

# 'BEING ROMANTIC', AGENCY AND THE (RE)PRODUCTION AND (RE)NEGOTIATION OF TRADITIONAL GENDER ROLES

Nicola Human

November, 2018

University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg

# Declaration

This thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the graduate Programme of Psychology, School of Applied Human Sciences, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. I, Nicola Human, declare as follows:

1. The data and arguments presented in this thesis – except where otherwise indicated – represents my original work. This research does not contain data in the form of pictures, graphs, or other information from someone else’s work or from the Internet, unless specifically indicated and referenced. This research does not contain the writing of someone else, unless specifically acknowledged as such.

(a) Where someone else’s ideas have been used, they have been rewritten in my own words and attributed to them.

(b) When someone else’s words have been used exactly, these have been referenced according to the American Psychological Association guidelines.

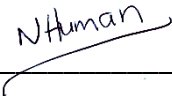
2. Two UKZN Psychology Honours research projects were conducted as off-shoots to this study in 2014. Both studies were co-supervised by myself and my supervisor Dr Michael Quayle and were submitted in October, 2014.

(a) In the first study, my data from Couples 1, 2 and 5 were analysed by Yamiska Naidoo (student number: 211517798) and Nondumiso Qwabe (student number, 211502797) for their project, titled “A qualitative investigation of how South African men and women produce romantic masculinity, and its relationship to hegemonic masculinity”. Written permission was acquired from the participants and an independent application to the Ethics Panel was approved for the students to use this data. In their Appendices, they included my original documentation as support, including my ethical clearance (Appendix 1B) and amended ethical clearance (Appendix 1C); advertisement (Appendix 2); consent form (Appendix 4); and


Interview questions (Appendices 7A-E). They used the pseudonyms I had created to refer to the participants; but their interpretation and analysis of this data was their own and was independently conducted to this study.

(b) A second Honours project, conducted by Kelsey Coady (student number 211502445) and Claire du Toit (student number 211527721) was also conducted in 2014, and titled “Norms that extinguish and enhance romance: A quantitative study in South Africa on the societal expectations about the way we get ready to go on a date, and how these are gendered”. It was independent to my study and generated its own unique data and analysis. However, it did use as a starting point the list of activities appearing in my checklist tables (Appendices 7B and 7E).

Therefore, the work described in this thesis has not been submitted to UKZN or other tertiary institution for purposes of obtaining an academic qualification, whether by myself or any other party.

Signed  Date 11 March 2019

As the candidate’s Supervisor I agree to the submission of this thesis.

Signed  Date 11 March 2019

## Dedications and acknowledgements

This work was supported by the National Research Foundation in the form of an Innovation Doctoral Scholarship, grant number 83778, received from 2013-2015. Additional support was provided in 2013, 2014 and 2018, from the NRF grant TTK2008051600002.

To my supervisor, Dr Mike Quayle – you have inspired me, encouraged me, and always been so kind, patient and knowledgeable. I thank you from the bottom of my heart for all your effort in getting me across the finish line. I am more grateful than words can express.

To the UKZN Social Psychology Laboratory and to Kevin Durrheim, thank you so much for listening to my ideas and providing me with helpful feedback and healthy cynicism about what could be ‘wrong’ with romance. I particularly extend my gratitude to Philippa Kerr and Tamaryn Nicholson, who embarked on this journey with me.

To Clare Chester and my colleagues at work, thank you for the support and interest and for cheering me on. Thank you also to my friends and our families for the encouragement, and the myriad small ways you have loved, helped and supported us.

To my darling Strauss and Oliver, for the sacrifices, endless support and for believing in me. And to Charlie, our unborn bean, I hope the stress of finalising the PhD has not done you too much irreparable damage.

Finally, to the participants, I extend my gratitude and appreciation for your openness and honesty. I’ve tried to stay as true to your stories as I can while still being critically reflexive about the system in which we are all of us placed. But this is not to say I am critical of you or your relationships. The love and respect you have for each other was so inspiring, and Strauss and I were both privileged to be a part of your lives for a short time. We learnt so much as a couple from you all, and from the extraordinary love, care, and consideration you show for each other.

Dedicated to the memory of our darling Alana, who provided help and humour at key moments and will be sorely missed.

# Abstract

Romance is a ubiquitous, Western cultural context which is constructed as an important tool for relationship success. However, research by gender scholars on romance as a site for gender enactment has been limited. Therefore, this study investigated the way that romance and romantic gendered identities may be produced or resisted, and investigated how 'being romantic' may produce affordances for particular gendered identities and limit others.

This study took an ethnographic discursive approach and five middleclass, heterosexual South African couples were recruited to take part. Each participant was asked to plan a 'romantic event' for their partner and was interviewed multiple times in different contexts. A total of 25 interviews were conducted over eight months in 2013. The transcribed interviews were analysed using a discursive approach to investigate how romance, masculinity and femininity were constructed and performed. The study's theoretical model viewed the romantic context as providing a range of situated affordances and discursive scripts for identity production, and explored how romantic masculinity and femininity were co-constructed as different but complementary gender identities.

The findings suggested that romance was differentiated according to time, effort, and flexibility in deviating from the discursive scripts that govern it. Three forms of romance emerged, and the more rigid the discursive boundaries, the more romantic it was produced as being and thus as offering the best access to emotional intimacy. This emotional intimacy was positioned as being central to relationship maintenance, especially within the context of marriage.

It was found that romantic masculinity was characterised by chivalry and the active orchestration of romance. In contrast, participants struggled to operationalise romantic femininity, especially in ways that allowed for active romancing of the man. Some romantic feminine agency was presented in resistance to this gendered norm, but appeared to need more justificatory work and more effort in its execution in comparison to that of the men participants.

By studying the co-production of masculinity and femininity as a product of the romantic context, a key finding has emerged. It has been argued elsewhere that women are responsible for the emotional housekeeping of their relationships, and this was evident in the data as well. However, this analysis argues that the narrow, rigid scope of the situational discursive scripts of grand dates limit the ways that women can take the initiative to enact them in meaningful ways. Thus, our modern understanding of romance places women in a dilemmatical position: they are expected to do relationship-maintenance, but the greater comparative effort and the stigmatising effect on both the active romantic woman and her partner means that women must rely on men to produce it. While it is possible to re-imagine romance, until we can collectively reduce this normative pressure, we will be strong-armed into re-enacting romance in ways that support patriarchal, old-fashioned gender identities.

Keywords: romance, masculinity, femininity, gender hegemony, patriarchy, situated affordances, discursive scripts

# Contents Page

'BEING ROMANTIC', AGENCY AND THE (RE)PRODUCTION AND (RE)NEGOTIATION OF TRADITIONAL GENDER ROLES.....	1
Declaration.....	2
Dedications and acknowledgements.....	4
Abstract.....	5
Contents Page.....	7
List of Figures and Tables.....	11
List of Extracts.....	11
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	15
1.1. Background to the study and rationale.....	15
1.1.1. Introduction: The importance of studying 'being-romantic' and gender identities.....	15
1.1.2. The rationale: how the study addresses gaps in the literature.....	16
1.1.3. Background.....	19
1.2. Research aims and questions.....	26
1.3. Outline of the project.....	27
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	31
2.1. Introduction and overview.....	31
2.2. A theory of gender: A historical overview.....	33
2.2.1. An early perspective: The biological study of gender.....	33
2.2.2. Sex role theory and script theories as a response to biological determinism.....	34
2.2.3. Hegemonic gender theory as a response to sex role theory.....	38
2.3. Problematizing masculinity theory, and proposed alternatives.....	43
2.3.1. Solo- or co-productions: Approaches to studying masculinity and femininity.....	43
2.3.2. The power of context.....	57
2.3.3. Power, resistance and agency.....	69
2.4. Summary.....	76
Chapter 3: Method and design.....	79
3.1. Evolution of the study design.....	79
3.2. Location of the study.....	81

3.3. Sampling.....	82
3.3.1. Sample population .....	82
3.3.2. Sampling protocol .....	85
3.3.3. Description of participants.....	89
3.3.4. Summary of ethical protections relating to sampling.....	91
3.4. Procedure and Measures.....	92
3.4.1. Design .....	92
3.4.2. Procedure.....	95
3.4.3. Interview design and content .....	97
3.4.4. Summary of ethical protections relating to data collection .....	100
3.5. Research Design.....	101
3.5.1. Theoretical orientation: Post-structuralist discursive analysis.....	102
3.6. Data Analysis.....	106
3.7. Validity, reliability and rigor of the study .....	109
3.8. Overview of empirical chapters .....	113
Chapter 4: Constructions of the context of romance .....	117
4.1. Introduction .....	117
4.2. Literature Review: Romance as practice versus romance as product.....	118
4.2.1. The development of the cultural practice of romance.....	119
4.2.2. Romance today.....	122
4.2.3. Romance as a script or romance as a contextual affordance? .....	126
4.3. Data analysis .....	128
4.3.1. The hierarchy of romance: Three forms of being-romantic .....	128
4.3.2. Strategic uses of the forms of being-romantic: Doing the work of being-in-love .....	151
4.4. Summary .....	161
Chapter 5: The outcomes of romance: Romance as a platonic ideal .....	163
5.1. Introduction .....	163
5.2. Literature Review: Intimacy versus sexual intercourse .....	164
5.2.1. Emotional intimacy .....	166
5.2.2. Sexual intercourse .....	171
5.3. Data Analysis.....	175
5.3.1. The relationship context: The soulmate discourse.....	175



5.3.2. Everyday life as unromantic and romance as anti-ordinary .....	177
5.3.3. Intimacy .....	180
5.4. Summary .....	210
Chapter 6: The affordances of romance and the romantic dividend .....	212
6.1. Introduction .....	212
6.2. Literature review: The affordances of romantic masculinity and femininity .....	214
6.2.1. Romance-as-equality and (de)gendered affordances .....	214
6.2.2. Gender 'equality' in the service of inequality.....	215
6.2.3. The affordances of romance-as-inequality.....	218
6.2.4. Studies investigating the co-construction of gender.....	227
6.3. Data Analysis.....	229
6.3.1. The grand date.....	229
6.3.2. The romantic gesture.....	267
6.4. Summary.....	273
Chapter 7: Resisting the affordances of romance .....	278
7.1. Introduction .....	278
7.2. Literature Review: Theorising resistance.....	280
7.2.1. Individual versus collective resistance: Social psychology and the contact hypothesis.....	280
7.2.2. How to theorise resistance in romance.....	283
7.2.3. My theoretical approach to resistance in romance.....	287
7.3. Data Analysis.....	291
7.3.1. Individualised resistance: When is it 'resistance', not <i>resistance</i> .....	292
7.3.2. A 'more robust' resistance: Resistance to ideals of passive women in romance.....	304
7.4. Summary.....	346
Chapter 8: Synthesis of the findings, limitations and conclusions .....	351
8.1. Strengths.....	351
8.2. Limitations .....	352
8.3 Recommendations and directions for future research.....	354
8.4. Synthesis of key findings.....	355
8.4.1. Chapter 4: Three kinds of romantic contexts .....	355
8.4.2. Chapter 5: Emotional intimacy, sex, and romance as a platonic ideal .....	357
8.4.3. Chapter 6: The affordances of romantic masculinity and femininity .....	358

8.4.4. Chapter 7: Resisting the affordances of romance .....	361
8.5. Overall conclusion.....	363
References .....	369
Appendices .....	384
Appendix 1A: Ethical clearance information .....	385
Appendix 1B: Ethical clearance certificate.....	386
Appendix 1C: Ethical clearance for amendments.....	387
Appendix 1D: Detailed discussion of ethical considerations .....	388
Appendix 2: Advertisement .....	392
Appendix 3: Information sheet .....	393
Appendix 4: Consent form .....	395
Appendix 5: Couple Information sheet.....	398
Appendix 6: Take-away information sheet.....	399
Appendix 7: Interview Schedules.....	400
Appendix 7A: Pre-event Individual interview schedule .....	400
Appendix 7B: Pre-event checklist .....	401
Appendix 7C: Post-event Couple interview schedule .....	403
Appendix 7D: Post-event Individual interview schedule .....	404
Appendix 7E: Post-event checklist.....	405
Appendix 8: Summary Table of couple information .....	409
Appendix 9: Transcription Notation .....	410
Appendix 10: Coding Schedule .....	411
Appendix 11: Supporting data for Chapter 6.....	417
Appendix 11A: McNemar Chi Square test for the variable 'Enhance romance if done' .....	417
Appendix 11B: McNemar Chi Square test for the variable 'Ruin romance if not done' .....	418
Appendix 12: Photograph of Sue's handmade gift.....	419

## List of Figures and Tables

Figure 1: Forms of romance.....	150
Figure 2: Screen shot of Ethical clearance certificate.....	386
Figure 3: Screen shot of Ethical Clearance of amendments .....	387
Figure 4: Recruitment Advertisement .....	392
Figure 5: Screen shot of McNemar Chi Square test for the variable 'Enhance romance if done' .....	417
Figure 6: Screen shot of McNemar Chi Square test for the variable 'Ruin romance if not done' .....	418
Table 1: Content analysis comparing participants' answers about romantic men vs romantic women...	231
Table 2: Activities participants did specifically for the romantic events, by Gender.....	250
Table 3: Table comparing Men's versus women's activities in terms of idealisation and expectations ...	252
Table 4: Investigation of gender across romantic gestures .....	270
Table 5: Comparison of romantic gestures by gender and effort versus spending of money .....	330
Table 6: Catalogue of Johan's justifications.....	334

## List of Extracts

Extract 1: Interview 1.5.....	129
Extract 2: Interview 1.2.....	131
Extract 3 : Interview 1.1 .....	134
Extract 4: Interview 3.1.....	134
Extract 5 : Interview 4.5 .....	134
Extract 6: Interview 1.1.....	135
Extract 7: Interview 2.5.....	135
Extract 8: Interview 3.1.....	135
Extract 9: Interview 3.2.....	135
Extract 10: Interview 3.3.....	135
Extract 11: Interview 4.1.....	135
Extract 12: Interview 4.5.....	136
Extract 13: Interview 5.3.....	137
Extract 14: Interview 2.5.....	138
Extract 15: Interview 3.1.....	138
Extract 16: Interview 4.5.....	138
Extract 17: Interview 5.3.....	138
Extract 18 : Interview 5.3 .....	138
Extract 19: Interview 1.3.....	140
Extract 20: Interview 2.3.....	140
Extract 21: Interview 3.4.....	140
Extract 22: Interview 5.3.....	141
Extract 23: Interview 4.2.....	141

Extract 24: Interview 3.4.....	141
Extract 25: Interview 3.3.....	142
Extract 26 : Interview 1.5.....	144
Extract 27: Interview 1.1.....	145
Extract 28: Interview 2.1.....	145
Extract 29: Interview 2.2.....	145
Extract 30: Interview 3.1.....	145
Extract 31: Interview 3.2.....	145
Extract 32: Interview 3.4.....	145
Extract 33: Interview 4.2.....	146
Extract 34: Interview 5.2.....	146
Extract 35: Interview 5.5.....	146
Extract 36: Interview 5.1.....	152
Extract 37: Interview 2.1.....	153
Extract 38: Interview 4.4.....	155
Extract 39: Interview 1.5.....	156
Extract 40: Interview 1.1.....	157
Extract 41: Interview 1.1.....	176
Extract 42: Interview 4.1.....	176
Extract 43: Interview 4.1.....	178
Extract 44: Interview 1.2.....	178
Extract 45: Interview 1.5.....	181
Extract 46: Interview 3.3.....	181
Extract 47: Interview 3.3.....	181
Extract 48: Interview 4.1.....	181
Extract 49: Interview 5.2.....	182
Extract 50: Interview 5.3.....	183
Extract 51: Interview 3.1.....	183
Extract 52: Interview 3.3.....	186
Extract 53: Interview 3.4.....	186
Extract 54: Interview 4.2.....	186
Extract 55: Interview 1.5.....	189
Extract 56: Interview 2.5.....	194
Extract 57: Interview 5.4.....	194
Extract 58: Interview 4.4.....	195
Extract 59: Interview 5.5.....	197
Extract 60: Interview 2.5.....	198
Extract 61: Interview 3.5.....	199
Extract 62: Interview 4.4.....	200
Extract 63: Interview 1.5.....	204
Extract 64: Interview 3.4.....	204
Extract 65: Interview 4.4.....	205

Extract 66: Interview 1.4.....	206
Extract 67: Interview 4.4.....	207
Extract 68: Interview 5.5.....	208
Extract 69: Interview 5.5.....	232
Extract 70: Interview 2.2.....	232
Extract 71: Interview 2.4.....	233
Extract 72: Interview 2.5.....	233
Extract 73: Interview 4.4.....	234
Extract 74: Interview 4.5.....	234
Extract 75: Interview 5.1.....	234
Extract 76: Interview 5.3.....	234
Extract 77: Interview 5.4.....	237
Extract 78: Interview 2.1.....	237
Extract 79: Interview 1.2.....	238
Extract 80: Interview 4.4.....	238
Extract 81: Interview 3.3.....	238
Extract 82: Interview 2.4.....	240
Extract 83: Interview 3.2.....	242
Extract 84: Interview 5.1.....	242
Extract 85: Interview 2.4.....	243
Extract 86: Interview 2.4.....	245
Extract 87: Interview 4.4.....	245
Extract 88: Interview 5.5.....	245
Extract 89: Interview 3.5.....	246
Extract 90: Interview 5.5.....	247
Extract 91: Interview 4.4.....	248
Extract 92: Interview 3.4.....	255
Extract 93: Interview 2.5.....	255
Extract 94: Interview 1.5.....	256
Extract 95: Interview 2.1.....	256
Extract 96: Interview 5.1.....	258
Extract 97: Interview 3.2.....	258
Extract 98: Interview 5.5.....	258
Extract 99: Interview 4.2.....	259
Extract 100: Interview 2.1.....	259
Extract 101: Interview 3.1.....	260
Extract 102: Interview 5.2.....	262
Extract 103: Interview 3.3.....	263
Extract 104: Interview 1.5.....	263
Extract 105: Interview 5.3.....	265
Extract 106: Interview 1.1.....	267
Extract 107: Interview 3.1.....	267

Extract 108: Interview 5.3.....	268
Extract 109: Interview 5.5.....	269
Extract 110: Interview 2.4.....	272
Extract 111: Interview 1.1.....	294
Extract 112: Interview 3.1.....	294
Extract 113: Interview 4.2.....	294
Extract 114: Interview 5.2.....	294
Extract 115: Interview 2.1.....	296
Extract 116: Interview 1.5.....	299
Extract 117: Interview 2.5.....	301
Extract 118: Interview 4.2.....	306
Extract 119: Interview 1.4.....	308
Extract 120: Interview 4.5.....	309
Extract 121: Interview 4.3.....	311
Extract 122: Interview 1.3.....	313
Extract 123: Interview 4.2.....	314
Extract 124: Interview 1.1.....	315
Extract 125: Interview 4.3.....	316
Extract 126: Interview 1.3.....	317
Extract 127: Interview 4.4.....	318
Extract 128: Interview 1.2.....	325
Extract 129: Interview 1.3.....	326
Extract 130 : Interview 4.5.....	327
Extract 131: Interview 2.2.....	330
Extract 132: Interview 1.5.....	335
Extract 133: Interview 4.2.....	342
Extract 134: Interview 1.1.....	344

# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1. Background to the study and rationale

### 1.1.1. Introduction: The importance of studying 'being-romantic' and gender identities

This ethnographic discursive study examined how 'being-romantic' or 'doing' romance, could provide an important site for the maintenance of traditional gender roles and power differentials between men and women. This study is situated within the field of critical feminist studies and thus acknowledged (a) the problems of dichotomising gender into 'male' and 'female'; and (b) that romance is a social practice which is 'up for grabs' to everyone, regardless of identified gender, sexual orientation, class, or race.

However, in this study I chose to focus on the heteronormative romantic practices of heterosexual couples for the following reasons. Firstly, it has been argued that romance as a cultural practice is entrenched within heterosexual and heteronormative ideals (Farvid, 2011; Hayfield & Clarke, 2012; Korobov, 2009; Morrison, 2010; Ngabaza, Daniels, Franck & Maluleke, 2013; Singh, 2013; Vincent & McEwan, 2006; Wetherell, 1995). Therefore, focusing on heterosexual couples allows researchers to tap most directly into what romance (and therefore romantic gendered identities) '*should*' look like. In popular culture this is a baseline against which other versions are judged. This study therefore provides a platform explore other versions of romance structured around non-cis gender and non-heterosexual identities in future studies, to investigate commonalities and departures.

Secondly, the study needed to select a particular focus (as all research does), and heterosexual couples were selected for the purposes of this study. This is not to imply that other sexual orientations are less 'worthy' of study. To the contrary, one of the recommendations made by the present study is to explore the production of romance in other relationship contexts. Therefore in this study, I have focused on the co-productions of heterosexual men and women, but this is *not to suggest* that I believe romance only

happens in heterosexual relationships or that it is the only viable form of relationship context.

### 1.1.2. The rationale: how the study addresses gaps in the literature

I identified the following theoretical gaps in the literature and have brought together three different arguments to provide the theoretical framework of my study. The first gap that was identified falls within the field of masculinity studies. While Connell (1987) originally proposed *hegemonic masculinity* and *emphasised femininity* together, framing them as twin concepts, I will argue in the Literature Review (Chapter 2) that these have, for the most part, not been studied as co-productions. Instead, they tend to be studied separately, and the study of hegemonic masculinity has mushroomed into an entire field of masculinity studies while the study of femininities is under-developed in comparison (Schipper, 2007). In addition, studies have also tended to look only at the way that men produce masculinities and women produce femininities. While some authors have called for the extension of masculinity studies to include women's constructions of masculinities (for example, Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Quayle, Lindegger, Brittain, Naboo, & Cole, 2017; Talbot & Quayle, 2010), Schipper (2007) has gone even further and proposed that instead masculinities and femininities should be studied *together as complementary but hierarchical co-productions* of gendered identities that together support a broader gender order which privileges men over women. I could find very little empirical work that has been conducted using Schipper's framework, leaving a gap in the literature which my study aimed to address. Schipper's (2007) argument is thus one of the three approaches I have drawn from in this study to address this gap in the literature and will be discussed in detail in the following chapters.

Secondly, while some critiqued Schipper's argument for not easily facilitating the study of multiple masculinities/femininities (see Messerschmidt, 2015, as an example), it does offer a means of providing a more nuanced analysis of broader gender orders within specific contexts where two key kinds of identities are present and rely on particular co-constructions in order to be successfully reproduced. This highlights the importance of



context in the performance of gender, which is an emerging argument within this field (Francis, Archer, Moote, de Witt and Yeomans, 2016; Quayle et al., 2017; Talbot & Quayle, 2010). It has been argued that different contexts offer different identity resources and constraints (affordances) for the production of gender identity. This approach is still relatively new, and therefore I hope to contribute to these arguments by investigating a particular context and the effects it has on affording access to gender identities. Thus, a focus on context forms the second of the three approaches I draw from in this study.

Being-romantic is one kind of context in which (typically) two people<sup>1</sup> produce identities through the construction and performance of being-romantic. This suggests that being-romantic may be a fitting context in which to study Schippers' conceptualisation of gender production. Furthermore, I proposed that 'being-romantic' is a particularly significant context, for the following reason: It allows us to participate in what might be termed a 'critical moment.' These are highly symbolic events or contexts which, even if experienced relatively infrequently across a life span, are constructed as unique, wonderful and key to leading a fulfilled and enriched life<sup>2</sup>. In this study, I proposed that it is possible that (1) embedded within these 'critical moments' are ritualised, traditional (that is, historically patriarchal and unequally gendered) ways of performing gender; and (2) that it may be difficult to experience these 'critical moments' authentically without enacting these gender roles in prescribed (and traditional or patriarchal) ways. Thus, this study examined the possibility that the experience of 'being-romantic' demands the reproduction of gender inequalities that work to shore up broader power differences between men and women. This, so far as I can find, is a novel approach to studying being-romantic, and I could find very little in the literature which conceptualised romance in this way<sup>3</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> And potentially – in heterosexual relationship contexts at least – two kinds of identities, making an application of Schippers (2007) relevant in this instance.

<sup>2</sup> Other examples might include getting married or becoming a first-time parent.

<sup>3</sup> While research has been conducted on 'romance', particularly in heterosexual relationships, these studies have been theoretically fragmented. Due to the limited literature available, I have out of necessity drawn from a variety of literature with different theoretical backgrounds and paradigms. Some of the sources consulted, therefore, have vastly different paradigms and approaches to my own, and I therefore viewed and interpreted these through the lens of my stated theoretical framework, as explained in detail in Chapter 3 (Methodology). For example, I have referenced sources (such as Bachen & Illouz, 1996) which use a cognitivist understanding to refer to romance as containing cognitive 'scripts', despite personally taking an alternative theoretical stance

The third approach I drew from in this study was based on Reis's (2008) argument that particular contexts expose identity *affordances*, defined as a particular set of symbolic resources that facilitate the construction of particular identities and make others more difficult to enact. While in any given context it may be technically possible to produce any one of a range of identities, Reis (2008) argues that certain identities will be easier to produce and have a more positive outcome, given the set of available identity resources.

An anecdote provides a good illustration: Traditionally, the man would pay the bill on a heterosexual romantic date (Illouz, 1997). However, a friend recently told me about her experiences trying to escape this gendered expectation. She and her boyfriend – being modern, progressive young people – regularly split the bill when they go on a date. But, generally, the bill is placed in front of him in the restaurant and she described how he will pay for it with a flourish but then expect her to transfer her share of the bill to him electronically afterwards. This may provide both with some pleasure: She has the pleasure of feeling 'looked after' and he reaps the status of the romantic man who is financially stable and considerate. However, she must later pay a transaction fee to transfer her portion of the bill to him and also has the emotional labour of remembering to service the 'debt'. Acting differently is possible, but the affordances of the situation create a current that is difficult to swim against.

This anecdote illustrates how the context of being-romantic provides identity affordances to couples 'being romantic.' Most often these affordances will embed old-fashioned gender identities within the context of being-romantic which (a) might differ from the usual relationship context, as in the case of this friend's relationship; but (b) because these identities are afforded by the particular context and carry the most potential rewards might be those we engage in anyway, for the sake of enjoying the outcomes that this context potentially allows us to access. This concept of 'affordances' is therefore the third approach I draw from to form my theoretical framework.

---

(I draw from Edwards' (1997) argument that we should view 'scripts' as cultural repertoires). My theoretical framework will be developed in more detail in Chapter 2 (Literature Review). The sources which conflict with my own theoretical stance have still been utilised because of the limited source material available, but I have taken care in my interpretation or application of them.

To my knowledge, there has been no study conducted of this nature, using this particular combination of theoretical approaches: that is, using a particular context (Francis, et al., 2016; Quayle et al., 2017; Talbot & Quayle, 2010) to observe and analyse how particular gender identities may be afforded (Reis, 2008) to men and women, to see if and how these identities complement each other (Schippers, 2007) and work to shore up gender differences or inequality. Therefore, in this study I explored the context of being-romantic, examined the rewards for engaging in that context (in order to explain the enticements for engaging in it), looked at what identities this context affords, and assessed alternatives for resisting these affordances.

I have briefly outlined my theoretical stance and identified key gaps in the literature. Next, I will provide background and contextual information for the study. I will then describe the aims and objectives of this study which were developed in response to these identified gaps, and provide an outline of the chapters that follow.

### 1.1.3. Background

#### 1.1.3.1. The study of gender inequality in South Africa

Historically, gender relations in South Africa were highly patriarchal, marked by massive power and structural inequalities between super-ordinate (male) and sub-ordinate (female) groups. The feminist movement has resulted in many positive structural and legal changes that have overtly promoted equality between the genders. These changes were entrenched in law in the promulgation of our constitution in 1996, and are reinforced by a dominant Western discourse of neo-liberalism (Ball, 2011; Lambert & Parker, 2006; Mühleison, 2007), which positions men and women as equals (Theilade, 2011). However, as Farvid and Braun (2006, p. 306) argue, women “remain embedded within a heterosexist imperative” where women are constructed as equal and with the power of choice, so long as those choices conform to the imperatives of hetero-sexuality.

In line with arguments of this nature, there has been a significant amount of research conducted in South Africa that has focused on negative aspects of intimate heterosexual relationships, such as verbal degradation; controlling behaviour; emotional,

physical or sexual abuse; domestic violence; or partner murder (see Boonzaier, 2008; Boonzaier & de La Rey, 2003; Boonzaier & de la Rey, 2004; Singh & Myende, 2017; Strebel, et al., 2006; and Vincent & Chiwandire, 2013; as examples). It has been found that South Africa has a comparatively high rate<sup>4</sup> of gender-based violence and intimate partner violence when compared to global samples (Abrahams et al., 2013, Mathews, 2010, Nduna & Nene, 2014, Vetten, 2005, all as cited in CSVR, 2016; see also Christofides et al., 2006, and Stats SA, 2013), which continues despite the strides towards gender equality that have been made in recent years<sup>5</sup>. For example, the homicide rate for South African women is estimated to be six times higher than the global rate, and at least half of these murders are committed by their male intimate partner (Abrahams et al., 2009 as cited in Morrell, Jewkes & Lindegger, 2012). Glick et al. (2000) showed that South Africa was second highest in their global sample for the endorsement of hostile sexism, and South African studies of masculinity have suggested that hegemonic forms of local masculinities are characterised by domination; 'traditional' values (understood as encapsulating patriarchal ideas, cf. Morrell et al., 2012); and a tolerance towards or willingness to engage in violent behaviours (Morrell, 1998; Morrell et al., 2012).

#### 1.1.3.2. The limitations of studying only the negative aspects of intergroup contact

However, an argument has also been made that the 'nice' aspects of problematic intergroup relationships are just as central to understanding ongoing inequalities between groups as direct conflict is (Dixon, Tropp, Durrheim & Tredoux, 2010; Durrheim, Jacobs & Dixon, 2014; Jackman, 1994; Jacobs, Manicom & Durrheim, 2013; Jost, 2017; see also Eibach, Wilmot, & Libby, 2015 and Osborne, Smith, & Huo, 2012, as cited in Jost, Becker, Osborne & Badaan, 2017). It has been suggested that positive intergroup

---

<sup>4</sup> These sources also argue that it is difficult to give precise estimates of the actual rates of these crimes as it is suspected that many go unreported (Christofides, Muirhead, Jewkes, Penn-Kekana & Conco, 2006). This issue is compounded by the fact that there are no 'official' statistics providing regular measurement of gender-based violence in South Africa (The Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CVR), 2016).

<sup>5</sup> For example, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's Social Institutions and Gender Index (2012) has argued that South Africa's progress towards achieving gender equality has been ranked as 4<sup>th</sup> in the world, which is commendable indeed (as cited in Statistics South Africa, 2013; and The Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, 2016).

behaviour – for example, intergroup helping – can be palliative and may impact on disempowered group members' ability and willingness to resist the status quo. For this reason, it has been suggested that these 'nice' aspects can act to shore up discrimination between groups. Therefore it has been argued that one should examine not only points of conflict between groups but also contact that appears, *prima facie*, to be *positive*, in order to understand how inequality may persist.

Research on sexism has demonstrated that 'positive' or benevolent sexism works to shore up power differentials between the genders, by presenting women as wonderful but weak and therefore deserving of love and protection (Barreto & Ellemers, 2005; Eagly & Mladinic, 1994; Glick & Fiske, 1996, 2001; Glick et al., 2000; Jackman, 1994; Jost & Kay, 2005). These benevolent prejudices are "rooted in the structure of personal relationships between men and women", but are also linked to broader, structural inequalities (Glick et al, 2000, p. 765). Hence it is as important to understand the dynamics of dyadic relationships between men and women, as it is to study structures of broader gender inequality, as this research suggests a link between the micro interpersonal level and the macro-societal level.

In a global sample, South Africa was ranked in the top 3 for the endorsement of benevolent sexist attitudes (Glick et al., 2000). A study by Viki, Abrams and Hutchison (2003) suggested a link between benevolent sexism and what they have termed 'paternalistic chivalry', defined as a set of beliefs and norms governing how men and women should behave in romantic relationships. These included, for example, a belief/norm that men 'need' women in order to be happy, and that men should protect and cherish women while women should be passive and emotionally supportive. As will be argued in Chapter 6 romantic masculinity and chivalrous behaviour is discursively connected. Furthermore, heterosexual sexuality has been argued to be an important site for the maintenance of "unequal gender power relations and male dominance" (Shefer & Foster, 2001, p. 375) and 'being-romantic' has been argued to be a defining feature of intimate interpersonal relationships (van Acker 2003). And yet, the study of the role of romance in relationships has often been overlooked in favour of research on negative

experiences in heterosexual romantic relationships (Rule-Groenewald, 2013; van Acker, 2003). Furthermore, romance is often constructed as something women are invested in, desire, and appreciate more than men (Giddens, 1992; Jarvis, 1999; Longhurst, 1998; Morrison, 2010; Reddy & Dunne, 2007; Rule Groenewald, 2013; Singh, 2013; Vincent & McEwan, 2006; Wilding, 2003). Romance thus forms an intersection between heterosexual men and women, a point of contact stereotypically seen not only as 'nice' and desirable, but as something (stereo)typically desired more by the disenfranchised group. Thus, it may be argued that a South African study examining the relationships of heterosexual couples, would be highly relevant, and that, if one is wanting to study 'niceness' as a possible conduit for ongoing gender inequality in dyadic relationships, 'being-romantic' is an important area of study.

#### 1.1.3.3. 'Being romantic' as a universalized social practice

In Westernised, capitalised societies – and increasingly, more globally as well – romance is a ubiquitous social product. For example, the term 'romance' may describe a genre of films and books; it defines a historical period or movement which influenced art, music, literature and philosophy; it may be used to define a particular kind of interpersonal relationship; and it has been identified as a marketing tool used widely in the advertising industry to promote the consumption of products (Illouz, 1997). Therefore, 'romance' is a term with many possible applications. However, a number of studies have found that romance is constructed in a similar way, despite – or perhaps as a result of – its ubiquity in society, and especially through its presence in various media representations (Bachen & Illouz, 1996; Driesmans, Vandenbosch, & Eggermont, 2016; Galloway, Engstrom, & Emmers-Sommer, 2015; Hefner & Wilson, 2013; Johnson & Holmes, 2009; Shapiro & Kroeger, 1991).

However, romance is not only a social product, but a social practice as well. It is something that people 'be' or 'do', and these social practices have particular affective, psychological and/or physical effects. Therefore, in this study, the term 'being-romantic' was used to refer to something very particular – the cultural practices involved in the *doing* of romance. These cultural practices are signified through the use of symbols, artefacts, and

rituals. Some studies have shown that we share similar ideas about what these symbols, artefacts and rituals 'should' be, suggesting media representations of romance shape how we construct and participate in romance (Bachen & Illouz, 1996; Driesmans, Vandenbosch, & Eggermont, 2016; Galloway, Engstrom, & Emmers-Sommer, 2015; Hefner & Wilson, 2013; Johnson & Holmes, 2009; Shapiro & Kroeger, 1991). It has also been suggested that these collective ideas about what romance 'looks like' are difficult to re-imagine or resist (Jarvis, 1999). While these 'romantic' activities are not necessarily sexual, they are often constructed as involving intimacy on some level (Giddens, 1992; Illouz, 1997). 'Being-romantic' commonly involves consumption of luxury goods and involves idealisation and a culturally defined repertoire of 'acceptable' behaviours that demonstrate to oneself and to others that you are 'doing-romance' (Illouz, 1997), as in the example of my friend above. It has been suggested that being-romantic is normalised, to the point where "it is so familiar that we do not always see it" (Jarvis, 1999, p. 4), and idealised such that discourses of romance may sustain myths and unrealistic expectations about marriage and what it means to 'live happily ever after' (van Acker, 2003). Romance as a social practice and as a particular context for doing gender will be explored in greater detail in Chapter 4.

#### 1.1.3.4. Controversy

The academic community is divided over whether the cultural practice of 'being-romantic' buttresses or undermines patriarchy. This divide has likely been exacerbated by the lack of empirical studies exploring how masculinity and femininity are co-produced within specific romantic events.

The first argument positions romance in a positive light for the following reasons. Firstly, it has been argued that romantic masculinity involves the performance of behaviours traditionally seen as feminine. For example, in three studies where only masculinity was considered in romantic contexts (Allen, 2007; Eldén, 2011; Martin & Govender, 2013), it was found that romantic masculinity was positioned as being caring, attentive and non-violent. It has also been suggested that the net effect of being-romantic entails the production of gender *neutral* identities. That is, it has been suggested that both

parties, although gendered as individuals, engage in similar romantic practices while being-romantic – such as attentive listening, consideration, care, focus of attention, emotional investment, and so on (Giddens, 1992; Illouz, 1997). The net outcome of these actions is to produce a sense of “androgynous equality” (Illouz, 1997, p. 184), or a combined super-identity which *feels* amorphous and gender-neutral - a sense of ‘we’ rather than ‘I’ (Giddens, 1992). Additionally, as will be argued in Chapter 5, romance is often positioned as leading to intimacy as an outcome. This intimacy, Giddens (1992, p. 3) argues, can be experienced as liberating and/or democratizing when it is seen as a “negotiation of personal ties by equals”. In this argument, the experience of ‘gender’ is de-emphasised, and romance and the intimacy it is described as bringing has been lauded as a means of reducing gender inequality in heterosexual couples (Giddens, 1992).

Alternatively, a second position argues that romance acts to shore up gender inequality by confirming and reproducing the patriarchal status quo with each (re)enactment. It has been argued that romance assists in or is the vehicle of the subjugation of certain classes and genders over others (Morrison, 2010; Tukachinsky, 2008). This argument contends that the identities performed while being-romantic are *not* neutral, but are highly gendered and entrenched in idealised and old-fashioned, patriarchal gender values (Morrison, 2010). For example, Talbot and Quayle (2010) and Quayle et al. (2017) argued that more hegemonically masculine traits in intimate partners were preferred by heterosexual women. Additionally, some studies (Allen, 2007, Eldén, 2011; Martin & Govender, 2013) have shown that while the traits of romantic masculinity may be positioned as counter-hegemonic and feminized (e.g. attentiveness), the way that these identity traits were performed actually worked to shore up inequality between men and women, rather than as resisting it.

This position also suggests that romance is discursively linked with sexual intercourse as an outcome (Farvid, 2011; Giddens, 1992). While this may be a desired outcome at an individual level for both members of a heterosexual couple, this association has been found to bring the authenticity of a romantic gesture into question, if it is understood as being performed solely to ‘get sex’ (Allen, 2007). In these instances, the



doing of romance would be seen as being in service to the performance of hegemonic masculinity (Allen, 2007), where, in Western societies at least, an interest in heterosex and sexual conquests is often constructed as a key feature of masculinity (Allen, 2007; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Redman, 2001), as being able to show “romantic sophistication carries with it the implication of sexual prowess and the ability to attract women” (Allen, 2007, p. 150). Thus, it has been argued that romance is *not* a panacea for gender inequality nor a guaranteed pathway to the re-engineering of heterosexual relations as assumed in the first position. Nor is it necessarily a neutral activity. Instead it has been argued (Redman, 2001, as summarised by Vincent and Chiwandire, 2013, p. 13), that:

romance offers men ‘a cultural repertoire’ for enacting, in culturally legitimated ways, forms of heterosexual masculinity that are harmful in their implications because they serve as a legitimising substratum of cultural acceptability within which more overtly harmful expressions of masculine dominance thrive.

It has therefore been suggested that romance may make more “overt” forms of masculine dominance possible and legitimate (Vincent & Chiwandire, 2013, p. 13), as the gendered identities involved in its performance are entrenched in patriarchal values. However, the mechanics of this has not been explored in detail. This argument also does not consider the ways in which women may be invested in and desire to be-romantic, or how identity benefits may result from romance<sup>6</sup>.

In short, these two arguments fall at opposite ends of the spectrum. As will be demonstrated in the literature review, very little research has been conducted on gender identities in romance (some examples include Allen, 2007; Quayle, et al., 2017; Redman, 2001; Talbot & Quayle, 2010); and none have been conducted looking at how masculinity

---

<sup>6</sup> Reflective footnote: As Snyder-Hall (2010) argues, we cannot dismiss a practice or cultural product outright because of its potential to endorse patriarchal values. This would be incongruous with third wave feminism. Instead, we should make space for individuals to choose for themselves, and ensure their equal access to these choices. That said, however, as feminists, we should also critically and reflexively examine cultural products and practices drawn from by individuals, to see how these are shaped by broader social norms and underlying discourses; and in turn, what cumulative effect individual choices have on broader patriarchal structures in society. While the ability to choose for oneself is important, it must be remembered that historically, we are not yet at a place where these choices are neutral. They do not occur in a cultural vacuum, but rather, both these choices and the individuals who make them are embedded within a broader system which privileges some over others, based on gender, sexual orientation, race, class and so on.

and femininity are co-constructed and simultaneously produced through the specific cultural practice of being-romantic.

This is a gap in the literature that will be addressed in the present study. Specifically, these romantic discourses, practices, and gender identities will be critically examined to consider how they are enacted, enlisted or performed in everyday life and what kind of outcome they have. Do they indeed promote gender equality (Giddens, 1992; Illouz, 1997), or instead do they shore up gender inequality, serving as an opiate to keep us happy, blind and numbed to a reality as unequally gendered subjects in a patriarchal society (Morrison, 2010; Tukachinsky, 2008; Vincent & Chiwandire, 2013)?

## 1.2. Research aims and questions

In Section 1.1.2 above, I described the gaps in the literature I identified as well as the three theoretical perspectives I drew from as the framework for this study. These gaps and the theoretical approach I took shaped the research aims and questions of this study. Through an inductive and iterative process of engaging with the data and with the literature, the following research questions emerged. This process will be described in detail in the methodology section. The first research aim was to see how romance was constructed in participants' accounts, to explore it as a context for performing gender identities. Secondly, I aimed to look at how participants constructed the outcomes of romance, in order to explore the motivations for engaging in romance and to see how this construction may fit into either of the two opposing positions on romance, outlined in Section 1.1.3.4. My third aim was to investigate the identities afforded by the context of being-romantic, and to deconstruct if and how these were gendered, particularly in relation to patriarchy. Finally, I aimed to examine any accounts of resistance or ways of re-imagining being-romantic, to see what alternatives may exist for creating romance and intimacy in heterosexual dyads.

These broad aims guided the development of the specific research questions which have been used to inform the structure of the Results and Discussion. The four empirical chapters (Chapters 4-7) will each address one of these questions in turn:

- (1) How is romance constructed by participants as a context for identity production?
- (2) What were the outcomes of romance, and how were these constructed?
- (3) What are the (complementary) gender identities that are afforded by the context of being-romantic?
- (4) Were these affordances resisted and what alternatives to these affordances exist?

In order to address these questions, I recruited engaged or married heterosexual couples and asked each individual to plan a date for their partner (thus providing participants with the opportunity to both be active in the planning of dates). I then interviewed them, taking an ethnographic discursive approach, to elicit discourses about these dates and their romantic practices, like how they met and got engaged and how they usually 'do romance.' I then analysed the transcribed data to see how the context of 'being-romantic' was constructed and what forms of gendered identities were (co)produced. Additionally, I analysed instances of resistance to see how being-romantic is applied and (re)imagined by the participants. In this way, I aimed to provide a contribution to this field in terms of the gaps identified above. The research methods and results will be described in detail below.

### 1.3. Outline of the project

So far I have introduced the focus of the study, outlined its theoretical framework, provided some background to the study, and introduced the key aims and research questions.

Chapter 2 will review the gender and masculinity literature in which the present study is situated. I will discuss some of ways that have been used to study masculinity and femininity in the past (for example in the work of Connell and colleagues). I will then examine limitations of these approaches and develop a detailed theoretical

framework for this study (Francis et al., 2016; Reis, 2008; Schippers, 2007). I will argue that when studying gender identities in heterosexual dyads, it is vital to consider how masculinity and femininity are produced in conjunction with each other as complementary gender identities within particular contexts, as different contexts offer specific identity affordances. To facilitate a dialogical style of analysis and discussion, the literature of romance is reviewed in more detail in the analysis sections (Chapters 4-7).

First, in Chapter 3, the methodological approach of this ethnographic discursive study will be explained, including a detailed description of the sampling methods, the design of the study and data collection procedure, the data analysis techniques used, as well as the ethical considerations of this study.

Chapters 4 to 7 contains the empirical Results and Discussion sections, one for each of the aims and corresponding research questions. In Chapter 4, I focus first on Francis et al.'s (2016) argument of the importance of context, and so explore how romance was constituted as a unique context by these particular participants. I will describe the three different forms of being-romantic that were described by the participants, which I have named the *grand date*, the *casual date*, and the *romantic gesture*. Then I will show how these were differentiated according to the extent to which they were constructed as being 'different' to everyday life and how romantic they were as a result. I will also argue that these contexts were not merely neutral, independent entities, but that they were drawn from and constituted for particular purposes within the interviews. That is, the construction of these three forms of being-romantic performed a 'job' for particular discursive effect, and thus also formed discursive resources for the participants in the constructions of their gender identities and in the construction of their relationships.

In Chapter 5, I analyse the constructed outcomes of romance. Emotional intimacy was positioned as the primary outcome of being-romantic, with the grand date offering the 'best' access to this intimacy. This emotional intimacy was described as being key to relationship maintenance, suggesting that there is ideological and normative pressure to engage regularly in romance (especially the more expensive and time-consuming grand dates) in order to protect participants' marriages from the contaminating

effects of everyday life. As will be explained, contrary to expectation, sexual intimacy was minimised in the data set, with very few overt references to sexual intercourse being made. However, there were implicit references to the expectation of physical intimacy on a date which, rather than being aligned with lust or desire, were rather constructed as a natural expression of the emotional intimacy arising from being-romantic. This platonic sanitised ideal protected men partners in particular from any potential accusations that romance was orchestrated only to gain access to sexual intercourse (which would have disrupted the authenticity of their accounts).

In Chapter 6, I examine the gendered identities afforded by these particular romantic contexts, focusing particularly on the 'grand date'. I use Schippers' (2007) concept of reciprocal and complementary gender identities to identify the idealised versions of masculinity and femininity constructed by participants as necessary for successfully being-romantic. I will show that romantic masculinity was positioned as being disinterested in romance; being active in orchestrating romance for the benefit of the woman; and as being chivalrous and attentive to her needs. On its own, this form of masculinity does not seem too bad: it is positioned as something women conventionally desire in a partner; however, when considered in conjunction with the complementary femininity required for this masculinity to function effectively, I argue we begin to see why it may be problematic. In order for romantic masculinity to have currency the complementary femininity needed to be invested in romance and passively accepting of men's romantic gestures. I also found that women were expected to put a lot more effort, time and money into their appearance in preparation for being-romantic.

In contrast, casual dates were positioned as gender-neutral but were glossed over as viable alternatives to grand romantic dates. Romantic gestures were presented as gender neutral activities and as offering more romance than casual dates and therefore as a more viable alternative. However, it will be argued that romantic gestures were gendered in the way they were positioned to different discursive effects which, it will be argued, was used to justify and legitimate the broader gender inequalities located within other romantic practices.

In Chapter 7, I examine instances of resistance to these idealised, gender ideals, to see if, where and how men and women resisted the seductive pull of the preferred ways-of-being-romantic described in Chapter 6. I found that most instances that were presented as resistance did not actually disrupt this preferred mode of being romantic; rather they acted as justifications for not living up to these idealised expectations – but without bringing into question their validity. However, there were instances where these gender ideals were disrupted by two women participants who were positioned as actively romancing their partners. These instances will be explored and I will examine the evidence and the justifications provided as to why these women romanced their partners. I will also explore how this was positioned by the men, and show that while they were overtly supportive and positive, there was also a subtle underlying construction that characterized their partners' active romantic femininity as negative. Additionally, these two couples constructed an active romantic femininity as carrying certain costs and stigma (which do not apply to romantic masculinity), further positioning it as problematic. Finally, I will demonstrate how these identities were problematic in relation to the complementary identity position available to the men partners. These discourses undercut participants' resistance to the affordances of romance which were described in Chapter 6, embedding within resistance the implication that it is norm-violating and 'wrong'.

Finally, in Chapter 8, these findings will be summarised and collated in a synthesis section, where the significance of the findings will be extrapolated. The research questions will be reflected on and the findings will be compared back to the literature and theoretical framework. The strengths and limitations of the study will be discussed and recommendations made for areas of future study.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### 2.1. Introduction and overview

In the Introductory chapter (Chapter 1), I argued that romance is not just a cultural product, but a cultural practice as well, and therefore that the ‘doing of it’ will produce identities. Because being-romantic is (stereo)typically something that two people do together, it is important to consider how identities are produced *together* (Schipper, 2007) using the affordances (Reis, 2008) made available by this particular context rather than considering it as a site for masculinity or femininity in isolation.

As I argued in the Introduction, there is limited research available looking at romance as a cultural *practice* (as opposed to a cultural *product*, of which there is a lot of research available), and the romantic identities produced through its performance. What research is available tends to focus on the production of only one of these identities, typically romantic masculinity (for example, Allen, 2007; Redman, 2001). While Allen (2007) included women’s constructions of masculinity in her sample (satisfying the call made by Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Talbot & Quayle, 2010; and Quayle et al., 2017); no study could be found that looked at femininity *and* masculinity, and how these are co-produced within the affordances produced by this specific context.

As argued above, my study proposed that romance may be a critically important context to study – not only because limited research is available on it – but also because it may form what we have termed a ‘critical moment’ in the narratives of our lives. Additionally, I demonstrated in Section 1.1.3.4 above that there appears to be a disagreement in the literature regarding whether the context of heterosexual romance has positive or negative implications for improving the relationships (both inter-personal and at the structural level) between men and women. Being-romantic, therefore, is a key site for the study of gender relations.

While romance as a context (and a practice) will be developed further in Chapter 4, in this chapter I will explore in more detail the gaps in the gender literature and the theoretical framework used for this study, as introduced in Section 1.1.2 of the

Introduction. First, I will very briefly outline a historical development of the study of gender, in recognition that “social theory never occurs in a vacuum” (Connell, 1987, p. 23). I will start with a description of the biological approach, then move to a description of sex role theory and cognitive script theory, as theories which critiqued and tried to overcome the limitations of a biologically deterministic approach. Then I will explore the concepts of masculinity theory as introduced by Connell (1987), which developed in response to a critique of sex role theory, in particular. I will describe the key tenets of this theory and examine briefly how these concepts have been drawn from in the years since their introduction.

Next, I will develop more specific aspects of masculinity theory in the light of some of the limitations and critiques that have been identified and then discuss in more detail the theoretical framework of this study that I have drawn from in order to address these gaps. First, I will discuss and problematize the concepts of hegemonic masculinity and emphasised femininity, and then discuss Schippers’ (2007) concept of complementary and hierarchical gender identities which are collaboratively produced in-interaction. Next, I will explore the issue of context, looking to see how masculinity theory scholars have explored this idea, and I will make the argument (drawing from Francis et al., 2016 and Quayle et al., 2017) that context invariably shapes and limits our gender identity performances. Finally, I will consider the issues of power, agency and resistance to see how these are dealt with by masculinity theorists. I will draw from Reis’s (2008) concept of affordances and Edwards (1997) concept of discursive scripts, to explore the argument that certain contexts provide affordances that facilitate specific identities. These can be enacted, or resisted strategically, but our range of engagement with these discourses is shaped and limited by the context itself. Once this theoretical framework has been developed in Chapter 2, I will explore additional literature specific to each of the Results and Discussion chapters, in Chapters 4 to 7.



## 2.2. A theory of gender: A historical overview

### 2.2.1. An early perspective: The biological study of gender

The study of gender originated in the second half of the 1800's and was rooted in a biological approach (Carrigan, Connell & Lee, 1985). This approach argued that gendered traits and roles were 'naturally' (and thus, 'inherently') linked to one's biological sex identity (Connell, 1987; Carrigan et al., 1985; Francis 2008). The goal of this research was to study biological differences between men and women with the implicit expectation that it would provide empirical proof of women's inferiority to men and naturalise the structural differences between men and women in terms of access to power, wealth, education, and other rights (Carrigan et al., 1985; Shefer, 2004).

This approach was (much) later critiqued as being *biologically reductionist* or *essentialist* (Connell, 1987; Carrigan et al., 1985), in that it justified differences in the gender order with biological explanations like differences in sexual organs, or hormones. This research (a) reified and legitimated the constructed differences themselves on an ideological level; (b) rationalised broader structural inequalities based on these 'differences' with scientific authority; and (c) polarised gender into binary, opposing-but-complementary gender categories – for example strong, rational man as opposed to weak, emotional woman (Shefer, 2004). In this way, gender identity was divorced from its social, political and historical context, as the biological explanation of sex differences justified the patriarchal social order, making it appear 'right' and permanent (Shefer, 2004).

While biological sex research is frequently assumed to empirically support the patriarchal status quo, over time it was found that, instead, this research increasingly supported claims made by feminists (Carrigan et al., 1985). Thus, it became clear that biologically-driven differences between men and women were fewer than traditionally believed (Connell 1987). For example, the finding that one's biological sex only accounts for 5% of the variance in social behaviour between men and women (Lott, 1990 as cited in Shefer, 2004) and biological sex research has debunked the cultural notion of gender binaries (Ainsworth, 2015). Instead, observable differences between men and women

(gender) must in large part be due to social and psychological reasons, resulting in a move away from a biological approach to a sociological approach instead (Carrigan et al., 1985; Shefer, 2004).

### 2.2.2. Sex role theory and script theories as a response to biological determinism

From the 1940's onwards, sex role theory was developed in order to address and explain the visible *social* (rather than biological) structural differences between men and women. Sex role theory moved beyond theories of sex differences and other research underpinned by assumptions of biological reductionism, as it differentiated between individuals and the social positions they occupy.

These social positions were seen to be the result of different category memberships, and any one individual was said to be defined by multiple categories (Baron, Branscombe & Byrne, 2012). For example, personally, I could be defined by multiple categories such as wife, mother, daughter, student, and academic. Each of these categories have differing role expectations, and the way I dress, talk and behave would shift from context to context. Thus, these social positions are argued to be accompanied by a set of distinctive behaviours (or roles) which are enforced through normative sanctions (Connell, 1987). These roles were theorized as being acquired through a process of internalisation, to the point where one's role is experienced as being an integral part of one's psyche (cf. Parsons 1953 as cited in Carrigan et al., 1985).

Sex role theory is closely related to cognitive script theory. As this is cited in some of the literature about romance, I will explain it briefly here. Where sex role theory argues that a category membership will shape/dictate a specific normative gendered role, script theory suggests that commonly occurring social situations will generate cognitive scripts which provide guidance in how we should act, how the behaviour of others should be interpreted, what different signs and objects in that context mean, and so forth (Nelson, 1986 as cited in Edwards, 1997). These scripts therefore form mental frameworks, which enable us to engage in routine situations in a way which makes sense and carries meaning (Nelson, 1981; and Schank & Abelson, 1977 as cited in Edwards, 1997). Cognitive script

theory proposes that we internalise these cognitive scripts which enable us to navigate specific social situations according to expected patterns of behaviour or experience (Nelson, 1981; Nelson, 1986; and Schanka & Abelson, 1977 as cited in Edwards, 1997). Cultural script theory moves one step further from cognitive script theory, in that instead of locating these structures in the mind, they are located in cultural sources of information that guide us in appropriate ways to act and to understand the actions of others. Rose and Frieze (1993, p. 501) define cultural scripts as “collectively developed scenarios that serve to instruct in the requirements of specific roles”.

According to these theories, gender identity is deterministically shaped by the acquisition of a specific script which enables us to take on a particular sex role, as determined by our biological sex. For example, as a heterosexual married woman, one of my roles is that of ‘wife’. As will be discussed further in Chapter 6, the woman partner in a heterosexual living arrangement (whether intimate partners or not, see Natalier, 2004), still takes responsibility for much of the housework as well as the emotional housekeeping in their relationships (Barker, 2012; Eldén, 2011; Delassandro & Wilkins, 2016; Giddens, 1992; Holford, 2012; Schäfer, 2008; Vincent & Chiwandire, 2013; Vincent & McEwan, 2006).

According to script theory, the explanation for this would be that the man and woman have internalised a script as children (based on observations of their own parents) that prescribes housework to be ‘woman’s work’. This would then provide guidance in how to navigate the distribution of housework in their adult relationship, and could explain why a wife might feel a husband who ‘helps out’ is something to brag about; or why a wife may feel embarrassed if an unanticipated guest were to see their messy house, while the husband may not experience any similar emotional reaction.

In this way, one can see how sex role and script theory can be drawn from to explain how we internalise and reproduce patterns of behaviour and identity, in a way that moves beyond a biologically-deterministic approach. However, as I will discuss below, this approach is still deterministic.

### 2.2.2.1. The strengths of sex role theory and script theory

Both sex role theory and script theory were popular with second wave feminists, as both theories argued that gender identity is learned, and is based on culturally- and historically-specific messages in one's social context (Frith & Kitinger, 2001). Therefore, these theories were progressive, as they allowed a move beyond a definition of gendered differences as *only* due to biological causes. Now, 'difference' was understood as due to varying individual responses to social expectations occurring through a process of socialisation into one's particular gender role (Connell, 1987).

This shift from biological determinism to a greater recognition of the role of socialisation opened up the possibility of reform: if these roles are considered to be social and learnt, then they can be *changed*. These theories thus underpinned many of the arguments made by American liberal feminists in the 1960's and 70's (Carrigan et al., 1985; Connell, 1987). As a result of these arguments, policy was formulated which targeted institutions responsible for socialising children into particular roles, such as nuclear family units, school environments, and the media (Connell, 1987).

Additionally, as a result of this shift in focus from the biological to the role of socialisation, researchers moved beyond the previous narrow focus on women's roles within nuclear family structures, to areas such as participation in the public arena (Carrigan et al., 1985). As a result of this feminist policy research, many beneficial changes were brought about, including greater participation by women in the political and labour spheres (Kiguwa, 2004).

### 2.2.2.2. Limitations of sex role theory and script theory

However, sex role theory and script theory have their limitations. Even as sex role theory was growing in popularity in the 1970's, it was being critiqued for the intangibility of the concept of 'roles', and more problematically, for the way in which it implicitly treats female and male sex roles as if they are equal and "equally oppressive" (Connell, 1987, p. 51). For example, the literature on male sex roles at this time positioned men as being 'captive' to the sex male role (Carrigan et al., 1985). This led to the rise of the

men's liberation movement in the 1970's, which was concerned with asserting men's rights, tracking discrimination against men, and raising consciousness in men of the need to move beyond the limitations of the roles ascribed to them (Carrigan et al., 1985).

But there were also substantial problems with sex role theory from a feminist perspective. First, sex role theory can be critiqued as masking underlying issues of power, failing to "confront patriarchy", failing to recognise differences produced by race and class, and implying a certain degree of anti-feminism (Carrigan et al., 1985, p. 574).

Additionally, surviving within sex role theory were the remaining vestiges of biological determinism, also referred to as essentialism (Connell, 1987; Shefer, 2004). Connell suggests that underlying this concept of the 'sex role' is the image of "an invariant biological base" (1987, p. 50). This image 'acts' on several levels. Firstly, it positions male and female sex roles as being "unitary" (Shefer, 2004, p. 190; cf. Connell, 1987), that is, as containing a set pattern of traits which will be similar within one gender but different across genders. Thus, masculine traits were conceptually linked (and limited) to men's bodies and feminine traits to women's bodies.

Secondly, these roles were constructed as "static" and "stable" over time, which curtails the extent of possible change we can aspire to, as it is insinuated that once these roles are learnt, they are difficult to unlearn (Shefer, 2004, p. 190; see also Connell, 1987). Finally, it implies that the 'normative' role is the one which is the most *commonly occurring*, and represents those who struggle with or resist normative prescriptions as rare and/or deviant (Connell, 1987).

As such, while sex role theory was oriented to instigating change, change was conceived as something that happened *to* roles, not as something arising within and between roles. For example, Carrigan et al. (1985, p. 581) argue that to claim there is a single male/female sex role is to oversimplify "to an impossible degree". That is, sex role theory could not conceptualise multiple masculinities and femininities, and could therefore not explain the relationship within different patterns of masculinities/femininities, or how one pattern might impact on another, forcing its adaptation or change (Carrigan et al.,

1985; see for example Demetriou's work on hegemonic masculinity's response to challenges from homosexual masculinity, 2004).

Thus, by continuing to focus on *differences* between men and women, sex role theory failed to conceptualise the *relationships* between men and women (Carrigan et al., 1985). It has therefore been argued that sex role theory has limited value for theorising or invoking significant or long-term social change. In sum, sex role theory sought to understand social differences between men and women but did not move sufficiently beyond essentialized differences, simply locating them in culture rather than biology.

Script theories have also been critiqued. Edwards (1997) argued that cognitive script theory is problematic because its notion of cognitive 'scripts' is a reification of resources which he argued should be seen as discursive, adaptive and reactive. Edwards (1997) suggested that conceptualising these scripts as "knowledge structures" (p. 165) or as "a program for generating the activity itself" (p. 166), limits how we can investigate the ways in which people engage with and creatively draw from these resources in the active construction of their lives. Cultural script theories can be critiqued for similar reasons to the critique of role theory above, as its basis rests in the conceptualisation of roles informed by culture, and thus is also limited.

### 2.2.3. Hegemonic gender theory as a response to sex role theory

In 1987, Connell's *Gender and Power* challenged the notion that one's biological heritage informed and limited the social relationships between genders and in particular, challenged the idea of undifferentiated gendered roles (Connell, 2002). One of the critiques mentioned in Section 2.2.2.2 is that sex role theory failed to adequately conceptualise multiple masculinities and femininities and the hierarchical positions they inhabit. It was ill-equipped, conceptually, to explain how intersecting identities might impact on the kinds of masculinities/femininities one could inhabit and reproduce, as well as the relative power these could bring, based on their position in a hierarchy. For example, sex role theory would not have been able to account for the differences in power that a white, heterosexual, able-bodied, middle class cis man might have in comparison to a

homosexual, disabled, impoverished Trans man of colour. Instead, sex role theory minimised differences between men, and maximised the difference between masculinity and femininity, thus tying masculinity to men's bodies and femininity to women's bodies.

In reaction to these theoretical shortfalls, Connell and colleagues used the concept of hegemony to explain the existence and hierarchical structuring of multiple masculinities and femininities (Carrigan et al., 1985; Connell, 1987, 1995, 2000). That is, they proposed that multiple forms of masculinity and femininity exist; however, these are not positioned as equal within the gender order, but are instead arranged hierarchically giving people different levels of access to specific gender identities and different gender identities different levels of power and prestige in the material and social order (Carrigan et al., 1985; Connell, 1987, 1995, 2000). Context is a key aspect of this theory, which will be explored more in Section 2.3.2 below.

The term 'hegemony' was drawn from the work of Marxists such as Antonio Gramsci, who popularised it in his analysis of Italian class relations (Anderson, 1976; Connell, 1987). Gramsci argued that the power and privilege of one group at the expense of other(s), is not (primarily) maintained through violence (Connell, 1987; Gramsci, 1971). Rather, it is embedded, maintained and condoned in the way society is organized at every level, from the micro- to the macro-level (Connell, 1987; Gramsci, 1971). This system is maintained through beliefs, practices, laws, norms, stereotypes and so forth, affecting the way that both "private life and cultural processes" are structured and organized (Connell, 1987, p. 184). It is a system in which power is defended from within, rather than imposed from above. As a result the gender system is simultaneously *powerful* and *difficult to challenge* because of the distributed nature of that power. Hegemony can thus be defined as the social, normative force that shores up and maintains structural inequalities and the hierarchies between different gendered identities (Connell, 1987; Gramsci, 1971; Jackman, 1994).

Based on this explanation of hegemony, Connell (1987) argues that the privilege of one group at the expense of others does not indicate a process of eliminating competing identities, values or objectives. Rather, she argues that this occurs through a

process of subordination – of tying competing identities into a system which is just beneficial enough in order to motivate maintaining a state of homeostasis (Connell, 1987). As has been suggested by literature on system justifications theory, this can lead to the endorsement and maintenance of unjust systems, even by those who do not benefit from it (Durrheim et al., 2014; Glick et al., 2000; Quayle et al., 2017).

This explanation allows the addressal of a further critique of sex role theory, which is that it minimised how much agency individuals are seen as having. Script theory was limited in its ability to account for the ways people can actively and creatively endorse, resist or collude with ideas about what it means to be a ‘man’ or a ‘woman’. Connell argued that gender identity is not fixed, but rather “actively produced, using the resources and strategies available in a given social setting” (Connell, 2000, p. 12; cf. West & Zimmerman, 1987; 2009). Thus, gender can be said to “transcend” one’s biologically-sexed body (Carrigan et al., 1985, p. 595). However, one’s sexed body is an inescapable aspect of one’s gendered identity: it acts to prescribe and curtail the kinds of gendered identities available to us, and it acts as a site for the performance of gender (Connell, 2000). In other words, Connell and colleagues argue that while the body acts as an anchor for gender, it is not the sole and total source of one’s gender identity. In this way, Connell aimed to de-link masculinity from men’s bodies and femininity from women’s bodies, in order to move beyond the biological determinism and unitary approach that sex role theory was critiqued for. Thus, using the explanation of hegemony, masculinity theory accounts both for daily contestations between forms of masculinities/femininities, as well as for changes in the forms of these masculinities/femininities over time (Carrigan et al., 1985; Connell, 1987). Resistance and agency will be discussed in more detail in Section 2.3.3 below.

Furthermore, this explanation of hegemony as a normative, cultural force assists in moving beyond another problem with sex role theory, which implied that the ‘normative’ role is the one which is the most *commonly occurring*, and characterised those who struggled to fully enact gender roles (or resisted) as rare or deviant (Connell, 1987). However, hegemonic gender theory recognizes that the hegemonic ideal is difficult to



achieve and does not need to occur statistically frequently to have power over, and maintain the structure of, a patriarchal society.

The most powerful gender identity – only available to men – was described as hegemonic masculinity. It represents that version of masculinity most culturally and contextually valued in that time and place, which, while it may not be the most statistically common version of masculinity, represents a normative ideal to which men orient to in the construction and performance of their masculinities (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Thus, as Connell (1987, p. 185) argues, “hegemonic masculinity is not necessarily what powerful men *are*, but what *sustains their power* and what large numbers of men are motivated to support” (emphasis added). Embedded within hegemonic masculinity is its dominance over other forms of masculinities and all femininities (Connell, 1987; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

Conceptualized initially as the counterpart to hegemonic masculinity, *emphasised femininity* represents the patterns of femininity which provide compliance with and ideological support for the dominance of masculinities over femininities. Hegemonic masculinity and emphasised femininity will be discussed further in Section 2.3.1.1 below.

An early goal of hegemonic masculinity theory was to make the relationship *between* these gender identities a central goal, as another critique of role theory (as described above) was that it could not conceptualise how the masculine and feminine roles might cooperate to produce a stable gender order. This was addressed by introducing hegemonic masculinity and emphasised femininity *together* (see Connell, 1987), along with multiple other forms of masculinities and femininities. These alternative versions were proposed to vary according to intersectionalities (such as gay masculinity or black masculinity), and/or according to levels of acceptance, complicitness or resistance to the more hegemonic forms of identity as well as the gender order overall (Connell, 1987). However, as will be critiqued below in Section 2.3.1, as these concepts were taken up by the broader field, these forms of masculinities and femininities were no longer studied *together*. This will be discussed further in Section 2.3.1.

### 2.2.3.1. Impact

Connell's theory of multiple masculinities and hegemonic masculinity has helped researchers to understand how gender is *performed* rather than as rooted solely in one's biological sex. It has concretised issues theorists had with sex role theory and offered viable alternatives. It has been used to understand masculinity in a variety of different contexts (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

Hegemonic masculinity has also been applied to different cultural settings as well. A few examples of these contexts appear in Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), and include: Mexico (Gutmann, 1996); Chile (Valdés & Olavarría, 1998); Japan (Ishii-Kuntz, 2003); Switzerland, Australia, England, and United States (Newborn & Stanko, 1994); and South Africa (Boonzaier & de la Rey, 2004; Gibbs & Jobson, 2011; Hearn & Morrell, 2012; Jewkes & Morrell, 2012; Martin & Govender, 2013; Mkhize & Njawala, 2016; Mooney, 1998; Morrell, 1998; 2001a; 2001b; 2003; Morrell et al., 2012; Morrell, Jewkes, Lindegger, & Hamlall, 2013; Ratele, Shefer, Strebel, & Fouten, 2010; Talbot, & Quayle, 2010), to name a few.

Given its extensive international and cross-cultural application, hegemonic masculinity appears to have been a widely useful analytical tool. It provided a rallying point for the burgeoning academic field of masculinity studies, which was supported by the introduction of journals and conferences specific to masculinity research (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). In the light of this wide and varied application, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) conclude that hegemonic masculinity and the concept of multiple masculinities have provided a fruitful alternative framework to sex-role theory and others of its ilk. This theory has therefore been extremely useful in uncovering the "mechanisms of hegemony" which privilege some men over others, and all men over women (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 834). However, as a field, and particularly in the way some of its concepts have been applied, it has faced critique over the years, and this shall be discussed across the sections that follow.

## 2.3. Problematizing masculinity theory, and proposed alternatives

This section will outline three specific aspects of masculinity theory which are central to the present study: hegemonic masculinity and emphasised femininity; the role of context; and issues of power, agency and resistance. Aspects of masculinity theory will be explored to see how these concepts are framed by the orthodox approach. Then these will be critiqued, and a proposed alternative theoretical framework will be described in response to these critiques, to assist in addressing the identified limitations.

### 2.3.1. Solo- or co-productions: Approaches to studying masculinity and femininity

#### 2.3.1.1. Masculinity theory: Hegemonic masculinity and emphasised femininity

As described briefly in Section 2.2.3, in masculinity theory the most highly valued form of masculinity is referred to as hegemonic masculinity (Carrigan et al, 1985; Connell, 2000; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). While not necessarily the most commonly occurring, hegemonic masculinity is the embodiment of “the currently most honoured way of being a man” (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 832). It forms the basis for a normative array of social practices which can be drawn on to justify and maintain the continued dominance of men over women. Connell (2000, p. 84) argued that through the exaltation of one particular form of masculinity, exemplified by certain men “who are celebrated as heroes”, the local (and thus global) subordination<sup>7</sup> of women is ideologically legitimated and maintained through a “pattern of practices” (as opposed to a defined role or identity; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 832). Hegemonic masculinity is therefore said to be structured around the justification of the subordination of women, as well as of alternative forms of masculinities.

Regarding multiple masculinities, Connell (2000) argued that the relationship between these different forms of masculinities is structured by power and their relative prestige and social standing in relation to each other and to hegemonic masculinity. In other words, each has differing amounts of social capital; and one’s corporal identity, sexuality,

---

<sup>7</sup> Local and global orders will be explored in the section on context, in Section 2.3.2.

racial identity, economic background and so forth, mediates the kinds of masculinities one may be able to authentically produce. All of these factors impact on the way different forms of masculinity are accessed and performed.

In terms of defining key features of hegemonic masculinity, Connell deliberately refrained from providing a concrete description (Connell, 1987; Connell, 2005; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). While this has led to some conceptual confusion in its uptake and deployment across the literature (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), it has been argued that by introducing it as an abstract concept, whose specific descriptive content may differ according to its cultural, historical, political context, it did not become “reified or essentialist” (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 386). Instead, it has been said to have served as a theoretical tool for understanding male dominance in many different contexts and applications (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). However, this same approach does not seem to have held true for emphasised femininity, as shall be seen in the argument that follows.

As noted above, emphasised femininity was introduced with hegemonic masculinity, as its counter-part (Connell, 1987). However, as a concept, emphasised femininity, and the relationship between hegemonic masculinity and emphasised femininity, has not been well addressed. There are inconsistencies and areas that still lack empirical evidence, which will be discussed in Sections 2.3.1.3 – 2.3.1.5. First, however, I will explore what has been stated about emphasised femininity. In order to critique it, I will be quoting extensively from the original sources in order to problematize them in the sections that follow.

In her early description of hegemonic masculinity, Connell (1987) introduced ‘emphasised femininity’ as the form of femininity which would be co-produced together with hegemonic masculinity. Emphasised femininity was described as being compliant with and complicit in the subordination of women and as one which “oriented to accommodating the interests and desires of men” (Connell, 1987, p. 183). It is thus a form of femininity which is optimized for maximizing benefits under the regime of hegemonic masculinity by allowing some women to be ‘first-runners-up’: never to have the same

power as men, but to have a particular type of power within a gender order in which men are dominant. Connell (1987, p. 184) suggested that other forms of femininity may be organised around resisting this subordination, or as a blend of “compliance, resistance and co-operation”.

Connell (1987) argued that femininity cannot be referred to as ‘hegemonic’ for the following reasons: (1) “all forms of femininity... are constructed in the context of the overall subordination of women to men” (p. 186-7), and there is therefore “limited scope for women to construct institutionalised power relationships over other women” (p. 187)<sup>8</sup>; (2) There is less violence between women compared to between men (p. 187); (3) “power, authority, aggression, [and] technology are not thematised in femininity at large as they are in masculinity” (p. 187); and finally, (4) there is the absence of “pressure” to “negate or subordinate” alternative forms of femininity, as hegemonic masculinity faces with alternative masculinities (p. 187). This definition has been quoted from extensively as it will be critiqued in the sections that follow.

In terms of describing the content of emphasised femininity and hegemonic masculinity, some disparities seem evident. As suggested above, hegemonic masculinity was deliberately not described in terms of traits in its introduction. For example, Connell (1987, p. 186) described it only as “heterosexual”. However, Connell did describe the content of emphasised femininity in much more detail, which included:

the display of sociability rather than technical competence, fragility in mating scenes, compliance with men’s desire for titillation and ego-stroking in office relationships, acceptance of marriage and childcare as a response to labour-market discrimination against women... sexual receptivity in relation to younger women and motherhood in relation to older women (Connell, 1987, p. 187).

This description provides a lot more clarity about what emphasised femininity might entail, compared to the more abstract definition of hegemonic masculinity. However, considering they were originally proposed together, it is unclear why emphasised

---

<sup>8</sup> In instances where feminized domination occurs, Connell argues that it occurs not between femininities but between individual women, and that “the note of domination that is so important in relations between kinds of masculinity is muted” (p. 187).

femininity should be more clearly defined than hegemonic masculinity. One might ask if it is important for hegemonic masculinity to remain ephemeral conceptually, why should its theoretical counterpart be different?

An added complexity is that Connell (1987) seemed to suggest that one reason why emphasised femininity cannot be seen as hegemonic is because it is rather nebulous in nature – that is, being difficult to define or as having a “bewildering array of traits” (Klein as cited in Connell, 1987, p. 183). Similarly, Leahy (1994, p. 69) suggested that emphasised femininity is constituted by numerous discourses which may overlap with “contradictory implications in specific actual situations”, and which need to be negotiated by women in everyday life.

Evidence for this “bewildering array” can be found in the diverse ways emphasised femininity has been defined in the literature. For example, further characteristics that have been identified with emphasised femininity include: being “emotional, passive, dependent, maternal, compassionate, and gentle” (Krane, 2001, p. 117); concern over being “responsive to male needs and the male ego” (Shefer & Foster, 2001, p. 379); being more concerned with forming emotional connectivity with a (male) partner than in sexual intercourse (Shefer & Foster, 2001); being “physically vulnerable and compliant” (Schippers, 2007, p. 90); being invested in “submissiveness, passivity, and nurturance” (Boonzaier & de La Rey, 2003, p. 1020); and providing “love, care and tenderness to soften ‘male hardness’” (Boonzaier & de La Rey, 2003, p. 1013). Also encapsulated in this understanding were ideals of purity and sexual chasteness; being sexually passive and available to one’s partner on demand; and as having reconciliatory abilities (in this case being held responsible for reconciling with abusive partners; Boonzaier & de La Ray, 2003).

While these examples support the claim of a “contradictory” and “bewildering array” of discourses of emphasized femininity, they still contradict the claim that it is difficult to define emphasised femininity in comparison to hegemonic masculinity. I will turn now to a critique of hegemonic masculinity and emphasised femininity, in particular in the way they have been taken up in the field of gender studies.

### 2.3.1.2. Critique: The masculinity bias in hegemonic gender research

In Section 2.2.3.1 above, which looked at the impact of Connell and colleagues' work, it was argued that the concept of hegemonic masculinity and multiple masculinities and femininities has been a fruitful contribution to the field of gender studies, given the range and extent of its application (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). In 2005, Connell and Messerschmidt found over 200 articles using the term 'hegemonic masculinity' in their title or abstract. In 2014, a similar search on Google Scholar returned over 460 articles using the term in the title alone, and over 20,000 articles using it within the body of their text. This was found to have increased to 760 articles and 36,000 articles respectively by 2017. This suggests that the concept and application of hegemonic masculinity is still gaining popularity, 30 years after the publication of *Gender and Power* (Connell, 1987).

As stated above (Section 2.2.3.1), in South Africa in particular, hegemonic masculinity and the concept of multiple masculinities have been enthusiastically utilised by local scholars as a means of exploring and critiquing local forms of masculinity, patriarchy and gendered inequality (see, for example, Bhana, 2005; Bhana & Nkani, 2014; Blackbeard, 2011; Gibbs & Jobson, 2011; Hearn & Morrell, 2012; Helman & Ratele, 2016; Hunter, 2005; Jewkes et al., 2015; Lesch & Bremridge, 2006; Lindegger & Quayle, 2009; Mankayi, 2008; Martin & Govender, 2013; Mkhize & Njawala, 2016; Mooney, 1998; Morrell, 1998; Morrell, 2001a; Morrell, 2001b; Morrell, 2003; Morrell et al., 2012; Morrell et al., 2013; Msibi, 2012; Ngabaza et al., 2013; Quayle et al., 2017; Ratele, 2006; Ratele et al., 2010; Reardon & Govender, 2011; Schepers & Zway, 2012; Shefer, Kruger & Schepers, 2015; Talbot & Quayle, 2010; Vincent & Chiwandire, 2013; Vincent & McEwan, 2006).

These concepts have been particularly useful in the South African context, with its rich and diverse ethnic and cultural context and history of racial, ethnic, class and gendered divisions. South Africa has been described as one of the most violent and patriarchal countries in the world (Morrell, 2001a; Shefer, 2004; Vincent & Chiwandire, 2013). Furthermore, South Africa is a melting pot of different cultures and ethnicities, which, with our particular background of legalised and systematic oppression of certain

groups at the expense of others, makes a field such as masculinity studies and hegemonic masculinity a valuable tool in understanding relationships between different forms of masculinity.

Compared to the Google Scholar search of hegemonic masculinity, emphasised (or emphasized, sic) femininity could be found 15 times in the title of published articles, and 2576 times cited anywhere in the article, in a search conducted in 2017. Thus, it appears safe to claim that in contrast to hegemonic masculinity, the construct of emphasised femininity appears to be far less researched.

Several South African studies were found that drew from or referenced the concept of emphasised femininities or multiple femininities (Barker, 2012; Bhana, 2005; Boonzaier & de la Ray, 2004; Graham, 2016; Helman & Ratele, 2016; Jewkes & Morrell, 2012; Moore, 2015; Morrell, 2003; Mthatyana & Vincent, 2015; Neophytou, 2012; Reddy & Dunne, 2007; Van Antwerpen & Ferreira, 2010; Vincent & McEwan, 2006); but, in line with the international trends, there appeared to be far fewer sources than those for hegemonic masculinity. Additionally, in a few of these cases, the reference to emphasised femininity was made only in passing (for example, Bhana, 2005 and Morrell, 2003) or else did not reference/draw from the original formulations of the concept, instead using parallel understandings of femininity (for example, Mthatyana & Vincent, 2015; Reddy & Dunne, 2007; Vincent & McEwan, 2006).

Therefore, it appears that despite being a core component of the original framework of hegemonic gender, *emphasised femininity* has not been taken up in the same way that *hegemonic masculinity* has, both locally and internationally. Therefore, the field of hegemonic gender studies can be critiqued for exhibiting a distinct masculinity bias in research applying the framework of hegemonic gender identities.

### 2.3.1.3. Critique: Essentialism in masculinity theory?

The key starting point for this critique is that, as described above (Section 2.3.1.1; cf. Connell, 1987; Connell 2005; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), there was to be



no “recipe” for hegemonic masculinity or emphasized femininity<sup>9</sup>. It was argued that since these are the forms of heteronormative gender considered most admirable in a given context they should be conceptualized as being constantly flexible whilst doing the work of maintaining patriarchy.

However, it has been argued that Connell and colleagues have claimed that subordinated masculinities, such as homosexual masculinity, are often “conflated with femininity” (Schippers, 2007, p. 88). Schippers (2007, p. 88) argues that this conflation is problematic, as it leaves us with “no conceptual apparatus” to distinguish between femininities and subordinate masculinities, “unless we reduce femininity to the practices of women and masculinity to those of men”. This is problematic because it is essentialist; and can leave theorists without an apparatus for conceptualising how these alternative masculinities and femininities may operate in cahoots or in resistance to hegemonic masculinity; or how one may perform gender identities more traditionally aligned with the opposite sex (Schippers, 2007; see also Paechter, 2012 and Halberstein,1998).

This issue is central in this study, and will be investigated in the Results and Discussion section by examining the ways that partners gendered themselves and their partners within a particular context.

#### 2.3.1.4. Critique: Leaving the collaborative effect by the way-side

As suggested above, Connell’s original conceptualisation of hegemonic masculinity and emphasised femininity was that these worked together to produce and defend the overall gender order, which privileges men at the expense of women (Connell, 1987). However, despite this original formulation, this concept of collaborative co-production has not been explored in much detail in comparison to the field as a whole as, typically, masculinities and femininities have been explored in isolation to each other. Additionally, as argued above, femininities have been less researched and less conceptually well-formulated than masculinities, both in Connell’s work and in the field as a whole.

---

<sup>9</sup> the latter being a more dubious claim, given the specificity of the description provided in Connell (1987)

It has been suggested by several authors that women's voices are often downplayed or excluded from studies of the construction of masculinity (Hearn, 2004; Quayle et al., 2017; Talbot & Quayle, 2010; Whorley & Addis 2006; Wong, Steinfeldt, Speight, & Hickman 2010). Connell and Messerschmidt (2005, p. 848) suggested that focusing only on men's constructions of masculinities "occludes" women's role in practices which produce masculinities, and they argue that women's construction of masculinities as well as a study of the interaction between masculinities and femininities is vital. A similar argument has been made by Talbot and Quayle (2010) and Quayle et al. (2017), who suggested that forms of masculinities only have 'social currency' (cf. Durrheim, Quayle, Whitehead & Kriel, 2005) when, at minimum, women are invested in their reproduction. It has thus been suggested that women play vital roles in validating, reproducing and perpetuating discourses of viable and preferable masculinities (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Quayle et al., 2017; Talbot & Quayle, 2010). Talbot and Quayle (2010, p. 256) suggested that it is "therefore important for critical masculinity studies to analyse the voices of women because they actively and passively coproduce, normalize, and even fetishize masculinities". Thus, it has been argued that it is vital to include an analysis of how women impact and shape masculinity, in our investigation of gender hegemony (Schippers, 2007). This has been done in some cases (for example, Allen, 2007; Quayle et al., 2017; Talbot & Quayle, 2010), but more research is needed to show how men and women collaborate to produce and resist ideals of masculinity.

Furthermore, Francis et al. (2016) argued that the cultural content of femininity is under-researched, even in feminist research. The cumulative effect of this is the (re)exclusion of women and the positioning of women "as passive consumers or recipients of masculinity rather than active agents in its construction" (Talbot & Quayle, 2010, p. 256). Consequently, Schippers (2007, p. 86) argued that studies of femininities have been othered or "displaced" by work on masculinity, which could suggest a further form of oppression of women and as symptomatic of our patriarchal society's favouring and bolstering anything masculine.

It has been argued above that hegemonic masculinity is a useful concept and which, as Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) suggest, provides the hope of exploring more equivalent ways of being a man. However, if one were to be extremely cynical, one might question what the cumulative impact this focus on hegemonic masculinity in the broader literature, to the exclusion of women, has had in the thirty years since the publication of *Gender and Power* (Connell, 1987). One might argue that the field itself appears to have become representative of the broader patterns in our societies of side-lining women and prioritising men by focusing on productions of masculinities and the experiences of men. Therefore, greater priority must be given to the inclusion of women's voices in the production of masculinities (cf. Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Quayle et al., 2017; Talbot & Quayle, 2010). We also need more study given to men and women's productions of *femininities*, in order to understand how these may collaboratively produce gender hegemony (Schippers, 2007).

However, it could be argued that we should go even further than this. Connell (2000, p. 40) argued that "masculinities do not first exist and then come into contact with femininities; they are produced together, in the process that makes a gender order". Therefore, just the inclusion of women's voices in the study of masculinities is not sufficient. It is vital to go a step further and to study masculinities and femininities *together* in order to more accurately try to understand the complexities of the gender order (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Schippers, 2007). Occasionally, research has considered how these gender identities are produced in talk by the opposite gender (e.g. Allen, 2007; Quayle et al., 2017; Talbot & Quayle, 2010), but the overwhelming trend in the field seems to be to isolate and study patterns of masculinity/ femininity independently. As with critiques of experimental psychology in the 1950s and 60s, where experimental psychologists were critiqued for trying to study human behaviour divorced of its social context (cf. Danziger, 1990; Fillenbaum, 1966; Orne, 1962; Riecken, 1962; Rosenzweig, 1933), this tendency in the field of gender studies divorces gender identities from the contexts in which they operate, and therefore could well be failing to grasp fundamental elements of these gender identities which could help explain why they are so pernicious and tenacious. It is likely that

in everyday contexts ‘being a man’ is shaped both by men and women, *in relation to* how men and women shape ‘being a women’ within the same context, and both constructions are mediated by the broader discourses, norms and alternative forms of masculinities/ femininities that operate in that particular socio-cultural-historical context.

What is needed, therefore, are empirical studies that consider the joint and collaborative productions of masculinity and femininity within particular contexts, in order to try understand how we (re)create and sustain gender hegemony (Schippers, 2007) as a whole.

#### 2.3.1.5. Proposed theoretical framework: Inclusion of women and co-constructions of gender identities

As I demonstrated in the previous section, it has been argued that gender is “relational”, and that in ‘real life’, masculinities and femininities are produced together and defined in counterpoint to each other (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 848; Connell 1987, 2000). However, as discussed above, empirical research on hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity has largely focused on how men and women respectively define and perform these in isolation (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Talbot & Quayle, 2010). This critique has been central to the design of my study. I will now turn to one of the key theorists whose argument has shaped the direction of my analysis.

Schippers (2007) argued that a comprehensive theory of gender hegemony needs to explain gender identities in a way that (1) does not reduce our understanding of masculinities as something men do/are and femininities as something women do/are; (2) allows for masculinity and femininity to be defined in a way which contributes to our understanding of gender hegemony while *making allowance* for an understanding of multiple gender identities; and (3) allows us to understand empirically how men’s domination over women operates in local and global arenas, as well as how race, class, ethnicity and sexuality intersects with gender to produce inequality between different forms of masculinities and femininities. In a rework of Connell’s original formulation, Schippers (2007) argues that it is vital not to lose Connell’s conceptualisation of hegemonic

masculinity, but that femininity needs to be reclaimed as a vital part of our understanding of gender hegemony.

#### 2.3.1.5.1. The importance of complementary binaries

Schippers (2007) argued that *the relationship or binary* between masculinities and femininities should be made central in the development of theories of gender, rather than emphasising one particular form of masculinity/femininity to the exclusion of the other.

Schippers argued that one should focus on the socially constructed quality content of 'man' and 'woman' as, she suggested, this is where we can locate the origin of hegemony. Citing Judith Butler, Schippers (2007, p. 90) argued that in Westernized societies, the relationship between masculinity and femininity is "naturalised" as being both "complementary and hierarchical", and that this hierarchical binary is rooted in the construction and normative power of heterosexual desire, which fuses "masculinity and femininity together as complementary opposites" (Schippers, 2007, p. 90).

Schippers argues the construction of complementary heterosexual desire forms the keystone in our understanding of masculinity and femininity, to the extent that sexual desire for the feminine is masculinised, and vice versa. However, Schippers argued that neither heterosexual desire nor this relationship of complementary, hierarchical difference on their own amount to hegemony. Schippers defined a contributing force of hegemony as being one that (1) "serve(s) the interests" of those at the apex (2007, p. 90); (2) provides legitimacy of the dominant group; and (3) provides the normative power to entice men and women to acquiesce to this system of domination. She argued that when a complementary and hierarchical relationship between masculinity and femininity is *naturalized*, it acquires hegemonic power.

An integral part of the naturalising, legitimating power of this "hegemonic scaffolding" is the symbolic pairing of masculinised and feminised characteristics (Schippers, 2007, p. 91). In other words, a masculinised characteristic will only gain legitimizing force if it is accompanied by an 'opposite but complementary' (and inferior?) feminized

characteristic. For example, Schippers describes hegemonic masculinity (in most Westernised cultures) as being symbolised by “physical strength, the ability to use interpersonal violence in the face of conflict, and authority”; while in contrast, femininity is symbolised by “physical vulnerability, an inability to use violence effectively, and compliance” (2007, p. 91). For example, the discourse that states that women are fragile and need men’s protection from the aggressive male ‘other’ illustrates how this symbolic pairing of gendered characteristics may reinforce the gender hierarchy in a way which simultaneously provides legitimation and normative power.

Using this concept of ‘opposite but complementary’, Schippers (2007) thus defined hegemonic masculinity as “the *qualities defined as manly that establish and legitimate a hierarchical and complementary relationship to femininity* and that, by doing so, guarantee the dominant position of men and the subordination of women” (p. 94; emphasis in original to indicate divergences from Connell’s original formulation). Schippers added that this definition opens up the “conceptual space” in which to define hegemonic femininity as “the *characteristics defined as womanly that establish and legitimate a hierarchical and complementary relationship to hegemonic masculinity and that, by doing so, guarantee the dominant position of men and the subordination of women*” (2007, p. 94, emphasis in original).

These definitions enable us to explore how gender relations could be naturalised as complementary and hierarchical. Additionally, in terms of the critiques listed above, Schippers’ (2007) model: (1) “recover(s) the feminine other” (p. 86); by (2) not over-associating ‘femininity’ and ‘masculinity’ with women and men respectively; and (3) provides a means of analysing how masculinities and femininities are collaboratively produced together. Thus, the three critiques of masculinity theory (Sections 2.3.1.3 – 2.3.1.5) above are addressed by Schippers’ (2007) framework.

Furthermore, in Section 2.3.1.1 I quoted extensively from Connell (1987) to demonstrate her explanation of why emphasised femininity cannot be hegemonic. I will now return to this point. Schippers (2007, p. 94) contended that Connell’s argument that femininity cannot be hegemonic is “only possible if femininity and masculinity are

conceptualized in isolation from each other”, which is a problematic and implausible approach already critiqued in the literature (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Schippers, 2007; Talbot & Quayle, 2010).

Additionally, I question Connell’s claim that (lack of) physical violence between women should define whether there are hegemonic power structures between kinds of women, for the following reasons. Firstly, I would question the primacy given to physical violence in the definition and ask why emotional, psychological and political (but non-physical) violence cannot be just as normative and ‘controlling’ at a societal level as physical violence (cf Paechter, 2012). For example, it was suggested in Dixon, Levine, Reicher and Durrheim (2012) that women police the boundaries of acceptable femininity, which suggests a normative controlling force may be at play amongst femininities as well as in masculinities, but may rely on different tactics to do so. Secondly, I would suggest that any lack of physical violence may speak more to the way women are socialised into certain ‘acceptable behaviours’ for men and women (Friedman & Schustack, 2010), and I would query that it would be problematic to discount socialisation as less relevant to this distinction of hegemonic power than mere evidence of physically violent domination. Assuming this is the case surely is a resort to an essentialist understanding of gender. Thirdly, there is evidence suggesting that physical violence by and between women is increasing (Kassin, Fein & Markus, 2017), which (a) supports my claim that social forces are central to the amount of physical violence at play, and (b) means that Connell’s claim (already 30 years old) needs to be revisited in any case.

#### 2.3.1.5.2. The broad import of contextually-specific binaries

Schippers’ approach helps us to resolve these questions, as it places the *relationship* between masculinities and femininities at the centre of gender analysis, meaning that the versions of masculinity *and* femininity that contribute to the continuation of male privilege can thus be seen as hegemonic, when gender hegemony (the overall societal dominance of men over women) is (re)produced.

As with Connell's argument that hegemonic masculinity reflects the most *privileged* form of masculinity, not necessarily the one that is the most *common*, Schippers (2007, p. 91) also asserted that this symbolic pairing of opposite and complimentary characteristics forms the "rationale for social practice more generally" and is not necessarily the most common mode of interaction between men and women. It is suggested that the specific gendered characteristics of these pairings of opposites may well differ depending on culture and context, but that this relationship between masculinity and femininity remains similar wherever gender hegemony exists.

Schippers (2007) argued that in seeking to understand and dismantle gender hegemony, one should acknowledge and analyse the complementary features of a relationship between masculinities and femininities as well as the way in which these have been naturalised and rendered as 'inevitably' hierarchical. Only then, Schippers suggests, can the "hegemonic scaffolding" of gender hegemony be rendered observable in a way which will enable us to work towards its disruption/dismantlement (2007, p. 91).

However, this argument has been critiqued for promoting binarism and occluding the performance of alternative gender identities (see Messerschmidt, 2015). This is an important critique, as any project claiming to have a feminist objective needs to repudiate the binarism of heteronormativity, and be inclusive of a spectrum of possible ways of performing gender.

This said, in the context of my particular study (as argued in Section 1.1.1), the focus is on heterosexual romantic contexts. As argued above (Section 1.1.3.3), romance could be positioned as an example of a context which, although not empirically common, has symbolical importance out of proportion to its frequency— firstly, as a site where one might expect definitional characteristics to be more commonly enacted than usual; secondly, where the simultaneous co-production of complementary gender identities are likely to be extremely relevant; and thirdly, where there may be old-fashioned (i.e. problematic for feminism) values and norms which might influence the kinds of practices and identities we endorse and engage in. Therefore, while Schippers (2007) needs to be probed further to see its extent of applicability/usefulness to other gender contexts, I would



argue that in the context of my study, it is a useful theoretical framework for understanding heterosexual romantic practices.

### 2.3.2. The power of context

In this section I will explore how the context of gender identity practices and performances have been described by masculinity theory. I will discuss the importance of context in the way that gender identities are accessed and performed; the kinds or levels of context that have been identified; and then discuss the theoretical position of this study, which is to examine a particular context in terms of the kinds of situated affordances and discursive performative scripts it can provide.

#### 2.3.2.1. Masculinity theory: The relevancy of context to gender identities

It has been suggested that together, hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity underpin “heteronormativity” (Messerschmidt, 2012, p. 36). This is defined as a system of

legal, cultural, organizational, and interpersonal practices that derive from and reinforce taken-for-granted assumptions that there are two and only two naturally opposite and complementary sexes (male and female), that gender is a natural manifestation of sex (masculinity and femininity), and that it is natural for the two opposite and complementary sexes to be sexually attracted to each other (heterosexuality) (Messerschmidt, 2012, p. 36).

In other words, these constructions do the ‘work’ of naturalising sexual and gendered identities which are complementary to each other, as encapsulated in the idea that men and women are “‘made for each other’” (Messerschmidt, 2012, p. 37; cf. Bruce, 2012; Schippers, 2007). This constructs heterosexuality as “*the* normal and natural form of sexuality and masculine men and feminine women as *the* normal and natural gender presentation” (Messerschmidt, 2012, p. 37).

However, Messerschmidt (2012) argued that not all heterosexual practices are equal – some carry more power than others. Thus, *the context* is important as it may

well make particular gendered or sexual identities more/less salient and therefore legitimate. According to Messerschmidt, “gender and sexuality are not absolutes and are not always equally significant in every social setting in which individuals participate” (2012, p. 37).

### 2.3.2.2. Masculinity theory: Nesting of local and global structures in the hegemonic gender system

According to Messerschmidt’s (2012) argument, the social setting/ context should be recognized as being extremely pertinent to the analysis of gender practices and identities. But the term ‘context’ is more complex than may first appear. Connell (2000) has suggested that contexts can be classified as falling into one of three categories, namely local, regional and global levels.

The local level is the one in which individuals operate, interacting with other individuals on a face-to-face basis. It has been suggested that within local contexts, different masculinities/ femininities serve as “tactical alternatives” for identity production (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 847), and recognises the individual’s role in actively producing a gender identity using the resources available to them.

The regional level refers to the broader context in which the local level is embedded. For example, one’s national identity and culture (and the gendered norms these contain) impact on the local level and on the kinds of gender identities we can produce (Connell, 2000).

In turn, the national level is impacted on by the global level – what is happening (or has happened, historically) in the world more broadly (Connell, 2000). Connell argues that large-scale, global institutions are *themselves* unequally gendered, and that these “global gender orders” (2000, p. 39) then impact on local gender orders. For example, imperialism, colonialism and capitalism were phases in our global history which were visibly male-dominated and contributed to the shaping of the modern global gender order – one which is dominated by “world systems of power, investment, trade and communication” (Connell, 2005, p. xxii).

Connell (2000, p. 39) argued that a particular configuration of gender norms and practices shape context at every level, from local to global, and refers to this as “gender order”. A “gender order” can be identified at every level of context, and is shaped by its particular historical, political, social, economic (and so forth) background, as well as its inter-relationships between the other levels of context (Connell, 2000). For example, local gender orders interact with each other within this broader global gender order.

This global gender order still privileges men today, albeit in different, locale-specific ways (Connell, 2000). This global order is characterised by ongoing widespread violence against women, “unequal wages, unequal labour-force participation, and a highly unequal structure of ownership, as well as cultural and sexual privileging” of men over women (Connell, 2000, p. 46); and Connell suggested that it therefore is logical to talk about hegemonic masculinity operating on a global scale. While this system privileges certain men over others, depending on their race, class identity and sexual orientation, there is a global “patriarchal dividend” (ibid.) for men arising from this shared global history. The “patriarchal dividend” consists of the direct and indirect benefits that accrue to men simply by virtue of their identified gender; their personal levels of investment, complicity or resistance to patriarchy largely does not impact their access to these benefits (Connell, 2000). Examples of types of patriarchal dividends globally include “unequal wages”, where on average, men earn more than similarly qualified women in the same position (Connell, 2000, p. 46).

As discussed above in Section 2.3.1, the specific features of hegemonic masculinity differ across contexts, depending on the cultural and historical forces shaping that context; and, in recognition of this, Connell and colleagues purposely kept their description of hegemonic masculinity abstract (e.g. Connell, 1987, 2000, 2005; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). It has also been argued that one must be wary of reducing any form of gender identity to sets of traits, as it reduces hegemonic masculinity to a set of fixed characteristics, and the whole point of the model is that it explains how the global gender order is simultaneously rigid and adaptive while all-the-while defending patriarchy (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Quayle, et al., 2017).

It has been clearly argued in the literature that the forms hegemonic masculinity may take differ from culture to culture (Connell, 2000; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). For example, in Australia, one form hegemonic masculinity might take is the embodiment of the 'lifesaver', with the lifestyle and physique that accompanies that career (Connell, 2000). In a multicultural context such as South Africa, one might expect there to be multiple culturally specific versions of hegemonic masculinity operating simultaneously (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Jewkes et al., 2015). In addition, these practices also have a widespread cumulative effect as they are embodied not only on an individual level, but also on a collective level. This cumulative effect impacts at a societal and global level how resources and power are distributed, how desirability and sexuality are constructed and the production of meaning, value, and symbolism (Connell, 2005).

For example, Morrell (2001a; also discussed in Connell 2005) explored the gender order in post-apartheid South Africa, finding that it is particularly influenced by the process of reintegration into the global economy. The global influences interact with a number of local culturally-differentiated rival patriarchies which are in competition for dominance in local contexts characterised by: high levels unemployment and widespread poverty; increasing violence and the HIV/AIDS epidemic. This in turn exists in tension with movements seeking to destabilise patriarchy, such as enforcing the constitutional protection of women's rights and the South African feminist movement as well as movements calling for the re-establishment of African philosophy, in which gender divisions are de-emphasised (Connell, 2005; Morrell, 2001a). All of these different forces interact to produce the local gender order in South Africa, one which is influenced by both the global gender order as well as the diverse local cultural context.

However, even within a single local context, differing micro-conditions can facilitate differing productions of gender identity experiences of the gender order. For example, Carrigan et al. (1985) explore the way the global gender order privileging men's careers may play out differently, depending on the local economic context of a specific household. For example, the authors suggest that in a household where the husband has a well-paid job and the wife is unemployed, the "well-groomed wife is subordinated not by

being under the husband's thumb – he isn't in the house most of the time – but by her task of making sure his home life runs on wheels to support his self-confidence, his career advancement and their collective income" (p. 593). In a different context, however, they suggest that if the husband's job is lowly paid and does not support his sense of self-esteem, then the husband's dominance over his wife might be supported through other means, such as "religion", "ethnic culture", or "force" (p. 593). In both instances, the authors suggest, global orders of patriarchy are being enacted but "the situations in which they do so are very different, their responses are not exactly the same, and their impact on wives and children is likely to vary" (p. 593).

Therefore, Connell argues, there are localized gender orders which may differ from cultural context to cultural context. These create the conditions for the broader construction of a global gender order which legitimates patriarchal domination at a world-wide level (Connell, 2000, p. 46). Therefore, it is vital to consider the *contexts* in which gender is enacted in terms of how gender performances are impacted on by both their local gender order, as well as the global gender order as a whole.

#### 2.3.2.2. Proposed theoretical framework: The particular importance of context

This argument can be refined even further. It has been suggested that even within the same cultural form of hegemonic masculinity, there are variations of acceptable/desirable behaviour *depending on the context* (Quayle et al., 2017; Talbot & Quayle, 2010). For example, a particular action (such as a heterosexual man crouching down to wrap his arms around another man's waist) might be acceptable, necessary, or even *valorised* in one context (such as on the rugby field, in order to form a scrum) but might be seen as highly questionable or as upsetting to the performance of a heterosexual masculinity in another context (such as in a night club). Another example could be that where a hegemonic form of masculinity might generally forbid 'excess' shows of emotions such as crying, it might be acceptable to become emotional in some contexts, such as when one's sports team scores a winning goal, or at the birth of one's child (especially if it is a son).

An example from the literature can be found in the work of Quayle and colleagues. They found that women construct different forms of masculinity as preferable within certain contexts; specifically, that more dominant and active forms of masculinity are preferred in contexts of work, romantic and familial relationships – but *not* in friendships (Quayle et al., 2017; Talbot & Quayle, 2010). Thus, the importance and relevancy of context within *one particular cultural view point* has been noted by some authors (Quayle et al., 2017; Talbot & Quayle, 2010), but a broader recognition of this in the literature is needed.

The study of the construction and performance of gender identity can be made even more fine-grained, however. While Quayle and colleagues demonstrated that the forms of desirable gender practices/performances might differ from context to context, Francis and colleagues (Francis et al., 2016) argue that it is important to emphasise the fluidity and contextuality of gender performances – that is, that the way an individual may perform gender identity may shift within the same context.

This conception of gender performances being fluid – as being constantly ‘up for grabs’ – refers to an approach to gender that Francis (2008; 2010; Francis et al., 2016) has referred to as ‘heteroglossic’, drawn from the work of Mikhail Bakhtin (as cited in Francis, 2008; 2010). Where monoglossic refers to holding viewpoints “which are positioned or imposed as unitary and total”, heteroglossic reflects an approach which acknowledges that an action or utterance occurs within a “specific socio-historic context” and which may have “different readings and meanings” which “jostle” for primacy, resulting in “fluidity, contradiction and resistance” (Francis, 2010, p. 479). Thus, multiple explanations for gender performances can co-exist without necessarily disrupting each other (Francis et al., 2016).

For example, in Francis et al. (2016), participants denied *and* accounted for gender differences and the lack of ‘girly girls’ in areas related to Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. Thus, Francis has argued that adopting a heteroglossic approach means being able to make our analysis more fine-grained, so we can better understand the complexities and shifts in gendered identity performances people make within a context.

Francis also distinguishes between localized, heteroglossic gender performances within micro-contexts and gender discourses at the macro-level, which may contain monoglossic explanations of gender (Francis et al., 2016). Francis suggests that despite heteroglossic performances at the micro-level, where “fluid”, “inconsistent”, contradictory practices which may be read as ‘female’ or ‘male’ depending on the context, these contradictory performances do not automatically upset the status quo at the macro-level (Francis et al., 2016). Instead, monoglossic accounts of gender may contain powerful normative discourses and therefore work to maintain hegemony (Francis et al., 2016). Francis proposes that these may only be upset or reformed through radically disruptive changes to these gendered discourses (Francis et al., 2016), which, she suggests, is why performances on the micro-level may resist hegemonic and normative discourses about gender, but that overall stereotypes about gender are more resistant to change.

Thus, it is vital to consider the importance of the situational context in the analysis of gender performances to see how gender is performed in particular contexts. But it is not that context influences gender productions deterministically, rather that contexts provide *affordances* – situational resources – that facilitate production of identities of particular types; and specific contextual rewards or penalties for producing identities appropriately or inappropriately.

### 2.3.2.3. Proposed theoretical framework: Contextual affordances and discursive performative scripts

It will be argued in this section that a particular situation or context should be viewed as providing a selection of contextual affordances and discursive performative scripts, which serve as resources for the production of gender. This discussion is central to my theoretical framework for the analysis of this study’s data.

### 2.3.2.3.1. Defining contextual affordances

The term 'affordance' was introduced by JJ Gibson (1977, 1979; as cited in Touretzky & Tira-Thompson, 2005) and was defined as the concrete opportunities (or disadvantages) an individual has access to within a particular environment. Norman (1988; as cited in Touretzky & Tira-Thompson, 2005) popularised the term and extended the application of affordances to include the *perceived* application of these opportunities – that is, the range of *possible* ways that a situated opportunity could be utilised/performed. Therefore, it has been suggested that a situational affordance emerges from a particular context, rather than pre-existing as an innate part of this context (Sun & Hart-Davidson, 2014).

Norman demonstrated that the very shape or nature of an object tells us how it should be used – for example, a well-designed door handle will tell us what kind of grasp strategy should be used to open it and whether we should push or pull a door to open it, without any instructions beyond its structure (as cited in Touretzky & Tira-Thompson, 2005). Likewise, a ball can be interacted with in any number of ways – rolled, kicked, thrown, caught and so forth (Touretzky & Tira-Thompson, 2005) but there are some activities that are not well facilitated by balls, like standing on them to reach a high shelf. The specific contextual circumstances will guide us as to which action will be the most appropriate in that time and place. Affordances are “action potentials that emerge in interaction with the physical and social world”, that provides (or affords) “opportunities for participants to act and engage with the environment” (Korhonen, 2014, p. 67). Note that the emphasis here is on facilitated action.

The concept of affordances has been applied to a variety of fields, for example in computer-human interactions and the design of robotics (Sun & Hart-Davidson, 2014; Touretzky & Tira-Thompson, 2005); the design of objects such as cameras (Spolsky, no date, as cited in Touretzky & Tira-Thompson, 2005); cognitive psychology (e.g. Lent, Brown & Hackett, 2000; Reis, 2008); and more recently, in discursive psychology and conversation analysis (e.g. Linell, 2015).



These more social constructionist approaches move beyond the affordances of the *objects* in one's environment to consider the affordances of the social context. This includes the individual's entire "encapsulating environment," such as their social circles (including "family, friendship network, peer group, neighbourhood, workplace, school, religious or community organization"); where they live (and where the interaction takes place); the normative influence of culture and roles; and "social and economic forces" (Moleko, 2012, p. 166).

Here, affordances are (re)conceptualised in a more abstract sense, as the opportunities arising from features of a context which provide resources or building blocks for action and identity performances (cf. Klein, Spears & Reicher, 2007; Reis, 2008). However, material aspects do still play a central role in shaping our access to certain affordances, as well as impacting on whether they are received as successful or not by others (Connell, 2000; Paechter, 2012; Schippers, 2007).

While Reis's approach (2008) was cognitivist (and therefore drew from a different theoretical viewpoint to my study), he stated the following, which is applicable to my theoretical framework: "Situations are social affordances; they represent the 'opportunities for acting, interacting, and being acted upon that others provide' (Zebrowitz & Collins, 1997, p. 217), opportunities that are inherent in every social context" (as cited in Reis, 2008, p. 316). That is, actions (and potential actions) are situational social practices, "through which people respond to, interpret, and influence affordances and constraints in contexts they engage in" (Lund, 2006, p. 182).

Actions carry "tangible consequences for the persons involved" (Reis, 2008, p. 316). For example, if a man paused to allow you to enter a doorway first, you could (a) step through (and be feminized through an acceptance of this chivalric act); (b) hold back, insisting he enter first (thus feminizing him); (c) criticize him for his old-fashioned behaviour; (d) thank him; and so forth. His action in that particular social environment<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> Other features might also be relevant to this interaction, such as where it takes place (and how formal the situation is); his identity; your identity (whether you identify as a man or woman; whether you are older or younger than him); your relationship to this man (Is it your brother or your employer?); and so on – all of these factors might further shape or restrain the opportunities for action you might have.

provides affordances that allow and constrain a set of possible appropriate responses, which once enacted create a contextual chain of meaning through which identity is produced in that moment.

As we all move through multiple social contexts on a daily basis (for example, home, workplace, recreational spaces, etc.), we constantly cross boundaries into the differing discursive spheres which govern these contexts (Lund, 2006). Thus, daily, we “experience the challenges of participating in and making sense of different practices” (Lund, 2006, p. 182); what Lund (2006, p. 182) calls “polycontextuality”, and which Francis (2008; 2010; Francis et al., 2016) would refer to as ‘heteroglossic’, as discussed above.

This approach provides a framework for exploring how context shapes identity through our interactions with it – that is, it both allows a description which includes the agency of individuals, and simultaneously, helps us to understand the contextual restrictions to agency and resistance (developed further in Section 2.3.3 below). This focus on *action* allows us to recover the useful concept of roles and scripts by treating them as affordances – discursive resources for the production and interpretation of contextual action.

#### 2.3.2.3.2. Defining discursive performative scripts

Discourses have been argued to be situated, in that the patterns of interactions within a particular context will occasion particular discourses to become relevant (Potter, 2004). These discourses in turn shape how future discourses will be enacted and what actions might logically follow, while still allowing for flexibility and free choice, within these discursive bounds (Potter, 2004).

Some contexts in particular may be constructed as being ‘script-like’ (cf. Edwards, 1997). For example, Alexander (2010) describes how institutions such as universities may develop discipline-specific discursive performative scripts that govern the learning process, including how information should be passed from teacher to student and how lecturers and students ‘should’ relate and interact with each other. For example, in a medical faculty, the discursive student-teacher relationship script may be typified by a

formal and hierarchical relationship, relative to the hierarchy of the hospital context; whereas in a faculty teaching the arts, a more liberal script positioning the transfer of knowledge and skill as being open to negotiation and debate might be more acceptable. These differences would afford different styles of communication and interaction and different kinds of identities for teachers and students within these contexts.

While romance is a context which has commonly been viewed as ‘scripted’ in the literature, this has mostly been from a cognitive or cultural script perspective and there are limitations to framing romance in this light. For example, as described above in Chapter 2, Section 2.2.2.2, Edwards (1997, p. 164, emphasis added) argued that using a cognitive script model is problematic, in that it seeks “to formalise such common sense resources, and place the scripted, planful nature of actions *prior* to accounts”. Edwards suggested that rather than viewing scripts as “updatable knowledge structures” (as in cognitive scripts; p. 165) or as “a program for generating the activity itself” (applicable to cultural scripts; p. 166), ‘scripts’ can be viewed as providing a “basis for accountability” (p. 166). In other words, where participants describe an event “*as* scripted, *as* instances of some general pattern, or *as* anomalies or exceptions” (Edwards, 1997, p. 144, emphasis in original), these descriptions can be analysed as situated performances with a specific goal or purpose, rather than reflecting prior mental constructs or models.

This goes beyond describing a particular context as a ‘mere’ “basis for accountability”. Rather than seeing romance as a set of ‘scripts’ (whether as a rhetoric of legitimation or as an actual script), I propose that we should view contexts such as romance as a structured set of contextual affordances (cf. Reis, 2008). They are frequently described as being script-like – in that there may be normative or idealised and *hierarchical* versions of romance-actions which may be positioned as preferable, or what one *should* do in the romantic context. Therefore, I argue in the context of romance it is wise to consider not only what contextual affordances may be described by participants, but also the discursive performative scripts (that is, where affordances are positioned *as* script-like), which might suggest a normative inducement to perform these identity affordances in particular ways.

#### 2.3.2.4. A final word on contexts

“Context” exposes affordances and discursive scripts that provide a backdrop for meaningful action (Linell, 2015; Reis, 2008). However ‘context’ is itself a complex idea that is difficult to pin down: it may include “actual talk... the surrounding situation and various more abstract contexts, such as situation definitions and background knowledge of topics” (Linell, 2015, p. 30). For example, in the present study, the location of the date forms part of the context, but this is also shaped by the relationship context of the two people on the date. As will be discussed further in the Methodology chapter, the participants in this study were all in long term, committed relationships (engaged or married). Reis (2008) suggests that these particular kinds of contexts will be characterised by longevity and shared knowledge of each other’s preferences and desired outcomes. Therefore, in the context of a long-term relationship and being-romantic, it is likely that the experience of each partner on a date is largely influenced by the actions of their partner (Reis, 2008).

For example, if there is a discursive performative script that when one goes on a date, one should dress up; then it is possible that if one partner had put a lot of effort into dressing up, but their date wore rumpled and smelly clothing, that the first person’s enjoyment on the date may be hampered. This is referred to as an instance where there is high outcome interdependence meaning that, according to Reis (2008), this kind of relationship context might afford more prosocial behaviour which might ensure both parties enjoy a successful outcome.

Thus, while the affordances of being-romantic may ‘allow’ the possibility of going on a date *without* dressing up, the actions of each partner are interpretable in light of the affordances of the context, and the chains of action produced by interactants in the situation (which may include creative revision of the context, the making-relevant of personal history etc.). Importantly, specific outcomes are more attainable if compatible with the affordances of the situation (and these affordances are partly produced by the interactants themselves). To achieve particular desirable outcomes people need to engineer situations with affordances to facilitate the interpretation of action in the desired ways.

Therefore, “situations promote, enhance or facilitate” certain actions or utterances, or the interpretations thereof (Linell, 2015, p. 33). The context also limits the possible actions/utterances to a range of possible outcomes/options which will make sense within that context (Linell, 2015). This not only guides us in deciding how it would be appropriate for us to act, but also helps to render the actions of others as intelligible and predictable (Linell, 2015). However, just as the context affords us with certain kinds of practices and utterances, it also limits access to certain outcomes positioned as undesirable. As in the example above regarding appearance on a date, while it is *possible* to dress in a slovenly way for a date, the affordances of “the romantic date” facilitate the interpretation of this behaviour as unromantic. Therefore the desire to enact romance within a given set of contextual affordances applies normative constraints to behaviour.

The next section will look more closely at the factors that shape how individuals respond to affordances, including issues of power, agency and resistance.

### 2.3.3. Power, resistance and agency

The previous section looked at affordances and discursive scripts as the *possibilities* for action – that is, as the range of possible actions and identities afforded by a particular context. In this section, I will explore what we can do with these affordances, in terms of using our agency to choose between them or resist them, as well as the broader factors that influence and restrict our choices. First I will discuss masculinity theory’s description of the hegemonic system and the implications for agency and resistance. Then I will discuss critiques and limitations to this concept and will suggest an alternative which draws from the theoretical perspective argued for above.

#### 2.3.3.1. Masculinity theory: The irresistibility of hegemony

Connell and colleagues have argued that a key reason to study gender identities lies in the argument that these are not rooted in biology, therefore they *can* and *do* change over time; and that individuals in local contexts are able to resist the hegemonic gender system (Connell, 1987; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). An important goal of

gender research is therefore to explore under what conditions hegemonic forms of gender identity can be resisted and re-envisioned. However, while it has been argued that the forms that hegemonic masculinity takes can be contested and change over time, local and global patriarchal structures have been found to entrench the privilege associated with hegemonic masculinity. Thus, the patriarchal order as a whole has proved stubbornly resistant to change.

As described above, gender hegemony is a hierarchical system which privileges the forms of masculinity (and to a lesser extent, femininity) which are at the top of this hierarchy (Connell, 1987; Schippers, 2007). This gender order is, by its nature, a system of subjugation. Hegemonic masculinity is a structure for subordination, where those who can enact hegemonic masculinity (or emphasised femininity) successfully can better subordinate those below them in the hierarchy. This links to patriarchal privilege, and also to the notion of the patriarchal dividend (Connell, 1987, 2005; Jewkes et al., 2015; Lindegger & Quayle, 2009; Martin & Govender, 2013; Morrell, 2003; Schippers, 2007), where even men who are not particularly good at hegemonic masculinity reap a dividend because of the patriarchy embedded in the gender order.

Just as there are substantial benefits up for grabs, there are also substantial risks (physical; economic; cultural) to rejecting the hegemonic gender order. These serve as enticements for participation in the hegemonic gender order and may help to explain why the broader system is resistant to change. It has been suggested that we have a (limited) choice in how (if at all) we take up the gender positions available to us, or whether we choose to resist them (Connell, 1987; Jewkes et al., 2015). We are constrained by a number of things: the limitations of our own bodies (e.g. Connell, 2000; Martin & Govender, 2013); our socio-economic-political context (e.g. Blackbeard, 2011); the culturally acceptable variations of gender positions available to us; and the consequences, repercussions or “social costs” for these choices (e.g. Mthatyana & Vincent, 2015, p. 52). Some authors have focused on this aspect of choice as the ‘leverage point’ for intervention, by making individuals aware of their choices and providing alternatives such as in the Macho Project in Sweden (cf. Jewkes et al., 2015).

However, it has also been argued that resistance can be limited by the normative pressure of these hegemonic gender identities and the way that power is exerted to punish individual norm-breakers or exclude them from benefits (Demetriou, 2001; Kadir & Tidy, 2011; Kandiyoti, 1988; Schippers, 2007). Sometimes individual resistance is achieved not by direct resistance, but by linking-in to and capitalizing on features of the hegemony that created the subjugation in the first place. For example, Edley and Wetherell (1997, as cited in Wetherell & Edley, 2014) discuss a participant with the pseudonym 'Neil', who was struggling to position himself as a 'man' in a way which resisted the hegemonic masculine identity of the 'alpha' group in school, the rugby jocks. In an interview with Edley, he first positioned himself as a 'wimp', as physically weak and afraid to get into physical fights. Then he re-interpreted 'wimp' as someone who is also 'mentally weak' - as someone who cannot defend themselves verbally, and he distanced himself from this type of 'wimpishness'. He then identified the alpha group as having many attractive qualities (good-looking, strong, and so forth), but as being mentally weak – followers, unable to think for themselves. Thus, he resisted hegemonic masculinity and simultaneously differentiated himself from alternative, subordinate masculinity, by positioning himself as independent. However the authors argued that independence is often characterised as one of the hallmarks of hegemonic masculinity. Thus, Neil's resistance re-appropriated one of the hallmarks of hegemonic masculinity therefore reinforcing the hegemony as much as resisting it.

This example illustrates the importance of studying individual-level strategies of resistance. However, it has also been argued that we need to also account for collective strategies for resistance, as these may be the most effective at engendering long-term change.

#### 2.3.3.1.1. Individual versus collective strategies for change

It is important to clarify the difference between *individual* strategies for producing identities within the hegemony and *structural/collective* resistance. As described above in Section 2.3.2, individuals' range of possible actions are shaped and limited by the contexts they find themselves in – therefore, they have limited ability to change the system;

and opportunities for resistance, while present, may be deterred by the consequences of non-conformity. In other words, individual success within a context often requires authentic enactment of “acceptable” gender identity within narrow parameters (as discussed in the previous section). Therefore it has been argued that, while interventions targeting individuals can be useful resources for engendering change (cf. Jewkes et al., 2015), broader, long-lasting societal-level change requires more than individual resistance. Indeed, this was one of Connell’s core arguments in *Gender and Power* (1987): that the structure of the gender system makes it particularly resilient to individual-level resistance.

Collective resistance, on the other hand, seems to offer a more effective means of stimulating broader societal change (Haslam & Reicher, 2012; Wright, 2009). Wright (2009, p. 860) defines collective action as individuals acting *as* representatives of a particular group in order to resist dominant discourses and therefore to improve “the conditions of the group as a whole”. Further distinctions between individual and collective level resistance will be explored in detail in Chapter 7.

#### 2.3.3.2. Critique: Resistance and the mechanisms of hegemonic change in masculinity

It has been suggested that masculinity theory has not been nuanced enough in its conceptualisation of change, particularly in the way that hegemonic masculinity was conceptualised as dealing with competing masculinities (Demetriou, 2001). Connell argued that hegemonic masculinity is flexible and adaptive, and accounted for shifts in the preferred content of hegemonic masculinity over time while still maintaining its patriarchal power base. However, the problem is that the dualistic formulation of masculinity/femininity and a dualistic formulation of hegemonic and subordinate/marginalised masculinities, can be said to have obscured the way that pockets of resistance easily become subverted in support of the broader patriarchal gender structure.

In other words, where it was assumed that resistance to hegemonic masculinity could lead to more egalitarian ways-of-being (cf. Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), Demetriou (2001) has argued that, when faced with resistance, hegemonic masculinity incorporates just enough of these aspects of competing masculinities in order to



'look better', without really changing substantially or relinquishing much of its power base. This helps to understand why hegemonic patriarchy is so resilient resistant to change, and will be discussed further in the section that follows.

### 2.3.3.3 Proposed theoretical framework: The hybrid bloc of hegemonic gender identities

Demetriou (2001, p. 348) offered a re-formulation of hegemonic masculinity as a "hybrid bloc that unites various and diverse practices in order to construct the best possible strategy for the reproduction of patriarchy", and demonstrated this through an analysis of the interaction between homosexual and heterosexual masculinities. According to Demetriou (2001, p. 351), *hybridization* can be conceptualised as "a strategy for the reproduction of patriarchy", as it enables hegemonic masculinity to strategically orientate to and incorporate pockets of resistance, thus reaffirming its overall domination over women. This process of hybridization, Demetriou (2001, p. 351) argued, involves a process of "appropriation... re-articulation and translation" of the practices or signifiers of the resistant, subordinated masculinity as they are incorporated into this hegemonic bloc.

For example, it could be suggested that the rise of the 'metrosexual' (the heterosexual man who is concerned with being well-groomed and consuming luxury products) makes hegemonic masculinity more 'gay friendly' while still maintaining its position of privilege and power over homosexual masculinities (Demetriou, 2001). In other words, by appropriating elements of what is seen as a more feminized homosexual culture, the incorporation of 'metrosexual' identity into the fringes of heterosexual hegemonic masculinity is able to "blur gender difference, to render the patriarchal dividend invisible... thus [absolve] any responsibility for it" (Demetriou, 2001, p. 353).

Demetriou (2001) suggests that this process of cultural appropriation occurs both ways, as subordinated/ marginalised masculinities can also take from the hegemonic form, for example as can be seen with the rise of 'bears' in gay culture<sup>11</sup> (see also Manley, Levitt, & MCoun, 2007). Using this conception to analyse the relationship between hetero-

---

<sup>11</sup> A 'bear' refers to a homosexual man who fits the classic image of rugged masculinity and tends to be large, well built and hairy (Manley, Levitt & MCoun, 2007).

and homosexual masculinities, Demetriou (2001) argues that this re- or cross-appropriation allows the 'masculine bloc' as a whole to reaffirm its domination over women.

Thus, Demetriou argues that his conception of the "hegemonic masculine bloc" (2001, p. 355) overcomes the difficulties posed by Connell's dualistic formulation of the relationship between hegemonic and subordinate/ marginalised masculinities. Not only does this formulation assist in unveiling the processes of "negotiation, translation, hybridization and reconfiguration" that form the reproduction of patriarchy; it also reveals the ways in which these processes camouflage patriarchy by rendering it as something "new and unrecognisable" (Demetriou, 2001, p. 355). Thus, Demetriou (2001) argues that this formulation accounts for shifts in the preferred content of hegemonic masculinity over time while still maintaining its power base.

This concept of the 'hybrid bloc' is interesting and useful, but it does insinuate some shadowy Moriarty pulling strings behind the scenes to manipulate the development and maintenance of hegemony masculinity. It is important to note the systemic resilience is decentralized; a property of the system rather than intentional conspiracy. Considering *situated agency and resistance* (as in the present study) may help to show how this decentralized coercion occurs. For example, Allen (2007) and Redman (2001) highlighted how teenaged boys used romantic masculinity as a means of performing hegemonic masculinity. So, by reconceptualising these patterns of masculinity as discursive tools, one can argue that these 'different masculinities' served as discursive identity resources within their interview contexts for participants to perform a situationally-appropriate identity and maximise the benefits they could accrue from these performances. Thus, I would suggest that re-appropriation happens in local contexts, but that with enough collective force it can lead to shifts/ affirmations of power at the regional and global levels.

#### 2.3.3.4. Proposed theoretical framework: Balancing conceptualisations of agency and context

As a final comment on agency and power, I would like to briefly discuss the importance of including a broader, contextualised, historico-political perspective in one's analysis. I have argued across the literature review that it is important to acknowledge the

agency of individuals in determining how to take up masculinity and femininity; and indeed, in the theoretical framework selected for the study, agency is prioritised and envisioned in more extensive ways than ever before.

However, it has been argued that it is important “not to... responsabilise” – that is, hold women accountable – for their oppression (Francis et al., 2016, p. 4). This may occur when men and women are described as drawing from identity resources in a similar and equivalent way (Ball, 2011; Theilade, 2011), with the result that “structural accounts of inequality” are submerged (Francis et al., 2016, p. 6) within a neo-liberalistic discourse (Theilade, 2011; Thoma, 2009).

As mentioned briefly in Section 1.1.3.1, the neo-liberalistic discourse presents women as equal to men and empowered to make free choices within a de-patriarchalised society. However, Farvid and Braun (2006, p. 306) argue that women “remain embedded within a heterosexist imperative”, where women’s choices are implicitly constructed as ‘free’ so long as they conform to the imperatives of hetero-sexuality. Where women are discriminated against, the neo-liberalist discourse would present these women as ‘failing to make correct choices’, rather than being victims of broader discriminatory attitudes. Thus, one could argue that this discourse repositions the blame for inequalities from the structural level to an individual level.

As Thoma (2009) argues, this neo-liberalistic discourse of equality de-emphasises the social and cultural context in which these choices are made, and conceals potential limitations of agency (such as age, status and gender). I suggest we need to carefully evaluate *how* we theorise gender, to ensure we do not unconsciously perpetuate the discriminatory practices/ideas we are aiming to critique. When one theorises about the relationships between groups, particularly the agency of a subordinated group, one needs to ensure there is no undue insinuation of blame or responsabilising for their subordinated positions.

I suggest we need to be reflexive about how we present those we study: recognising the contextual factors that might constrain ‘freedom’ of choice; studying identity performances in context where possible; and being cautious in the conclusions we

make or blame we attribute to those disempowered by structural discourses which reward them for compliance.

Thus, in this study I draw from a definition of agency as a “contextually negotiated, socially motivated, dynamic process” (Korhonen, 2014, p. 78). That is, I conceive of agency as being mediated by our social context and the affordances available to us, rather than as an innate “property or a competence of the individual” (Korhonen, 2014, p. 67).

I would argue that the theoretical framework developed above will assist me in this task. Firstly, I will explicitly consider context, and the kinds of affordances and identity resources it provides within a particular situation (being-romantic). Secondly, by considering not just affordances, but discursive performative scripts as well, I aim to show the inducements that may exist that encourage, entice or coerce us into particular forms of identity production. This will hopefully mediate my interpretations of the content of masculinities and femininities available while being-romantic, in recognition that these may not be completely ‘free’ choices and there may be different consequences for how gendered identities are drawn from. Thus, my goal is to investigate and appreciate where identity production may be troubling for men *and* for women, while balancing this with an understanding of how the starting blocks for identity production within patriarchal societies are not equivalent for men and for women. Since men and women are located differently within the patriarchal system, the consequences, costs and rewards for resistance or compliance are not the same either.

## 2.4. Summary

In sum, the study of gender over the past century has seen various shifts in thinking. Early approaches tended to biological reductionism, and were critiqued as being very problematic. Later theories, such as the sex role theory and cognitive script theory, improved our understanding of the impact of cultural contexts on gender but were critiqued for ultimately being essentialist and deterministic. Connell and colleagues’ theory of gender hegemony (cf. Schippers, 2007) addressed a number of the concerns regarding

sex role theory and script theory. However, while on the whole the concepts of hegemonic masculinity and emphasised femininity have contributed significantly to the field of gender studies, some critiques have been made about the way that these concepts have been taken up in the field as a whole.

These critiques were that (1) there has been a tendency to reduce masculinity to the practices of men and femininity to the practices of women; (2) there has been a masculinity bias in the study of gender identity, with the result that both women's voices in defining masculinity and the study of femininity has been side-lined; (3) along with this bias has been a move away from studying masculinity and femininity as co-productions and instead studying them individually, in a way that could be critiqued as being divorced from the complexities of social reality; (4) while context was important to the articulations of masculinity and femininity, it was suggested that context is even more important than has been previously argued for. Even within the same kind of masculinity/ femininity, there may be situationally-relevant affordances that shape the particular form this masculinity/ femininity takes. (5) In terms of resistance, it was suggested that masculinity theory's conceptualisation of how hegemonic masculinity deals with resistant masculinities was insufficient and could not fully explain why hegemony seems so resistant to change. (6) Finally, it was argued that we need to take into account not only the immediate context of gendered performances, but also the historical-political context, in order to more fully appreciate how women and men's access to agency and resistance may be shaped and limited differently, based on their relative positions within the gender hierarchy.

These critiques informed the theoretical framework of this study. Firstly, I argued that in the context of heterosexual romance, it is important to try and understand the coproduction of masculinity and femininity, to see how together it produces the gender order and in this way to ensure the representation of both men's and women's voices.

Secondly, I argued that we need to be clearer about how masculinities and femininities might be utilised as contextualised identity affordances, and how their expression may be shaped by discursive performative scripts. This, it was argued, would

assist in more fully accounting for the impact of contexts on the expression of gender identity.

Thirdly, I suggested we need to develop a more contextualised understanding of power, agency and resistance, in order to more fully understand how these masculinities/ femininities may resist or collude with their hegemonic counterparts, in ways that do not simply locate masculinities in men's bodies and femininities in women's bodies. This undertaking would also need to seek to understand gendered differences in agency or resistance between masculinities and femininities, to try to understand change (or the lack thereof) over time.

Finally, I argued that it is vital to be reflexive about the arguments one makes, to ensure that agency and resistance in the construction of one's identity can be explored in ways that do not attribute blame to individuals, especially those most prejudiced by the status quo. I suggested that we need to seek to understand gendered identity performances within their contexts to try understand their allure and how we might re-imagine them, even if it is with difficulty.

Thus, this project will – using discourse analysis (cf. Wetherell & Edley, 1999) and the theoretical framework described above – investigate how contextual affordances and discursive performative scripts may “may serve as tactical alternatives” for the performance of gender in the context of being-romantic (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 847). This is a novel approach to the study of gender, contexts, and romance, and brings together various theoretical perspectives in order to address gaps identified in the existing popularised frameworks.

The analysis is undertaken in four distinct parts. Each will use the theoretical framework developed here as a base, but will further develop the literature review to address each component of the analysis.

## Chapter 3: Method and design

This study aimed to explore participants' constructions of gender-in-romance in a series of interviews. Originally, three problematic areas within romance were identified based on a preliminary reading of the literature; namely, (1) agency, (2) consumption, and (3) idealization. To explore these as co-constructed, heterosexual participant-couples in stable long-term relationships were recruited for participation. To explore how participants engaged with agency (and resistance) we created a situation in which standard expectations of agency in romance were supported or disrupted, by supplying enough money for them to go on two dates with the request that each partner arranged one. We expected that the date planned by the woman would disrupt standard hegemonic gender expectations. To explore the way that gender-in-romance was constructed individually and together, interviews were planned with each partner individually and with the couple together. Although I could not attend the date with them without ruining the romance (the object of study) I planned to be with them while they got ready to try to understand the material elements of preparing for and enacting romance.

The original plan was to favour breadth over depth and recruit 6-13 couples, interviewing each once and to have different couples participating in each aspect of the study described above. However, as the work progressed the design evolved, as I will now explain.

### 3.1. Evolution of the study design

The preliminary design was submitted for ethical clearance to the University of kwaZulu-Natal Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (see Appendix 1A) and received ethical clearance (see Appendix 1B).

However, as I began the process of data collection, the design evolved in response to the constraints and realities of the research context (see Durrheim, 2006), as well as in terms of my developing understanding of the literature and a preliminary analysis of the emerging findings. This is known as iterative qualitative research design and is seen

as an acceptable approach to research design so long as (1) the emerging design remains within the scope of its ethical clearance and (2) that any refinements are critically and reflexively made in order to improve the validity, reliability and cohesiveness of the study (Durrheim, 2006).

As I gained a more nuanced understanding of the topic and the context, the research design was refined in order to better focus the process of inquiry. The three original problem areas were reviewed, and it was found that in terms of the data and a better understanding of the literature, these were less central to my focus than originally anticipated. Instead, more pressing concerns emerged, which evolved into the refined research questions identified in the Introduction and re-iterated below. Some minor aspects of the data collection protocol were refined to improve the consistency of the data collection across participants and a few interview questions were added to the interview schedule.

The greatest change that was made was to have one consolidated study with one group of participants, rather than numerous sub-studies with different groups of participants. A key motivation for this change was because the cost to participants in one of the sub-studies in the original design was later identified as being quite high, as I originally planned to recruit participants for an ethnographic-style one-off interview to be conducted while they got ready for a date. However, after receiving ethical clearance for this design, I became concerned that this interview, which relied on the depth and intimacy that the ethnographic approach can engender, would not actually produce the rapport needed in order for it to function effectively. That is, I was concerned that the potential awkwardness of having little pre-existing rapport with an interviewer and minimal benefits for the participants might discourage participation (in terms of obtaining participants as well as drop out).

Therefore, by shifting away from multiple cross-sectional interviews to an ethnographic discursive approach, I felt that the cost-to-benefit ratio would be better proportioned: While this change increased the number of interviews to participate in, it ensured a better rapport could be developed over the process and it was further



compensated by participants receiving two free dates (described below). As a result (as will be described in the sampling section below, Section 3.3), I ended up having no issues with recruitment or drop out.

This shift prioritised richness of data over sample size, and produced a number of benefits as a result, such as (1) sustained and in-depth relationships with participants, giving (a) a deeper understanding into their lives; and (b) increasing the trust which is necessary for an ethnographic design; (2) providing the opportunity to sample multiple discourses across different contexts, thus increasing the representativeness of the study and therefore providing a better methodological fit with the discursive approach; and (3) improved data quality because the data had more depth and richness.

This process of evolution and refinement occurred in consultation with my supervisor, and stayed within the scope of the original ethical clearance. That said, all of these changes were submitted to the ethical clearance committee for review and approval was granted by the committee (see Appendix 1, Part C).

As a result of this iterative process of refinement, this study's more focused aim was to investigate the cultural practice of being-romantic, in to order to explore how it may serve as a particular context that affords certain gendered identity resources. A post-structuralist discursive approach was used to investigate how the particular context of being-romantic in heterosexual couples affords complementary gender identities. These affordances will be investigated to see how they are constructed and how porous the boundaries of these may be, in terms of participants being able to deviate from or re-imagine them.

### 3.2. Location of the study

The study data was collected in 2013 within the urbanised setting of the greater Durban area of KwaZulu-Natal. The reason for this focused location was as follows: Illouz (1997) argues that romance is a cultural product of Westernisation and globalisation that typically involves expenditure and consumption of luxury items. More urbanised settings will typically offer access to a broader array of activities, products and experiences

typically positioned as romantic. Urbanised settings also tend to act as a cultural melting pot where different cultural ideas (such as romance, in this instance) might be shared across cultural lines. It is also likely that those with ready (physical) access to cosmopolitan areas might also (1) be more likely to have the financial capital to engage in these kinds of activities, products, and/or experiences; and (2) *want* to engage in these kinds of activities/products/experiences. This is not to say that romance *only* exists in urbanised settings or that romance *needs* to occur in these particular ways: Illouz (1997), for example, describes a number of low-expenditure or free activities positioned as romantic by her participants, as well as a variety of settings in which they make take place. However, by focusing on an urbanised setting it is more likely that a broader range of people will fall into the target population, and that there will be a more representative array of activities and discourses of romance that become accessible as a result.

### 3.3. Sampling

Firstly, the specified sampling frame will be discussed, including changes made to the original sampling criteria. Next, the recruitment protocol will be discussed and then the sample themselves will be described. Finally, in Section 3.3.4 I will briefly describe the ethical protections in place with regards to sampling<sup>12</sup>.

#### 3.3.1. Sample population

This study made use of purposive (Durrheim & Painter, 2006) and theoretical (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Silverman, 2005) sampling strategies, in that there were set criteria for participation and these criteria were developed for theoretical reasons to maximize the representativeness of the sample. As my goal was to recruit participants who were interested in and participated regularly in being romantic, my sampling strategy aimed to recruit those who were likely most invested in being-romantic. In this way, one could

---

<sup>12</sup> A full and detailed account of the ethical considerations of the study are discussed in Appendix 1D. In text, the ethics pertaining to each stage of the research process will be discussed briefly per section, in order to manage space limitations of this thesis.

argue the sampling strategy was also critical case sampling, as I sought participants who could provide me with accounts which were particularly “information rich” (Kelly, 2006a, p. 290). These different theoretically-driven sampling requirements will now be discussed.

The target population of the study was urban South African adults between the ages of 20-30, who were employed at the time of participation in the study. This age range was specified in terms of Erikson’s crisis of intimacy versus isolation (Stevens, 1983), which suggests that people in the age range of 20-39 are concerned with seeking out romantic partners and establishing romantic relationships. Researchers (e.g. Dowd & Pallotta, 2000; Illouz, 1997; Toner, 1988) have suggested that going on romantic dates is a way of ‘trying out’ partners and establishing and consolidating relationships. Therefore, focusing on the earlier half of this defined age range means one can target a group who are likely to be regularly involved in and invested in doing-romance. The latter portion of this age range (from 31-39) were not included as it is more likely that participants in this age range may have young children, which may make it more difficult to regularly be able to engage in romance.

The specification regarding employment was included because a certain amount of expendable income is required to be able to be invested in and regularly participate in romance. As discussed in the section on the evolution of the study (Section 3.1), the sampling criteria was later refined further and specified that participants be engaged or married at the time of their participation. Ethical clearance was obtained for this change. While this further restricted the sampling pool, meaning that some potential participants who would previously have been able to participate were no longer eligible (thus impacting on the ethical principle of justice; cf. Wassenaar, 2006), it was argued that the benefit to the study’s scientific value would outweigh the potential threat to justice (Wassenaar & Mamotte, 2012). It ensured that the relationship contexts would be (1) well-established and (2) likely to be similar across participants. It also enabled the interviewers to compare the narratives of ‘how we met’ and ‘how we got engaged’ to the stories told about the dates participants went on for the study.

Additionally, it is likely that there will be a greater difference for long-term couples (such as couples who are engaged or married) between everyday behaviour and the production of oneself as an object of romance, compared to couples with a short-term dating history who may be more self-conscious (and therefore put more effort into producing romance), even when spending time together on 'non-romantic' occasions.

Finally, it has been argued that marriage is heteronormative making it a "key site of patriarchy" and thus a "core institution for the reproduction of gender inequalities" (Hirsch, 2003, as cited in Singh, 2013, p. 23; see also Shefer & Foster, 2001). Therefore it is likely that embedded within this relationship context will be traditional discourses about what men and women 'should' be like on a date. Thus, although further restricting the sampling frame, it allowed for a more comprehensive and nuanced analysis of the gendered production of romance than what was originally envisioned, therefore more adequately addressing the study's research questions.

There was no specification regarding race, however the study did limit the sampling frame to heterosexual couples. There has been very limited research investigating co-constructed gender identities in the context of being-romantic, whether in heterosexual or homosexual relationship contexts. Since the study aimed to explore the production of heteronormative gender identities in a context particularly important to heteronormative relationships (romance) it was decided to focus this study on investigating heterosexual couples only, in order to see whether/how these traditional gender identities were drawn from and enacted in romantic settings. It was thought by so doing I could maximise the likelihood of finding the kind of discourses of romantic masculinity and femininity that I was interested in. This study could therefore provide a baseline, against which future research could depart from. The investigation of identity performances of homosexual couples while being-romantic is necessary and valuable, but fell beyond the scope of this particular study. It is identified as an area for future research.

A key premise of a discursive approach is that all members of a group are socially competent representatives of that group, able to draw on various discourses in order to communicate, justify and negotiate meaning (Silverman, 2005; Teubert, 2010). As

such, any population member as defined by the constraints mentioned was viewed as a potential participant, and actual selection depended on availability and willingness, rather than random selection. In terms of the ethical principle of justice (Wassenaar, 2006), it is vital to ensure that there is a fair selection of participants. As the specified sampling method was purposive rather than convenience sampling, and there was a strong emphasis on the voluntariness of participation, it is argued that this requirement was met.

### 3.3.2. Sampling protocol

It was planned to recruit participants through personal referrals, word-of-mouth, snowball sampling, or by advertising in local media such as newspapers, magazines, or on social media websites. A number of strategies were specified in the proposal as I was initially concerned there might be difficulty in recruiting participants, especially in the proposed ethnographic 'part two' of the study. However, the evolution of the study design (described above) seemed to assist greatly in making participation seem very desirable.

Ultimately, the primary recruitment tool was an advertisement (see Appendix 2) which was posted on the social networking site, Facebook. Particular care was taken in the design of this advertisement, as I wished to avoid indirectly influencing participants' conceptions about what I meant by 'romance'. Green was chosen for the background colour as a gender-neutral colour that would not jar with the text of the advertisement. The image selected was a silhouette, to ensure that no particular racial group would be suggested. The image is obviously heterosexual, which reflected the desired sample frame. The couple in the image make reference to romance (in that they are forming a heart shape with their arms), but in a way which does not suggest a particular conception of what romance should 'look like'. This was consciously done in order to try to avoid priming participants about what I was 'looking for' them to do on the romantic events they would plan. This was reinforced in the text of the advert. The text outlined the criteria for participation and gave an idea of what would be required from participants. As participation required a substantial investment from participants (in terms of time, effort, and initial financial outlay), as much

information was provided at the outset as possible to ensure participants were prepared for what participation would entail.

This advertisement was piloted by emailing it to postgraduates in psychology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg. The goal of piloting the advertisement was to ensure that the advert did not evoke/prime particular versions of romance, and the responses from the pilot study confirmed that the design of the advert itself did not position romance in any particular way. However, while the pilot members said their impression was that many forms of romance could be seen as valid in the study, some predicted that a dinner would be the most likely form that the research event might take. This feedback was duly noted and the advert was used as piloted.

I shared this advertisement on my personal Facebook page, and asked my Facebook contacts to share the advert to their walls, which extended exposure to the advert to friends-of-friends and therefore beyond my immediate social contacts. Potential participants were instructed not to respond on Facebook but rather to email me directly in order to protect their confidentiality. Since the initial circle of people with whom the advert was shared were my known associates, this dissemination method did not reach a random sample of the population. However, one of the initial respondents reported to me that the advert had been downloaded from Facebook and circulated via email as well, thus extending the reach of the advertisement beyond my immediate social network. This may have helped in a small way towards decreasing the bias inherent in this mode of recruitment.

Couples 1, 2 and 3 were recruited through this advertisement. Couple 4 was recruited through a personal referral by a mutual connection. There was also some use of snowball sampling, in that Couple 2 referred Couple 5 for participation. Snowball sampling uses existing participants to connect further possible participants with the researcher (cf. Miles & Huberman, 1994). This method of recruitment meant that none of my direct or first level contacts were recruited for the study – all participants were separated from myself by at least one degree of separation.

Regardless of the channel of recruitment, the next steps in the process were the same. Participants contacted me using an email address created for the study. I confirmed with them at that point that they met the requirements for the study in terms of relationship status, age and employment status. Participants were then sent more information about the study, using an adapted version of the consent form (see Appendix 3) and were invited to ask for any additional clarifying information. If they were happy with this information, participants were invited to meet with me to go through this information in person. During this meeting, the consent form (including the procedure, what would be required from them and their rights as participants; see Appendix 4) was discussed with participants in full detail, and they were given the opportunity to ask questions. To reduce the possibility of dropout, in the contact meeting the time costs were carefully and thoroughly explained to participants so they were fully informed before committing. There were no issues with drop out once participants had met with and consented to take part in the study. The participants then signed the consent form, and set up a time and date for participation in the study.

Initially nineteen couples responded to the advertisement and requested further information. All of these couples met the stipulated requirements. Of these nineteen couples, one couple was mixed race (white man, Indian woman) and the rest of the respondents were racially homogenous (fifteen white South African couples and four Indian South African couples). No coloured or black South African couples responded to the initial advert. Only five couples responded to the information sent to them and arranged to meet with the researcher to give formal written consent to participate. One of these couples was the mixed race couple, the other four were white South African couples.

Silverman's (2013) strategy of *sampling to saturation* was followed. The sampling strategy aimed to recruit between three to eight couples, undertaking analysis during data collection and stopping recruitment once data saturation had been achieved (Silverman, 2013). Once all five couples had been interviewed it was found that no new themes or discourses seemed to be coming up in the interviews and so it was decided that the five couples (ten participants in total) were sufficient for the purposes of this study.

The study design (described below) involved multiple interviews across several contexts, both individually and in couples. Therefore, while in this study the sample size may 'only' be 5 couples/10 individuals, there were 25 interviews with over 22 hours of interview data, which yielded a large volume of data for analysis. The depth and breadth of interviews with this small group of participants, including in their own homes as they prepared for a date, makes the method closer to a discursive ethnography than a standard cross-sectional interview study. This is further supported through the length of time in which participants were involved in the study, namely one initial meeting, two individual interviews each (four in total) and one couple interview. Participants thus interacted with me over the course of several weeks as we arranged and participated in these meetings. In total, data was collected over the course of May to December 2013.

Furthermore, discourse analysis focuses on the use to which data is put, rather than the attitudes or experiences of individuals, it is sampling *discourses* and *practices* rather than *individuals*. Therefore, a small sample size can yield a sufficiently large number of "linguistic patterns" to provide convincing answers to the research questions (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p. 161).

While originally it had been hoped to recruit a racially diverse sample, to reflect the racial diversity of South Africa, it was found that mostly white participants volunteered to take part in the study (nine of ten participants). This most likely is due to the use of the researcher's social networks to recruit participants, which inevitably introduces bias into the sample and makes it non-generalizable. While this severely limits the extrapolations that can be made from this study, on reflection it was decided that a more homogenous sample means one can say more about one particular group, thus increasing the depth of the analysis (as opposed to the breadth). However, this is recognised as a limitation of the study and it is recommended that future research should investigate the gendered identity productions of other South African race groups.



### 3.3.2.1. Limitations of the sampling protocol

As this is a qualitative study and sampling was purposive rather than random, results are not be generalizable in the quantitative sense. However, through the methods described above and by analysing discourses drawn on by the participants, it can be argued that this study has been able to access broader discursive repertoires, which increases the transferability of the analysis beyond its relatively small sample size. Another limitation of the study is that it includes only heterosexual men and women. Including a comparative sample of homosexual men and/or women would have increased the depth of the analysis, however, in order to keep the proposed study manageable – and in line with the aim of exploring the role of romance in heteronormative gender identity – it was decided to limit the sample to heterosexuals.

Additionally, the nature of the sampling method also creates limitations in terms of applicability to race and class. This study is not representative of broader South Africans, but rather only to middle class, white South Africans. Future studies should investigate being-romantic in other contexts.

### 3.3.3. Description of participants

Couples were numbered according to the order in which they first met with the researcher for the initial meeting (which covered a face-to-face explanation of the research process and consent process); it does not necessarily indicate the order in which they were interviewed. For most couples, the initial meeting was followed very closely by their 'romantic events' and the interviews. However, I met with Couple 3 in July and only interviewed them in December 2013 at their request, which made them the last couple from whom data was collected.

All participants were white South Africans, excluding the woman from Couple 1, who is Indian South African. All participants were middle class, had received tertiary qualifications, and were employed at the time of the study. All participants came from the greater Durban area of KwaZulu-Natal and were interviewed in 2013. All participants are

English first language speakers, except for Couple 4 who are from an Afrikaans heritage. All of the interviews were conducted in English. Pseudonyms were given to all participants and it was aimed to select pseudonyms which reflected participants' cultural backgrounds/ heritage. Each couple will now be described in (anonymized) detail, in order to give some background information while still protecting their identities.

Couple 1 is a mixed race couple. The man was given the pseudonym Luke, and the woman the pseudonym Ansuya, with the nickname Sue. This was done in order to reflect both her cultural identity and the Anglicisation/Westernisation of her real-life nickname, which was used by both herself in introducing herself to me, and by her fiancé in the interviews. Luke was 25 years old at the time of his participation and employed in the IT industry. Sue was 22 years old, and worked within the health sciences. They were engaged at the time of the study. They met in 2009 through Luke's sister, and at the time of their participation had been dating for 3 years and 9 months. They did not live together: Sue lived with her parents and a younger, adult sister and Luke lived with his married sister and her husband at the time of data collection.

Couple 2 were given the pseudonyms of Eddie and Robyn. Eddie was 25 years old at the time of their participation, and Robyn was 24 years old. Eddie works in the Sales industry and Robyn works in education. They were married at the time of the study and lived together. They met in 2007 while both attending university, and at the time of the study had been in a relationship for over 6 years.

Couple 3 were given the pseudonyms of Bruce and Louise. Bruce was 28 years old and Louise 27 years old at the time of their participation. Both participants work in education. At the initial point of contact with this couple in July 2013, Bruce and Louise were engaged but not living together, but by the point of data collection with this couple in December 2013, they were married and were sharing the same residence. At the time of the interviews, Bruce and Louise had been in a relationship for approximately 1 year, having met in December 2012 at their local gym.

Couple 4 were the only couple to participate who were from an Afrikaans heritage. They were therefore given pseudonyms which reflected their cultural background:

Johan and Anika. Anika was 27 years old at the time of their participation and Johan was 30 years old. Anika works in education, and Johan works within the field of Maintenance. They were engaged at the time of their participation. While they had briefly attended the same school as children, they 'officially' met in 2012 in church. They began dating soon afterward and had been together for approximately a year and a half at the time of the study. At the time of participation they were sharing the same residence: Johan had recently moved in with Anika and her parents due to conflict with his family over their relationship.

Couple 5 were given the pseudonyms of Tom and Heidi. Tom was 30 years old at the time of their participation and Heidi was 28 years old. Tom works in media and Heidi works within the field of design. They were married at the time of the study and shared the same residence. They met in 2006 through mutual friends and at the time of the study had been in a relationship for 7 years.

#### 3.3.4. Summary of ethical protections relating to sampling

As mentioned above, the ethical considerations of the study are discussed in detail in Appendix 1D. I drew extensively from the eight ethical principles described by Wassenaar and Mamotte (2012) in order to ensure this study was ethically sound. Here, I will briefly discuss the protections put in place in relation to sampling.

Firstly, Wassenaar and Mamotte (2012) argue that one must recruit from a population that is relevant to the research question. I argue this requirement was met by defining a population of interest of participant couples who would likely be invested in romance, thus ensuring relevancy. Secondly, Wassenaar and Mamotte (2012) argue that participants should not be exploited or recruited merely as convenient (this relates to the principle of justice, cf. Wassenaar, 2006). It is argued that by advertising and recruiting on a first-come basis based on participants' willingness to participate, that this requirement was met. Thirdly, it has been argued that undue inducements which may "distort perceptions of potential risks" should not be offered (Wassenaar & Mamotte, 2012, p. 276). This study was at risk of this critique as up to R500 compensation per individual participant was offered, which could possibly be seen as influencing participants' capacity to consent (Emmanuel,

2004; Emmanuel, Curry, & Herman, 2005). However, it has been suggested that inducement are not undue when the risks of participation are low (Emmanuel et al., 2005), or if the actions are those that the participants would engage in anyway. Participants confirmed in the interview that R500 is what they would approximately spend on a routine date night, and were recruited from a population invested in and regularly engaging in this practice, which reduces the risk of undue inducement.

In relation to the process of gaining informed consent, as mentioned above, special care was taken in gaining informed consent. Due to the ethnographic discursive approach taken by the study, participation involved some investment into the process and a relationship between participants and researcher. Therefore, it was identified as important to manage the consent process thoroughly to reduce risk of drop out. Thus, as described above, participants were provided with information on the study costs and expectations before they agreed to meet with me (see Appendix 3); and at the point of initial contact, I went through the study design in full, giving participants the opportunity to ask questions. Once we had gone over the study requirements and their rights as participants, we signed consent forms (see Appendix 4) and set up dates for the interviews. Participants were given a copy of the consent form to keep through the interview process to serve as a reference point. Please refer to the ethics discussion (Appendix 1D) for further details.

### 3.4. Procedure and Measures

#### 3.4.1. Design

The first and second aim of this study was to investigate romance as a *context* for gender performances and to explore the *outcomes* of romance, respectively. Therefore, a key aspect of the design was to give participants the opportunity to talk about romance in different settings. This is in line with the ethnographic discursive approach that was adopted by this study, as it extends the variety of discourses that participants can access across contexts, allowing researchers to explore a range of discourses and identity strategies available to individuals. Therefore, I asked participants to plan 'romantic events'

and then interviewed them about these events, as well as other instances of romance in their lives, including how they would typically be-romantic. This elicited a number of discourses about romance which are explored in Chapters 4 and 5.

The third aim was to explore the affordances of romance. As will be argued in the literature discussed in Chapter 6, it has been suggested that in hetero-normative romantic contexts, male and female affordances may involve different gendered norms in terms of being actively (or passively) involved in planning and orchestrating romance. Therefore, I sought to disrupt this, to explore the effect disruption may have on the way that romance was constructed and narrated in an interview setting. Each individual participant was given the opportunity to plan and execute 'a romantic event' for their partner. In this way, if being romantically active is gendered, it will be disrupted as both the man and the woman would plan a date, and there would likely be discursive differences in the way these two romantic events were constructed by participants. Each participant was offered up to R500 to compensate them for expenses incurred, with a total of R1,000 offered per couple. Participants were also asked to photograph aspects of their event that they found to be romantic. Each couple was interviewed together and individually about these romantic events after they had taken place. These are referred to below as the post-event interviews, and there were three per couple (one couple interview, and one individual interview each), and fifteen in total. These post-event interviews were conducted by myself, in one setting, and in most cases took places at the participants' home<sup>13</sup>.

Another aspect identified in the literature discussed in Chapter 6 of the Results and Discussion concerned differently gendered expectations about how men and women get ready to be-romantic. To investigate this, ethnographic interviews were conducted with each participant in their home, as they got ready to go on the date that their partner planned for them. These interviews are referred to below as the pre-event interviews and were conducted by a same-sex interviewer to try to ensure that the experience was as comfortable as possible for participants. I conducted the interviews with the women participants, and my husband, Strauss Human, conducted the interviews with

---

<sup>13</sup> For Couple 1, this took place at Sue's home, and for Couple 2 this took place at Eddie's mother's house.

the men participants<sup>14</sup>. Some aspects of interest included investigating appearance-based vulnerabilities or anxieties; if there are any expectations around how they *should* look while being-romantic; what happens if these expectations are violated; and how these expectations differ depending on different situations (for example how they ‘should’ look on a date compared to how they dress on a normal occasion). One interview was conducted per participant, with ten pre-event interviews conducted in total. All of these were conducted at the participant’s current residence.

The fourth aim investigated instances of negotiation and resistance of the identities afforded by the romantic context. While this aim did not impact on the research design as specifically as the others did above, the kind of research design (ethnographic discourse analysis) used in this study assisted more generally in addressing this aim, as the sustained engagement with the participants provided access to multiple discourses. Therefore, there was rich and in-depth access to multiple instances of both collusion and resistance across the participants.

Overall this approach is known as “in-depth interviewing” (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984, p. 77), as it involves “repeated face-to-face encounters” between the researcher and participants. In this way, participants are given multiple opportunities to draw from discursive repertoires, giving a more representative construction of these social constructs. These kinds of interviews are typically “modelled after a conversation between equals”, rather than the objective and detached approach adopted by positivists (ibid.). The kind of interview selected was semi-structured interviews. This meant that interview schedules

---

<sup>14</sup> A note on the male assistant: The researcher’s husband, Strauss Human, was suitably qualified and had prior experience conducting qualitative field research, and agreed to complete the pre-date ethnographic interviews with the men participants. This benefited the study as he had existing skills and so needed less training than a novice interviewer; and he was already familiar with the premises and goals of the study because of his relationship to the lead researcher. Additionally, it added immense value to the process of building rapport with the participants as it enabled our personal relationship to be drawn from as a springboard for discussion, and it seemed to make the experience less intimidating for some participants (as the research experience was positioned as ‘a couple talking to another couple about marriage and romance’, versus a more formal and intimidating research setting). This opened up channels of inquiry that might not have otherwise been available. For example, by sharing our engagement story (and expressing ‘feeling bothered’ that it was non-normative despite being more gender-equal because he didn’t go down on one knee), it gave participants the chance to critically reflect on gender dynamics and idealised expectations of proposals.

were developed for each of the three interview types which gave some consistency across the data set; however, interviewers were able to deviate from these where necessary/appropriate in order to sustain the conversation (for example, making a personalised example if participants were struggling with a question) or to probe further, where unexpected nuggets of information were mentioned (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984).

### 3.4.2. Procedure

#### 3.4.2.1. Initial point of contact

As discussed above in the Sampling protocol (Section 3.3.2), once potential participants made email contact with me, I went through a vetting process to ensure they met the criteria for inclusion. They were then sent a version of the consent form (see Appendix 3) describing the commitment that would be asked of them as well as their rights as potential participants. The study design was also briefly explained via email. If participants were happy to continue, a face to face meeting between the couple and myself was arranged. These meetings took place in public coffee shops, in a location convenient for the participants. In this meeting the informed consent process was managed, and dates for their romantic events were suggested.

#### 3.4.2.2. The pre-event interviews

Once the dates of the two 'romantic events' were confirmed, the pre-event interviews were arranged. Whose event was conducted first depended on the participants – I did not control for order of gender. Whoever was *not* planning and executing the date would be interviewed before the date that they were taken on. That is, when it was the turn of the woman to plan the date, the man would be interviewed before the date (and vice versa). Topics covered included his/her expectations for the date and how he/she was preparing for it (See Appendix 7A for the interview schedule). The same interview schedule was used for both men and women participants. As mentioned above, because of the intimacy involved in the ethnographic interview as participants prepared for their date, a

same sex interviewer conducted these interviews; with the lead researcher (Nicola Human) interviewing the women and my husband, Strauss Human, the men.

In addition, towards the end of the pre-event interview, participants were also given a checklist of gender-specific activities one might possibly do in order to get ready for a date (see Appendix 7B). Participants were asked to check the ones they had done in preparation for the romantic event, and also to indicate which ones they did on a daily basis. They were also asked to indicate how long it had taken them to get ready and provide estimates for how long it usually took them to get ready for a date, versus for everyday activities. These checklists served as a springboard for discussion and also gave me an indication of the kinds of preparation participants undertook for romantic occasions, in comparison to everyday life.

#### 3.4.2.3. The post-event interviews

Once both of the romantic events and their corresponding pre-event interviews were conducted, the follow up interviews were conducted. The couple interview was conducted first, and the romantic events were described and discussed, using the photos they had been asked to take as a springboard for discussion (See Appendix 7C for the interview schedule). Then, individual interviews were conducted with each participant (See Appendix 7D for the interview schedule). As mentioned above, I conducted all three of these interviews.

In addition to the questions asked in the interview schedule, participants were also asked to complete two further checklists, one for women and one for men (See Appendix 7E). These had the same gender-specific list of activities one might do to 'get ready for romance' that were used in the pre-event interviews, and this time participants were asked to complete both the men and the women list. Here, they were required to assess each activity in three different ways, ticking where relevant if performing this activity would (1) "make a romantic date MORE romantic"; (2) if "NOT doing this would kill the romance"; and (3) "Which ones should women/men do for an extremely romantic occasion



(e.g. getting engaged)”. In this way, talk around the idealisation of romance as well as consumption and production of oneself as a gendered romantic subject was investigated.

Once these post-event interviews were concluded, the participants gave the researcher digital copies of the photographs they had taken on the dates and their receipts. The money was then reimbursed to them up to the value of R500 per date, and participants signed for the receipt of this money. All of the interviews were audio recorded, with the explicit consent of the participants. Please see Appendix 8 for a table with an overview of this sampling and data procedure information, including pseudonyms, whose date was conducted first, who the interviewer was, and so on.

#### 3.4.2.4. Post-data collection

The audio interview data was transcribed in its entirety using abridged Jeffersonian notation (cf. Antaki, Billig, Edwards & Potter, 2003; Silverman, 2005; Wooffitt, 2001, 2007; please see Appendix 9 for a transcription guide). I transcribed the majority of the interviews, and outsourced the balance to a research assistant. I carefully checked the transcription of these and returned to the recordings frequently during analysis.

#### 3.4.3. Interview design and content

As explained above, three different kinds of interviews were conducted: a pre-event individual interview, a post-event couple interview and a post-event individual interview. Please refer to Appendix 8 for a table listing the couple numbers; pseudonyms; and the interview numbering and description. Each interview had a separate interview schedule that was developed in accordance with the particular goals of that interview. These interview goals in turn were developed from the research aims and questions, to ensure there was a cohesive link between the data produced and the research aims.

The pre-event interviews’ primary goals were to observe participants as they got ready for romance and ask them about it, and to prompt discourse about what they found romantic. The post-event couple interviews’ primary goals were to explore how the

two romantic events were positioned and to investigate how the gender of the 'instigator' influenced how these were positioned as romantic. The post-event individual interviews' primary goals were to reflect on the discussion in the couple interview, and to prompt discourse around gendered differences in how I expected men and women to prepare for romance.

With these goals in mind, and bearing in mind the overarching aims of the study as a whole, I developed the three interview schedules. Kvale (1996, p. 129) argues that each question in an interview schedule have two distinct purposes: a "thematic" purpose and a "dynamic" purpose. Thematically, each question must contribute to the researcher's evolving understanding of the topic and assist in providing answers to the research question(s). Dynamically, each question should contribute to the developing relationship between researcher and participant. In other words, they should be designed to initiate and then continue to foster an openness and flow to the conversation (Kvale, 1996).

Therefore, in the pre-event individual and post-event couple interview schedules, an easy question was given first to act as an ice breaker, to put at ease and begin the process of building up a rapport between the interviewer and participants. It was important to repeat this step in the couple interview, firstly, as it was the first time the men were interviewed by myself; and secondly, because it had a different dynamic to the one-on-one interviews. The post-event individual interviews occurred directly after the couple interview, and so an ice breaker question was not necessary for these interviews.

Kvale (1996, p. 125) argues for the importance of this building up of rapport in interviews:

The research interview is an interpersonal situation... neither as anonymous and neutral as when a subject responds to a survey questionnaire, nor as personal and emotional as a therapeutic interview. Patients seek therapists for help: They are motivated to be as open as possible with the therapist... In a research setting it is up to the interviewer to create in a short time a contact that allows the interaction to get beyond merely a polite conversation... The interviewer must establish an atmosphere in which the subject feels safe enough to talk freely about his or her experiences and feelings.

These particular ‘ice breaker questions<sup>15</sup>’ were chosen because they are the (1) the kind of stories that couples relate often, so they will be familiar and easily formulated narratives; and (2) were likely to have idealised accounts of romance and gender identities encapsulated in them, and therefore would be useful comparisons to the events conducted for the study. This made them useful both thematically and dynamically as introductory questions. The questions then proceeded in a logical way, becoming more personal and requiring of reflection, as the rapport developed. Please refer to Appendices 7A, C and D for the interview schedules.

As the interviews were semi-structured, these interview schedules served as a flexible guide that provided key questions and prompts for the interviewer to use, but also gave the interviewer scope to probe for and explore interesting issues as they emerged (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). The benefit of this approach was that it gives some measure of consistency across interviews, as interview questions will occur in a similar order, using similar phrasing (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). Simultaneously, being a flexible guide, it gives an added benefit of allowing the interviewer to probe further or adjust the questions, based on the particular context. Taylor and Bogdan (1984) describe probing as being able to ask more directed and specific questions as they emerge, asking for more detail and clarifying meaning as necessary. This allows the interview to unfold organically in response the particular way the participant is constructing their narrative. Kvale (1996) argues that the skill here requires recognising pieces of information that are key to the participants, while simultaneously holding the research aims and questions in mind. Information given about either of these key areas was probed further in the interviews. Participants were also able to ask clarifying questions, and the interviewers were able to illustrate the question with personal stories to provide context, where necessary.

The pre-event checklist (see Appendix 7B) was developed in order to assist the interviewers with collecting accurate and consistently observed ethnographic data, This was especially important as there were two different observers. The secondary function

---

<sup>15</sup> Namely, “To start with, I’d love to hear about you and your partner met. Can you tell me about that?” in the pre-event interview; and “To start off, I’d love to hear about how you guys got engaged. Can you tell me about this?” in the post-event couple interview.

was to use this data as a springboard for discussion with participants about how one produces oneself as a romantic subject compared to in every-day life, and exploring how this might be gendered. In this way, the data from these checklists helped to inform different aspects of all four of the Results and Discussion chapters (Chapters 4-7). The lists were generated by considering all the things one might do to get ready for an extremely romantic occasion, such as getting married. By using an extreme such as a wedding, it was hoped to be as thorough as possible, on the understanding that it was unlikely for participants to tick many of these for an average date. The same list of items were used in the post-event individual interviews, and these were investigated according to how idealised these were positioned as being and whether this was related to gender. This second version investigated not what was actually done but what *should be done*, by asking of each item whether doing it would make a date more romantic; whether not doing it would kill the romance; and whether one's gender group should do this for a very romantic occasion. This generated a lot of discourse about the kinds of gendered affordances that romantic contexts produce, and the different ways this is gendered. This will be discussed in Chapter 6.

#### 3.4.4. Summary of ethical protections relating to data collection

The process of informed consent was conducted (See Appendix 4 for the consent form), as discussed in the sampling protocol section above. The consent form provided details of the researcher and her affiliation, supervisor contact details, participant responsibilities, and participants' right to confidentiality and the voluntary nature of their participation. In this way the ethical requirements of autonomy and respect for dignity (Wassenaar, 2006) were achieved. Participants also completed an information sheet (see Appendix 5) giving personal information about themselves (such as age, occupation, and where the interviews would be conducted), which confirmed in writing what had been communicated to the researcher over email regarding their eligibility as participants. This has been stored in a secure location separate to the data, and will be destroyed at the end of the study.

Participants were given a copy of the informed consent form to keep as well as a take-away information form (see Appendix 6), which re-iterated their rights as research participants and provided my contact information, my supervisor's contact information, and contact information to independently access post-participation counselling, should they suffer any stress resulting from their participation. In addition, I tried to avoid sensitising participants unduly to gender issues, by designing the interview schedules to explore gender, but not gender inequality directly (see Appendices 7A, C and D). In this way, I aimed to achieve the ethical principle of non-maleficence by keeping the risk to benefit ratio as favourable as possible (Wassenaar, 2006).

From the beginning of the transcription process pseudonyms were given to the participants to ensure their identities are kept anonymous. Other details that may reveal the identity of participants were also be anonymised, such as names of work places, the specific details of their occupations and so on. Additionally, any photograph used in any of the output from the study will be photo-edited to anonymise participants, additional parties, as well as any other identifying features that may appear within. In the storing of data, any data such as consent forms containing identifying information have been stored separately to transcripts so that they will not be linked in any way, and will be destroyed after the study is completed. Electronic data was stored in a protected file to ensure its confidentiality. Please refer to the ethics discussion (Appendix 1D) for further details.

### 3.5. Research Design

This study took a discursive approach, to explore how gender relations are (re)produced and (re)negotiated in instances of 'being-romantic'. This approach allowed for the investigation of how individuals position themselves and legitimate their experiences, within the broader discourses operant in South Africa regarding gender, romance, and dyadic relationships. In this way, the broader power relations between men and women were investigated by analysing discourses drawn on by individual participants. Discourse analysis and post-structuralism will be discussed more in the sections that follow.

### 3.5.1. Theoretical orientation: Post-structuralist discursive analysis

The data was analysed using a discursive, post-structuralist framework, especially drawing on Potter and Wetherell (1987); Wetherell (1995); Edwards (1997); Potter (1996); Weedon (1987) and Wetherell & Edley (2014). Jarvis (1999, p. 4) has argued that heterosexual “(r)omance is naturalised within our culture – it is so familiar that we do not always see it” (see also Bruce, 2012). In other words, romance has been argued to be a “particularly pervasive discourse” which shapes our understanding and interpretations of relationships (Jarvis, 1999, p. 4). Where other qualitative approaches treat language as a resource to convey information about people’s experiences and identities, post-structuralist discourse analysis approaches language as the central focus of study, to work out how people talk intangible psychological constructs into being and, in so doing, position themselves and others (Wetherell & Edley, 2014). Therefore, a post-structuralist discursive approach allows romance – as both a context for performing identity and as a cultural repertoire – to be scrutinised and problematized, especially in terms of the kinds of subjectivities it affords. Where a post-structuralist approach would usually focus on subject positions (see Gavey, 1989; Hollway, 1984; Weedon, 1987), the concept of affordances, as described above, will be drawn from in this study. While a post-structuralist approach seeks to decenter the subject in understanding the fragmentary nature of identity; I would argue that the concept of affordances may enable us to further decenter the subject, by focusing more on the aspects of social situations that provide (or *afford*) certain identity resources. Therefore, I have drawn from affordances in place of subject positions in this study.

Weedon (1987) argues that language is the site of historically and culturally specific discourses, which compete for social dominance. These competing discourses offer their subjects differing forms of subjectivity, which may be performed in the interests of hegemonic discourses, or used to resist them. Subjectivity is thus a constant process of becoming (cf. Spears, Jetten & Doosje, 2001), constantly “reconstituted in discourse each time we think or speak” (Weedon, 1987, p. 33). Experience itself lacks meaning until it is constituted as ‘meaningful’ through “a range of discursive systems of meaning” which may serve competing political interests (Weedon, 1987, p. 34). Thus, the individual is

simultaneously an *agent* constructing meaning; “the *site* for a range of possible forms of subjectivity”; and simultaneously, “a *subject*, subjected to the regime of meaning of a particular discourse and enabled to act accordingly” (Weedon, 1987, p. 34, emphasis added). Discursive psychology thus tries to understand the tension in this relationship between being

at the same time, the products and the producers of discourse (Billig, 1991), and it aims to examine not only how identities are produced on and for particular occasions but also how, in the form of established repertoires or ways of talking, history or culture both impinge upon and are transformed by those performances (Wetherell & Edley, 2014, p. 355).

Therefore, through a discursive study of language, one can analyse not only the individual’s constituted subjectivity, but also the broader discourses which give ‘voice’ to the individual’s subjectivity and which structures society in a way which empowers some subjectivities and oppresses others. Studying how these discourses are drawn from can unpack how they ‘work’ towards achieving certain interests or how they may be used to resist them (Weedon, 1987).

Hence, an advantage of this approach is that the analysis process is three-fold. Firstly, it enables the researcher to investigate how participants position and constitute their identities through talk, and how they orientate to existing discourses around (in this instance) gender, power and romance. Thus, discourse analysis does not view masculinity and femininity as innate, biologically-determined ‘essences’ (Wetherell & Edley, 2014). Instead, I investigated how ‘masculinities’ and ‘femininities’ form a range of (sometimes competing) sets of culturally-specific norms, practices and resources for gendered identity performances (cf. Klein et al., 2007; see also West & Zimmerman, 1987, 2009).

Secondly, discourse analysis also allows the researcher to investigate broader social structures constituted through “*discursive patterns*” (Wetherell & Edley, 2014, p. 355, emphasis in original) that, while drawn from by individuals, may do broader ‘work’ to shore up gender inequalities between men and women.

Thirdly, in seeking to understand power and meaning, part of the work of discourse analysts is to examine how strategies for resistance to more hegemonic forms of gender may be formulated.

An advantage of this method is that it avoids locking men and women into particular roles ('hegemonic', 'complicit', 'alternative' etc.), which can sometimes be misrepresented as *fixed* identity positions (Wetherell & Edley, 2014). Fluctuating versions of these subject positions does not hint at psychological complexes or disorders, but rather at how we respond to different contextual pressures and norms and resources as we construct and defend ourselves in-talk. Reddy and Dunne (2007, p. 62, emphasis in original) contended that this framework "understands gender identity as a performance, that is, *what you do* at particular times, rather than a universal *who you are*, (in which) we recognize the potential for reconfigurations of gender and sexual identities". As Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) argued: gender performances are *not* inherently linked to biology, but are constructed through discourse, which (while resistant) may be subject to change. Thus, the "cultural dupe syndrome" can be avoided (Jackson, 1995, p. 58), as the ways that people actively engage with, draw from, are subject to, are complicit in and/or resist normative discourses of romance are studied.

Several authors (Dowd & Pallotta, 2000; Toner, 1988; Tukachinsky, 2008) have argued that the representation of romance in society forms a cultural resource or a social 'script' (Toner, 1988), which enable individuals to produce romance in recognizable ways which legitimize and authenticate their romantic relationships. Gendered identities have also in the past been constructed as patterned and predictable – what some schools of thought might call 'scripted'. The discursive psychological approach, on the other hand, argues that instead gender and romance should be viewed as containing resources that can be drawn from as one shifts between context-specific identity positions.

It has been argued that acknowledging and understanding these shifts in identity positions are critical in the search to understand how hegemonic gender identities function on an ideological level (Wetherell & Edley, 2014). In this project I am explicitly *not* arguing that romance or gender are 'scripted' in the cognitive psychology sense, but instead



that, as socially competent members of society, we draw from shared discursive resources (namely, contextual affordances and discursive performative scripts; see Section 2.3.2.3) to construct our identities as an ongoing process.

The success of these depends on how they are taken up by those around us and to whom we perform these identities. When our performances follow accepted patterns we can say they have social currency – they are more likely to be recognised and accepted as such by those around us (Durrheim et al., 2005). The more consistent these performances are, the more cohesive our sense of self over time may be. In analysing the way gender is performed across different contexts, it can be better understood how these gendered identities are “created, negotiated, and deployed” (Wetherell & Edley, 2014, p. 362). Thus, by incorporating this fluidity and “complexity” of contextually-embedded identity performances into the analysis, I can better capture and understand the complexities of social life, gaining a more nuanced understanding of how social hierarchies are “constructed, unsettled, and sustained” over time (Wetherell & Edley, 2014, p. 362).

However, it is also important, as analysts, not to fall into the trap of going to the other extreme of the “cultural dupe syndrome” – it must also be remembered that “embodied practices do not occur in a vacuum” (Messerschmidt, 2012, p. 33). In other words, while one should recognise and explore the ways that people are accountable for the gendered identities they embody and reproduce, their contextual embeddedness and the normative forces that shape and limit one’s agency and accountability must also be borne in mind and incorporated into the analysis.

There are rewards for (re)enacting normative behaviour and consequences for non-normative behaviour. Thus, while romantic subjectivities will be critically engaged with in this study, it is with the acknowledgement that (1) there may likely be tangible rewards for engaging in romance in normative ways and (2) men and women may experience the context and its rewards and consequences differently, based on how they are placed differently within a patriarchal system. Part of this is the acknowledgement that the act of being-romantic is situated within a broader ongoing identity project – both as individuals and as a couple (see Messerschmidt, 2012). This is why it is important to

consider the relationship context as part of the broader societal context in which romance and romantic gendered identities are performed and constructed.

### 3.6. Data Analysis

This study has adopted a qualitative, discursive analysis approach (cf. Edwards 1997; Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Weedon, 1987; Wetherell & Edley, 2014). This theoretical orientation has already been explained in the previous section. In this section I will explain the actual steps followed to conduct the analysis.

Transcription began as data started to be collected, and the first steps of analysis began during the transcribing process (see Silverman, 2005). As I transcribed the interviews, and checked the quality of the transcriptions completed by the assistant transcriber, I started making notes on emerging areas of interest. This involved a process of “familiarisation and immersion” (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Kelly, 2006, p. 322). This process involved reviewing the data and reading the literature to become familiar with the key issues in both the field and within the data. This was an iterative process of moving between the data and the literature. Through this inductive process, the focus of the project became more refined and as a result the research aims shifted in line with the developing focus.

Using these preliminary notes, the refined research questions, as well as points of interest gleaned from the review of the literature, a coding schedule was developed. Please see Appendix 10 for the coding schedule. Potter and Wetherell (1987, p. 167) argue that coding is useful to assist the researcher in carving up an “unwieldy” data set into “manageable chunks”, and so was an important preliminary step in the data analysis.

Interviews were then coded in Nvivo qualitative analysis software using the preliminary set of codes. As coding progressed the definition for each code was articulated and refined to ensure that the coding process would be consistent across the 25 interviews. As the interviews were read and coded, more themes emerged which were added to the coding schedule (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Some of these codes were straight-forward (such as code 2.1.1 ‘bad dates’ or code 2.1.4 ‘pre-event guessing’, Appendix 10), but many

of them required some preliminary analysis (such as codes 3.1 and 3.2, Appendix 10), where differing patterns of femininity and masculinity were coded for. Additionally, as the interviews were coded, the codes themselves were refined and were grouped together and positioned hierarchically to represent the relationships between them (as per the numbering system in Appendix 10).

Potter and Wetherell (1987, p. 167) argue that at this stage of the coding process, the focus is on producing “a body of instances” and therefore one should include *all* instances of a particular discourse, even those that may seem peripheral or less clearly defined. Therefore, I was ‘over-inclusive’ in my coding, including any part of text that seemed loosely related to that particular code. I was also ‘over-inconclusive’ in the sense of coding more than just the relevant text, and aimed to include the parts before and after each extract in order to keep it in context for the process of analysis which would follow (see also Silverman, 2005).

I also tried to include instances which seemed to be in conflict with the way the discourse was presented so that these points of conflict could be considered with the other instances of these discourses, to ensure my developing explanation could account for *all* instances of its deployment (Silverman, 2005). This coding process assisted in grouping extracts with similar themes together.

Once the preliminary coding process was completed, these groups of similarly-themed extracts were then read and re-read in-depth for similarities and differences between them (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). In particular, I looked at how participants constructed romance and gender identities, how they positioned themselves through these discourses, and the discursive effect of utterances or actions based on how they were responded to. Where possible the purpose or goal of the discourse was considered as well, in terms of justification, defence, idealisation, and so on. Potter and Wetherell (1987) also suggest looking to see how drawing from a discourse might achieve one end for a participant, but might go on to create a further “problem” that will need to be resolved. By remaining aware of these contradictions and shifts in positions and discourses, one can analyse to see what parts of a discourse may be problematic and why.

I also looked specifically at how the interviewer responded to what the participants were saying, as well as being aware of my responses to what they were saying as I coded and analysed the data (in an effort to critically interrogate my “own suppositions and unexamined techniques of sense-making”, Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p. 168). This approach was guided by Potter and Wetherell’s advice that there should be two stages to doing analysis – first, identifying patterns of difference or similarity across the data set, and then secondly, looking to see what function and effect these rhetorical devices may have. In this way, they suggest, one can analyse both the “broad organisation” of discourse and power at the societal level, as well as displays of power, negotiation and defence in the micro-interactions of “moment-to-moment detail” (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p. 169).

As these collections of extracts were being coded, I also created discursive maps of the ideas as they were emerging to organise how they related to each other (see Braun & Clarke, 2006 for a similar discussion of thematic maps). This helped me to conceptualise how the deployment of these different discourses related to each other. Additionally, at this stage, I began linking the emerging ideas back to the literature, so see how they worked in conversation with these.

These steps did not occur in a linear fashion, but rather were repeated iteratively as the focus of the study became more refined. For example, once a section had got to a point where it had been mapped and I had begun writing it up, I often found that I needed further examples of each discourse, and so the process of re-reading the data, grouping together similarly themed extracts together, and analysing them, would be repeated. With each iteration, however, each search would become clearer and more directed, creating a funnel approach to the coding and analytical process (Silverman, 2005). This occurred in line with Potter and Wetherell’s (1987, p. 174) recommendation that the different stages of analysis are “conceptual” rather than being a “rigid temporal narrative”, and that there should be a “fluid movement between the different stages”. This iterative approach is also recommended by Silverman (2005).

In the write-up, a variety of ways of representing the data has been chosen. In some case, basic counts of information/discourses appear. This is useful as it gives a

summarised overview of the data set as a whole, giving the reader an idea about how commonly this instance occurs (Silverman, 2005). In other cases, a number of short extracts are given, which again assists in giving an overview but this time with a specific discourse operationalised in context. Finally, longer extracts were also presented which demonstrate in more detail how these discourses were deployed. Given the length of the analysis section, for convenience some portions of the interview are presented more than once where they are central to multiple points of analysis.

By using a variety of methods of presenting the data, I aimed to have a balance between presenting detailed 'close up' and 'bird's eye view' representations of the data, to improve the credibility of the analysis (Silverman, 2005).

### 3.7. Validity, reliability and rigor of the study

It has been argued that poor quality work, whether qualitative or quantitative in nature, is unethical; therefore, it is important for research to be credible, rigorous and scientifically sound (Silverman, 2005; Wassenaar, 2006; Wassenaar & Mamotte, 2012). Therefore, this section will describe the steps taken in this study in an effort to increase the rigour.

In qualitative research, validity refers to the 'believability' of the analysis – in other words, how closely it reflects the social phenomenon it refers to and how credible an analysis of this phenomenon may be seen to be (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Silverman, 2005). The biggest threat to validity, Silverman (2005, p. 211) argued, is the threat of "anecdotalism": the selection of key instances in order to validate the researcher's pre-conceived argument. This 'siren call' is made harder to resist, Silverman argues, because of limitations of space. Additionally, it is often difficult to gauge how typical these cases are of the data set as a whole. Finally, where data is presented in tabular form, the original data is absent, making it impossible for a reader to form their own interpretation of the data.

A few key techniques were identified to increase the 'believability' of this research study (cf. Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Silverman, 2005). Silverman (2005) argues for the use of the "refutability principle" (p. 212), which is the idea that qualitative researchers

should avoid coming to “easy conclusions” (p. 213) and instead be critical of their preconceived ideas and try to disprove one’s theory at each step of the research process. Kelly (2006b, p. 377) describes this as taking an “ironizing”, self-reflexive stance to doing analysis, which means to write in a way that is critically self-aware (see also Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007).

This was identified as a potential issue early on in the research process. In particular, I was concerned about imposing my own preconceived ideas about romance onto participants. In the data collection phase, I attempted to avoid this by using the term ‘romantic event’, using a neutral poster to recruit participants, and emphasising to participants that they could do whatever they wanted when planning their dates. In the analysis phase, I drew from the methods that follow to attempt to remain objective and to avoid “jump(ing) to easy conclusions” (Silverman, 2005, p. 213).

Potter and Wetherell (1987) argue that valid discursive research should be coherent, in that analysis should explain both the main features of a discourse, as well as its “micro-sequences” (p. 170). Silverman’s (2005, p. 214) notion of “comprehensive data treatment” is similar, and involves insuring that *all* aspects of the data set are included in developing the analysis. An example of how this was applied in this study: As a new code was added, I would go back through the data set to ensure that all and any instances that could apply to this code was included in this grouping for analysis. By doing this, I was also drawing from Silverman’s “constant comparative method”, which means that an emerging hypothesis should be tested against as many other instances as possible before any generalising claims are made (2005, p. 213). Evidence of this method can be seen in instances where I list multiple examples of particular discourses or behaviours in order to give weight to the argument being made.

This practice also includes the study of any “deviant cases” (Silverman, 2005, p. 215). Silverman (2005) argued that one must seek to understand the instances in one’s data that seem to be anomalies, as this will not only enrich the analysis but also increase its validity. For example, in my data, men were predominantly argued to be the ones who should romance their partners. Anika and Sue seemed to be anomalies, as they both

romanced their partners. Chapter 7 explores this 'resistance' and demonstrates that participants positioned the 'active woman romancer' as problematic and needing justification, particularly in terms of protecting their partners' masculinity. These justifications present these 'anomalies' as something that coherently 'fits' within the broader discourse of active romantic masculinity (please see Chapter 7 for more details). Therefore, by including deviant cases in the analysis, the analysis is enriched and validated.

It is argued that qualitative research should not merely report what participants have said, but 'go beyond' it analytically. For example, Terre Blanche et al. (2006, p. 331) argue that while participants act "within a discursive frame", we as discursive analysts need to detach ourselves from this discourse in order to adequately "reflect on the text" in a critical way. This is done by comparing the deployment of discourse across the data set as well as by incorporating theory into our understanding of this discourse. However, it has also been argued that analysis should still remain in tension with the original text. That is, it should not only reflect the analyst's theoretical viewpoint, but also account for the participants' orientation to the discourse, and the way the discourse is deployed in talk in this way (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). So, while not promoting the return to one's participants in order for them to validate our findings – a technique promoted by some qualitative research but which Silverman (2005, p. 212) fears is a "flawed method" – it is necessary to avoid imposing our viewpoint on the discourse, bending the data to fit our pet theory. Therefore, in doing the analysis, care was taken to think critically about the data, and while I moved beyond how participants might interpret the data (cf. Kelly 2006c), I aimed to remain true to the way the discourse was deployed. This acted as a tether to any potential flights of analytical fancy. I accomplished this in the following way: As each discourse was written up and described, I tested it against the original texts, to ensure I had not moved beyond its originally deployment. Another reason to put in longer extracts, as described above, is to assist the reader in assessing the success of this.

These were the techniques enlisted to increase the 'truthfulness' and credibility of this study. Next, the 'reliability' of this study will be discussed. The parallel of reliability in qualitative research is the consistency with which data is dealt with (Silverman,

2005). Potter and Wetherell (1987) argue that some qualitative research focuses only on looking for the *common* or *consistently used* discourses across different data sets. They warn against 'being consistent' in this way, as this approach focuses on the few discourses that are comparable across the data set at the expense of investigating the full range of resources people draw from to construct and account for their version of the world (Potter & Wetherell, 1987).

Instead, they recommend giving participants multiple opportunities to draw from these discourses in different ways, as this will allow researchers to explore how participants' "interpretative resources are explored and engaged" (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p. 164). In this study, each participant took part in three interviews (a pre-event individual interview, a post-event couple interview and a post-event individual interview). Each interview had a different focus with different interview questions, but required participants to draw from discourses around romance and gender in order to answer them. Therefore, the research design assisted in increasing 'consistency' in the sense used by Potter and Wetherell (1987).

Silverman (2005) uses 'consistency' in a slightly different sense. He argues that reliability in qualitative research may be achieved by using "detailed data presentations" with "minimal inferences" (Silverman, 2005, p. 221). This may be achieved (1) through the use of data extracts as opposed to the researcher summarising participant's meaning in their own words; (2) by including the interviewer's comments and continuers instead of just the interviewee's response; (3) by including longer data extracts to give the reader the context of the quote; and (4) by transcribing the 'nitty gritty' of conversation such as transcribed pauses, overlaps, false starts and so forth, which aids in increasing the reader's understanding of the original conversation (Silverman, 2005).

In this way, the reader may gain a deeper understanding of the context of the extract and the argument that derives from it, and is thus able to verify the analyst's interpretation. Therefore, I used abridged Jeffersonian notation which includes these "nitty gritty" (cf. Antaki et al., 2003; Silverman, 2005; Wooffitt, 2001, 2007; see Appendix 9);



presented longer, detailed extracts with the interviewer's questions and responses included to support the arguments made in the Results and Discussion sections.

### 3.8. Overview of empirical chapters

The results and discussion is split over four chapters. Each chapter will address one of the research questions, as described in the Introduction (Chapter 1, Section 1.2).

The research questions are:

- (1) How is romance constructed by participants as a context for identity production?
- (2) What were the constructed outcomes of romance, and how were these achieved?
- (3) What (complementary) gender identities were produced-in-romance, and what are the identity affordances of the context of being-romantic?
- (4) Were these affordances resisted and what alternatives to these affordances exist?

Thus, in Chapter 4, the context of being-romantic will be explored. It will be shown that three distinct ways-of-being-romantic emerged from the data. These were differentiated in practical terms (such as in terms of location and expense) as well as according to how flexibly or rigidly these situational discursive scripts were defined. It will also be demonstrated that these forms of romance were drawn from and constructed for differing discursive effects. The grand date, despite being positioned as requiring the most effort and expense to produce, was constructed as the ideal form of being-romantic as it offered the most intense experience of romance. The casual date, on the other hand, was the foil against which the grand date was contrasted. Romantic gestures were the most loosely defined and therefore the most individual and diverse. These gestures were typically constructed as tokens of love and appreciation, and so were presented as a means of imbuing one's relationship with romance in an everyday setting, particularly at times when going on grand dates were impractical.

In Chapter 5, I will consider the outcomes of romance. It will be argued that romance was set up in contrast to everyday life. Where everyday life was presented as being contaminating to the marital relationship, romance was set up in direct contrast, as a

means of doing relationship-maintenance. Therefore, I will show how romance – and in particular, the grand date – was constructed as integral to the success of participants' marriages.

I will demonstrate that the way romance achieves this effect is because of its constructed outcome – that of intimacy, and in particular, emotional intimacy. Emotional intimacy was described as a sense of connectedness to one's partner resulting directly from being-romantic. It will be shown that physical intimacy, and in particular sexual intercourse, was rarely directly spoken about. Participants oriented to the discourse of 'romance for sex', but used it to distance their own romantic practices from it, instead positioning physical intimacy and sexual intercourse as the physical expression of this desirable emotional connectedness. It will be argued that this discourse places normative pressure on couples to engage in being-romantic, and specifically, to be romantic according to the limited (limiting?) discursive scripts and affordances of the grand date.

In Chapter 6, I will discuss these discursive scripts and affordances in more detail, and explore how romance – and in particular, the context of the grand date – affords gender identities. It will be shown that romantic masculinity was characterised by the active orchestration of romance and by attentive and chivalrous behaviour. Using Schippers' concept of complementary but hierarchical gender identities I will then explore what space romantic femininity was constructed as needing to occupy in order to give romantic masculinity currency. I will argue that romantic femininity was constructed as being passive and as receiving (and appreciating) romantic gestures. I will also demonstrate that it appeared to be much more difficult for participants to articulate romantic femininity compared to romantic masculinity, especially in ways that were active. The discursive effect of this more nebulous definition will be explored, drawing from Billig's (1999) concept of repression. I will suggest that the discursive repression of what it means to be a romantic woman might allow us to focus on the 'niceness' of romantic masculinity and the wonderful, gender-neutral, equitable outcomes of being-romantic.

In this chapter, I will also investigate the affordances provided by romantic gestures. Of the three forms of romance described by participants, romantic gestures

seemed to have the most potential in terms of offering gender-neutral affordances, as they were described as being performed by men *and* by women, and were the most fluid in terms of what it would entail to produce. However, it will be argued that, upon closer investigation, this form of romance was constructed as being subtly different depending on who it was performed by. Not only was the content of these gestures gendered, I will also show that they were drawn from and positioned to differing discursive effects. I will suggest that men's romantic gestures were positioned as being 'sweet' or 'endearing' while women's romantic gestures were typically offered as evidence for the men participants to know they were appreciated in return for their grand romantic gestures, *without the women needing to reciprocate to the same degree*. I will suggest that romantic gestures were therefore less gender-neutral than they initially appeared.

In Chapter 7, I will examine instances of resistance to the situated affordances of romance. These instances will be explored to see how they can de-stabilise or re-imagine the ways we construct romance. It will be argued that in many cases, instances that were presented as resistance were actually used as justification as to why participants were unable to perform romance in the idealised, normative way. Thus, I will argue that as such, they were not really acts of resistance at all, but rather efforts to make their actions understandable within these idealised and normative romantic discourses.

However, two of the women participants were constructed (by themselves and their partners) as resisting the passivity of romantic femininity and actively romancing their partners. While this active resistance could potentially destabilise the gendered romantic order, a number of factors were identified which may limit the transformative or disruptive effect they may have.

Firstly, I will argue that their romance was positioned as requiring a great deal of effort – more so, in fact, than the effort required from active romantic men. Secondly, it will be argued that the amount of justificatory rhetoric used in discussing these instances suggest that being a 'romantic woman' and a 'romanced man' may be stigmatising positions to occupy. It will be argued that if romantic femininity is characterised by being-romanced, then, correspondingly, to be romanced is to be feminized. Therefore, if

the women partner is actively romancing her partner, it will be argued that the partner becomes feminized as a result. The strategies undertaken by these participants to protect and align the man as active and masculine, will be explored.

I will thus argue that while participants were able to strategically draw from, position and create romance, they were restricted by the context's available affordances. Where participants did try to resist these affordances, it was at the cost of creating a negative, dis-preferred identity (active romantic femininity and passive romanced masculinity), and it will be shown that participants then needed to discursively protect themselves and their partner from these resulting subject positions. Therefore, it will be argued that the greatest identity rewards come from reproducing situational discursive scripts of romance, but that this is problematic because these scripts and affordances are entrenched in chivalrous and patriarchal ways of relating to each other, which through discourses of romance and emotional intimacy, become positioned as idealised and desirable. It will be shown that, as a result, there is normative pressure to go on grand dates and perform these problematic identities in order to 'do' relationship maintenance.

The implications of these findings will then be elaborated in the synthesis section. It will be suggested that it is problematic that women are constructed as wanting romance, but are positioned as being the ones who should receive it, not initiate it. Several authors have argued that there is a cultural expectation that women should be responsible for the emotional housekeeping of heterosexual relationships (Barker, 2012; Eldén, 2011; Delassandro & Wilkins, 2016; Giddens, 1992; Holford, 2012; Schäfer, 2008; Vincent & Chiwandire, 2013; Vincent & McEwan, 2006). However, in this study I have argued that this is problematic beyond the reasons suggested in the existing literature. I have demonstrated that romantic agency is masculinised, so that when women try to actively romance men, it is positioned as a difficult or problematic position to occupy. Hence, I will argue that while society expects women to maintain the health and well-being of their romantic relationships, women are simultaneously placed under normative constraints to be romanced and not to actively romance their partners. Thus, women have the responsibility, but not the means, for maintaining the health of their marriages.

# Chapter 4: Constructions of the context of romance

## 4.1. Introduction

In reviewing the literature for this study it was found that there have been a number of studies conducted on romance, in some form or other; however, it has been undertaken across many disciplines and is therefore theoretically fragmented. Literature examining the practices of jointly constructing masculinity and femininity through being-romantic (especially from my theoretical perspective) was extremely scarce. There is a dearth of literature regarding specific practices of being romantic, and the kinds of identity this context affords. The context of romance will therefore form the focus of investigation in this chapter, which will assist me in addressing the first research question, namely “How is romance constructed by participants as a context for identity production?”

I will start by examining literature on romance, and on being-romantic in particular. This will out of necessity be a pastiche of literature from different theoretical backgrounds because of the gaps mentioned above; however, I will interpret and apply these findings using the lens of my theoretical framework, as articulated in Chapter 2 and 3. Once the literature has been explored, I will develop the participants’ explanations of being-romantic, as a site for the performance of identity.

In this chapter, I will argue that in the ways we talk about romance - from representations of romance in media (such as books, movies, magazines, and so on) to the way it is explored in the academic literature – there is a tendency to position romance as having a set ‘script’, or series of steps required to recognise this event as ‘doing romance’. However, I will argue that romance is more multi-dimensional than this, as will be made clear in the analysis section.

There will be two stages to the analysis of participants’ talk. Firstly, I will explore participants’ talk about different ‘kinds’ of romance, which were positioned as varying according to how script-like they were positioned as being, and, as a result, the intensity of romance they provided access too. Secondly, and in line with the theoretical

framework of this study, I will then argue that participants did not merely relay information about romantic 'scripts'; rather, that they described a discursive repertoire of situated identity affordances, which were drawn from strategically in complex and nuanced ways. I will argue that these constructed varieties of romance were drawn from and positioned in particular ways in the interview data, doing the 'work' of justifying romantic practices and constructing participants' relationships as special, meaningful and unique.

#### **4.2. Literature Review: Romance as practice versus romance as product**

In Section 2.3.2 of the Literature review (Chapter 2), I made the argument that it is vital to include a consideration of context into our understanding of gender affordances and performances, as these are indelibly shaped by the context in which they occur. Without an understanding of context, we miss key reasons that the existing hegemonic gender order may resist reform. For this reason, this Chapter of my Results and Discussion will look at romance as a context for doing gender in.

In societal discourse, as well as in much of the literature, a common presumption seems to be that 'romance' can be defined very narrowly; for example, going on luxury dates at upmarket restaurants, dressing up, men acting in chivalrous ways, and so on. This narrow definition reflects a tendency to assume that romantic dates are culturally or cognitively scripted. But some research (for example Schwarz, 2010, where participants discussed using a camera to imbue a moment with romance, specialness and intimacy) suggest that romance is more complex or nuanced than that – that individuals interact with the romantic context, using it to produce identities.

In this literature review, I will first look at how the cultural practice of being-romantic developed. I will describe the origin and development of romance, and discuss what romance 'looks like' today. I will show that romance is both idealized and normalized. I will then argue that rather than conceptualise romance as a cultural or cognitive script, we should approach it as a strategic and situational affordance.

#### 4.2.1. The development of the cultural practice of romance

In Chapter 1, Section 1.1.3.3, I argued that ‘romance’ is a term with many possible applications. For example, romance can be defined in several ways – as a genre of film/novels; as a historical period in literature, music and art; as a pseudonym for the kind of relationship that includes emotional and physical intimacy; as a verb (to romance someone); and so on (Illouz, 1997). In the case of my study, I am specifically referring to a ‘romantic date’ between two people; in particular, a heterosexual romantic date, for the reasons explained in Section 1.1.1.

Romance has typically been thought of as a Westernised cultural artefact (e.g. Illouz, 1997; Vannini, 2004); however, it has also been suggested that romance exists in many forms around the world, and in other periods in history as well (Lindholm, 2006). However, as the particular cultural phenomenon focused on in this study, ‘the romantic date’ only emerged in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, specifically in Western consumer-capitalist culture (Illouz, 1997).

Before the twentieth century, even in ‘Western’ cultures ‘dating’ as a practice did not exist, and the range of available leisure activities were limited. In rural areas, leisure activities included communal settings involving informal or formal group activities. Informal activities might include food-oriented activities such as picnics, or practical activities such as “barn-raising” or group quilting sessions (Illouz, 1997, p. 54); while formal activities might include church-, community- or state-organised events such as fetes, fairs or dances. In urban areas, the leisure activities of the mid-to-upper classes typically occurred in private homes in a practice known as “calling” (Illouz, 1997, p. 54). ‘Calling’ might include teas, dinner parties, or balls; and courtship took place within the woman’s home under the watchful eye of her family. Leisure activities outside of the home were generally associated with and limited to the lower classes (Illouz, 1997).

However, during the 1920s and 30s, courtship evolved into the practice of ‘dating’ (referred to in this study as ‘being-romantic’), with leisure activities such as dancing in a dance hall, going to the movies, eating a meal in a public space and so on, becoming an acceptable practice beyond the class boundaries that had previously regulated it. Illouz

(1997, p. 56) referred to this shift from the private to the public space as the creation of “islands of privacy” within public spaces. These “islands” were structured and enforced by the physical design of the contexts themselves (for example, a darkened cinema; the ‘table for two’ where one could talk without being overheard; and so on), allowing couples to construct a sense of privacy and intimacy while in a public setting (Illouz, 1997).

In part, the development of being-romantic was facilitated by the increasing independence of women and the redefining of love and marriage that took place in the twentieth century (van Acker, 2003; as discussed further in Chapter 5). Where love was viewed in the nineteenth century as being associated with suffering and tragedy, it became seen in the 20<sup>th</sup> century as the goal in the pursuit of happiness (Illouz, 1997; Straub, 2006). This shift entailed the idealisation of love as the central rhetoric that makes our lives meaningful.

Another major influence on the development of romance as a cultural and discursive practice was the rise in consumer culture in the twentieth century. Illouz (1997) described the development of romance as a cultural phenomenon and demonstrated a tie between consumerism and romance. She suggested that there was a post-Victorian shift away from austerity and frugality, towards what she called a “*Dionysian aesthetic*”, or the hedonistic consumption of ‘unnecessary’ but enjoyable luxury items (Illouz, 1997, p. 15, emphasis in original; Tukachinsky, 2008). It has been argued that hedonism is a necessary part of consumer capitalist culture, as the driving force behind consumption (Bell, 1976; as cited in Illouz, 1997). This hedonism is evident to some degree in the privileging of certain commodities over others when being-romantic – for example, in the consumption of expensive meals in luxury settings, the drinking of champagne, the association of romance with roses, et cetera (Illouz, 1997). The consumption of these expensive items became symbols or tropes of romance, as romance increasingly became associated with pleasurable leisure activities (Illouz, 1997).

This close tie between being-romantic and consumption was facilitated by two processes which occurred simultaneously: the “romanticization of commodities and the commodification of romance” (Illouz, 1997, p. 26). The first process refers to the gloss of



romance which certain commodities and leisure activities acquired, through their representation in movies, magazines, and advertising in the early twentieth century (Illouz, 1997). Vannini (2004, p. 9) argued that certain commodities are constructed as “essential” to the positioning of a date as romantic, as they “[signify] the ‘special-ness’ of the event”. These components, Vannini argues, are not *unique*, but are rather “mass marketed and mass produced”, and yet are “still consumed as endowed with an aura of uniqueness” (2004, p. 9). When an event is marked by these signifiers as ‘special’, it “allows its consumers to operate a Gestalt-like switch and interpret the story of an evening as ‘a magical fairy tale’” (Vannini, 2004, p. 9). For example, as stated above, candlelight and roses (especially red roses) became romanticised – that is, seen as a signifier that the ‘doing’ of romance is taking place (Illouz, 1997). This was facilitated through the rise in disposable income of an emerging middleclass, as well as through the rise of mass-produced goods during this period (Illouz, 1997).

The second process refers to the way that romance has become commodified, in that the practice of doing-romance or being-romantic became increasingly linked to consumption of leisure and luxury goods; activities<sup>16</sup>; or technologies<sup>17</sup> (Illouz, 1997, p. 26; Tukachinsky, 2008; Vannini, 2004). This was enabled by an increasing representation of love in mass media, especially as a means of promoting consumption (Illouz, 1997; Straub, 2006; Wo, 2011). Thus, while romantic activities involving no or little consumption are feasible and *can be* identified, they are less discursively ‘to hand’ in our collective imagination about what it means to be romantic (Illouz, 1997; Vannini, 2004). Instead, it has been suggested that when participants are asked to define romance, it is evident that “consumerist romantic practices are culturally *more prevalent*... (and) serve as the *standard against which nonconsumerist moments are constructed*” (Illouz, 1997, p. 125, emphasis in original).

---

<sup>16</sup> For example, going for a drive or going to the cinema

<sup>17</sup> For example, automobiles or the movie theatre

## 4.2.2. Romance today

### 4.2.2.1. Introduction: Romance in modern romantic relationships

'Being-romantic' has been a recognisable cultural practice for nearly a century (Illouz, 1997). I have discussed a few aspects of its origins in the early twentieth century, and how it served as a break in practice from the previous courtship rituals of finding a marriageable partner. As such, being-romantic as it emerged in the early twentieth century was an entirely new kind of cultural practice. In time, it came to represent the commodification of relationships themselves, as 'dating' was a way to engage in these luxurious, leisure activities and 'try out' potential relationships, to see if they would develop into a permanent one (Illouz, 1997; Toner, 1988). In this way, being-romantic came to mirror a new kind of consumerism that was occurring at a broader societal level – where we expect to be able to try out a 'product' to see if we like it before committing to it and then if we change our mind later, to return it and try another (Toner, 1988). Similarly, the rise of the Westernised cultural practice of 'dating' performs a similar service, in that it allows us to 'try on' another person to see if there is a romantic fit, or chemistry between us (Illouz, 1997).

This, along with other sociological changes such as the depolarisation of marriage status<sup>18</sup>; a rise in divorce rates; and some degree of de-institutionalisation of romantic relationships and child-rearing<sup>19</sup>, has meant that marriage is no longer seen to be as permanent and inflexible as before; with various kinds of relationships and ways-of-being seen as increasingly acceptable<sup>20</sup>. In this light, the practice of being-romantic and going on

---

<sup>18</sup> That is, where previously one was defined as either married/unmarried (with spinster/bachelor or widow/widower being used to clarify one's unmarried state); there are now many more ways of describing one's relationship status compared to in the past. Examples could include: casual dating (where one might date multiple people simultaneously); monogamous dating; cohabiting; long distance relationship; online relationship; separated; sex buddy (where there is no romantic relationship, and the relationship is more about sexual gratification); fling (romantic relationship which is short-lasting but intense); et cetera.

<sup>19</sup> That is, that it is becoming more common and/or socially acceptable to have children outside of marriage

<sup>20</sup> Examples of these varieties of relationship set ups could include: same sex marriages; cohabiting life partners; co-parents who are not in a relationship; long term relationships with or without children; marriages with or without children; and so forth. In the context of post-modern societies, all of these forms of relationships are gaining currency and cultural acceptability; compared to a century ago, where a long-term relationship was far more likely to be limited to a child-producing marriage with someone identified as being of the 'opposite' gender.

dates allows us to experience another person in these romantic contexts, which enables us to decide whether (and how) to proceed with the relationship or not (Illouz, 1997).

That said, it is likely that being-romantic might differ for married couples, in comparison to the arguments made above (Illouz, 1997). Lizardo (2007, p. 233) described being-romantic in terms of allowing us to make our lives meaningful through the act of consumption and to discover oneself through “sensual excess”. In the case of romance (as will be seen in the following chapter more particularly), as consumption occurs in collaboration with one’s partner (and in this study, with one’s marriage partner), it could be suggested that this allows a shared sense of identity to be created through our rituals of romantic consumption. This last point will be explored further in the following chapter (Section 5.3.1).

It has been suggested that being-romantic for married couples may be constructed as more to do with relationship work or maintenance (Roundy, 2011; see Chapter 5 for further discussion), as compared to this analogy of ‘shopping for a partner’ (Toner, 1988). Illouz (1997) suggested that while there are aspects of being-romantic that link to a Dionysian-like joyous consumption of excess (see also Campbell 1987, as cited in Lun, 2004) there was also evidence in her data set that participants (especially in reference to long term relationships) constructed romance as more of a ritualised, symbolic, and sanctified experience, which jarred with this conception of romance as being about consumption to excess. In these instances, romance was more likened to a religious experience, constituted through the use of an Apollonian-like use of symbols and rituals. These served to ritualistically mark out a sacred space that was separate to everyday life, in which a higher emotional experience could be attained in connection to a significant other (Illouz, 1997).

Romance, as a discursive repertoire of practices, might well contain aspects of either Apollonian or Dionysian – or both – of these kinds of experiences. According to the theoretical framework of this study, I would argue that the representation of these two kinds of romantic experiences provide discursive frameworks that provide contextual affordances for the production of both romance and identity. Thus, rather than aiming to

investigate which of these two approaches best defines romance, my goal in the data analysis will be to see how participants draw from and orient to these different resources. I will now look more specifically at what the literature has argued about specific practices of being-romantic in the twenty-first century.

#### 4.2.2.2. The practices of modern romance

Thus far, I have discussed briefly the origins of romance, and proposed two different roles that being-romantic may play in our lives, depending on our relationship status. I will now look more closely at the practices of romance, to see what the literature argues being-romantic 'looks like' as a practice.

Illouz (1997) asked participants in her study to list activities considered romantic. She found that the activities offered by participants could be divided into three different categories: "*gastronomic* (e.g., preparing or purchasing food at home or in a restaurant); *cultural* (e.g., going to the movies, the opera, or a sports event), and *touristic* (e.g., going to a vacation spot or a foreign country)" (Illouz, 1997, p. 121-2, emphasis in original).

A second important aspect of being-romantic is *where* the romance occurs. Illouz (1997) suggested that romance is typically (but not exclusively) linked with activities outside of the home. It has been suggested that it is the distinction from everyday life (especially prominent/relevant in accounts of longer term relationships) that provides the point of departure for the creation of romance (Illouz, 1997; Jarvis, 1999).

Illouz (1997) argued that this distinctiveness from everyday life is important, in that it is through being identified as 'different' that its romance and 'specialness' is maintained. Illouz (1997) suggested that there are four ways that romance can be demarcated from everyday life. The first kind of boundary that Illouz identified is that of time, in that romance is typically defined as having a clear beginning and end. In addition, it has been suggested that being-romantic often is seen as (stereo)typically occurring at night (Illouz, 1997).

Secondly, Illouz (1997) proposed that there are spatial boundaries between romance and everyday life. For example, generally, 'outside the home' is constructed as more romantic than 'at home', as, Illouz suggested, 'outside the home' provided a sense of escape from everyday concerns.

The third means of marking the boundaries between being-romantic and everyday life was suggested to be artefactual (Illouz, 1997); that is, it was proposed that through the use of 'special' products reserved for 'special occasions', one can intensify the romantic experience and make it seem more formal. Examples could include using/wearing a commodity given to you as a gift (e.g. fragrance); wearing "elegant clothes" or "getting dressed up"; consuming "expensive meals" that would be too costly or decadent to consume on a day-to-day basis (Illouz, 1997, p. 116).

Finally, the fourth boundary proposed by Illouz (1997) was emotional. In line with her suggestion that romance is Apollonian, Illouz argued that there is a "similarity between the awe and the intensity felt in the religious experience and the romantic sentiment", as well as a sense that the identities of the two parties on the date are merging through this romantic experience (Illouz, 1997, p. 117). In other words, it is suggested that one's emotional responses should be different to those experienced in everyday life, that there should be an intensity equitable with a religious experience. It is suggested that this boundary is especially important, for it acts not only as a barometer for the success of the date but as an indication of the current worth of your relationship as well (Illouz, 1997). That is, if you are unable to access this feeling of emotional intensity, you will feel the date has been unsuccessful, and the relationship as a whole might be brought into question. Illouz (1997) therefore argues that romantic intensity is an important boundary in the doing-of-romance.

Illouz (1997) argued that these four factors act as a boundary to protect the sacredness of the romantic space from intrusion and to amplify the sense of it being special and separate to everyday life. Therefore, being-romantic is described in the literature as something that is out of the ordinary (Illouz, 1997; Morrison, 2010). However, it has also been acknowledged to be a "ubiquitous" part of modern, Westernised culture (Morrison,

2010, p. 208); and it has also been suggested that participants orient to these practices of being-romantic as meaningful and simultaneously as potentially problematic. For example, it has been shown that some participants in studies on romance have suggested that romance can be formulaic or inauthentic (Illouz, 1997; Morrison, 2010; Schwarz, 2010; Storey & McDonald, 2013; Tukachinsky, 2008), and some of these participants strove to reinterpret romance in unique or unconventional ways<sup>21</sup>. Lindholm (2006) suggested that not only are we active, strategic performers of romance, we are increasingly becoming suspicious of romance and the consumption it entails. Lindholm argued that because of this link to consumerism, we more widely find romance (and the performance thereof) as less “convincing” – even while we perform it to position our relationships as meaningful (Lindholm, 2006, p. 6). Thus, it has been suggested that romance is “acutely conscious of itself as code and cliché. We have become deeply aware that, in the privacy of our words and acts of love, we rehearse cultural scenarios that we did not write” (Illouz, 1997, p. 293).

Thus, it could be argued that there is a tension between the relatively formulaic activities required to ‘do’ romance successfully and the need to feel like is unique and individualized in order to be authentic. It seems likely that one cannot experience romance as authentic if it’s too formulaic or planned, but rather that it needs to feel spontaneous and personal – or at least non-stereotypical – in order for it to feel authentic and thus a reassurance of the legitimacy of this relationship.

#### 4.2.3. Romance as a script or romance as a contextual affordance?

Participants’ concern (as seen in Illouz, 1997; Morrison, 2010; Schwarz, 2010; Storey & McDonald, 2013; Tukachinsky, 2008) over authenticity of romance suggests that the theoretical framework being used in the study should be able to investigate and explain how we interact with the affordances of romance in active and strategic ways.

---

<sup>21</sup> For example, in Morrison (2010), several of her women participants, in defining what was romantic for them, “took photographs of their partners doing household chores or because of issues surrounding anonymity, of the end result, such as a clean kitchen. It is emphasised that these actions are physical expressions of love” (p. 197). In doing so, these participants tried to reformulate what being-romantic means in ways that were less conventional.

As discussed in Chapter 2, in reviewing the literature, it was found that being-romantic is often investigated in terms of being scripted. Several authors (Bachen & Illouz, 1996; Dowd & Pallotta, 2000; Jenkins, Nixon & Molesworth, 2011; Morrison, 2010; Sanders, 2008; Schwarz, 2010; Straub, 2006; Toner, 1988; Tukachinsky, 2008) have suggested that the representation of romance in the media forms a cultural 'script' for how it could be reproduced in our lives (Toner, 1988). Morrison (2010) describes romance as a "codification of love" and as a "highly scripted practice, set of ideas, experiences and actions" (p. 207). For example, Rose and Frieze (1993) used a cognitive script approach to understanding the patterns within what is defined broadly as 'romantic'. They found that the list of activities that were defined as entailing 'going on a first date' included getting ready for the date; the man picking up the woman for a date involving a meal of some kind, and often included additional entertainment such as a movie show or a party; the man taking the women home; and (ideally) some act of intimacy would occur, such as a good night kiss. The authors note that "these results suggest that changing social norms have not had much effect on female and male roles" in the doing of romance (p. 508).

When looking at these findings, it is tempting to conclude that the fact that romance is easy to define means it must be produced from some common cognitive or cultural script. However, we must be wary of oversimplifying the case. For example, Jenkins et al. (2011, p. 267) argue that any interpretation which "ascribes too little autonomy to individuals" should be rejected. Similarly, Lun (2004) argued that one needs to develop a theoretical understanding of the role of culture in shaping the affordances available to us in doing-romance, while still recognising individual agency in enacting meaningful experiences from these affordances.

As mentioned above, being-romantic has been part of Western culture for nearly a century, and thus it is likely clearly defined and expressed in societal discourse. Being-romantic also seems to have become normalised and idealised, which suggests there are certain rewards and pressures on us to enact romance in particular, limited ways that might appear script-like on the surface (discussed further in Chapter 5). Also, as mentioned above, some studies (Illouz, 1997; Morrison, 2010; Schwarz, 2010; Storey & McDonald,

2013; Tukachinsky, 2008) have shown that participants are not limited to what appears in these ‘scripts’ – but instead interact with these strategically in agentic ways. Therefore, rather than conceptualising the romantic practices described above as ‘scripted’ in the cognitive sense, it may be more theoretically productive to envision ‘scripts’ as recognizable frameworks for behaving meaningfully and, in the retrospective accounts produced in interviews, for recounting forms of behaviour and experiences jointly recognizable as romantic.

As argued in the Introduction (Section 1.1), I could find no investigation of being-romantic from this particular theoretical perspective. Furthermore, the majority of sources cited in this Chapter are more than 10 years old, and it is possible that the practice of romance may have shifted over time. Additionally, I am investigating this from a South African perspective, which, while heavily influenced by Western consumer culture, is also a cultural melting pot and may have a unique take on what it means to be romantic as a result – however, very little South African information on being-romantic as a discursive practice could be found. This data analysis that follows aims to address these gaps by providing a novel combination of theoretical approaches to address this particular context.

### 4.3. Data analysis

The goal of this analysis is twofold: Firstly, to explore participants’ constructions of romance in order to understand society-level discourses about romance within this particular population in South Africa. Secondly, to explore individual’s agency within this cultural construction of romance, to see how participants may draw from these situated affordances and discursive performative scripts to navigate, simulate, and create moments of romance with partners.

#### 4.3.1. The hierarchy of romance: Three forms of being-romantic

In deconstructing participants’ talk about ‘things-that-are-romantic’, three distinct kinds of romance emerged. These three forms of romance will first be discussed and



contrasted, using the guidelines postulated by Illouz (1997) above – that is, along the four boundaries of time, space, artefacts and emotions; activity-orientation (gastronomic/ cultural/ touristic); and relationship to consumption (direct, indirect, none). It will be argued that these three forms of romance were positioned hierarchically by participants and can be conceptualised as following a pyramid shape.

At the bottom of the pyramid, I have placed romantic gestures, as the most commonly occurring form of romance. These had the fewest boundaries from everyday life (cf. Illouz, 1997); were the most flexible and diverse; and while constructed as romantic, were of less intensity and duration than the other forms of romance. At the top of the pyramid I have placed the grand romantic date, which had the most boundaries from everyday life; were constructed as most closely following discursive performative scripts; and were the most romantically intense of the three forms of romance. Casual dates have been placed in the middle of the pyramid.

Furthermore, two vital aspects of this hierarchical pyramid emerged from this deconstructed understanding of romance; namely, that these three forms of romance varied both in their romantic intensity, as well as in how loosely or tightly formulaic they were presented as being. In the second section, this talk will be discursively analysed to see what participants ‘do’ with it within the context of these interviews and within the broader landscape of their relationships. First, however, these three forms of romance will be explored.

#### 4.3.1.1. The casual date

The first form of being-romantic that has been identified has been termed the ‘casual date’, as exemplified in the following extract:

##### EXTRACT 1: INTERVIEW 1.5

1. Sue: the things we'd usually do [...] would be like going to dinner (.) y'know like at (.)
2. Spur=
3. Nicky: =ok[ay
4. Sue: [or like (.) Mugg n Bean, type of thing [...] it's (.) very much chilled [...]
5. Nicky: Having (.) maybe like a budget °where you can go, maybe a bit more° [...]
6. will that a-affect y'know e-e-maybe having (.) s-slightly different vibe to like (.) a
7. normal Spur or something like [that?

8. Sue: [YEAH, yeah [it will for sure because now I'm not  
 9. Nicky: [okay  
 10. Sue: actually wearing jeans and a [t-shi(h)rt ((small laugh))  
 11. Nicky: [o(h)kay

The casual date was constructed as going to movies or to inexpensive, casual, family-friendly restaurants – or in the case of Couple 4, going on what they termed ‘safari dates’ (eating each course of a meal at a different restaurant or food kiosk, typically in a shopping mall). Casual dates were also constructed to include less conventional, activity-oriented ‘fun’ dates, such as going snorkelling or surfing (Couple 5); antique shopping (Couple 5); go-carting (Couple 1); fishing (Couple 3); gymming together (Couple 3); playing video games together (Couple 1, Couple 4); playing arcade games (Couple 4); window shopping (Couple 4); renting DVDs to watch at home (Couple 1, 3); camping or geocaching<sup>22</sup> (Couple 2). While these dates often took place at night, many were also constructed as occurring during the day time and thus the time of the casual date was less central to its construction.

While food may be consumed on some of these dates, it was not specifically referred to and was not constructed as “delicious” in the same way as on the grand date (see below). The restaurants mentioned as examples in Extract 1 (as well as across the data set) are inexpensive or ‘popular’ restaurants with a casual atmosphere. Spur is a chain of South African ‘Native American’-themed family restaurants with cost-effective meals and an informal, child-friendly atmosphere<sup>23</sup>. Spur was referred to frequently as the site of casual dates in Interviews 1.1, 1.3, 1.5, 2.3, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, and 4.5. Mugg and Bean, another chain of South African restaurants, was another popular option mentioned by participants. Mugg and Bean serves moderately-priced American bistro-style foods and is described as

---

<sup>22</sup> An outdoor recreational activity reminiscent of a modern-day treasure hunt, where a global positioning system (GPS) device is used to locate hidden items (known as a ‘cache’). Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geocaching> and <https://www.geocaching.com/guide/>, accessed 1 September 2017.

<sup>23</sup> Information retrieved from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spur\\_Steak\\_Ranches](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spur_Steak_Ranches) and <http://www.spur.co.za/> on 23 April 2015.

having a “homely atmosphere<sup>24</sup>” and a “fast casual”<sup>25</sup> style of service. Mugg and Bean was referred to in the context of a casual date in interviews 1.1, 1.3, 3.1, and 4.3.

In these constructions, food was described as being consumed in casual settings, and romance was constructed in informal ways which required (moderately) more time, effort and money than eating a meal at home. However, this form of romance does not require a large expenditure, and thus was constructed as a practical option – something the couples could do regularly, such as described in Extract 1 above.

While there were a number of references to this form of romance, there were no explicit or direct references to or descriptions of the kinds of food that one would consume on this kind of date. In addition, these dates did not typically require dressing up too much, and participants tended to construct the ‘dress code’ as being in line with what they would wear on an everyday basis. For example,

#### EXTRACT 2: INTERVIEW 1.2

Luke: “we don’t actually have these big things that often [...] if we can actually get an evening [...] you just wanna relax, just have a night off, and then it’s (.) watching (.) movie(h)s or (.) so(h)(h)mething like that so, she’s usually in her pyjamas”.

Thus, there were very few boundaries constructed between casual dates and everyday life, and consequently, casual dates were constructed as less romantic than grand dates (See Section 4.3.1.3).

In addition, casual dates were often constructed as occurring more frequently than grand dates, and as a result feeling *less* special. As will be argued in more detail below, this construction of the casual date as mundane provided a backdrop against which the grand date could be imbued with more romance through its distinctiveness from the ordinary.

---

<sup>24</sup> Information retrieved from <http://www.muggandbean.co.za/about.php> on 25 January 2016.

<sup>25</sup> Information retrieved from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mugg\\_%26\\_Bean](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mugg_%26_Bean) on 25 January 2016.

#### 4.3.1.2. The romantic gesture

The second form of being-romantic that will be discussed has been called the 'romantic gesture'. 'Romantic gestures' refer to small daily acts of love or consideration (cf. Morrison, 2010) which, while often inexpensive, were described as requiring thought or effort and which would make their partner feel loved and special. This form of romance typically took place in everyday spaces, such as the home or at work and could occur at any time of day. Examples of romantic gestures included running a candlelit bath for their partner (Bruce, Couple 3); cooking surprise meals for their partners (Robyn, Couple 2; Louise, Couple 3; Anika, Couple 4; and Heidi, Couple 5); surprising partners at work with flowers (Louise and Bruce, Couple 3) or to take them out for coffee or for lunch (Luke, Couple 1; Heidi, Couple 5). Romantic gestures also included small tokens, such as inexpensive food items like sweets or chocolates; making him lunch (Robyn, Couple 2), breakfast (Heidi, Couple 5), or coffee (Tom, Couple 5); handmade gifts (Sue, Couple 1; Louise, Couple 3; Anika, Couple 4); or more expensive purchased gifts, chosen specifically because they knew their partner really wanted it or would appreciate it (examples included boots and perfume by Johan, Couple 4; superhero t-shirts by Sue, Couple 1; an Africa pendant necklace by Eddie, Couple 2; and tickets for the Playhouse by Tom, Couple 5).

As can be seen by the diversity of these examples, the 'romantic gesture' covers a broad range of acts, with differing levels of consumption. For example, purchasing a present entails direct consumption; making your partner a surprise romantic meal involves indirect consumption; and running a candlelit bath involves almost no consumption at all. It does, however, make use of candles as romantic artefacts.

The use of candles in this instance is not only artefactual but also transformative – it is a way of distinguishing, elevating and demarcating this space as a romantic one. Candles are positioned as creating both a metaphorical and a literal boundary between every-day and romantic spaces (cf. Illouz, 1997). It is a metaphorical boundary as its use acts as a sign or symbol of this being *something different* to everyday life. It also acts as a literal boundary as they are a visual element that physically changes the space because of the light they cast – a dim, soft light falling only on their immediate settings, therefore

only that which exists within the circle of candlelight is relevant. Candles literally cast the rest of the world into shadow, shining only on the couple and what they are doing.

In addition to being positioned as a way of creating these boundaries, candles were also constructed as a symbol of romance itself, and were a widely used trope throughout the data set. Other examples included: “She has surprised me quite a few times... (with) like a candle-lit dinner on the table” (Bruce, Interview 3.3); “we as a family are hopelessly romantics ((Nicky: Okay)) We will plan the beach and we will plan the ... um candle-lit dinners” (Anika, Interview 4.5); “I’m just like ‘a:h whatever we don’t have the money for it’ like... it’s dumb, cause I mean (.) we could just- put some candles on a table and have a nice meal here” (Tom, Interview 5.3).

Thus, the use of candles is an important cultural practice/ artefact (cf. Illouz, 1997), which was discursively linked to being-romantic and which mark an occasion as ‘romantic’. It could be argued that the use of candles assists in marking or delineating the spatial boundaries of everyday spaces and reconstituting it as a romantic one, for a specific duration of time. Hence, the use of candles in ordinary spaces makes the ordinary special – it simultaneously marks the boundaries of romance and constitutes romance in an unromantic everyday space.

As can be seen from the examples above, while many of these gesture required little financial expense, others required more expense, such as purchasing perfume or boots for their partner (Johan, Couple 4) or buying tickets to the Playhouse Theatre. While these examples involved more costs than the other examples I have defined as ‘romantic gestures’, I have included these expensive examples because of the other similarities they shared with the category as a whole – namely that it required effort and/or time to plan and execute these gestures, especially in terms of finding and purchasing an item. These items, as well, as the other examples, were all constructed in a similar way: as a sacrifice made for the benefit of one’s partner, to demonstrate that the participant was thinking of them and cares for them.

Therefore, while the examples of romantic gestures differed in financial costs, there were other anticipated costs involved, namely, that these were all constructed

as requiring time and effort to orchestrate. For example, it is the combined act of thinking to run a bath for one's partner, *with* the use of candles that produces this gesture as romantic. Thus, romantic gestures were positioned as (often *extremely*) romantic because of the thought and effort that went into the gesture – they were constructed as sending the message 'you are special to me' and 'I'm thinking of you' and thus that the participants' relationship is uniquely romantic and caring (this will be referred to as 'the soulmate discourse' and will be discussed further in the following chapter). Often, these gestures increased in romance by being positioned as a surprise, for example:

**EXTRACT 3 : INTERVIEW 1.1**

1. Nicky: ((la[ughs]))
2. Sue: (((laughs)) he actually surprised me at work yesterday with lunch ((la[ughs]))
3. Nicky: [a::w
4. ((both laugh))
5. Nicky: That's so sweet

**EXTRACT 4: INTERVIEW 3.1**

1. Louise: he goes in the bathroom and he- he runs a bubble bath and puts candles out
2. [and he's like 'why don't] you go have a bath and I'll start dinner' and you walk in it's like
3. Nicky: [ Oh ( ) ]
4. Louise: 'aah' [ .hhh uh ] ((small laugh)) .hhh (.) um (.) a couple of times he's sent
5. Nicky: [Aw ((small laugh))]
6. Louise: flowers to school
7. Nicky: Ja=
8. Louise: =ja .hhh and (.) ja so just doing like little things unexpectedly.

**EXTRACT 5 : INTERVIEW 4.5**

1. Johan: .hhh (.) but I'll feel roma- I'm romantic in a way I mean (.) [you] do t- things to make
2. Nicky: [Mm]
3. Johan: her feel special and [.hhh ] you go out of your way to- to surprise her (with ma-) or or
4. Nicky: [Mhm]
5. Johan: (.) (like) to see her smile .hhh=
6. Nicky: =Yeah

My responses in lines 3 and 5 of Extract 3 and line 5 of Extract 4, show the discursive effect of the partners' gestures: they are received as being extremely positive and 'sweet'. In these extracts, this aspect of surprise ("doing little things unexpectedly", line 7 of

Extract 4) is constructed as conveying thoughtfulness, consideration and care (in order to “make her feel special” and “see her smile”, Extract 5). It is a way of positioning the recipient – and the relationship as a whole – as ‘special’. Thus, rather than extravagant acts of consumption, it is the thought and the effort involved in producing these surprise gestures that makes these gestures romantic.

A key goal of these gestures is constructed as being to make his partner “feel special” (lines 1-3) and to “smile” (line 5). Other examples of surprise romantic gestures in the data set included:

**EXTRACT 6: INTERVIEW 1.1**

Sue: “in his being romantic he will (.) like buy me little chocolates and sweets [...] buy me little teddies [...] he’ll come to me with a packet of sour worms, ‘cause I >love sour worms and he hates them<” and “my love language is (.) buying stuff for him [...] I always try and get him something small”.

**EXTRACT 7: INTERVIEW 2.5**

Eddie: “she put garlic chilli sauce on my hamburger she made me for lunch ((Nicky: oh ni(h)(h)ce)) and I thought it was tomato sauce, and I was really pleasantly surprised ((Nicky laughs))”.

**EXTRACT 8: INTERVIEW 3.1**

Louise: “in the garage he made it a (.) portion of it into an art studio for me”.

**EXTRACT 9: INTERVIEW 3.2**

Bruce: “Like I try and just do something out of the ordinary (.) p- sp- spontaneous (.) maybe try and surprise her something you know”.

**EXTRACT 10: INTERVIEW 3.3**

Bruce: “She has surprised me quite a few times, and that was awesome”.

**EXTRACT 11: INTERVIEW 4.1**

Johan: “So say for instance sh- she looks at a certain type of clothes .hhh and then uh okay next (time be-) if you wanna surprise her, okay (.) you know what she likes[...] basically that’s b- uh how romantic it gets” and “we bik- big on surprises ((small laugh)) you know? [...] I’ll just get her something that she really wants or .hhh same with me vice versa [...] even though you don’t always do something romantic it’s that thought the ele- essence of surprise”.

#### EXTRACT 12: INTERVIEW 4.5

Johan: “that is (.) a surprise and I (.) and that is her being romantic [...] tryna be doing something special for me”.

These gifts often carried personal meaning – for example in Couple 1, Luke’s gift to Sue is sour worms – a sweet that he does not personally like (the insinuation is that this increases the selflessness and consideration of the act); and Luke – a fan of comic books – receives T-shirts with superheroes on them from Sue. Eddie (Couple 2) tracks down a particular necklace Robyn’s been wanting. Louise (Couple 3) surprises Bruce with a work-related present (a silver-plated whistle) when he is promoted, and Bruce surprises Louise with a candle-lit bath after a long day and converts a part of their garage into an art studio for her. Johan (Couple 4) pays special attention on shopping trips to see what his fiancée likes so he can buy her a surprise later on. Anika (Couple 4) makes gifts for Johan using meaningful items like photographs; printed text messages; and sweet wrappers; and so on. The more personally meaningful these gifts were, the more they were constructed as demonstrating thought and effort, and the more productive they were of romance.

The combination of thoughtfulness, personal meaning and the element of surprise and self-sacrifice are constituents of romance in this version of being-romantic. These unexpected gestures were positioned as showing consideration and care, and were a way of imbuing their relationship with meaning (by drawing from the trope of soulmate narrative – see Chapter 5, Section 5.3.1 for a discussion). Romantic gestures are thus identified as an area of academic interest, as their construction appears to differ from the discourse of strict-boundaries-between-life-and-romance, as suggested by Illouz (1997; and as seen in the discourse of the grand date, see below).

#### 4.3.1.3. The grand date

The form of being-romantic which had the most consensus and was the most narrowly defined of the three forms is what I will call the *grand date*. This construction of being-romantic involved the consumption of delicious dinners at expensive restaurants. In



terms of the boundaries identified by Illouz (1997), this form of romance was the most readily definable in terms of the temporal, spatial, artefactual and emotional boundaries she described. This was constructed as being the 'recipe' or 'formula' for a successful night out, which, while constructed by some participants as being 'safe' or 'unoriginal', would however ensure that the night went well.

#### 4.3.1.3.1. The grand date as formulaic and susceptible to disruptions

As in the studies mentioned above (Illouz, 1997; Morrison, 2010; Schwarz, 2010; Storey & McDonald, 2013; Tukachinsky, 2008), my participants seemed to orient to the 'script-like' nature of this formulation of being-romantic, and participants often referred to "the media" and to Western movies to provide examples, explanations and justifications for the rhetorics used to explain the grand date (12 of 25 interviews: 2.3, 2.5, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 4.5, 5.3). For example, when asked "have you guys like learnt anything about yourselves through the process, either as individuals or as a couple?", Heidi replies:

##### EXTRACT 13: INTERVIEW 5.3

Heidi: "I've learnt that like (.) romance isn't something that- (.) cause typically in the movies (.) it will always be like the guy planning something for the girl ((Nicky: mhm)) that's -well, I dunno, it seems like it. But I'm like, it doesn't have to be like that, like I must plan romantic things for Tom ((Nicky: Mhm)) Ja".

Here, Heidi orients to the discourse that men romance women (developed further in Chapter 6), positioning this as a societal expectation, a discursive performative script which has influenced her through the medium of "movies". Through this discourse, she justifies why she does not normally initiate romance in their relationship – it acts as an explanation, an excuse. She then describes an imperative that she should plan a romantic date for Tom, which constructs her as being willing to resist this discursive performative script. This explanation for the normative influence of the grand date was evident in other participants' accounts as well:

**EXTRACT 14: INTERVIEW 2.5**

Eddie: “when you grow up i-in a Western culture and ((Nicky: mm)) you go through (.) a:: (.) dvd store and (.) go to the romance section ((Nicky: ja)) and [...] it’s all exactly the same thing ((Nicky: ja, ja)) so:: (.) you think okay well that’s (.) w-how the role you have to (.) slot into, to do this ((Nicky: ja)) you know”.

**EXTRACT 15: INTERVIEW 3.1**

Louise: “I think kind of the perception of (.) of romantic and going out is very kind of ruled by Hollywood ((small laugh))”.

**EXTRACT 16: INTERVIEW 4.5**

Anika: “we usually, things that we (.) haven’t done before, .hhh things that we .hhh that will make our relationship interesting [...] if you go to- for instance (.) that- that seems (.) if you (.) watch movies it will be that thing ‘wow I want that to be happening”.

**EXTRACT 17: INTERVIEW 5.3**

Tom: “I’m sure a lot of what we think is romantic is informed by like (.) ((Nicky: ja)) like our culture. Specially like Western (.) like, Hollywood, kind of stuff ((Nicky: ja))”.

Thus, participants constructed the grand romantic date as having a narrow scope of affordances “to slot into”, as it is rooted in a discursive performative script which is heavily influenced and tightly defined by the media and Hollywood. This provided a justification for restricted ways they constructed grand dates, especially in comparison to the two other forms of romance discussed above (cf. Edwards, 1997). For example, in the following extract, Tom describes feeling pressured to come up with an original idea for his date for the study, and then deciding to rely on the comfortable and familiar discursive performative script of the grand date:

**EXTRACT 18 : INTERVIEW 5.3**

1. Nicky: A:nd what was it like planning it?
2. Tom: (.) U::H (.) I was super-stressed, like (.) [six weeks ago?
3. Heidi: [(laughs)]
4. Nicky: okay?
5. Tom: like when we first talked about it because [like flip okay, now I have to plan like the
6. Nicky: [ja?
7. Tom: most romantic date ever
8. Nicky: ((laughs))

9. [...]
10. Tom: 'cause I was tryna think like (.) what (.) amazing different thing, other than dinner can
11. I do for a date
12. Nicky: okay
13. Tom: and it's ha(h)(h)rd to like (.) I guess dinner is th- like the romantic thing, [like
14. Nicky: [mm
15. Heidi: for us, maybe
16. Tom: ja=
17. Nicky: =ja. [okay
18. Tom: [like I couldn't think of- (.) I wanted to do something different but then I was like
19. *jis* if I do something different it could backfire so hectically
20. Nicky: oka[:::y
21. Tom: [so like, really nice dinner, (in a) nice restaurant
22. Nicky: ja
23. Tom: will- will be cool, so then I stopped stressing about it [and was fine
24. Nicky: [Mm
25. ((all laugh))
26. Tom: I booked our table a month ago
27. Nicky: (((laughs))) tha(h)t's sjho(h)
28. Heidi: (((laughs))) organi(h)sed

Tom describes initially feeling like he needed to do something 'other' than the typical night out (in order to provide 'good' data for the study), but was concerned about how successful it might be ("it could backfire so hectically", line 19); so he decided instead on their 'typical' night out, which turned out to be extremely successful (with Heidi joking that "it was amazing" ((Nicky: Oh ja?)) it was like the best date ever, I was like, 'Tom, you WIN' ((all laugh))").

Tom's concern about whether the date would "backfire so hectically" reflected another important aspect of the grand romantic date: that the narrow definitions of what constituted a grand date meant that it was susceptible to disruptions. This appeared in other interviews as well. Examples of potential disruptions included being in a bad mood or feeling ill or uncomfortable on a date (11 of 25 interviews, Interviews 1.1, 1.3, 1.4, 2.1, 2.2, 3.3, 3.4, 4.1, 5.2, 5.4, 5.5); not appearing focused on one's partner, for example, by looking at one's cell phone or watching television while on a date (Interviews 2.1, 2.3, 5.1, 5.3); or being concerned about potential flaws in one's appearance (such as not having shaved one's legs, being worried one's partner will notice a pimple, or being concerned about hygiene, 19 of 25 interviews, Interviews 1.1, 1.2, 1.4, 1.5, 2.1, 2.2, 2.5, 3.1, 3.2, 3.4, 3.5, 4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 4.5, 5.1, 5.2, 5.4, 5.5). In contrast, no disruptions were described in connection to the casual date or the romantic gesture. This provides additional evidence

that the grand date differed to the other forms of constructed romance in this study, in tightness of the affordances, or to borrow Eddie's metaphor, the narrowness of the slots provided by the discursive performative script.

#### 4.3.1.3.2. Spatial boundaries

Other participants' descriptions of a 'romantic date' (in speaking hypothetically, as well as in their description of each other's romantic events which had been orchestrated for the study) also drew from elements of this 'recipe' or discursive performative script to position the date as romantic – in particular, the enjoyment of delicious food in a quiet, upmarket restaurant. For example, Luke (Couple 1), in describing Sue's romantic event, says

##### EXTRACT 19: INTERVIEW 1.3

Luke: "Sue took me to: (.) a nice little (.) like (.) larney [fancy] little (.) hotel restaurant [...] it was really nice, it was very quiet and like (.) like (.) very intimate [...] and the::n (.) 'I ordered steak and it was amazing° [...] it was the best (.) meat I have ever had in my life [...] it was- v-very intimate as well, it fe- the restaurant didn't even music... it was just quiet, it was just the two of us".

Similarly, Eddie (Couple 2), when answering the question 'how would you define romance', says (to the laughter of his wife and the interviewer, Nicky):

##### EXTRACT 20: INTERVIEW 2.3

Eddie: "it's something out of the ordinary to force you to focus on [...] just your relationship [...] a quiet restaurant is a good way to do that 'cause you [...] consuming something delicious? [...] =(b- with) (.) your partner looking delicious".

Louise's (Couple 3) date was held at Olive and Oil, a restaurant selected by Louise because that was where they had had their first date. Bruce, in describing her date says that:

##### EXTRACT 21: INTERVIEW 3.4

Louise: "I knew what it was like [...] and we really enjoyed it [...] it was a nice starter [...] it was very good [...] And then u::m (.) then we had seafood platter [...] and they

make amazing seafood platter, wow, it was so good” (Interview 3.3). Louise, in describing her date at this restaurant, says “it was nice to go to a place where .hhh um (.) we knew that we would get good service, and good food? °ja:ː˚”.

Finally, Heidi (Couple 5), describing Tom’s date, says:

**EXTRACT 22: INTERVIEW 5.3**

Heidi: “we:ːː (.) u:ːM (.) went and had dinner a:t (.) u:ːM (.) Harvey’s [...] it was very-romantic setting [...] it’s very pretty restaurant [...] there was like, a faint bit of music [...] (and the food was) ama:ːːzing [...] we shared each other’s food, just so we could try it? And we could talk about it [...] ja. Amazing food”.

As can be seen in these quotes, delicious food of a high or exceptional quality was a central element in the production of what I have termed the ‘grand date’. Inevitably, of the two romantic events executed by each pair of participants for the study, the dates that were constructed as the more romantic of the two were the ones whose food was described as being “amazing”.

As we can see in Heidi’s extract, the sharing of this delicious food also seemed to be an important part of a grand date. The act of sharing food was also presented in Couples 3 and 4, as a means of imbuing their dates with even more romance. For example:

**EXTRACT 23: INTERVIEW 4.2**

Anika: “we ate a pizza there, we share everything, but it’s very nice because there you also .hh if (.) e-if you share something with somebody ((Nicky: Ja)) it’s totally different to having your own thing. You have your dinner and I have my dinner ((Nicky: Ja, ja)) .hh but (.) we share everything [...] it’s very nice. It’s actually very nice”.

**EXTRACT 24: INTERVIEW 3.4**

Louise: “Just (.) sharing our meals and you know it was (.) just really bringing us closer together [...] we- we (.) share (.) every- ev- everywhere we go, we always try to share?”

However, on the second date for the study, they tried something ‘different’.

Bruce explains:

### EXTRACT 25: INTERVIEW 3.3

Bruce: “And then for the first time ever on a date, w-we got the same dessert, and just had our own dessert [...] Usually we share everything, pretty much [...] so we broke tradition ((laughs))”.

Hence, the sharing food was sometimes (but not always) constructed as providing an added layer of intimacy to a date.

The location of these grand dates tended to be in upmarket restaurants, typically more formal and expensive than those selected for casual dates (interviews 1.1); with a quiet or muted atmosphere in terms of soft, gentle lighting (“the lighting was really nice, kind of soft light but not (.) too dark”, Tom, Interview 5.5; also similarly referred to in interviews 1.3, 2.1, 5.2, 5.3,) and muted music which did not jar or intrude (interviews 1.3, 2.3, 2.5, 5.2, 5.3). The atmosphere of grand dates were described as not too crowded or too ‘dead’ (“there was a vibe, like, quite a few people but not super busy”, Heidi, Interview 5.3; also in interview 1.3, 2.1, 2.2, 5.2 and 5.5). Additionally, they were described as receiving good service from restaurant staff (interview 3.3); and if possible, an interesting or beautiful view (examples included of the city – Interviews 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 5.3; the ocean or beach – Interviews 1.3, 1.5, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 4.3, 5.3; or hills/ mountains – Interviews 2.2, 2.3). These factors contributed to making the space feel different to and more romantic than everyday spaces (cf. Illouz, 1997).

#### 4.3.1.3.3. Artefactual boundaries

In contrast to casual dates, the form of romance associated with more expensive restaurants was constructed as requiring a special or different construction of the self in readiness for (or to help produce) romance. As described in the methodology, two lists – one each of possible man-oriented and woman-oriented activities one might do to get ready for a date – were given to participants to discuss in their individual interviews (pre-event interview and post-event individual interview). Generally speaking, the activities positioned as most central to the successful production of romance across genders were

ones that were hygiene-oriented, and this will be discussed further in the following chapter on intimacy.

For example, in most interviews it was argued that on a date, one should smell clean and fresh (18 of 25 interviews, 1.1, 1.2, 1.4, 1.5, 2.1, 2.2, 2.5, 3.1, 3.4, 3.5, 4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 4.5, 5.1, 5.2, 5.4, 5.5) and have fresh breath (11 of 25 interviews, 1.4, 1.5, 2.1, 2.5, 3.1, 3.4, 3.5, 4.4, 4.5, 5.4, 5.5). However, in addition to these 'basic' hygiene rituals, the following activities were endorsed in each of the interviews as being transformative, that is, of having an important role in making a date feel more special and romantic. For example, applying perfume (11 of 25 interviews, 1.1, 1.4, 1.5, 2.1, 3.1, 3.4, 3.5, 4.2, 4.4, 5.2, 5.4) or aftershave or cologne (14 of 25 interviews, 1.1, 1.2, 1.5, 2.2, 2.5, 3.2, 3.4, 4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 4.5, 5.1, 5.4, 5.5) as opposed to one's everyday deodorant, was positioned as making a date feel more romantic. Other examples included wearing *more or particular*<sup>26</sup> items of jewellery such as dressier earrings or bracelets (10 of 25 interviews, 1.1, 1.2, 3.1, 3.4, 4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 5.2, 5.4, 5.5), or accessories like a special watch or different glasses (interview 4.2); wearing more makeup or nail polish than usual (16 of 25 interviews, 1.1, 1.5, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.5, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 5.2, 5.4, 5.5); wearing formal shoes (12 of 25 interviews, 1.1, 1.2, 1.5, 2.5, 3.2, 3.4, 3.5, 4.2, 4.4, 5.1, 5.4, 5.5) or high heels (5 of 25 interviews, 2.1, 3.4, 4.5, 5.2, 5.4); wearing more formal or sexier clothes than those used for every-day life (22 of 25 interviews, 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.5, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.5, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 4.5, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 5.5); or getting a haircut (7 of 25 interviews, 1.2, 2.1, 2.2, 2.5, 3.2, 3.5, 5.5).

It also included styling one's hair in a way different to everyday wear – for some women like Sue this meant straightening it and wearing it loose; for other women, like Heidi, it meant curling it<sup>27</sup>; and for the men participants it meant styling it using some form of hair wax or gel (16 of 25 interviews, 1.1, 1.2, 1.5, 2.1, 2.2, 2.5, 3.1, 3.2, 3.4, 4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 4.5, 5.1, 5.2, 5.4). For the men participants, some positioned exfoliating (2.1, 2.2) and/or moisturising (1.2, 4.1, 4.4, 5.1) as important to the production of romance; while others argued that grooming one's nails in preparation for a date was vital (2.5, 3.4, 4.1, 4.4,

---

<sup>26</sup> especially where these were given as a gift by one's partner

<sup>27</sup> On an everyday basis, Sue wears her hair curly and in a bun, and Heidi wears it loose and straight, or tied up.

5.5). It was also argued that grooming one's beard (2.1, 2.2, 2.5) or having a clean-shaven face for men (12 of 25 interviews, 1.1, 1.2, 1.4, 1.5, 3.2, 3.4, 4.2, 4.4, 4.5, 5.1, 5.2, 5.4) or legs or underarms for women (13 of 25 interviews, 1.1, 1.2, 1.4, 1.5, 2.1, 3.4, 3.5, 4.2, 4.4, 4.5, 5.2, 5.4, 5.5) would make a date more romantic.

Finally, some women argued that having a wax (specifically of one's "private parts" Sue, 1.4; also mentioned in Interviews 1.1, 1.5, 2.1, 4.5, 5.2) and putting on self-tan (Interviews 2.1, 5.2) could also make a date feel more romantic.

Part of these boundaries between everyday life and being-romantic on a grand date was constructed through the consumption of 'special' or luxury products that were reserved for special occasions (cf. Illouz, 1997). This is evident in the following extract, where Luke explains why he only wears aftershave on dates:

**EXTRACT 26 : INTERVIEW 1.5**

1. Nicky: e::r wha- what is it about like that, that would make it more romantic?
2. Luke: [...] this one (.) um aftershave I have (.) that I only ever wear when I go out with her-
3. to important- (.) .hh like if we go out on a date or something because of how much
4. she likes it and I
5. Nicky: yeah
6. Luke: .hhh she always comments on it and she'll always like hold me closer [like and then
7. Nicky: [O:H okay
8. Luke: she smiles and she'll say "oh I love the smell"=
9. Nicky: =o[kay
10. Luke: [(laughs)) ([and then] I get
11. Nicky: [ja ]
12. Johan: touched<sup>28</sup>) so(h) l'(h)m li(h)ke (.) I won't go out [if £if I can without spraying that£
13. Nicky: [(laughs))
14. : okay (.) ok[ay nice ]
15. Luke: [(laughs))] And I don't wear it any other time [(laughs)) (.)]
16. Nicky: [(laughs)) ]

In this context, Luke saves his aftershave for use on these romantic occasions only, as it encourages physical intimacy on these dates (this relationship to physical and emotional intimacy will be discussed more in the next chapter). By 'dressing up' for the grand date and consuming products held aside for 'special occasions' only, participants constructed their physical appearance as a "break from routine" (Sue, Interview 1.1, see

<sup>28</sup> referring to his love language of 'touch', here this refers to hugging and cuddling



below). This in turn positioned the grand date as “feeling” different – and thus, the act of ‘dressing up’ can be included as one of the boundaries differentiating these grand dates from everyday life. This use of one’s appearance to mark a grand date as such was common across the dataset:

**EXTRACT 27: INTERVIEW 1.1**

Sue: “it’s a bit of a break from the ordinary, it’s a break from routine ((Nicky: okay)) and it makes it a bit more special, u::m (.) so, it:- It kinda just (.) like I know Luke will really appreciate seeing my hair down [...] tryna make it special (.) and not (.) routine and make it feel like the (.) <same> (as) when we’re going out just to see a movie”.

**EXTRACT 28: INTERVIEW 2.1**

Robyn: “it’s something different [...] if you just dress like you dress everyday then it’s not something different ((Nicky: Okay)) cause romance (.) like is not (.) everyday thing it’s got to be something different and special”.

**EXTRACT 29: INTERVIEW 2.2**

Eddie: “‘cause if I know that I haven’t done anything sort of special then uh I’m not gonna act any different to just (.) ((Strauss: Mm)) (.) it just being normal sort of event (.) ((Strauss: Mm)) so I think it- ja it is (.) does (.) work on that sort of aspect (.) .hhh of I’ve done something different so tonight is different”.

**EXTRACT 30: INTERVIEW 3.1**

Louise: “I still want him to you know e- e- (.) think that I’ve gone (.) you know outta my way to look pretty for him [...] Maybe to make it special as well”.

**EXTRACT 31: INTERVIEW 3.2**

Bruce: “Lou and I (aren’t) very materialistic [...] it’s just a .hhh (.) for me just something different [...] something just to say to her ‘hey, this is different’, you know? (.) ((Strauss: Ja)) Something different, something unique, um something special”.

**EXTRACT 32: INTERVIEW 3.4**

Louise: “I don’t usually use a- wear a lot of makeup [...] but I think fo::r (.) especially for like really big dates? ((Nicky: mm)) like a very special occasion? ((Nicky: Mm)) u::m (.) just going like that <extra step>? Just kinda makes it more special ((Nicky: Ja)) if not for him like, definitely for °me°? [...] it (does) kind of like (.) change the atmosphere cause you kind of feel like you’ve put .hh (.) I don’t know, so much mo::re into it, o:r ((Nicky: Mm)) you know that you:: (.) look pretty? [...] like it’s a- i-it-it a different league to a normal da(h)te? ((laughs))”.

**EXTRACT 33: INTERVIEW 4.2**

Anika: "I dressed very fancy for that [...] we have done a fe:w (.) fancy dress eating [...] we TRIED to do it on our anniversaries because it's usually .hh m- it makes it more special for us, so ja".

**EXTRACT 34: INTERVIEW 5.2**

Heidi: "(It) will kind of (.) show like 'oh, this is a special thing we're gonna do:.'" ((Nicky: Okay. Alright)) it's also got to do with confidence I think [...] you're more confident".

**EXTRACT 35: INTERVIEW 5.5**

Tom: "I think it shows that you (.) care, (along with) I s'pose? u::m (.) And also like maybe like marks the occasion (.) as like this isn't normal life. (So we won't like) we gonna talk about (.) shopping lists and stuff, this is a (.) special ((Nicky: Okay)) ja".

Participants construct dressing for romance as being "different" (Bruce, Robyn, Louise), "out of the ordinary" (Sue, Eddie, Louise), and "special" (Sue, Louise, Anika, Bruce, Heidi, Robyn), in comparison to how they would dress in everyday life. This is positioned as being transformative: as Tom says, it "marks the occasion (.) as like this isn't normal life" (emphasis in original). Heidi's sentiment is similar: "(It) will kind of (.) show like 'oh, this is a special thing we're gonna do:.'" and Louise says this way of dressing will "make it special". By "showing" or "marking" that something non-ordinary is taking place, the grand date is constructed as anti-ordinary and as distinct to everyday life.

Not only is dressing up distinguishable from how they would dress in everyday life, but it also differs from how they would dress for what was constructed as 'casual' dates: Louise states that "it's a- i-it-it a different league to a normal da(h)te" and Sue says "tryna make it special (.) and not (.) routine and make it feel like the (.) <same> when we're going out just to see a movie".

Louise expresses a similar idea in interview 3.4, that doing these kinds of things that 'extra' or 'above' one's usual routine has an impact on how the evening 'feels': "it did kind of like (.) change the atmosphere", making it feel more distinct to everyday life and more romantic. Therefore 'dressing for romance' was constructed as a way of

demonstrating physically that what they, as romantic subjects, would be embarking on, was *romance*, and was different and special in comparison to everyday life.

#### 4.3.1.3.4. Temporal boundaries

In terms of when they would occur, grand dates were typically constructed as occurring at night. While this was rarely explicitly argued, participants (and the interviewers) would often use the word 'evening' as a synonym for 'date', for example:

Tom: "we'd get on with our date, but maybe it would ruin the entire evening" (Interview 5.1)

Nicky: "what was it like taking turns to plan a romantic evening for each other?" (Interview 3.4)

Robyn: "yay! We're having a romantic evening" (Interview 2.1)

Eddie: "there's a definitely- definitions of (.) what we do together (.) like what is a romantic evening" (Interview 2.3)

Eddie: "the classical romantic evening" (Interview 2.2)

Sue: "I was like, you know what, I'm not actually gonna book it I'm just gonna see how the evening goes" (Interview 1.3)

Sue: "it was nice to be able to have an actual romantic evening, where y'know we were going out and (.) y'know (.) being all dressed up" (Interview 1.3)

Louise: "We still had a very romantic evening" (Interview 3.4)

Anika: "I THINK THAT's the MAIN reason we get dressed for a romantic evening" (Interview 4.2).

Similarly, there was a strong association between romance and the word 'night', for example:

Bruce: "I sent her some flowers at work? And u::m (.) And it's- all it said was 'date tonight'. You know on the flowers" (Interview 3.3)

Bruce: "She surprised me by taking me out the one night" (Interview 3.3)

Heidi: "(.) maybe on another night, it would have been more romantic" (Interview 5.4)

Louise: "I think both of us just want the best for each other [...] and want each other to have a romantic night" (Interview 3.1)

- Anika: "I felt like a million dollars when I walked out last night" (Interview 4.5)
- Johan: "you not every night that you can do something" (Interview 4.1)
- Johan: "well mine's gonna be obviously in the night time, not during the day" (Interview 4.1)
- Tom: "we try to sort of have like a date night once a week" (Interview 5.1)
- Tom: "it's not like your (.) you know (.) like date night, standard, you know" (Interview 5.3)
- Heidi: "you... think 'oh tonight we gonna go and .hh have our date'" (Interview 5.2)
- Heidi: "cause like we'll usually go out at night" (Interview 5.2)
- Robyn: "if it's like a romantic (.) date, u::m (.) and it's at night (.) I s'pose, you dress up mo:re (.) than during the day, I don't know (.) it's just night-time, it feels more exciting, because it's night-time ((Nicky: ja)) and (.) pretty lights" (Interview 2.1)
- Eddie: "going to: (.) a restaurant we've never tried before ((Nicky: Mm)) on (.) a (.) particular date night" (Interview 2.5)
- Luke: "I've got- o- one sister who (.) date night is a (.) it's a big deal for them" (Interview 1.2)
- Nicky: "is there any a- a- anything else that you're (.) °planning on° (.) that might be different from like u:h (.) the normal (.) movie night" (Interview 1.1)
- Anika: "then he'll get the car at night, we will dress up and go out" (Interview 4.2).

In addition, there were multiple references to the romantic events executed for the study, using the phrases "tonight", "that night", "last night", and so on. While participants were given as few hints as possible as to what the interviewer expected them to do for the study, 9 of the 10 romantic events conducted for the study were held at night. This further suggests that there is a strong discursive link between this kind of being-romantic and a particular time of day.

This seemed to be a key element in demarcating the romantic space from everyday life and also validates some of the other key features of grand dates, as discussed above. For example, not only does being-romantic in the evening authenticate the use of soft lighting (constructed as romantic), which is utilised in the transformation of every day spaces into romantic spaces; but it also seems to be more socially acceptable to dress up in the evening; to eat a larger, more formal meal; and to consume alcohol, typically of the types associated with romance such as wine (interviews 2.2, 3.2, 3.3, 4.1, 5.1, 5.3), cocktails (interviews 1.3, 1.5, 2.1, 2.3, 2.5, 4.2) or champagne (interviews 2.3, 3.3, 4.3, 4.4).

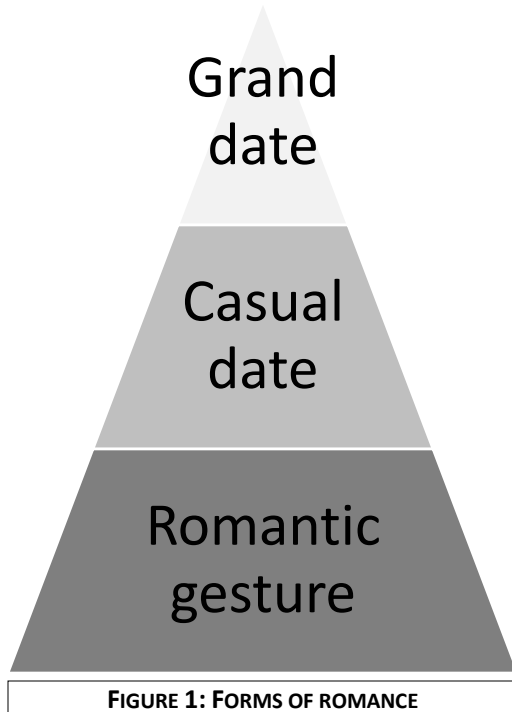
#### 4.3.1.3.5. Emotional boundaries

The final boundary dividing romance from everyday life was defined by Illouz (1997) as being an emotional boundary. Grand dates were described by participants as bringing intimacy as their outcome. This forms one of the key focuses of Chapter 5, and so will not be discussed in detail here. Grand dates were also constructed as being much more romantically intense than the other two forms of romance. This will be developed further in the comparative section that follows (Section 4.3.2).

#### 4.3.1.4. Contrasting the three kinds of romance

Three different forms of romance have been discussed. They will now be compared to each other. It was found that each of these forms of romance differed in how romantic they were positioned as being. Romantic gestures were highly individualised, and while often positioned as being very romantic, were also described as being smaller gestures that were more prolific and could occur at any time in everyday spaces (and of course this is part of their appeal). Casual dates also were positioned as occurring fairly frequently, as occurring either during the day or night, and had some (but not many) boundaries to distinguish it from everyday life.

Grand dates, on the other hand, seemed to follow a more tightly formulated discursive performative script. They were positioned as occurring infrequently; at night; in upmarket, intimate restaurants serving high quality, expensive food; and requiring a certain amount of “dolling up” (Eddie, Interview 2.3 and 2.5) in order to produce oneself as a romantic subject. Thus there were more boundaries in place, which made the grand date feel distinct from everyday life.



Therefore, one could conceptualise romance as a pyramid, where the grand date, as the most romantically intense, the most distinct from everyday life, and occurring the least frequently, could be placed at the top of the pyramid. The romantic gesture could be placed at the bottom of the period for its frequency and because it occurs in the midst of everyday life. Therefore, according to this conceptualisation, these concepts could be argued to increase in romantic intensity as one moves up the pyramid. However, as we move up this pyramid, these forms of romance also become more

inflexible in terms of the affordances they provide, as well as what constitutes a recognisable and successful act under each category. Romantic gestures were positioned as being flexible, highly individualised and specific to the relationship context. Grand dates, conversely, seemed to follow a more tightly conceptualised discursive performative script, as described above.

It was also found that, as the explanations of being-romantic became more formulaic, these constructions were also increasingly vulnerable to disruption, which reflects the likely increasing idealisation of romance in these particular contexts. In contrast, no disruptions were described by participants in connection to the casual date or the romantic gesture, suggesting that they provide more flexible affordances that can be adapted, manipulated and drawn from more creatively than the grand romantic date.

#### 4.3.1.5. Summary: the hierarchy of romantic intensity

Therefore, being-romantic was not a single, monolithic discursive structure. Rather, three different forms of romance were identified. They varied in terms of how strictly they were separated from everyday life according to the time, location and

artefactual boundaries (cf. Illouz, 1997) used to construct them. They also differed according to whether they were 'scripted' according to societal level discourses or whether there was flexibility to modify them according to individual relationship contexts. Finally, they differed according to how idealised or flexible they were to interpretation and improvisation. Most of the examples given relied on consumption in some way or other, confirming Illouz's findings of romance being linked to consumption, but we did not find that this was the key distinguishing features in our data set. Rather, participants distinguished between these forms of romance based on the aforementioned criteria, and then used these forms of romance strategically, as discursive resources within the interview. These resources were drawn from to justify limited performances of romance in day-to-day life and position their relationships in loving and meaningful terms, as will be described further in the following section.

#### 4.3.2. Strategic uses of the forms of being-romantic: Doing the work of being-in-love

The romantic hierarchy was not merely described in the interviews, it also formed a core discursive device for making the participants' relationship contexts intelligible and justifiable. As shown above, grand dates were positioned as the most intense romantically, and as will be argued in Chapter 5, they also provided a level of connection and emotional intimacy far beyond that of the two other forms. In the sections that follow, I will argue that this romantic intensity (and the resulting emotional intimacy they provided) was used to explain participants' preference for grand dates. Firstly, I will show that participants constructed an imperative to be romantic, which was difficult to satisfy without sufficient romantic boundaries protecting the couple from the intrusions of everyday life (See Section 4.3.2.1). Secondly, I will argue that casual dates were mainly drawn from in order to position grand dates in contrast to casual dates, as the preferred, ideal (and idealised) form of being-romantic (See Section 4.3.2.2).

However, the grand date was also positioned as difficult to (re)create regularly in everyday life (See Section 4.3.2.3). Thus, as I will show, romantic gestures were drawn from to imbue participants' relationships with romance on a day to day level.

Romantic gestures were therefore constructed as useful in place of the grand date to demonstrate the intimacy of their relationships in a more sustainable way (See Section 4.3.2.4).

#### 4.3.2.1. The romantic imperative and the difficulties of being romantic at home

The grand date, as shown above, was positioned as being the most romantically intense and as having a number of boundaries in place which distinguished it from everyday life. In justifying why the grand date was a more romantic way of being-romantic than the other forms, participants discussed how hard it was to 'do-romance' in the home, where there were few boundaries to protect the act of being-romantic from the intrusions of everyday life. For example, Couple 5 constructed a candle-lit dinner at home as a legitimate way of 'doing romance', but one which they do not often manage in the hurly-burly of everyday life. For example, in Interview 5.4, Heidi says "like maybe I should like (.) cook Tom a special dinner more often" and describes a romantic woman as one who would "surprise him with... a special- she's made a special dinner and like dre::ssed up". Similarly, Tom says:

##### EXTRACT 36: INTERVIEW 5.1

1. Strauss: D' you guys o- often do romantic things together?
2. Tom: .hhh (.) Um hhh (.)
3. Strauss: and uh wha- what kind of things (.) do you guys do?
4. Tom: (.) You know hhh I- I would say not- not often enough um (.)
5. Strauss: Mm=
6. Tom: =.hhh (.) we both have pretty stressful jobs and Heidi's studying (.) and [ so ]
7. Strauss: [Mm]
8. Tom: often when (.) I know I should be saying let's eat dinner at the table (.) over a glass of
9. wine, light some candles and talk or whatever .hhh I'm like 'a::h' we both sort of look
10. at each other and we're like 'ah do you wanna watch *Breaking Bad* while we eat?'
11. .hhh and then we just watch like four episodes in a row you know

Tom's response is similar to Heidi's: She states that "maybe I should [...]" and he states "I know I should" plan romantic things for each other. Both orient to what I have termed a romantic imperative, in that they feel they do not do romantic things together



“often enough”. This constructs romance as obligatory, and as something one should engage in “often enough”.

Tom constructs everyday life as being “stressful” and busy (line 6), which emphasises the impracticality of doing-romance regularly (to be discussed further below in Section 4.3.2.3). In line 8, he takes responsibility for not initiating romance (“I know I should be saying [...]”; this will be discussed further in Chapter 6), and then constructs what would be a legitimate way for them to do-romance at home: eating “at the table”, drinking “wine”, lighting “candles” and creating emotional intimacy by “talk”ing (lines 8-9). As discussed above, these accoutrements or artefacts of romance construct a bounded space in which romance can be performed and experienced as a separate and special endeavour. Even though he describes it as not occurring regularly enough, it is constructed as a legitimate form of doing romance in a way that routinely watching TV together is not. In this way, romance is constructed as obligatory for a soulmate relationship and the soulmate relationship is constructed as the default (possibly only) aspirational type.

There are, however, some issues apparent in this extract around the regular performance of romance. It is described as requiring effort and seemed to be constructed as being more difficult to maintain, and this could be because everyday life can more easily intrude upon the romance in these settings. For example, unless the food has been bought readymade someone must still cook and of course there are dishes to be done afterwards. The setting of home might also bring with it temptations that interfere with the experience of romance, as can be seen in lines 10-11 as well as in the next extract:

#### EXTRACT 37: INTERVIEW 2.1

1. Nicky: U:::m (.) okay, so, when you guys do things together [...] how does it impact on the relationship?
- 2.
3. Robyn: We::: ja: (.) It's definitely better than sitting in front of the TV [...] It's just feeling tired
4. (.)°just being an adult° (.) [(laughs)) ( )
5. Nicky: [Ja::: (.) when you actually (.) like when you do
6. something romantic (.) u:h=does it (.) sort of [...] affect the way you guys feel about
7. each othe:r, or? Bring you CLOSER or [( )
8. Robyn: [Ja it (definitely) hhh u:::m (.) Ag, like it's,
9. weird after a night of just (.) chilling in front of the TV, I got to bed and I'm like (.) °I
10. didn't even speak to him°
11. Nicky: O(h)ka(h)(h)[(h)y

12. Robyn: [and it's really bad  
13. Nicky: ja=  
14. Robyn: =ja you feel like you haven't connected at a:ll [...] if we just like (.) eat supper and  
15. (.) like (.) just do nothing=  
16. Nicky: =ja  
17. Robyn: then I go to bed and I'm like 'wow. I didn't actually (.) ask him how his day was or  
18. anything', so going on a date (.) or, like [...] when you plan time, I said- the other day  
I was like (.) ((small laugh)) we trie:d- I was like 'tonight (.) no TV, no cell phones', we  
19. managed the no TV but (.) he was like (.)[on his cell phone] I was like 'cell phone!'<sup>29</sup>  
20. Nicky: (((laughs)) ]  
21. Robyn: (((laughs))) it's really difficult though=  
22. Nicky: (((laughs))) =ja (.) ja no it is

Robyn discusses how dinner on an average, unromantic night at home excludes the possibility for romantic intimacy. The romantic imperative is again present in this extract, and is evident in lines 12 and 14. Robyn says that she tried to create a romantic setting at home by limiting the use of technology – to create a sense of distinctiveness from everyday life and to demarcate/create a romantic setting. However, this is positioned as being “really difficult” (line 19), particularly in terms of stage-managing the home environment and making it feel separate enough to everyday life to afford any sense of romantic intensity. This allowed intrusions from everyday life to occur, and in this way the use of the cell phone perforated the boundaries Robyn was trying to impose on the evening, disrupting the attempt at romance.

This association of going-on-dates with consumption outside of the home reinforces these kinds of dates (particularly, casual dates and grand dates) as being superior, due to having more boundaries and therefore more ‘protection’ from everyday life. Therefore the investment in and consumption involved in performing these kinds of romance is justified, as they provide a more adequate means of satisfying the romantic imperative.

#### 4.3.2.2. Casual dates are less romantic than grand dates

However, as discussed in Section 4.3.1.4 above, grand dates and casual dates were not positioned as providing similar kinds of romantic intensity. Grand dates were

---

<sup>29</sup> Mimes wagging her finger in impatience

constructed as having the narrowest discursive performative script and as providing access to the most romantic intensity as a result. In this section, I will show how participants contrasted casual dates and grand dates, to justify the effort and expense needed to access the most romantic intensity. In the following extract, Johan compares the date they went on for the study to their “regular”, more casual dates:

**EXTRACT 38: INTERVIEW 4.4**

1. Johan: you started thinking of .hhh different places to go to=
2. Nicky: =Okay.
3. Johan: .hhh [so] I think et- I think it- it open our mind in a way a bit
4. Nicky: [Ja] Mhm=
5. Johan: =doing this whole
6. thing ‘cause now you wanna do something different, you wanna do s- you actually
7. wanna go do something [special] as the- where the: times when you do s- things it’s
8. Nicky: [Mhm ]
9. Johan: also special but .hh (.) it’s um (.) more like a regular thing.
10. Nicky: Okay=
11. Johan: =yeah like you do go to like hh .hhh say Spur is your .hhh your place that you
12. always go to you’ll [always] go to Spur [you] know ((small [laugh])) .hhh It’s not like]
13. Nicky: [ Ja ] [ Ja ] [ ((small laugh)) .hhh ]
14. Johan: you’re really d- .hh although you’ll like to try something new but you don’t always get
15. to doing it [...]
16. Nicky: so e- s- (.) say like the- the normal thing you do like going to Spur and (compared) it
17. to where you sort of trying something new and different, [ is ] would y- you say
18. Johan: [Mm]
19. Nicky: they’re both the same like r-[(romantic -wise)
20. Johan: [No it’s actually- uh no it’s different ‘cause [Spur] is like a
21. Nicky: [ Ja. ]
22. Johan: normal thing ja [I mean] it’s like you sit there, you eat (ah) have a chat.hhh (.) but I
23. Nicky: [ Ja. ]
24. Johan: think you can go out somewhere and do different or (.) go out of your .hhh (.) hhh (so
25. your) I think your (.) comfort zone?
26. Nicky: Yeah
27. Johan: then you start .hh you more vulnerable but also that you are more .hhh bound to
28. each other [I think]
29. Nicky: [Okay.] Ja

Spur is positioned as the “regular” (line 9) or “normal” (line 22) thing to do, and in this case reduces how romantic the experience is constructed to be because it is positioned as ‘routine’, somewhere you “always” go to (line 12). While you can “eat” and “have a chat” at the “regular” restaurant, Johan describes how going out of “your comfort zone” (line 25) by trying a new restaurant makes you vulnerable, which has the effect of increasing the romantic intensity – through experiencing something new together you are

more “bound to each other” (line 27-8). In this way grand dates are constructed as more romantic than casual dates.

This can be seen in other instances across the data set. For example, Luke also describes the difference between “regular” dates and the kind of date executed for the study:

**EXTRACT 39: INTERVIEW 1.5**

Luke: “I didn’t realise how (.) nice having big dates was [...] I just thought they’d be like normal dates just bigger [...] I didn’t think it would be like (.) it w- w- everything would be different, the whole atmosphere was different [...] I really enjoyed that”.

Eddie, in Interview 2.3, laments the fact that the restaurant he took Robyn to, Roma, is “losing (.) its appeal” as it has a reputation for being expensive, whereas “it’s like th- the same price now as going to Spur, people just don’t know about it [...] you’ll think ‘ah let’s go to Spur tonight’ (.) and you’d spend the same money? (.) so that’s not a thing”. Instead, he says, restaurants like Roma offer a “whole sort of experience” which makes it his “special occasion place” when he is orchestrating grand dates.

As discussed above, on a casual date – in line with its construction as something routine – the kinds of outfits or appearance management required to enact it was also constructed as routine or every-day. The kinds of activities or venues described for a casual date generally only necessitated the use of casual wear, for example Luke says that “we both (.) got very busy social lives and (.) if we can actually get an evening [...] you just wanna relax, just have a night off, and then it’s (.) watching (.) movie(h)s or (.) so(h)(h)mething like that so, she’s usually in her pyjamas or something” (Interview 1.2).

One might note at this point that it is interesting that Sue’s mode of dressing is used by Luke as a marker for the formality of the evening (this will be discussed more in Chapter 6). Robyn states that before marriage she “used to (dress up) more... I must have been quite a *poppie*<sup>30</sup>” but that now when they go on casual dates, “it sounds ba:d (but) you

---

<sup>30</sup> Derived from the Afrikaans word ‘*pop*’, meaning doll; *poppie* refers to a woman who tends to dress in an overtly feminine way (heavy makeup, nail polish, feminine style of clothes, etc.). It can also be used in a

don't have to impre(h)(h)ss anyone... I just try to be comfortable now ((small laugh))" (Interview 2.1). In both examples, comfort is positioned as being a key factor and the activity (such as watching movies at home in one's pyjamas) is constructed as informal and relaxing – "a night off". Such an activity is constructed as not requiring one to "impress" anyone, 'even' one's partner, meaning that one's appearance takes a relatively low priority (in contrast to grand dates where participants positioned making an effort to look good *for* their partners). In the following extract, Sue also positions casual dates as something you don't have to dress up for:

EXTRACT 40: INTERVIEW 1.1

1. Nicky: You said something about it's like (.) L-Luke wanting to do something and y'know
2. s-having (.) maybe like a budget °where you can go, maybe a bit more° over th-
3. not over the °top°, [but >you know what I mean< U:::M will that- will that a-affect
4. Sue: [(small laugh)]
5. Nicky: y'know maybe having (.) slightly different vibe to like (.) a normal Spur or something
6. like [that?
7. Sue: [YEAH
8. yeah [it will for sure because now I'm not actually wearing jeans and a [t-shi(h)rt
9. Nicky: [okay [o(h)kay
9. Sue: ((small laugh))
10. Nicky: [...]'why's that, why [is that like different (.) ja
11. Sue: [ja::: I think it's (.) its- its- (.) it's a bit of a
12. break from the ordinary, it's a break from routine=
13. Nicky: =o[kay
14. Sue: [and it makes it a bit more
15. special, [u:::m ] (.) so, it:- It kinda just (.) like I know Luke will really appreciate
16. Nicky: [okay]
17. Sue: seeing my hair down
18. Nicky: okay (.) [ja
19. Sue: [y'know? So that like just a little things in that sense
20. Nicky: m[hm
21. Sue: [u:::m (.) so ja I think (.) also, tryna make it special (.) and not (.) routine and make it
22. feel like the (.) <same> when we're going out just to see a movie
23. Nicky: okay

Sue positions her choice of outfit as impacting on the "vibe" or atmosphere of the date. "Jeans and a t-shirt" are described as what one would wear to that exemplar of the casual date, Spur, which in turn would contribute to the date having a casual vibe.

---

derogatory way to refer to such a woman as ditsy, shallow or naïve. ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_South\\_African\\_English\\_regionalisms](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_South_African_English_regionalisms), on 10 June 2014).

However, when one dresses up, this results in a change of atmosphere. Sue argues that dressing up will be a “break” from the “ordinary” and the “routine” (line 11 and 20), that it will make “it a bit more special” (line 14 and 20), that “Luke will really appreciate it” (Line 16), and that it has an affective component, impacting on the feelings associated with the event (“not... *feel* like the same when we’re going out just to see a movie”, emphasis added, line 20-21). Casual dates (and one’s appearance on this kind of date) are constructed as “routine”, which diminishes the potential for romance, especially when contrasted with the grand date.

Therefore, participants constructed casual dates as a *foil* to grand dates, as a pedestrian version of romance which to some degree fulfilled the imperative to be romantic, but without providing access to more intense romantic experiences. In this way, the grand date was positioned as being the ideal, as it provided the most “special” and romantic experiences in comparison to the other forms of romance.

#### 4.3.2.3. The impracticalities of grand dates

This said, however, it was found that participants used several strategies to justify why going on grand dates was not always practical. Participants were asked how often they would perform the romantic activities they had described to the interviewer (see Question 4, Appendix 7A; and Question 6, Appendix 7C). The romantic imperative<sup>31</sup>, identified above, seems to imply a normative pressure on couples to regularly engage in romance. The participants oriented to this to avoid the implication that they enacted romance inadequately or infrequently.

Most commonly, participants argued that romance is expensive (discussed in interviews 1.1, 2.3, 2.5, 3.1, 4.1, 4.4, 5.1, and 5.3) and it requires a certain amount of effort (interviews 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 5.1, and 5.4) for which they are often too tired (interviews 1.4, 2.1, 2.5, 4.1, and 4.4) or too busy (interviews 1.2, 1.4, 2.2, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.5, 4.1, 4.2, and 5.3).

---

<sup>31</sup> This romantic imperative will be explained in more detail in Chapter 5, when I discuss the outcomes of being romantic and demonstrate that this outcome was positioned as being a vital part of relationship maintenance and the overall survival of the marriage relationship.

Some participants also argued that their work directly conflicted with their ability to be romantic (for example, needing to work at night – interviews 2.2, 4.1, and 4.2). Others argued that other factors were off-putting, such as the uncomfortable clothes one wears on grand dates (interviews 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 3.4, and 4.1), or finding grand dates to be stressful (in particular, worrying that something might go wrong which affects one’s enjoyment of the date – interviews 1.2, 1.3, 2.1, 2.5, 4.4, and 5.1; worrying about the weather– interviews 1.2, 3.1, 4.1, 4.3, and 5.3; or worrying that one might behave in inappropriate ways that might affect the ‘romanticness’ or one’s partner’s enjoyment of the date – interviews 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 2.1, and 3.3).

These defences against the regular performance of romance, especially in the context of orchestrating grand dates, were widespread. This provides further evidence that participants oriented to some kind of implied normative pressure to regularly engage in romance (what I have termed the romantic imperative). The grand date was constructed as the most successful means of satisfying this romantic imperative, but as difficult to perform regularly. Instead, alternatives were proposed in the form of romantic gestures.

#### 4.3.2.4. Alternatives to fulfilling the romantic imperative

What practical alternatives then exist for couples wishing to fulfil the romantic imperative and thus position their relationship as romantic? In interview 2.2, after positioning grand dates as bringing a sense of closeness (this discourse of emotional intimacy is discussed further in the following chapter), Eddie says that he thinks he should do “smaller things more often,” in order to maintain this sense of closeness. Strauss agrees, saying “Well t(h)o me now as well like ((Eddie laughs))... jees maybe I should actuall(h)y .hhh pick Nicky some(h)thing u(h)p li(h)ke no(h)w on the way ho(h)me or something ((Eddie laughs))”. Thus it was positioned by participants that even “small things” – those acts classed earlier as romantic gestures (see Section 4.3.1.2) - allow you to access a feeling of intimacy to some degree, in a way which requires less effort, time and money. This is therefore positioned as a work-around to satisfying the romantic imperative.

Thus, in lieu of the grand date, the romantic gesture was constructed as a way to demonstrate one's love for one's partner in everyday settings, for a lower cost than grand dates, and examples of these were given as a way to show that participants *did put effort* into their marriage by regularly romancing their partner in everyday ways. Examples included buying your partner their favourite sweet when you yourself don't like it (Couple 1), looking out for a trinket you know your partner wants (Couples 2 and 4), running a bath/ tailoring your gym program to include your partner (Couple 3), and so forth – in sum, “the little things, that (.) make you feel loved” (Louise, Interview 3.4).

Another example of a romantic gesture described by participants was tailoring one's gesture to suit the partner's personality, and this was positioned as making the romantic gesture even more romantic. For example, the participants drew frequently on “love languages.” Chapman (1995) proposed five ‘love languages’, which reflect different styles for love-communication. The three ones commonly described by participants included a love language of touch, where one shows love through physical affection and contact, such as holding hands, hugging, cuddling, and so forth. Luke (Couple 1) and Louise (Couple 3) were described as having this style of love language. The language of quality-time refers to a sense of love being experienced/shared when uninterrupted, intimate time can be spent together. This was used to describe Robyn (Couple 2) and Bruce (Couple 3). The language of gift-giving involves the showing of love through the giving of a small, meaningful gift, and was used to describe Sue (Couple 1).

Couples 1, 2, and 3 drew from this rhetoric of love languages to explain and justify their romantic gestures as being *particularly romantic*. In most of these instances, participants described deliberately choosing to communicate love through/ via their partner's love language, in order to make their partner feel loved. Participants described doing this on top of expressing love through their own love language. For example, Bruce (Interview 3.2), in addition to showing Louise love through his love language of quality time, describes Louise's love language as being physical touch, and says that he makes sure to “give her a hug [...] and snuggle up and hold her or .hhh or hold her hand [...] and then she's- then she feels loved”. Similarly, in interview 1.1, Luke is also described as having a



love language of physical touch, and Sue describes (in addition to the gifts she buys him, in line with her own love language of gift-giving) making sure when she hugs him that it is “a real hug and you’ve got to be in the moment [...] in order for him to know that I >y’know< that I love him”. Sue describes Luke as also consciously mirroring her own love language of gift-giving to make sure she feels appreciated and loved, by buying her small gifts. These two discourses of romantic gestures and of showing love by consciously mimicking one’s partner’s love language, constructed romance and intimacy as being brought into everyday spaces, and thus as a means to satisfy the romantic imperative.

Therefore, these romantic gestures had a particular discursive effect in the interviews: they were drawn from to demonstrate that even though participants did not necessarily engage regularly in the (stereo)typical and idealised ‘grand dates’, their relationships were still characterised by affection and romance, through romantic gestures and by mirroring one’s partner’s love language. These accounts positioned their relationships as loving and caring, and as satisfying the romantic imperative to regularly do-romance.

#### 4.4. Summary

I have argued that romance was not constructed as a singular cognitive script. Rather, romance was constructed as taking one of three forms, the romantic gesture, the casual date, or the grand date, each with different affordances and identity outcomes. These three forms can be delineated along the lines of the boundaries proposed by Illouz (1997), with the grand date positioned as having the most boundaries from everyday life, and the romantic gesture as the least. The more boundaries an instance of being romantic had, the more romantically intense it was positioned as being; however, this also meant that it became more narrowly defined and restricted in the ways that it could be performed in a way that could be recognised as successful as well. For this reason, I proposed that these three forms of being-romantic are hierarchical, with the most tightly structured but most romantically intense grand date at the top of the hierarchy, and the most flexible and diverse form of romance, the romantic gesture, at the bottom of the pyramid.

In addition, rather than being mere statements of variations in a particular context or cognitive/cultural script, these forms of romance were positioned and drawn from in strategic ways. Thus, being-romantic is not merely something that you *do* or *embark on*, but it is something that affords you with different identity resources to position your identity and your relationship in various ways. For example, the casual date was used as a foil against which the grand date was positioned as romantic, idealised and preferable to the casual date. However, in other instances of the interviews (for example, when asked directly how often the couples were romantic), the grand date was also positioned as impractical and difficult to orchestrate regularly. In contrast, the romantic gesture was proposed as a means of injecting small, regular doses of romance, and by so doing, satisfying the romantic imperative, where the grand date was positioned as impractical.

In this way, participants drew from these three forms of romance in active and strategic ways that would be obscured by understanding romance as a scripted or role-based situation. Rather, romance provides a set of resources (i.e. affordances) for participants to draw from strategically to create situated instances of being-romantic. However, there are different 'types' of romantic contexts with different costs and affordances. Grand dates were more rigidly defined, suggesting that the discursive performative script is narrower, allowing less flexibility in how participants can take up these affordances, but also positioned as providing maximal romantic intensity, and thus the best means of satisfying the romantic imperative.

The romantic imperative warrants further investigation, as it appeared to place normative pressure on couples to engage in romance regularly. Romance is also used strategically to do relationship-maintenance through achieving a sense of emotional (and physical) intimacy, as well as afford heterosexual partners particular gendered identities, as we will see in the following two Chapters.

# Chapter 5: The outcomes of romance: Romance as a platonic ideal

## 5.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, I argued that three distinct forms of romance were constructed by participants. These three forms of romance were positioned as differing in how 'romantic' they were, and how much flexibility (according to discursive performative scripts) one might have in socially acceptable ways to construct it. The romantic gesture was highly individualised, and was constructed as small unique offerings (requiring thought and effort) to demonstrate one's love for one's partner. These could be made in any space, at any time of day. Casual dates were also diverse, but followed a more recognisable pattern. Grand dates were constructed as the most romantic, but also the most constricted as to the kinds of acceptable/recognisable discursive performative scripts that could constitute being-romantic.

In the chapters that follow, I will explore how romance (as a particular kind of context) affords and limits our access to specific identity enactments, which may be rewarding and/or problematic. But first, in this chapter, I will look more closely at the romantic imperative, to examine in more detail the normative pressure expressed by couples to (regularly) orchestrate romance. I will examine the outcomes of romance, in order to see how these were constructed. This will assist me in addressing my second research question, "What were the constructed outcomes of romance, and how were these constructed?"

This will be done with the aim of understanding why the grand date was constructed as being the most romantic – why did participants construct it as the preferred means of being romantic, despite requiring more time, effort and money and being the most restrictive in terms of how to 'do' it successfully? I am particularly interested in understanding the rewards of performing romance in these particular ways, which may

serve as an enticement for enacting these discursive performative scripts (as suggested in Section 1.1.2).

First, the available literature on the 'outcomes' associated with this form of romance will be examined to see what arguments have been made and what discourses are available. As stated in the Introduction (Footnote 3, page 15), the literature on romance has been theoretically fragmented, and the same can be said for the literature on the outcomes of romance. This literature will be drawn from, despite being written from a different theoretical perspective to my own, out of necessity. However, this information will be interpreted and applied using the theoretical lens described in Chapters 2 and 3. Then data will be examined. I will argue that performing the ideal(ised) affordance of the grand date brings the most rewards; and secondly that these rewards were constructed as necessary to the health of participants' marriages. This, it will be shown, places normative pressure on married couples to perform and consume romance, and explains the romantic imperative seen in Chapter 4.

## 5.2. Literature Review: Intimacy versus sexual intercourse

In the Introduction (Chapter 1), a debate in the literature was briefly outlined. Firstly, I highlighted a disparity in the literature regarding the potential outcomes of romance and the kinds of identities needed to successfully perform romance (see Chapter 1, Section 1.1.3.4). The first side of the debate argued that being-romantic would result in an amorphous sense of gender neutrality which, it has been suggested (Eldén, 2011; Giddens, 1992; Illouz, 1997; Martin & Govender, 2013), may stem from the performance of similarly-gendered identities (such as being caring, considerate and emotionally invested) while being-romantic. The alternative side of the debate argued that the gender identities needed to perform romance were, in fact, highly gendered and problematic in that their performance was rooted in patriarchal values (Allen, 2007, Eldén, 2011; Martin & Govender, 2013; Morrison, 2010; Quayle et al.; 2017; Talbot & Quayle, 2010; Tukachinsky, 2008).

These two viewpoints were assessed in relation to the question of whether romance operates in the service of patriarchy or not. In the first argument, authors suggested romance is a positive, destabilising force as it undermines unequal and hierarchical relationships between men and women (Giddens, 1992; Illouz, 1997). The second viewpoint, however, argued that romance is the vehicle of subjugation, in that it reaffirms the broader inequalities between men and women. Focussing more specifically on the potential *outcomes* of romance: the first side of the debate orients to romance resulting in a sense of intimacy and connection as typified by an amorphous, desexualised, gender-neutral ‘we’ identity state for the couple – blurring the gender boundaries between the partners. The other side of the debate connects romance with heterosexual intimacy and therefore quite powerfully differentiates the partners by gender.

As suggested in Section 1.1.3.4, while on an individual level, heterosexual sexual intercourse may be desired by both partners, the discursive association of romance with sexual intercourse is often avoided as the authenticity of romance may be questionable if it is understood as being performed solely to ‘get sex’ (Allen, 2007). However, a focus or interest in heterosex is (stereo)typically masculinized (Allen, 2007; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Redman, 2001), and Allen (2007) argued that “romantic sophistication carries with it the implication of sexual prowess and the ability to attract women” (Allen, 2007, p. 150) and when men are too good at romance they risk appearing inauthentic.

These perspectives, and the tensions between them, will form the focus of the next two chapters (Chapters 5 and 6). These two suggested outcomes of romance (emotional intimacy and sexual intercourse), will be explored in the current chapter, while the romantic identities afforded by romance will form the focus of the next chapter. The literature on the potential outcomes of romance will first be explored in more detail, and then the data will be examined to see how participants construct the outcomes of romance.

### 5.2.1. Emotional intimacy

In this literature, one line of reasoning has been that being-romantic leads to emotional intimacy. This emotional intimacy is positioned as being of vital importance to modern-day marriage, which, as a cultural institution, has been described as having shifted in meaning over the twentieth century. It has been suggested that marriage has become increasingly idealised and at the same time, seen as optional. This has made the institution of marriage more fragile and simultaneously of higher value. Simultaneously, there has been a rise in self-help pop culture and a therapeutic discourse which states that marriages take *work* in order to succeed. This could link in to and explain the romantic imperative, as seen in Chapter 4. Romance, with its discursive tie to emotional intimacy, has been suggested to be a key site where married couples can do this therapeutic relationship 'work'.

I will first explore the changes that have taken place in how marriage is conceptualised, then discuss how everyday life is constructed as damaging to marriage. Next, I will explore the rise in popularised therapeutic discourses which position intimacy generally, and romance specifically, as the way in which to do relationship-work.

#### 5.2.1.1. Shifts in the institution of marriage during the twentieth century

Coontz (2005) described changes in the institution of marriage over time and argued that over the past century, major changes have transformed the nature of marriages in many countries around the world. More so than ever, Coontz suggested, marriages are viewed as something we select to enter (and stay in) by choice. Prior to this time, marriages were often viewed in a utilitarian sense, as entered into out of some or other sense of obligation: for example, to unite the families, to achieve financial security or upward social mobility, for reproductive purposes or to form alliances or to strengthen political ties (van Acker, 2003); and divorce was comparatively rare. However, during the twentieth century, with the rise of a more financially independent working and middle class and with second wave feminism making way for women to enter more diverse work places under more

equitable working conditions, meant that women were able to have more say in if, when, and under what conditions they entered into marriage (Coontz, 2005; van Acker, 2003).

Additionally, during this period, a further change in the construction of marriage occurred in that the purpose of marriage began to be associated with love and the idealised notion of 'happily ever after' (Coontz; 2005, Illouz, 1997; Straub, 2006). With this change, "husbands and wives increasingly became seen as *collaborators* in a joint emotional enterprise" (Giddens 1992, p. 26; emphasis added).

While these changes in how marriage is constructed may make marriage feel more fragile, it was argued that this voluntariness validates them and can make marriage feel more intimate as a result (Coontz 2005; cf. Illouz, 1997). Coontz suggested that there is a certain amount of anxiety inherent in this shift in our understanding of marriage: "I know that if my husband and I stop negotiating, if too much time passes without any joy, or if a conflict drags on too long, neither of us *has* to stay with the other" (2005, p. 313, emphasis in original). However, Coontz argued that we may experience marriage as more fulfilling than in the past and that this fulfilment seems to be tied up with this frailty.

Giddens (1992) defined this version of the marital relationship as being "pure", that is, as representing "a situation where a social relation is entered into for its own sake ... which is continued only in so far as it is thought by both parties to deliver enough satisfactions for each individual to stay within it" (p. 58).

Another shift that occurred during this time, was in expectations about marriage and passion, especially sexual intercourse. Giddens (1992) suggested that before 1900, it was believed that there was something about marriage and passion that conflicted with each other, making them incompatible. While there have been changes in sexuality in the twentieth century (see Section 5.2.2 below), Giddens' position was that this change is negligible, in that romantic love and the characteristics and compatibility of one's partner are seen as the central reasons to get married (more so than sexual attraction, which is positioned as fading with time; Giddens, 1992).

For Giddens, therefore, modern marriage is "centred on individual satisfaction (maintained only as long as both individuals get something out of it), constant

self and couple reflections, democracy and gender equality” (as cited in Eldén, 2012, p. 5). Eldén (2011) argued that Giddens’ (1992) construction of the ‘good couple’ is one which positions each person as being “responsible” and “autonomous”: that is, that each person within the couple are seen as being responsible for creating their own personal change, in order to benefit the dynamic of the couple as a whole (Eldén, 2011, p. 150). This presents ‘the good couple’, and marriage more generally, in an idealized way.

#### 5.2.1.1.1. Idealization of romance and marriage

The kind of love described by Giddens (1992) entails a:

one of a kind type of love, echoed in ideas of ‘The One’ or one’s ‘soul-mate’. As Giddens points out, what is particular about this ideal of love is its ‘one and only’ and ‘forever’ qualities, and its insistence on the beloved as a source of a mystical sense of completion for the lover (Vincent & McEwan, 2006, p. 40).

Thus, it has been suggested that romance and modern romantic relationships have become increasingly idealised in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (Broughton & van Acker, 2007; Singh, 2013; Vincent & McEwan, 2006). This discourse that one should marry one’s soulmate and live happily ever after is entrenched discursively in our collective consciousness and links into a Westernised conception of romance as a whole (Shumway, 2003). Therefore, Eldén (2011) argued, there is normative pressure on couples to sustain this idealised image of ‘forever one and only’, as a value to strive towards in order to feel as if you have selected the correct partner and the relationship can be socially validated. This suggestion could explain the romantic imperative as seen in Chapter 4, but needs further empirical investigation.

#### 5.2.1.1.2. Everyday life, the sanctity of marriage and changes in our attitudes towards divorce

However, in real life, the bus(y)ness of living makes this idealised image of ‘happily ever after’ difficult to sustain (Illouz, 1997; Nelson, 2004; Shumway, 2003). For example, it has been suggested that in modern society, there is a conception or stereotype that marriages tend to “wear out” – and more so than in the past (Lawes, as cited in Potter,



2004, p. 619). Accompanying this discourse are tangible, global increases in the divorce rates (Stacey & Pearce, 1995), which, van Acker suggested, may be due in part to a difficulty that people may have in finding ways to live up to and realize these idealised expectations of what marriage is expected to entail (van Acker, 2003).

### 5.2.1.3. A rise in the therapeutic, self-help approach to marriage

Around the same time that these shifts occurred in westernised constructions of marriage and romance, was the rise of pop psychology and therapeutic self-help approaches. Eldén (2012) argued that therapeutic discourses are an integral part in modern, Westernised societies. She argued that the “terminology of therapy has entered into everyday language and gained the status of common sense, making it almost impossible to avoid” (Eldén, 2012, p. 4). Furthermore, Eldén (2012) argued that key concepts from therapeutic discourses are so entrenched in our discursive understandings that these concepts “have become taken-for-granted truths for the pursuit of a happy life and happy relationships” (Eldén, 2012, p. 4).

Additionally, Eldén (2011) argued that in popular culture, particularly popular psychology (as disseminated via self-help books, television shows and advice columns in magazines), there is an emphasis on the need to ‘work’ on these relationships in order to maintain the projected image of the ‘good couple’. She describes this work as “Working on your relationship means dedicating time to talk and reflect on yourself and the relationship: where you are heading, what feels good and not so good” (2011, p.150).

A large portion of popular psychology is thus dedicated to providing tips and tricks on how to better ‘work’ on your relationship. For example, you might take “personality and relationship tests” to identify your pattern of relating to a partner (cf. ‘love languages’, Chapman, 1995), or find “five easy-to follow steps to better communication with your spouse, a better sex life” and so on (Eldén, 2011, p. 150). There are huge industries dedicated to finding the latest ‘solutions’ to our ‘marriage problems’ by improving intimacy (Shumway, 2003).

#### 5.2.1.4. Romance, the marriage-saver

Discursively, romance has become distinguished as one of the central means by which one can 'do' relationship-work, which, along with this simultaneous construction of marriage-as-frail, positions romance as "necessary for marriage" (Jackson 1999, as cited in van Acker, 2003, p. 17). Jackson and Scott (2002, p. 204, emphasis added) refer to the pervasive assumption in Westernised society that "love is... the basis of a mutual, caring bond *created by romance* and sexual attraction and cemented through physical and emotional intimacy".

This association of romance with relationship-work is one of the key reasons that romance has been constructed as gender-neutral and as vitally important to improving relationships (see Chapter 1, Section 1.1.3.4). For Illouz (1997), the twentieth century was a time in which men and women's needs were increasingly pitted against each other, and she argued that intimacy and communication needed to be utilised in order to reconcile these needs. Thus, for Illouz, romance is constructed as a key site in which communication and intimacy can occur, and romance is therefore positioned as a salve that helps maintain and nurture marriages (as implied in the romantic imperative, cf. Chapter 4).

Van Acker (2003) suggests that this has put more strain on the institution of marriage, as it raises the expectation – without psychological or historical basis – that romance and romantic love equates to a happy, long-lasting marriage and therefore fulfilment in life (van Acker, 2003). In this context, romance serves the purpose of mate selection and wooing, as well as the (re)kindling of intimate, romantic love and relationship maintenance (van Acker, 2003). These factors contributed to the romantic date and romance becoming more central in the creation and sustaining of relationships but unrealistic expectations regarding romance may have had a role to play in the increase in divorce rates during the twentieth century (Giddens, 1992; Illouz, 1997; van Acker, 2003).

However, Illouz (1997) has argued that being-romantic allows one to plug into that idealised fantasy about what relationships 'should' be – for a short time at least. This conception of everyday life as mundane becomes juxtaposed being-romantic, which *becomes special in contrast* (as discussed in Chapter 4; Illouz, 1997). Therefore, being-

romantic (specifically by going on grand dates, as argued in the previous chapter) allows participants to inject romance into daily life. This in turn provides a sustainable way to keep the idealisation of marital relationships alive.

Therefore, in the romance-as-therapy discourse, couples are positioned as getting the chance to connect, to focus entirely on each other, and to (re)create emotional intimacy with each other (Illouz, 1997). This may restore the sense of connectedness and idealization of the relationship, thus acting as a restorative against the ‘harmful’ influence of everyday life. Therefore, it has been suggested that the act of being-romantic, with its idealised stereotypes regarding what it means for a long-term relationship, means that while on a date, couples are constructing an “illusion of well-being” – that their relationship is happy and ideal (Ingraham, 1999, as cited in van Acker, 2003, p. 27). This in turn naturalises and normalises both the practice of romance and the institution of heterosexual marriage (van Acker, 2003).

For this reason, romance has been argued to open up a therapeutic space within relationships to emotionally recharge and reconnect in order to recover from the tarnishing effects of everyday life and do relationship-maintenance. Illouz (1997) has argued that “stability of married life depends on sustaining this rhythm” between interjections of romance and dull, unromantic, everyday life (Illouz, 1997, p. 290). This, therefore, is the background to the argument made by some theorists that romance is a positive social construct which allows for couples to do relationship work in an gender-equitable and neutral space, to strengthen their relationships.

However, emotional intimacy is not the only discursively-associated outcome of romance. Romance is also commonly understood as being associated with, or leading, to sexual intercourse. This association with sexual intercourse will now be explored in more detail.

### 5.2.2. Sexual intercourse

As stated above, the alternate argument is that a key outcome of romance is sexual intercourse (Giddens, 1992; Jamieson, 2002); which (a) throws into question the

pursuits of romance (by men at least) for intimacy alone; and (b) further brings into question the presumed gender neutrality of being-romantic, as will be discussed below.

#### 5.2.2.1. The increasing visibility and acceptability of sex

Where publications once had a “coy silence on sex and a strong emphasis on romance” (Jamieson, 2002, p. 262), this shifted over the course of the twentieth century along with changing expectations about sexual intercourse. As sexual intercourse shifted from being seen as necessary for reproduction (and being of limited pleurability for women) to being seen as necessary for sustaining long-term relationships, there was an increased expectation that women would “receive, *as well as* provide, sexual pleasure” (Giddens, 1992, p. 12, emphasis added). As a result of this shift in how sex is conceptualised, “many have come to see a rewarding sex life as a key requirement for a satisfactory marriage” (Giddens, 1992, p. 12, emphasis added; Shumway, 2003).

With second wave feminism and the advances made in sexual politics, women’s sexuality has become increasingly accepted and acceptable (Giddens, 1992; Shumway, 2003). Women are no longer expected to be sexually chaste and pure at the time of entering marriage (or at least, not to the same degree as at the beginning of the twentieth century). However, women are often held (and often hold each-other) to a pernicious double-standard on promiscuity (Farvid, Braun & Rowney, 2016).

Despite the progress made by gender theorists in moving beyond an essentialist, biologically deterministic explanation (as described in Chapter 2), in popular (Westernised) culture, sexuality in particular is still rooted in discourses relying on biological explanations for gender differences. For example, Hollway (1984) identified the male sex drive and the have/hold discourse as two key discourses which regulate heterosex. The male sex drive discourse can be described as the construction of men as being dominated by a biological need to have intercourse (Hollway, 1984). Potts (2001, p. 145) described the construction of the “penis brain”, which was positioned as being external to and independent of the man. This ‘penis brain’ was constructed as taking over the man’s brain when aroused, thus acting as a justification for risky or problematic sexual encounters

(Potts, 2001). The corresponding position for women within this discourse is a pressure to feel attractive enough to keep your partner's attention, but not so attractive that you are blamed for inviting the unwanted attentions (or approaches) of other men (Hollway, 1984).

The have/hold discourse provides a justification for the male sex drive discourse and relates to discourses about heterosexual relationships (Hollway, 1984). This discourse provides an (essentialist) explanation of why men and women have sexual intercourse: that men have sex in order to 'have' or 'possess' the woman (where the woman is the object of desire of his unreasonable penis-self); while women have sex in order to 'hold' the man in a romantic relationship – or, as one woman in her study said, “sex is expressing whatever the relationship is, and *is going to be*” (Hollway, 1984, p. 235). Thus, this discourse presents women as having sexual intercourse in order to demonstrate (or start) a romantic relationship with a man.

While coming from a different theoretical perspective, Giddens (1992) makes reference to the have/hold discourse that 'men want sex, and women want intimacy/romance', using it to explain why men might be invested in acquiring certain 'tools of seduction' that may be used to gain access to women's bodies. Giddens (1992) identifies romance as one of these 'tools'. Romance is thus positioned discursively as something which women want, and men orchestrate to keep women happy and increase the chances of sexual intercourse (Farvid, 2011; discussed further in Chapter 6).

As Westernised societies broke from the strictures of the Victorian era during the twentieth century, sex became seen as increasingly acceptable and visible; simultaneously, successful and 'mutually beneficial' sexual relationships became seen as central to a fulfilled romantic relationship. For example, Seidman (2002) argued that over the twentieth century, love became sexualised to the point where “the language of love now intermingles with that of sex” to the extent where “the giving and receiving of sexual pleasures are viewed as demonstrations of love” (p. 228). Another example can be found in Shumway (2003), who discussed marriage therapy books of the early twentieth century. Shumway demonstrated how romance and therefore marital fulfilment was constructed as being achieved through sexual intercourse, where this intercourse occurred on the physical,

emotional and spiritual levels simultaneously. This, he suggested, is how passion was made central to the success of marriages in the twentieth century. This conception of sexual intercourse is, it could be argued, an alternate means of achieving the state of connection and unity that was argued above to be achievable through emotional intimacy.

Sex is now broadly accepted as one of the possible outcomes of being-romantic and Rose and Frieze (1993) report that sex is equally expected by both partners within a 'steady' heterosexual relationship. Lindholm (2006, p. 8) stated that "it is very often assumed by Western social scientists and philosophers that the Western ideal of romantic love serves primarily as a socially acceptable reason to engage in sexual intercourse". Contrary findings have been put forward by Wilding (2003), whose findings suggest the de-emphasis of physical intimacy in favour of emotional pleasure.

Thus, whether romance is authentically linked to physical intimacy (cf. Shumway, 2003), especially within relationships (Rose & Frieze, 1993), or positioned as part of the toolkit of the 'womaniser' (cf. Giddens, 1992), sex has entered our discursive repertoire of what it means to be-romantic (Farvid, 2011).

There are, therefore, two possible outcomes of romance described in the literature: emotional intimacy, or sexual intercourse. Emotional intimacy has been hailed as a possible rationalisation for romance, in that it could bring about a sense of equality and emotional connection. This has been extrapolated to make the argument that being-romantic can therefore lead to broader gender-equality.

However, romance is also discursively linked to sexual intercourse. Some authors have argued that sexual intercourse may be problematic, in the way it is performed (in terms of its ties to the male sex drive discourse and the have/hold discourse), as well as to the possible (mis)use of romance as a means to manipulate women into sex. The discursive tie between romance and sexual intercourse could thus be problematized, if it throws into question the 'purity' of the motives behind being romantic. However, sexual intercourse has also become increasingly seen as vital to the health of one's marriage. This suggests a distinction between romance as a way to *get* sex (inauthentic, false intimacy) and sex as a physical culmination of emotional intimacy (authentic).

### 5.3. Data Analysis

In this analysis, I will first discuss the relationship context as constructed by participants (Section 5.3.1). Participants drew from a soulmate discourse to position their relationship as special and unique. This discourse delegitimised past relationships, and presented the current relationship in idealistic terms. However, this presentation of their relationship was constructed as being under threat from everyday life, which was constructed as calcifying the intimacy of their relationship (Section 5.3.2). Being-romantic was constructed, in contrast to everyday life, as a means by which to revitalise participants' relationships and protect them from the contamination of everyday life.

It can be argued that this provided the discursive and normative force behind the romantic imperative, as described in Chapter 4. Being-romantic was positioned as providing access to emotional intimacy, allowing participants to engage in romance in a therapeutic way (Section 5.3.3.1).

#### 5.3.1. The relationship context: The soulmate discourse

The participants constructed their relationship in terms of an idealised "relationship context" (Reis, 2008, p. 319), by presenting their relationship as unique, special and as having the 'one and only' and 'forever' qualities that Giddens (1992) and Vincent and McEwan (2006) refer to. This was a broad overarching trope that was found across the data set with all participants. As mentioned in Chapter 4's literature review, partner selection has been suggested to be similar to an act of consumption, in that you try multiple 'products' out by dating them, before finally selecting which one you will 'purchase' (that is, marry; van Acker, 2003). In the data for this study, there was only very minimal references to past relationships, which were framed in terms of highlighting their incompatibility in relationship to their current partnership.

In this small sample of couples sampled for their commitment to each-other, however, participants most frequently glossed over these references to past relationships in

service of a *soulmate discourse*, which links to Giddens's concept of the 'pure relationship'. It entailed positioning the partnerships in an idealised way – as 'soulmates'. This overarching discourse was found across the data set and expunged previous partners (and dates with them) as if they were 'bad dreams' that were quickly forgotten once their 'true loves' had been found. That is, this discourse acted to de-legitimise previous relationships, making it clear they were never meant to work – in contrast to their present relationship. The consumption discourse regarding past partnerships is quite matter of fact and anti-romantic. In contrast, the soulmate discourse imbues romance into talk about their partners or their relationship in more idealised ways. For example:

**EXTRACT 41: INTERVIEW 1.1**

1. Sue: He's always made the effort, no matter what [...] Like, he used to ride here in the rain
2. and the cold<sup>32</sup>=
3. Nicky: =ja
4. Sue: Y'know? All sorts o- of weather and (.) come through y'know just to see me, even if
5. it was just for like, ten minutes
6. Nicky: wo:::::w [...]
7. Sue: he's said to me just like [...] For him, he just knew from the beginning it was-
8. Nicky: mm
9. Sue: it was a relationship worth doing <anything> for
10. Nicky: 'kay
11. Sue: and u::m (.) e- that was the like, this relationship is the first time I've had someone
12. who's actually (.) wanted me for like, me::: , like m- <exactly [who I am]
13. Nicky: [yeah (.) [cool
14. Sue: [and he's the
15. one guy I've been able to be 100% myself with [...] y'know (.) just (.) the way that we
16. interact with each other [is a lot different to how (.) how I did with previous guys [...]
17. Nicky: [ja
18. Sue: it's amazing, it's [really different and u:m (.) ja, I think (.) it's (.) like I look at lots of my
19. Nicky: [ja
20. Sue: friends' relationships and it's just like I can't believe how blessed and how lucky I am
21. to have someone's who y'know
22. Nicky: ja
23. Sue: so genuine

**EXTRACT 42: INTERVIEW 4.1**

1. Johan: It just felt like so comfortable, I've never experienced with others [ .hhh ]
2. Strauss: [That's] cool=
3. Johan: =where
4. (.) ja before like you were always- you dunno what to talk about=
5. Strauss: =Ja

---

<sup>32</sup> on a motorbike



6. Johan: .hhh but with her it was just like (.) you could speak about anything [...] Ja it was just  
7. so comfortable, I mean like I'll sit and she'll lie on my arm and (.) that's say it was  
8. just like normal, it was just like normal from the start. I've never experienced  
9. something with any other .hhh woman. [Mm.] Ja.  
10. Strauss: [ Ja. ] That's awesome man. It sounds  
11. kinda like soul mate kinda vi(h)be actu(h)ally. [[[laughs]].hh That's awesome]  
12. Johan: [Maybe you know hey actually ] I'd  
13. actually- I believe that

We can see the soulmate discourse at play in these extracts. In both cases, past relationships were positioned as less meaningful; less intimate; and with people who were less genuine and less connected to the participants. In contrast, their current partners are positioned as “comfortable” to be around (Extract 42, line 1 and 7), as someone that it is ‘safe’ to be yourself around, someone who loves you unconditionally. This construction is produced collaboratively between the interviewer and participant in Extract 42.

In instances when this narrative was drawn from, participants typically positioned themselves as *lucky* to be in this relationship, which constructs the relationship as *special* and *unique*. This narrative was (1) present across the dataset<sup>33</sup>; and (2) was drawn from strategically to accomplish certain feats in the interview. For example, where explaining why one might not have dressed up more for a special date, women participants (participants 1-4) drew from this relationship to position partners as loving and accepting them anyway *for who they are*, and not caring for that kind of thing (despite it being constructed as a societal expectation to dress up on a grand date). Thus, participants positioned their relationship as idealised, romanticised, and intimate. However, this intimacy was positioned as being under threat.

### 5.3.2. Everyday life as unromantic and romance as anti-ordinary

Similar to the line of argument made in Section 5.2.1.2 of the literature review, for participants, this sense of connection and intimacy that the soulmate discourse

---

<sup>33</sup> This may in part be due to the sampling criteria of this study, in that I recruited young, married or engaged couples whose relationships would have not been of long duration because of the age requirement (I sampled for ages 20-30); as well as due to the interview context (being asked about their relationship). This two factors together might have meant that they felt they needed to justify their relationships as being ‘the real deal’, leading to the use of this soulmate discourse.

imbued their relationships with, was positioned as being under threat from everyday life. Everyday life was constructed as contaminating to intimacy and therefore to this sense of shared identity. It was found that participants positioned ‘everyday life’ and being-romantic as being opposite and complementary constructs, as can be seen in Extract 37 (p. 153), as well as in the following extracts:

**EXTRACT 43: INTERVIEW 4.1**

1. Strauss: D- do you feel you know when- when you guys go out to do- just anything like you
2. know romantic kind of involved, but do-do you feel that it .hhh does have an impact
3. on your relationship?
4. Johan: (.) Yes I f- ja actually it does I think it I mean n- just brings you closer .hhh=
5. Strauss: =Mm.
6. Johan: Um instead of just b- sitting at home in front of your TV (.) because I mean you do- in
7. a time I think if you- if you in a same routine the whole time .hhh you start to lose
8. each other. Y-[y- you] get to y- y- not lose in a sense but you get so used to .hhh=
9. Strauss: [ Oh. ] =Ja.
10. Johan: this environment and stuff that you basically (.) you’re like in a rut you know, you’re
11. just (parking). .hhh [I mean] I think if you go out and you do things you start (.) in a
12. Strauss: [Ja. ]
13. Johan: y- you bring out that feeling of excitement again [...] so .hhh it’s good to have (.)
14. way, ja something out of the ordinary sometimes you know

**EXTRACT 44: INTERVIEW 1.2**

1. Strauss: When you, talking about when you get ready to do something romantic like going for
2. a romantic .hh [date with you partner, um if you do dress up, a bit more (.) [...] why
3. do you think (.) you’d want to do that, °why:°
4. Luke: Because (.) I-I don’t know like (.) We’ve been dating for so long now (.) like not (.)
5. things aren’t spec- you know when you first start dating, <like everything’s special>.
6. <Now nothing’s really (.) special anymore> so when you making a big deal,
7. everything’s special again (.) [so] you wanna- you wanna be as (.) good as possible
8. Strauss: [ja]
9. Luke: because it’s (.) >I don’t know< like e- everything’s, >I don’t know< just everything’s
10. special [...] so like these are the times when you can (.) try and <impress her again>
11. and like (.) make her realise £that it’s fun£ (.) >I don’t know< like these are the [times]
12. Strauss: [mm ]
13. Luke: when it actually (.) <when things do> feel like (.) you can make that effort like y-ur-
14. supposed to make the effort >I don’t know<=
15. Strauss: =JA
16. Luke: it’s like having a first date (.) just, it’s not a first date anymore now, it’s a (.) special
17. date
18. Strauss: JA.

In Extract 37, Extract 43 and Extract 44, participants characterise everyday life in a similar way: as being “the same routine” (Extract 43, line 7) or “in a rut” (Extract 43,

line 10); “feeling tired” and being “an adult” (with the responsibilities and concerns that come with that; Extract 37, lines 3-4), and that “nothing’s really (.) special” (Extract 44, line 6). This constructs everyday life as boring, ordinary, repetitive and non-special.

In contrast, being-romantic is positioned as being special, unique, and exciting. Robyn states that “when you plan time” (line 18) to do something romantic and avoid distractions like TV and cell phones, you have an opportunity to experience a feeling of having “connected” (line 14) with one’s partner. Johan argues that when you “go out” (line 11) on a romantic date, you can “bring out that feeling of excitement again” (line 13). He suggests that it’s “it’s good to have (.) something out of the ordinary sometimes” (line 13-14), as this allows you to feel as if “you’re bonding in a way, ja” (not cited above). Luke argues that going on “special date(s)” (line 16-17) allow you to access the feelings one experienced at the beginning of the relationship, where it was “ama:zing” and he was “hanging on every word that she said like “wo::w<sup>o</sup>” (not cited above), and he would “impre::ss he:r” (line 10). He argues that by “making a big deal” of a date, “everything’s special again” (lines 6-7) and he can “make her realise £that it’s fun£” (line 11).

In this way, romance is positioned as breaking the monotony of everyday life by recalling the idealised ‘early days’ of their relationship. Thus, in these extracts, romance and everyday life are positioned as being opposite and complimentary – as special versus non-special, different and exciting versus ordinary and mundane, romantic versus every day.

This discourse of ‘romance-as-anti-ordinary’ and ‘everyday-as-unromantic’ was common throughout the data set. For example, the business<sup>34</sup> of everyday life is constructed as being exhausting (interview 1.4) and as leaving little time, space or energy for being-romantic (interviews 1.4, 3.1, 3.3, 5.1). Everyday life was constructed as feeling like you’re in a “rut” (Interviews 3.2 and 4.1) or as “routine” (interviews 1.1, 1.4, 2.4, 3.3, 4.1, 5.1); whereas in 23 of the 25 interviews, romance was directly referred to or positioned as “special” (interviews 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.5, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 5.5). It was described as being a “break from the ordinary”

---

<sup>34</sup> That is, the business of making a life, which is filled with busyness (and little free time)

(Interview 1.1) and as being “out of the ordinary” (Interviews 1.4, 2.2, 2.3, 2.5, 3.2, 4.1, 4.5), and as being “different” to everyday life (Interviews 1.1, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 3.1, 3.2, 3.4, 3.5, 4.1, 4.3, 4.4, 5.3, 5.5). In contrast then, the everyday is hence positioned as “ordinary” (refer to interviews listed above), monotonous and mundane. Romance was also described as “exciting” (Interviews 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 3.5, 4.1, 5.1, 5.3); “fun” (Interviews 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 4.1, 4.3, 4.4, 5.1, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 5.5); and as ideally feeling “spontaneous” in some way, although this was acknowledged as not always being practical (Interviews 1.3, 1.4, 2.2, 2.3, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3).

### 5.3.3. Intimacy

The goal of Chapter 5 was to investigate how the participants constructed the outcomes of romance. It was found that intimacy was constructed as the key outcome of romance, and the reason why one should engage in ‘doing-romance’. Through discourses of intimacy, romance was constructed as a valuable and necessary enterprise for couples to engage in repeatedly, in order to do ‘relationship-maintenance’ and so satisfy the romantic imperative. There were two kinds of intimacy evident in the data – emotional intimacy and physical intimacy.

Emotional intimacy was widely discussed as a key motivating discourse for the doing of romance. This could have been due to the gender of the researcher, who is a cis, heterosexual woman and conducted the bulk of the interviews, and it is possible that this framed participants’ talk of romance (emphasising emotional over physical intimacy to give the interviewer what participants perceived she ‘wanted to hear’<sup>35</sup>).

Physical intimacy was more often than not implied or gestured towards (Durrheim, 2012) by participants, rather than directly addressed in the interview data. In part, this could be attributed to the reticence of the interviewees, who were hesitant to discuss the participants’ sexual relationship in case it made them uncomfortable (therefore having implications for ethical issues). This is regrettable as potentially valuable data could

---

<sup>35</sup> This gendering of romance as something that women are invested and interested in more than men will be discussed more in Chapter 6 of the Results and Discussion

have come from it, and it is an area for future research. However, the spectre of physical intimacy was present throughout the data. For example, a key motivating factor in ‘getting ready for romance’ was the preparation of the body so as to encourage (or at least to not *discourage*) physical (or sexual) intimacy. Additionally, when it did come up it was often dealt with in terms of physical intimacy, such as hugging, cuddling or kissing, rather than as a blatant discussion of sexual intercourse. Finally, physical intimacy was constructed as being an extension of emotional intimacy, and therefore a justifiable outcome of *authentic* romance (in contrast to a more mercenary discourse of romance-for-sex). These discourses will now be explored in more detail.

### 5.3.3.1. Emotional intimacy

#### 5.3.3.1.1. Introduction: The importance of emotional intimacy

Emotional intimacy and a sense of connectedness was constructed as being a product of romance, and was the key motivation given for doing-romance, as can be seen in the following extracts:

#### EXTRACT 45: INTERVIEW 1.5

Luke: “at the end of the date just (.) I don’t know, I- after Sue’s date I- I felt (.) I felt, very (.) I felt a lot closer to Sue like ((Nicky: Yeah)) b-w- We had had this ama:zing time together [...] I definitely felt like a better connection”.

#### EXTRACT 46: INTERVIEW 3.3

Louise: “it was really nice, to just relax, just feeling able to catch up [...] we were able to (.) like talk, and really like, you know (.) be: (.) intimate with each other through conversation [...] it was nice, °it was very romantic° ((laughs))”.

#### EXTRACT 47: INTERVIEW 3.3

Bruce: “like (.) ja so dinner together, u:m (.) and just (.) spending time (.) spending one-on-one quality time where (.) where I’m no- I’m a 100% focused on her ((Nicky: Mm)) and she’s 100% focused on me, you know? ((Nicky: Ja)) [...] made me feel very special and very important and- and valued”.

#### EXTRACT 48: INTERVIEW 4.1

Johan: “romance is basically just [...] being with each other basically [...] it’s actually very hard to explain but it’s more like a feeling, but a feeling that you can’t explain really. It’s (just) that- that closeness this- that .hhh ((Strauss: Ja)) Ja that it’s closeness that you share”.

#### EXTRACT 49: INTERVIEW 5.2

Heidi: “if we haven’t been on a date for a while, then it feels like we haven’t (.) really like seen each other properly”.

As seen in these extracts, participants constructed being-romantic as ‘quality time’ which provided the opportunity to emotionally connect with each other and achieve emotional intimacy. Emotional intimacy was constructed as an end product of romance – as resulting in “closeness” (Johan, Couple 4), “a better connection” (Luke, Couple 1) and a “meeting of the minds” (Tom, Couple 5).

It was also positioned as something that you *do* – a particular mode of interaction – whether it was constructed as “deep conversation” (Tom, Couple 5), or more commonly, as “talking and laughing” (Tom), “chat(ting) and laugh(ing)” (Heidi), being “relax(ed)” and “talk(ing)” (Louise) and “having fun” together (Tom). This casual style of interaction, positioned as taking place within the more formal and delineated romantic space, is protected from intrusions from the outside world and therefore takes on meaning – the couples become “100% focused” on each other (Bruce) and by *doing* intimacy in the context of being-romantic, the couple feels closer, connected, as one.

Therefore, through the constructions of boundaries from everyday life (by making romance as something separate to everyday life through all the things we do; see Chapter 4), being-romantic enables the prioritisation of conversation, the limitation of distractions, and the marking out of a contextual space which allows couples to (re)connect.

Thus, participants presented romance as a means of ‘doing’ relationship maintenance, which provides an inherent motivation for being-romantic. Simultaneously, this presents romance as being in a state of natural decay unless rejuvenated by being-romantic (as per the romantic imperative). Hence, it could be argued that this discourse positions being-romantic as having a therapeutic effect on the relationship. Participants

constructed conversations on dates as different to everyday conversations – as *feeling* more intimate and leading to a greater sense of connectedness at the end of the night.

### 5.3.3.1.2. Romance-as-therapy discourse

This discourse positions the ‘romantic space’ almost like a therapy room which opens up new levels of communication and deeper intimacy that could not be achieved in everyday spaces. Thus, because of the emotional intimacy which results from being-romantic, relationship maintenance can be performed through the (re)establishment and nurturance of a closer bond. This construction of romance appeared across the data set, however, in two cases, this discourse of romance-as-therapy was deployed in an even more literal way:

#### EXTRACT 50: INTERVIEW 5.3

1. Heidi: it's funny 'cause sometimes when we do:: go on dates we fight
2. Nicky: mm?
3. Heidi: and we DON'T (.) otherwise really fight that much [...] But sometimes we realise it's
4. because like other than that time (.) we haven't really like (.) engaged with each other
5. Nicky: [okay
6. Tom: [mm
7. Heidi: [...] and then (.) [it's better (.) like [than it wa(h)s befo(h)(h)re
8. Tom: [hhhh
9. Nicky: [ja: okay=
10. Tom: =ja, cause when one
11. of us might be like, a bit ticked with the other one about something [...] [but NOW
12. Nicky: [okay
13. Heidi: [mm::
14. Tom: you're like (.) only (.) focusing on each other
15. Nicky: ja
16. Tom: and like maybe those feelings like (.) (come up a bit) [...] I think it always ends up
17. being good [...] when you like (.) CLEAR the air and like, everything is cool and like
18. you recalibrate [and
19. Nicky: [ja
20. Heidi: ((laughs)) re-ca(h)(h)lib[rate (((laughs))
21. Nicky: [((lau[ghs))
22. Tom: [a(h)(h)nd like (.) [when everything like clicks into place
23. Nicky: [good word
24. Tom: again and then it's cool

#### EXTRACT 51: INTERVIEW 3.1

1. Nicky: okay so the next question is um with these expectations what would happen if- if d-

2. you didn't meet it on a date [...] what would it affect maybe say your enjoyment of the
3. date?=-
4. Louise: =.hhh U:::m: [...] I mean we go on dates- we hhh we have quite- both of us
5. have quite diffic- (.) like (.) (a lot of) issues in our back- (.) ground?
6. Nicky: Okay?
7. Louise: um (.) and we've been on dates where .hhh (.) you know we'd start talking about stuff
8. and it's just becomes so emotional that (.) I just start crying [.hhh] and at the dinner
9. Nicky: [Okay]
10. Louise: table like in a restaurant and I'm [sitting] there like cryi(h)(h)ng .hhh and um (.) in the
11. Nicky: [ Ja. ]
12. Louise: end though it's (.) it's always (.) you know whatever that issue was, it- we talk about
13. It, and [...] we always e- end up somehow having the most amazing time

These two instances – that of fighting or crying while on a date – would (stereo)typically be seen as an undesirable or a dis-preferred response (Pomerantz, 1984 as cited in Wetherell, 1998) when doing-romance, as these actions could potentially disrupt the romance of the date. However, these actions would be acceptable or expected in a therapeutic context.

Tom and Heidi had a fight on Heidi's date (the first one) and are explaining/justifying it to me in this extract (Extract 50). They use the language of therapeutic discourses (cf. Eldén, 2011, 2012) to frame the dis-preferred act of 'fighting on a date' in a more positive light. Doing-romance is positioned as an escape from the distractions of everyday life – they are described as not really connecting in their everyday life, but then spending one-on-one time on the date. This exclusive focus on each other gives them the opportunity to air grievances which leads to a fight.

However, this undesirable response is framed as leading to a positive outcome – they “recalibrate” (line 18), feeling closer, more united, more intimate (“everything like clicks into place again and then it's cool”, Tom, lines 22 and 24). This constructs the bounded experience of doing-romance similarly to that of partaking in couple's therapy, where the focus is on one another; unspoken issues are spoken; conflict may ensue but through that conflict the couple's bond is re-forged stronger than before. In this way, the language of therapy/ psychological discourse is used to explain and justify the act of fighting, in a way which likens romance to a therapeutic space. Romance in this image is very much about restoration and repair.



In Extract 51, Louise gives crying as an example of ‘failing to meet or live up to expectations’ on a date (Question 6E of the pre-event interview, in Appendix 7A). She begins by framing ‘crying on a date’ as occurring when they talk about their backgrounds which are positioned as containing “a lot of issues”, which make her upset to hear about/relive. This acts to explain or justify the act of ‘crying on a date’. Louise further orients to the potentially undesirable nature of this behaviour in lines 8 and 10 – through overly clarifying the context (“at the dinner table like in a restaurant”, lines 8 and 10); emphasising the word “crying” (lines 8 and 10) and through the use of laughter which positions the act of crying as undesirable/ ridiculous.

This ‘undesired behaviour’ of hers is positioned as a foil to her construction of Bruce’s chivalrous way of ‘saving’ the date by cheering her up (not directly quoted here), leading to these nights being constructed as (ultimately) being “the most amazing time” (line 13). Thus, as a whole the meta-discourse of the soulmate discourse is brought in again, confirming again the awesomeness of their love and their being perfect for one another.

Hence, by drawing from this discourse of romance as therapeutic, these two potentially negative acts are re-interpreted as providing an opportunity for couples to reconnect via these acts, with the outcome of the date being a stronger sense of intimacy and connection to each other. While these were the two most extreme versions of this discourse, across the data set participants positioned romance as engendering a sense of intimacy and closeness, and therefore this discourse of romance-as-therapy was widely deployed.

#### 5.3.3.1.3. The vulnerability of marriage

This discourse about positioning romance-as-therapy was necessary in the data set, in light of the way that married life was positioned. Participants constructed everyday life – and in particular, life as a married couple - not only as *unromantic* as discussed above, but as being *anti-romantic* – that is, constructed as being in a natural state of decay until rejuvenated through being-romantic.

Participants presented intimacy and this sense of connection as becoming reduced over time by everyday married life, resulting in a decreasing lack of intimacy between them; and thus, romance was positioned as being central in ‘saving their marriages’, again linking to and explaining the romantic imperative identified in Chapter 4. In the following extracts, participants describe the effect of everyday (married) life on intimacy:

**EXTRACT 52: INTERVIEW 3.3**

1. Bruce: even if you live in the same house and you busy and pass, pass, [pass, pass
2. Nicky: [yea::h ja,
3. [definitely
4. Bruce: [you- you don't communicate, like [...] these are things I have in my heart, you know?
5. Nicky: ja::

**EXTRACT 53: INTERVIEW 3.4**

1. Louise: When you live together, u:m (.) You can pass each other and (.) [you don't really
2. Nicky: [mm
3. Louise: have that bond .hhh so it kind of like (.) allowed us to get closer [...] one-one of our
4. marriage courses actually=
5. Nicky: =ja=
6. Louise: =said like you know (.) you should (.) plan uh- even
7. when you have children, [cause you should make e-ah- once a month or .hh [once
8. Nicky: [ja [mm
9. Louise: every quarter or something, once a year like go on a date
10. Nicky: mm
11. Louise: just like have that time where you [...] can (.) connect [...] and like (.) catch up [...] It
12. reminded us how much we actually need, to go on dates and like (.) find time for just
13. each other
14. Nicky: ja

**EXTRACT 54: INTERVIEW 4.2**

1. Nicky: w-would you say you guys normally do romantic things u:M sort of (.)
2. Anika: ja: we try to keep it to our anniversaries
3. Nicky: okay, [is that like once a year? Or like once a month?
4. Anika: [because mm:: no once a mo(h)(h)(h)nth
5. Nicky: [((laughs))
6. Anika: [((laughs)) we try to keep something special because [.hh if we don't do that (.) [it
7. Nicky: [ja: [mm
8. Anika: feels like you're losing th-that person? but not losing [that person it's just- you feel so
9. Nicky: [ja
10. Anika: far away from that person [...] It's like .hh there's something growing between you .hh
11. we once called it (.) u::m (.) it's like a piece of glass, you standing there, [with a piece
12. Nicky: [ja::

13. Anika: of glass between you .hh and, you speaking e-but it's not coming through, [you don't  
 14. Nicky: [yeah  
 15. Anika: understand what °the person is trying to say° [...] you have to have that (.) close  
 16. time, you have to have to spend time together [actually (.) just y-you and y-your,  
 17. Nicky: [mm::  
 18. Anika: special person, [otherwise you (.) lose that connection  
 19. Nicky [ja mm

Louise (Extract 53) and Bruce (Extract 52) draw from a discourse of romance dying after marriage. Both participants present life after marriage as being reducible to mere cohabitation – she says “when you live together, u:m (.) you can pass each other and (.) you don't really have that bond” (lines 1-3), and Bruce says “you busy and pass, pass, pass, pass... you don't communicate... like ((say))... these are things I have in my heart” (lines 1 and 4). This image of “pass(ing) each other” suggests the distance between them increases over time in everyday life and partners are unable to (re)connect in an intimate, meaningful way within this space. Thus, it is suggested that intimacy cannot exist under these circumstances, and that it is *necessary* and *important* for couples to regularly go on dates in order to do ‘relationship-work’ to counteract the effect that everyday life has on their sense of connection to each other.

Johan (Extract 43) and Anika (Extract 54) also construct the everyday as anti-romantic and as resulting in a sense of loss of intimacy between partners. Johan says that you “start to lose each other”, because you are “in a same routine... (and) so used to... this environment... you're like in a rut you know” (lines 7, 8, 10). “This environment” refers to their home environment. Living together – rather than bringing further intimacy – actually draws them into a rut. His phrasing of “start to lose each other” suggests that there is an emotional distance which increases over time. In contrast, romance is presented as that which “brings you closer” (line 4, Extract 43) – as countering the “rut” effect of everyday life, and as providing a means of doing relationship maintenance.

In lines 8 and 10 Johan reformulates what he is saying in order to defend against the possible interpretation of ‘loss’ as meaning the *relationship ending* because of this progressive loss of intimacy. This defence is necessary as this would disrupt the presentation of the soulmate discourse, where their love is presented as idealised and

eternal. He therefore reformulates the problem as an intrapersonal one (being “in a rut”), rather than an interpersonal one (physical/ actual loss of the partner).

Anika also presents everyday life as making her feel as if her partner is less accessible to her, and thus leading to a loss of emotional intimacy (line 6 and 8): “we try to keep something *special* because .hh if we don’t do that (.) it feels like you’re losing th-that person” (emphasis in original). Like her partner Johan, she also references it in terms of “losing the person” (line 8) and then amends this to clarify her meaning: “but not losing that person it’s just- you feel so far away from that person” (lines 8 and 10) – that is, she argues that it is an increasing sense of emotional distance, not the physical/actual loss of the person that results from this lack of romance.

Again, in this extract, there is a sense of decreasing intimacy over time: Anika says “you feel so far away... there’s something *growing* between you .hh we once called it (.) u::m (.) it’s like a piece of glass” (emphasis added), where again, the emotional distance is something which “grows” or worsens over time and results in a complete breakdown of communication. This leads to the feeling of loss of “connection” (line 18), because the intimacy which results in a sense of connection to each other is not maintained.

In each of these cases everyday married life was constructed as anti-romantic and as decreasing the amount of intimacy and connection between participants – as being antithetical to intimacy and connectedness. Across the data set, a discourse of ‘romance dying after marriage’ was broadly referenced. In other words, participants positioned being married in particular - not just everyday life in general - as having a potentially negative impact on the way couples feel about each other and their relationship and thus being anti-romantic (Interviews 1.1, 1.4, 2.3, 2.4, 3.3, 5.5, 5.3).

Married life was constructed as being very hectic, busy, and filled with the mundane acts of maintaining a household, which was constructed as detracting from participants’ abilities to connect and maintain intimacy (Interviews 1.2, 5.1, 5.3). Additionally, many of the participants were given pre-marital guidance before getting married, in some form or other (Interviews 1.2, 2.4, 3.3, 4.3, 5.5). This advice framed marriage as something that is not easy, and that takes ‘work’ to maintain. Marriage

therefore has a humdrum routine element in direct contrast to the soulmate discourse drawn on by many participants throughout to position their relationships in an idealized way. This discourse of banal marriage disrupts the image of an idealized automatic ‘happy ever after’, and positions their ‘ever after’ as something which must be worked on to be maintained.

#### 5.3.3.1.4. Romance as relationship-work

As discussed in the previous chapter, grand dates were positioned as more romantic than the other forms of romance. However, I will show now that they were also positioned as providing the best access to emotional intimacy and this sense of emotional connectivity, and therefore as the most effective relationship-maintenance tool in the married couple’s arsenal.

For example, Eddie (Interview 2.2) distinguishes between the types of romantic acts one can perform, and argues they have a different effect on intimacy, with going away for the weekend being positioned as having a longer lasting effect on intimacy/connectedness than going out for dinner. In another example, in Couple 1’s interview data, Sue’s date was positioned as a grand date while Luke’s was not. This was accomplished by drawing from romantic affordances such as “the food was incredible” (Interview 1.5) and “the restaurant... was just quiet” and “intimate”, to the point where it is positioned as being only them existing: “it was just the two of us- well there were other people there but they were- they were just (.) sitting somewhere ((Nicky: ja)) in my mind (.) they weren’t there” (Luke, Interview 1.3). Luke expands in the following extract:

#### EXTRACT 55: INTERVIEW 1.5

1. Nicky: a- a- and as a whole, what was this experience like, was there anything like really
2. good, or really bad or [(you know)
3. Luke: [(It was) I:: exp- e- e- it was very good I didn’t realise how (.)
4. nice having big dates was, I=
5. Nicky: =okay=
6. Luke: =I (.) I just thought they’d be like normal dates just
7. bigger=
8. Nicky: =yeah ((small laugh))=
9. Luke: =I didn’t think it would be like (.) it w- w- everything would

10. be different, the whole atmosphere was different [...] at the end of the date just (.) I  
 11. don't know, I- after Sue's date I- I felt (.) I felt very (.) I felt a lot closer to Sue like=  
 12. Nicky: =yeah  
 13. Luke: w-we had had this ama:zing time together [...] I definitely felt like a better connection

“Everything” was constructed as “being different” on Sue’s date (line 10) – as being qualitatively different in some way to their usual dates (which were positioned earlier in the interview as casual dates). Luke goes on to construct Sue’s date as being extremely intimate: “I felt a lot closer to Sue” (line 11), “We had had this ama:zing time together” (line 13), and as providing the opportunity for “a better connection” (line 13). This is contrasted to Luke’s date, which was positioned as a less romantic, casual date (“it was nice... but it was more about the... show”). This suggests that the date that more closely followed the discursive performative script for grand dates, is produced as being more successfully romantic and a greater sense of intimacy is afforded by more closely reproducing this discursive script. This was argued in a similar way in interviews 2.3, 2.5, 4.4, 5.3 and 5.5. Thus, emotional intimacy and connectivity was positioned as being more greatly “facilitated” (Heidi, Interview 5.2) by being on a grand(er) date.

This might be because the grander the date, the more boundaries are in place to protect the idealised space of the romantic bubble from the intrusions of reality and everyday life. Additionally, as argued in Chapter 4, the grander the date, the narrower and clearer the discursive performative script is, resulting in a clearly-defined set of affordances for doing-romance in a particular way. Participants positioned emotional intimacy as arising through the performance of romance on a grand date in a particular way. Finally, by contrasting being-romantic with everyday married life, the reasons for the romantic imperative identified in Chapter 4 become clearly constructed: everyday married life erodes the emotional connectivity you have with your partner, but in contrast, being-romantic can restore that sense of connection and intimacy. Thus, emotional intimacy was constructed as a vital *component* of the romantic event, the most important *outcome* of doing-romance, and the *reason for doing* romance.

### 5.3.3.1.5. Problematising this construction of romance

However, when one considers the two key discourses discussed above in conjunction to each other, a dilemma emerges:

- a. on the whole casual dates were constructed as “routine” and “everyday” (see previous chapter), and grand dates were commonly constructed as the most *effective* means of producing emotional intimacy and that sense of connectedness; and
- b. in light of the romance-as-therapy discourse and the romantic imperative (Chapter 4), romance is constructed as *vital* to the production and maintenance of a ‘healthy relationship’

It could be argued that the effect of these discourses is to funnel couples into the (re)enactment of romance in particular ways: through the doing of ‘grand dates’ according to the discursive performative scripts that define them within a particular social context, and one could argue that this forms a “sweet persuasion” (cf. Jackman, 1994, p. 2) to repeatedly engage in capitalist acts of consumption in order to produce romance, experience intimacy, and gain access to/construct the experience of being in a successful relationship. In the forthcoming chapters, this will be further analysed in light of the kinds of gendered identities that are afforded by this romantic context and are positioned as necessary to successfully ‘be romantic’, in order to elucidate whether / in what ways this is problematic beyond the financial burden it places on couples to consume romance.

The normative pressure of these combined discourses was evident in the disclaimers and defences used by participants to justify why grand romantic dates were not something they did regularly (refer to Section 4.3.2.3 of Chapter 4). As shown previously, these defences against the regular performance of grand dates were widespread, suggesting that participants oriented to the normative pressure of the discursive performative script to regularly be-romantic in order to ‘do’ relationship maintenance.

In sum, romance, and in particular the grand date, was constructed as generating an emotional intimacy which, in turn, was constructed as necessary to maintain a happy and healthy relationship, but as something that is impractical to perform on a regular basis. Participants positioned romantic gestures as viable alternatives to romance,

which, while not as successful at generating emotional intimacy, enabled them to position their relationships according to the soulmate discourse in the interviews. The less potent affordances of the romantic gesture will be considered in more detail in the chapters that follow.

Emotional intimacy as a whole was constructed as being the central outcome of the romantic date, and the key reason for taking part in it. The combined discursive effect of the 'romance-as-therapy' and the discursive performative script of the grand date has been identified as potentially problematic, and will be further explored in the following chapters to see what identities are afforded by this discursive script. Next, however, I will turn to a discussion of the other potential outcome of romance: sexual intercourse and physical intimacy.

### 5.3.3.2. Physical Intimacy

#### 5.3.3.2.1. Introduction and definitions

In this section, I refer to physical intimacy to mean a sense of physical closeness, such as walking arm-in-arm, holding hands, holding each other, which, while it may lead to sexual intercourse is not inherently sexual. In the argument that follows, I try to distinguish between physical intimacy and sexual intercourse, depending on the participants' intended meaning. Where this is unclear, I use both terms as an either/or option.

Romance (specifically the grand date) was constructed as giving access to this sense of emotional intimacy and was positioned as an imperative for couples to consume/produce grand dates in order to do relationship maintenance. This needed to be protected from everyday life via the boundaries discussed in Chapter 4. Additionally, as will be shown in the section that follows, in this particular relationship context (engaged/married) it also seemed to be necessary to keep the construction of romance 'pure' by distancing it from a 'romance for sex' discourse (that is, keeping romance pure from other desires).



### 5.3.3.2.2. The spectre of sex

Thus, physical intimacy in contrast to emotional intimacy had a much more subtle or implied presence in the interview data. While emotional intimacy was emphasised by the participants as being key to their enjoyment of romance, sexual intercourse was hardly mentioned directly, contrary to the arguments discussed in the literature review above. This may in part be due to the interviewers' reticence to discuss this topic. For example, the main interviewer hedged her questions whenever the topic of sex came up, for example:

Nicky: u:::m (.) is that (.) I-like (.) okay and here we get into iffy territory .hh U:M: sort of like hygiene sort of being close to someone like that kind o::f (.) y-you know (.) (Interview 2.5).

Nicky: Okay and (.) .hhh (.) like other body hair remova(h)l- sorry this is also verging on the dodgy again I guess (Interview 4.4).

Nicky: So do you think it's too, without getting dodgy or anything but um is it to do with like intimacy? (Interview 5.2).

This would have not only signalled to the participants the subject matter (sexual intercourse) I was asking about, but also that this subject matter was to be framed as risky or sensitive. This said, on closer analysis of the occasions where it *was* discussed, it could be argued that this was due to other reasons as well (for example, to construct one's motives for being-romantic as authentic and 'pure'; discussed further below), which is suggestive of how sex and physical intimacy was positioned in relation to this construction of romance.

### 5.3.3.2.3. Using romance to 'get sex': The predatory romantic man discourse

It was discussed above in the literature review (Section 5.2.2) how romance can be linked to sex discursively. This discourse was drawn from by participants in the following ways:

EXTRACT 56: INTERVIEW 2.5

1. Eddie: I don't really know what romance i- a romantic woman
2. Nicky: ja
3. Eddie: (.) I uh- I just think women enjoy being romanced [...]
4. Nicky: so receiving it [rather than
5. Eddie: [JA I think it's (.) it is sort of in the man's prerogative [...] I don't- £I
6. actually ha(h)ve no(h) idea::
7. Nicky: o(h)ka(h)(h)y, fair enou(h)gh=
8. Eddie: =((laughs))=
9. Nicky: =((laughs)) u:::m, ja I mean from what I've
10. seen stereotypically like (.) like, in the stereotypes it's the man who does all the
11. romancing and it's the woman who is romanced, like, do you think you'd agree with
12. that? O::r=
13. Eddie: =Ja and I th- (.) hh (.) coy in a sense
14. Nicky: okay?
15. Eddie: like (.) the- I think that- the typical will be the bashful (.)
16. Nicky: mhm
17. Eddie: like (.) flirtatious but (.)
18. Nicky: sort of also::
19. Eddie: keeping it at a hands [arm's length kind of thing
20. Nicky: [ja mhm
21. Eddie: that is what- oh >and then the man has to win that, and that is what romance is<
22. Nicky: okay
23. Eddie: or has to beat that
24. Nicky: ja
25. Eddie: and (.) ja, so:: (.) hh (.) ja hh I think it is a: (.) it's a two way street, but (.)
26. Nicky: mm
27. Eddie: you know it's- it's- it's three lanes in one dire(h)ction and o(h)ne co(h)ming ba(h)ck
28. and all tha(h)t=
29. Nicky: =o(h)kay
30. °((both laugh))°

EXTRACT 57: INTERVIEW 5.4

1. Heidi: I s'pose it's like (.) if I think of it typically romantic (.)
2. Nicky: mhm?
3. Heidi: you woul- it'll be like oh a guy will like (.) like plan some event, and (.)
4. Nicky: mm
5. Heidi: maybe like (.) buy flowers a::nd (.) .hh hhh (.) but he's doing it (.) because the girl
6. wants to do it (.) [Not because he:: really (.) like he'll enjoy it
7. Nicky: [oka::y ja
8. Heidi: but (.) he would be just as happy (.) to do something (.) enjoyable that's not really
9. deemed (.) romantic, [*per se*
10. Nicky: [okay alright
11. Heidi: u:::m
12. Nicky: okay (.) .hh so it's for the girl's benefit, then?
13. Heidi: (outwit then) I sp- I s'pose so
14. Nicky: mm, ja. U::m (.) Why do you think guys do it then? (.) is it just to:: (.) make the girl
15. happy? Or get her into bed? [or (.) those kinds of things? [(laughs)]
16. Heidi: [(small laugh)) [(laughs)) mm maybe a bit
17. of both?
18. Nicky: okay?
19. Heidi: but (.) I think after you're married it's just to make the girl happy (.) [probably

20. Nicky:

[okay     Alright

In both of these extracts, romance is positioned as a tool of seduction, defined as enabling (specifically) a man to “win” (line 21) or “beat” (line 23) the woman’s defences (where defences are described as “keeping (it) at arm’s length”, line 19; all from Extract 56), or to “get her into bed” (line 15, Extract 57). Here, it is implied that sexual intercourse is the ‘reward’ which can be “won” by the man after seducing the woman through romance. Obviously, this is gendered in this account, with men constructed as being the ones with the “prerogative” (Line 5, Extract 56) to orchestrate the doing-of-romance, and this will be discussed further in Chapter 6. For the time being, however, the point here is to show that sexual intercourse is constructed as an outcome of romance – the reward for “winning” or “beating” down the woman’s defences.

However, there was some discursive distance between the subjects created in/by/through this discourse of ‘doing sex for romance’, and the participants themselves. This is evident in Extract 57, where Heidi argues that “after marriage”, a man is more likely to plan romance to “make the girl happy” (line 19). If Heidi was to argue unequivocally that men plan romance to get sex, then it would disrupt the presentation of the romantic events planned by her husband by calling his motives into question (as well as upsetting her presentation of them according to the soulmate discourse). This distance was also evident in another type of discourse, which I have termed the predatory romantic man discourse. In the two extracts that follow, both participants were asked to describe ‘the romantic man’ (the construction of which will be developed in full in Chapter 6).

#### EXTRACT 58: INTERVIEW 4.4

1. Nicky: <besides having the money to blow on thi(h)ngs like that>, i:s there anything else (.)
2.        [maybe in the way they behave like (.) [the romantic man]
3. Johan: [.hhh                   [hhh                   [U:::m hhh                   ] (.) .hhh it's uh that type of
4.        men, okay they'll- they'll (.) they ve:ry: (.) >I-I can imagine in my head but
5.        [it's hard to explain<]
6. Nicky: [((small laugh)) .hhh ] °↑ja?°
7. Johan: I think they- they- very::- they take their lead that's one of the things that I know they
8.        do=
9. Nicky:        =Mhm?=  
10. Johan:        =>they take their lead<, they [...] get the- that< suspicion <into the (.) the
11.        women's minds> as well in a way like [the w-] the women they didn't know what to

12. Nicky: [Okay.]
13. Johan: expect [.hhh ]
14. Nicky: [Okay] (.) so like the mysterious?=
15. Johan: =Ja the mysterious [thing]
16. Nicky: [ O]kay ja? [...]
17. Johan: And giving- giving all the attention to her, ma[king] her feel special I think that's
18. Nicky: [ Ja. ]
19. Johan: basically what they get down to doing. [.hhh ] Okay but £in the movies also it works-£
20. Nicky: [Okay ]
21. Johan: it comes down to something else at the end of the day so I think
22. [£that's- (that- that's) the bigger] plan
23. Nicky: [ Okay ((small laugh)) ]
24. Johan: [.hhh ] you know? (([a[ughs)) .hhh ] ((small laugh)) you know [but um] (.)
25. Nicky: [ Ja(h).] [Okay ((small laugh))] [Perfect] Ja=
26. Johan: =I think that's why they do it
27. Nicky: Ja.
28. Johan: to be honest with you (.) 'cause I also know how b- guys minds work↑.
29. Nicky: Ja, ja
30. Johan: you know [like (([au[ghs)) ]
31. Nicky: [ja [((laughs))]

Prior to the start of Extract 58, Johan has described a romantic man as someone who spends a lot of money on extravagant gestures of romance, which he constructs as being over-the-top and unachievable for many men (including himself). He further distances himself from this construction of the 'romantic man' by saying that they "make her feel special" (line 17), but in order to achieve a "bigger plan" (line 22), a "something else" (line 21). He is gesturing towards the topic of sex, and seeks confirmation from the interviewer in lines 24 and 30 to see if I understand what he means (by asking "you know?" three times). I respond with "okay", laughter and a "perfect, ja" in line 25 and a "ja" with (shared) laughter in line 31, demonstrating a gesture towards a shared understanding of the unspoken reference to sex (Durrheim, 2012).

This romantic man is positioned as being manipulative – "they get their women all worked up" (said prior to extract) by being "mysterious" (lines 14/15). Johan distances himself from this construction of a manipulative romantic man with ulterior motives by implying that his knowledge is not first-hand but because "I also know how b- guys minds work" (line 28). He therefore distances himself from this construction of a stereotypically romantic man as one who manipulates women through romance in order to have sexual intercourse with them. This manipulative quality is also evident in the next extract:

EXTRACT 59: INTERVIEW 5.5

1. Nicky: U:::m (.) okay, so: (.) if I had to sa:y (.) the phrase u:m: ‘the romantic man’, sort of
2. >f - if you think in terms of stereotypes< [...] what would the romantic man look like?
3. Tom: Mm:: (.) [...] >I think<. I think sincerity is a big part of like rea↓l romance, not like (.)
4. .hh a::h (.) smooth – >you know like< [the smooth guy i-is always a bit like (.) there’s
5. Nicky: [Ja:::]
6. Tom: something predatory about him (.) [like, sincerity is someone who actually ca::res
7. Nicky: [u:::H↑
8. Tom: about (.) like his partner so=
9. Nicky: =okay=
10. Tom: =ja
11. Nicky: .hh the predator (.) would that be: (.) so(h)(h)rry that sounds terrible ((laughs)) but
12. u:::m (.) would that- would that kind of romance be more, like (.) to get the chick into
13. be:::d? [O:::r]
14. Tom: [Ja:::] I’m h- cause like I went to a (.) private boy’s schoo::!?
15. Nicky: oh=ja?
16. Tom: and like (.) I know the type. And like, the way they talk about women, and l=when I
17. see them reacting (.) even eh- interacting with women [...] I can recognise (.) that
18. kind of guy=MAYBE it’s un-unfair on them
19. Nicky: ja
20. Tom: but like I’m like ‘.hhhh woo:: (.) wouldn’t trust that guy’ [...] th-there’s just like a::: (.)
21. telling someone what they wanna hear, a:nd [...] there’s like an insincerity that (.) is
22. like (.) mistrustful. [and all that
23. Nicky: [okay okay.
24. Tom: [...] the girl might feel super romanced but the guy is just like ‘it’s a means to an end’
25. Nicky: .pt okay
26. Tom: so I would sa:y, it’s like inauthentic

Tom also utilises this rhetoric of a “predatory” romantic man (line 6) and is even more explicitly negative about this construction. He uses this image to identify what the romantic man is *not*, by first identifying features which are similar to his construction of himself as a caring, thoughtful husband who tries to regularly romance his wife (part of the excluded data), and then referring to an inauthentic or insincere “smooth guy” (line 4). This “smooth guy” is one who does not “actually care about his partner” (line 6 and 8) and uses romance as a “means to an end” (line 24). Here again there is an indirect reference to sexual intercourse, with romance constructed as a means of negotiating access to women’s bodies, however, in a way that is positioned as “predatory” and therefore inauthentic.

Like Johan, Tom distances himself from this construction. He says that while “maybe it’s unfair on them” (line 18), he “wouldn’t trust that guy” (line 20) because of the way they “talk (about)” and “interact with women” (lines 16 and 17). Tom positions himself as different (and resistant) to this form of masculinity, which is quite hegemonically

masculine in appearance. He positions this type of man as one who is “smooth” and charming on the surface, who might as charming and romantic. Tom, however, constructs himself as having inside knowledge (based on his experiences at school), enabling him to “spot (this kind of man) in an instant” (excluded part of extract); while simultaneously constructing himself as *not* this type of man, and therefore as authentic and caring in contrast.

This discourse of the man scheming and plotting to get a woman into bed, and using romance as a tool of seduction, links to the male sex drive discourse and the have/hold discourse, as discussed in the literature. While this construction was almost completely absent from the women’s accounts (in any form, whether in relation to their own experiences or just broader constructions of romantic masculinity), men participants generally distanced themselves from it.

For example, Tom and Johan defended themselves in the ways discussed above. Bruce described himself (*and* his friends, presumably as a way of emphasising his distance from ‘these types’ of men) as being sexually chaste, uninterested in one night stands, and loyal to their partners; and described meeting with these friends regularly to keep each other accountable to being ‘this kind’ of man (“we have like, regular (.) one-on-one [...] meetings [...] where I’ll be like [...] ‘listen bra, how’s it going with your wife? How’s it going with your marriage? Are you: (.) making her feel loved?’ [...] Reminding each other [...] 50 years from now, ‘is the secretary getting a bit too attractive? You know? Stay away from her”); Interview 3.5).

Eddie describes being unable to imagine what a romantic woman might be like, because he doesn’t even look at other women (see In these ways most of the men participants distanced themselves from this trope of the manipulative/predatory man who uses romance in order to have sexual intercourse. However, what was perhaps surprising (in the light of the male sex drive discourse and the have/hold discourse), was that this rhetoric of manipulation or being predatory was also applied to describe women.

Extract 60 below). And, as discussed in the previous section, emotional intimacy was emphasised in both men's and women's accounts as the desired outcome of romance.

#### 5.3.3.2.4. Women's bodies as the tool of seduction

In these ways most of the men participants distanced themselves from this trope of the manipulative/predatory man who uses romance in order to have sexual intercourse. However, what was perhaps surprising (in the light of the male sex drive discourse and the have/hold discourse), was that this rhetoric of manipulation or being predatory was also applied to describe women.

#### EXTRACT 60: INTERVIEW 2.5

1. Nicky: ((laughs)) (.) u::m (.) okay- but- okay, so I asked what the romantic man looks like
2. and you-you think, it would be someone quite effemine-ate (.) basically
3. Eddie: ja [...]
4. Nicky: So what would a stereotypically, romantic woman look like?
5. Eddie: (.) I don't know, I sort of consider all women romantic [...] that's actually pretty difficult
6. (.) [cause (.) y-y-on a romantic evening, you dress up (sort o- even if it) was the idea
7. Nicky: [mm
8. Eddie: that was happening here, [a::nd (.) we- versus if I see a girl who dresses up like that
9. Nicky: [ja
10. Eddie: every day, I (.) just think that she's either a tart, [O::R like (.) it doesn't impress me
11. Nicky: [o(h)ka(h)(h)y
12. Eddie: in the slightest
13. Nicky: mm
14. Eddie: (.) I dunno, I think you know when you see (.) a romantic woman in the context of a
15. relationship kind of thing
16. Nicky: okay?
17. Eddie: (.) Ja:, u::m (.) [I don't really see how ] like ((laughs)) I might score myself brownie
18. Nicky: [CAUSE otherwise it's like]
19. Eddie: points now, I don't see other women in a romantic light, [like (.) I don't see how they
20. Nicky: [ja
21. Eddie: would be romantic
22. Nicky: mhm
23. Eddie: u::m
24. Nicky: fair enough ((laughs))

#### EXTRACT 61: INTERVIEW 3.5

1. Nicky: W-what would a romantic w-f-woman look like? [...]
2. Bruce: (.) hh (.) I know, I s-think when I was younger (.)
3. Nicky: mhm?

4. Bruce: u::M::: (.) one of my (lady) friends said to me, she was like 'a::h, all guys are into
5. (girls) with big boobs and small bums', you know?
6. Nicky I: o(h)ka(h)y?
7. Bruce: And I was like, that's not true really, you know? u::m=
8. Nicky: =ja?
9. Bruce: (.) I guess (you could mean that) I think (.) from what I've seen (.) I don't know- think-
10. for me I don't really growp- I didn't grow up in the city [...] (.) from what I've seen? I
11. think u::h (.) maybe glamorous (.) really skinny chicks [...] maybe very char-
12. charismatic, very- got a lot of charisma
13. Nicky: okay?
14. Bruce: U:m, I guess
15. Nicky: quite sexy- flirtatious?, or [not really or
16. Bruce: [se::xy:: (.) .hhh u::m hhh (.) I don't know hey [...]
17. for me as well my- my perception would also be from rugby? [...] a lot of the girls
18. there would be:: (.) very shallow? (.)
19. Nicky: uhuh
20. Bruce: would dress very ski- very scantily? [...] u::m (.) would (.) expose a lot of their bodies?
21. [...] would be very flirtatious, very, um (.) in your face (.)
22. Nicky: mm:::
23. Bruce: and that really- I just leave (((laughs)) u::m (.) that wasn't my scene. My-my close
24. Nicky: [ja(h)
25. Bruce: friends in my-my team (.) weren't really into that kind of stuff
26. Nicky: Mhm
27. Bruce: (.) Um

#### EXTRACT 62: INTERVIEW 4.4

1. Nicky: Ja. Cool .hhh Okay now to ask the flip side, so what do you think a stereotypical
2. romantic woman looks like?
3. Johan: (.) ((small laugh)) (uh that's a-) .hhh that's a hard question [...] women really aren't
4. the- the romantic ones [.hhh ] in a sense so they don't really do something for the
5. Nicky: [Mhm]
6. Johan: man to be romantic. .hhh=
7. Nicky: =Ja=
8. Johan: =now and then but then they also (.) .hhh what they do,
9. the man usually do [...] I mean it's like (.) or they- they've got this whole plan in their
10. mind that they gonna try to seduce the guy I dunno=
11. Nicky: =Oh okay. Alright. [So (coming)]
12. Johan: [ I dunno ]
13. Nicky: down to that aspect of it again [or]
14. Johan: [Ja] I m- I mean now that's what I just [ see on TV ]
15. Nicky: [((small laugh))]
16. Johan: you know [you get there you get the] women and they got this .hh lingerie going here
17. Nicky: [ Ja ((small laugh)) ]
18. Johan: [and every]thing and ((small [laugh]))
19. Nicky: [ Okay. ] [ Ja ] ((small laugh))=
20. Johan: =and then they got this whole
21. thing in their mind of what (.) might happen
22. Nicky: Ja
23. Johan: [(you know)] I dunno .hhh but like say like I dunno hhh it's uh it's difficult [...] I think
24. Nicky: [ Okay. ]
25. Johan: public has actually made it, .hh the society [.hhh ] that- that's why woman don't really
26. Nicky: [Mhm]
27. Johan: go and really do something like (.) like that be[cause] of .hhh being seen as women



28. Nicky: [ Ja. ]  
29. Johan: are being forward or cheap or slutty or something if they do things that guys maybe  
30. do

Eddie, Johan and Bruce's first reactions to being asked to describe a romantic woman was to describe her in terms of her physical appearance, the way she dresses, and her behaviour (all three also expand on this definition to give other ways that women could be seen as romantic – this will be discussed further in Chapter 6. According to this construction, a romantic woman dresses in a revealing manner for the purposes of seduction. In these ways most of the men participants distanced themselves from this trope of the manipulative/predatory man who uses romance in order to have sexual intercourse. However, what was perhaps surprising (in the light of the male sex drive discourse and the have/hold discourse), was that this rhetoric of manipulation or being predatory was also applied to describe women.

Extract 60, Eddie explains this using the following argument: (1) "on a romantic evening, you dress up" (line 6), by which act you identify the act of doing romance and yourself as being different to the everyday, as discussed in Chapter 4. The act of dressing up is done with the goal of making oneself look more attractive and sexually appealing *to one's partner*, suggesting sexual availability. (2) However, a woman "who dresses up like that every day" (line 8-10) is one who is outside of the romantic context/bubble, which in the everyday context then looks like a "tart"<sup>36</sup> (line 10). This may be because the message that one is sexually available is no longer obviously aimed at one person (her date), but appears to be directed at *all* men, rather than within "the context of a relationship" (line 14-15), where the message of sexual availability would be read by outsiders as being targeted at her partner.

In Extract 61, Bruce describes a romantic woman as one who is "glamorous" (line 11), "really skinny" (line 11), "charismatic" (line 12), and later as "expose a lot of their

---

<sup>36</sup> "Tart" is defined in several ways on Urban Dictionary. On the whole, it can be taken to mean a women who dresses provocatively, and who appears to be sexually promiscuous (but isn't necessarily).  
<http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=tart> Accessed on 19/08/2015.

bodies” (line 20), “dress very scantily” (line 20), “very shallow” (line 18) and “very flirtatious” (line 21) and “in your face” (line 21). Bruce’s ‘romantic woman’ is one who is sexually forward (even aggressive – by being “in your face”) and promiscuous.

In Extract 62, Johan describes a ‘romantic woman’ as having “this whole plan [...] that they gonna try to seduce the guy” (line 9-10); as “wearing “lingerie” (line 16); and that society would/could class this woman as “forward or cheap or slutty” (line 29). Thus, the romantic woman is constructed by these participants as seductive, sexually forward, and scantily clad.

This discourse diverges from the ‘predatory’ man one in that, where the ‘smooth guy’ would use romance as a tool to gain access to women’s bodies, here women’s bodies are offered as an act of seduction which is linked to/classed as constituting an act of romance itself, although not necessarily in a positive way. All three man participants present this kind of woman as not personally desirable to them, although perhaps Johan seems less offended with the concept than Bruce and Eddie. Bruce and Eddie, where they mention encountering this kind of woman in ‘real life’ both describe repudiating or dismissing her advances: Eddie says “I (.) just think that she’s either a tart, O:::R like (.) it doesn’t impress me in the slightest” (line 10, 12) and Bruce describes “that really (.) I just leave ((laughs)) u:::m (.) that wasn’t my scene” (line 23). This positions both men as being chaste and sexually pure, particularly in comparison to these women (cf. Flood, 2013).

All three of the participants hedge their answers, using phrases such as “I dunno”, “sort of”, “I guess”, et cetera, which limit the impact of their answers, and present them as ‘open for negotiation’, rather than as something they truly believe/stand by (Dixon & Foster, 1997). Additionally, Johan and Bruce emphasise that their answers are not based on their own personal experience, but are drawn from the media; and as discussed above, where Bruce and Eddie describe coming into contact with these women in ‘real life’, they position these advances as unappealing or undesirable. All of these discursive manoeuvres save face as they ensure they are not heard as finding this kind of woman attractive.

Thus, three of four<sup>37</sup> men participants constructed the romantic woman at least partially in terms of a 'predatory' woman, who would dress in a sexualised manner with the purpose of seduction. None of the women participants referred to a 'romantic woman' in this light, although two of them did refer to appearance in the construction of a romantic woman: Heidi says the romantic woman would be "dressed up" (Interview 5.4), and Louise jokes "in my head I have like (.) blonde hair and big boobs ((laughs))" in the midst of struggling to define a romantic woman (Interview 3.4).

It could be that the men participants in particular oriented to the male sex drive and have/hold discourses, and in order to distance themselves from these discourses drew from them to position 'other' men as "predatory" or "smooth". Additionally, by including women in this discourse, they also de-emphasised the gendered nature of these discourses, thus protecting themselves from it. Interestingly, none of the women participants drew from the male sex drive/ have/hold discourse when discussing romantic masculinity. It is possible that the men participants oriented to this discourse in a (defensive) way that was unnecessary for the women, which could explain these findings.

#### 5.3.3.2.5. The problem of 'romance for sex'

Why would this construction be something that is necessary to distance oneself from? Flood (2013) suggested that men and women both work to distance their sexuality from the 'slut' discourse. Similarly, based on the data above it can be argued that this construction of romance (that is, that romance is either utilised, possibly in a calculating or manipulative way, for the purposes of gaining access to sex; or that women's bodies are used to invite sexual advances), where romance is so closely tied to sexual intercourse, constitutes romance as something which is cheap, tawdry, and inauthentic. This discourse of 'romance for sex' was constructed generally in a negative way, as epitomising a lack of emotional intimacy, which as discussed above, was constructed as the goal and the result of 'real', 'authentic', 'successful' romance.

---

<sup>37</sup> Couple 1 were unfortunately not asked this question, as the interview schedule was expanded based on their participation (as discussed in the Methodology Chapter).

#### 5.3.3.2.6. Physical intimacy as a desired/desirable outcome of romance

However, despite these defences, it was clear in other aspects of the data set that physical intimacy was an anticipated outcome of romance. This was evident in participants' concern over their physical appearance and the production of oneself as a physically appealing romantic subject (particularly those aspects relating to intimate hygiene); in their descriptions of the kinds of physical affection that may take place on dates, such as holding hands, hugging or kissing; and finally in implied/indirect mentions of sexual intercourse, which is alluded to but hardly ever directly addressed. This will now be developed in more detail.

##### 5.3.3.2.6.1. Being a physically appealing romantic subject

Firstly, participants positioned themselves as being concerned with making themselves physically appealing on dates, so as not to have anything "gross" (Interviews 2.1, 2.5, 3.4, 4.5, 5.2), "wrong" (Interviews 1.2 and 1.5, 2.1, 5.2), or "off-putting" (Interviews 2.1, 4.1, 5.2) about themselves. Ways to avoid feeling like this included showering, brushing teeth, use of deodorant or perfume, and shaving (by the women participants in particular). Participants also discussed some things that would be off-putting if their partner didn't do, such as failing to shave his face (Interviews 1.1 and 1.4, 2.1, 4.5) or her under-arms and legs (Interviews 1.5, 2.5, 3.5, 4.4, 5.5); or failing to shower (Interviews 1.4, 1.5, 2.1 and 2.4, 2.5, 3.4, 3.5, 4.4, 5.4, 5.5), brush teeth (Interviews 1.4, 1.5, 2.1 and 2.4, 2.5, 3.4, 3.5, 4.4, 5.4, 5.5), wash hair (Interviews 3.4, 3.5, 4.4), use deodorant (Interviews 1.4, 1.5, 2.5, 3.4, 3.5, 4.4, 5.4), or to groom one's nails (Interviews 2.5, 4.1 and 4.4). These things, if not done, were described as "killing the mood" (Interviews 1.4, 2.5), or stopping one's partner from "go(ing) there" (that is, becoming physically or sexually intimate, Interview 3.4). So, for example:

#### EXTRACT 63: INTERVIEW 1.5

1. Nicky: £Okay cool£ .hhh u:::m (.) okay so::: (.) I- let's look at the ones that would kill the

2. romance u:m (.) what is it about (.) okay, showering and brushing teeth [and ] that's
3. Luke: [yeah]
4. (.) it's hygiene
5. Nicky: ye[ah]
6. Luke: [if its i- f- y- d-y- d- if- if some(thing) smells wrong you just (.) don't want to
7. Nicky: Okay cool, alright (.) u::m (.) and the:: the facial hair thing?
8. Luke: .hh um (.) well I don- maybe it's just a thing with (.) Sue but she doesn't like the
9. stubble, she always complains
10. Nicky: okay=
11. Luke: =so:: (.) i=if we go out >y'know like< she'll come she'll feel it once and be like
12. "no" and then she'll just stay away from me
13. Nicky: okay [right ]
14. Luke: [she won't] want to get close because she doesn't like the stubble, so
15. Nicky: okay
16. Luke: have to shave before we go out
17. Nicky: okay. So all of these kind of it's encouraging sort of getting [to >y'know<] hold her
18. Luke: [mm: ]
19. Nicky: close, like that kind of [thing? Okay awesome (.)
20. Luke: [ye::s th- that's my- I-love language is-
21. [(is to use-)] body contact so:=
22. Nicky: [(is to (.) ja)] =okay cool

#### EXTRACT 64: INTERVIEW 3.4

1. Nicky: and then u::::m (.) hh grooming nails? (.) how would that make it more romantic?
2. Louise: I think like u::::m (.) I don't know, l:: have a thing about nails ((laughs))
3. Nicky: ((laughs))
4. Louise: ((laughs)) u::m but (.) you know (.) U::m (.) specially toe nails [...] just because I
5. know that (.) after the date we're going to come home and we're going to (.) you
6. know, cuddle [or you know (.) .hh and then he will take his shoes off like and I don't
7. Nicky: [mm::
8. Louise: wanna be gouged in the leg or [something
9. Nicky: [exa(h)ctly ja (((laughs))
10. Louise: [so you know it just (.) also shows that
11. he's going that extra step for me::
12. Nicky: ja

#### EXTRACT 65: INTERVIEW 4.4

1. Nicky: Okay and then um (.) .hhh (.) what about the body moisturiser hh that if you didn't
2. use it would kill the romance.
3. Johan: .hhh Ja in a way 'cause I mean like if you got some people's got very dry hands
4. [(or we s-)((rubs hands)) rough hands
5. Nicky: [Mhm. Ja=
6. Johan: =especially us that work with- with our
7. hands [.hhh ] I mean if you gonna touch a girl or you rub her leg or whatever and it's
8. Nicky: [Ja ja]
9. Johan: like feels like you've got like sand paper hands [I mean] it's not gonna .hhh=
10. Nicky: [Okay. ] =It's not
11. gonna be romantic=
12. Johan: =Ja [I don't] think that's gonna turn her on hey (((small laugh)))
13. Nicky: [ Ja ] (((small laugh))) Kay
14. ((small laugh))

In all three cases, there is an implicit understanding that at some point of the date, whether during or “after” (Extract 64, line 5), physical intimacy may occur. These three participants describe aspects of one’s appearance that must be groomed, because otherwise the romance and the physical intimacy may be disrupted. So for example the “gouging” in the leg, the “sand paper hands”, the prickly beard, the body odour or unpleasant breath – these are all things that could potentially disrupt or derail physical intimacy (if not actual sexual intercourse), and therefore, it is implied, also disrupt the romance of the event. Therefore, participants’ concerns over producing themselves as physically appealing (or at minimum, with nothing physically *objectionable*), implies that at some point of the evening, the way they look, smell and taste will become salient.

#### 5.3.3.2.6.2. Physical affection on dates

Secondly, participants described numerous ways of showing physical affection on dates, which would achieve a sense of physical intimacy. Examples included holding hands (Interviews 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 3.1, 3.2, 4.2, 5.2); hugging (Interviews 1.1, 1.4, 2.3, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 5.4); cuddling (Interviews 1.3, 1.5, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 4.2, 5.4); kissing (Interviews 1.2, 1.4, 2.3, 3.1, 4.2 and 4.5, 4.4, 5.2 and 5.4, 5.5); walking arm in arm (Interview 1.3); putting a hand on one’s partner’s leg or putting one’s legs over the other’s lap (Interviews 1.1, 1.5, 3.3, 4.2, 4.4, 5.4, 5.5); and stroking one’s partner’s hair (Interviews 1.5, 4.2, 5.2). These acts were described as either taking place during the date or afterwards.

#### 5.3.3.2.6.3. Sexual intercourse as an extension of emotional and physical intimacy

However, it can be inferred that these acts of physical affection were not the only reason for participants’ concerns over their appearances. There were also indirect references to sexual intercourse in the data. Some of these examples appeared in the extracts above (emphasis added): “it comes down to *something else* at the end of the day so I think that’s (that that’s) the bigger plan” (Johan, Extract 58, lines 21-22); “cause I mean ja the girl might feel super romanced but the guy is just like ‘it’s a *means to an end*’” (Tom,

Extract 59, line 24). Other references to sexual intercourse in the data set included the phrase “*killing the mood*” (Interviews 1.4, 2.5); or “just because I know that (.) after the date we’re going to come home and we’re going to (.) you know, cuddle or *like you know* (.) .hh” and ““Darling, you need to (.) sha:::ve before *I go there’* ((laughs))” (Louise, Interview 3.4); “Sorry I don’t wanna *go into depth* there... I mean it’s just you can’t w- .hhh think (.) you gonna *turn on* a guy” (Johan, Interview 4.4). There were some other possible allusions to sexual intercourse that can be read as such because of the context in which they fall:

**EXTRACT 66: INTERVIEW 1.4**

1. Sue: I should have put shaving there as well [((laughs))
2. Nicky: [okay ( ) cool
3. Sue: and that can kind of kill the mood [((laughs)) if you have hairy underarms or hairy legs
4. Nicky: [oh okay
5. Sue: [((laughs))
6. Nicky: [right. ja ((laughs)) w-what is it do you think tha- that kills the mood there with um,
7. y’know like [hairy
8. Sue: [I think it’s just the general like (.) uh (.) like expectancy I think?
9. Nicky: uhuh
10. Sue: (.) I think it’s just what society says [like in a sense that, y’know (.) if you(h)r le(h)gs
11. Nicky: [okay
12. Sue: aren’t shave(h)n like typ- for women it’s [y’know? (.) It uh either you’re a fe(h)minist or
13. Nicky: [ja
14. Sue: y’kno(h)w ((laughs)) or just like lazy I guess=
15. Nicky: =ok[ay
16. Sue: [or (.) ja, I think it- it (.) I think it comes
17. down to the whole like (.) <seductive> thing in a sense
18. Nicky: ja?=  
19. Sue: =where it’s more- more feminine to be like, cleanly shaven?
20. Nicky: okay (.) cool? Fair enough. How do you feel about that? u:::m
21. Sue: u:::m ja, I think if I’m trying to be romantic, I’d like to be clea(h)nly sha(h)ve(h)n
22. [((laughs))
23. Nicky: [ja, ( )

In this extract Sue discusses the importance of shaving on a date. Through the phrases "killing the mood" (line 3, 6) and "the whole like (.) seductive thing" (line 17), combined with the emphasis on being “cleanly shaven” (line 19), one could understand the phrase "to be romantic" (line 21) as being a reference to being physically (if not sexually) intimate rather than just ‘being-romantic’ in the stereotypical sense of the term, as defined in Chapter 4. This suggests there is an implied association between physical/sexual intimacy and being-romantic: despite the lack of explicit reference to it, it is understood to be linked

discursively. This is also apparent in the following extract, where Johan is discussing getting ready for an extremely romantic occasion. In this extract, I am interviewing Johan about the checklist of men’s activities one could do to get ready for a date (please refer to Appendix 7E for the post-event checklist for men).

EXTRACT 67: INTERVIEW 4.4

1. Nicky: um .hh okay and I see you ticked all of them for the- the extremely romantic
2. occasion hh um do you wanna tell me anything about that or why (.) [why would you
3. Johan: [Argh well ja I
4. think if- if you wanna be extra romantic and [.hhh ] the whole thing and say you’re
5. Nicky: [Mhm]
6. Johan: going a bit kinky and all the kinda crap [(I mean)] .hhh
7. Nicky: [ Okay. ] What do you mean by that,
8. like sort of getting sex- (.) [(so s-)] basi(h)cally [or ja (okay) ]
9. Johan: [ Ja. ] [Ja basically] you know a guy- you
10. know relationships [I’m not] talking about myself now but [ um ] (.) in ge[neral .hhh
11. Nicky: [ Ja. ] [Mhm] [Generally
12. speaking ja ja
13. Johan: um (.) I think say you know a- some people do some kinky crap
14. Nicky: Mhm

Here, we can again see the use of ‘being romantic’ in reference to physical/sexual intimacy. Johan initially is trying to be deliberately oblique, and uses the expression to “be *extra romantic*” (line 4, emphasis added). This is an implicit reference to physical/sexual intimacy, understood from the subsequent use of “going a bit kinky” (line 6). The interviewer then directly asks him whether he means sexual intercourse (line 7-8). He then defends what he has said – he specifies that (1) he is talking hypothetically (“you know a guy”, line 9); (2) that he means in the context of relationships (“you know relationships”, line 9-10); and (3) adds “I’m not talking about myself now” (line 10). These defences frame what he is about to say as being as far from his own experiences and identity as possible, which could explain the explicit detail he is able to give (which was exceptional, compared to the rest of the data set).

While not quoted here, he continues and gives a description of the kinds of “kinky crap” to which he is referring, in order to justify being as well-groomed as possibly for such an “extra romantic” occasion (“say you got some cream or (.) chocolate syrup over you I mean .hhh especially on the body hair removal there I think a girl would rather lick a



(Nicky: ((small laugh)) okay ((small laugh))) a- a chest without hair there and licking- have to take hairs out of her mouth because ja”). The meaning has now become explicit – a sexual activity which is framed within the context of being “extra romantic” (within a “relationship”) as a way of doing something exceptional with one’s partner.

Thus, the early reference to being “extra romantic” can now be clearly seen as a reference to sexual intercourse/ physical intimacy which is not just sex, but something occurring within the context of a relationship on a special occasion (being *extra* romantic).

#### EXTRACT 68: INTERVIEW 5.5

1. Nicky: So, the showering and teeth (.) u:::m (.) what does [that mean?
2. Tom: [JA, so:: the same kind of
3. thing like if- if you’re being intimate (.) but you are worried about either what you: (.)
4. think you smell like or breath smells like or whatever, but also what the other person
5. (.) y-it’s (.)
6. Nicky: mhm
7. Tom: u:::H you gonna feel (.) less inclined to [...] like (.) be romantic, or (.)
8. Nicky: okay [cool
9. Tom: [intimate [...] SO IF she’s not feeling it, [then like it’s not gonna happen, [like we
10. Nicky: [then it’s (.) [ja
11. Tom: not gonna feel romantic together?
12. Nicky: okay

Here again, romance is used as a euphemism for physical intimacy/sexual intercourse. The context of this quote is as follows: Tom is discussing the list of ‘women’s activities’ that Heidi might do to get ready for a romantic evening (see Appendix 7E) which could increase or impede the way romance is experienced on a date. Throughout this discussion, Tom emphasises how whether she has shaved or not (for example) only matters to him in so far as it might affect her and make her feel self-conscious and less inclined to be “intimate” with him. This presentation of oneself as a partner whose love and commitment would not be undone by momentary failures to meet these societal expectations of appearance was a tactic common in the data set, and was part of the widely-deployed soulmate discourse. In this extract, the terms ‘being or feeling romantic’ (lines 7, 11) and ‘being intimate’ (lines 3, 9) are used interchangeably, which suggests that in this context, like with the previous extracts, ‘romance’ refers to sexual intercourse.

It is vital at this point to distinguish between the ‘romance for sex’ discourse (discussed in Section 5.3.3.2.3), and what is taking place in these extracts. The former positions romance as something performed with the goal of having sexual intercourse. It is constructed as a manipulated outcome of *predatory* romance, positioned as being *unromantic* and *inauthentic*. On the other hand, the latter is euphemistically conflating the notion of being-romantic with physical intimacy and/or sexual intercourse. In this construction, physical intimacy and sexual intercourse is positioned as a natural outcome of authentic romance, described as ‘extra-romantic’, a natural climax. In this way, while not often explicitly discussed, physical intimacy and sexual intercourse is invisible but present throughout the data set, usually hinted at but rarely explicitly described.

In the light of the previously discussed association of romance with emotional intimacy, it could be suggested that this intersection between romance and sex renders sexual and physical intimacy as not-just-sex, but as *emotionally intimate sex*. It is meaningful sex, intimate sex, which has been initiated in a way positioned as authentic. This construction repurposes existing discursive ties between romance and sex, reframing it in a way that does not disrupt the broader grand romantic discourse.

Therefore, by aligning oneself with the grand romantic discourse; by constructing the ‘romance for sex’ discourse as cheap, tawdry and meaningless and distancing oneself from it by aligning this discourse with a “predatory” ulterior motive; and by emphasising emotional intimacy as the desirable, valuable outcome of romance; physical intimacy and sexual intercourse is positioned as the ‘natural’ expression of emotional intimacy rather than the result of any manipulative endeavours by oneself or one’s partner. Through this discourse, romance is positioned as a vehicle for imbuing marriage/long term relationships with meaning, emotional and physical intimacy and authenticity.

## 5.4. Summary

As will be shown in the next chapter, the desire for or an interest in emotional intimacy is typically feminized in the literature or broader societal discourses. However, it was found that in this data set that it was constructed by both parties (men and

women) as important and the *reason* for being-romantic. Thus, it can be argued that by men and women participants arguing for the need for emotional intimacy and framing it as the idealized outcome of being-romantic, this romantic outcome could be seen as framed in this dataset as gender-neutral, and a key explanation for the romantic imperative.

Sex was present in the data set but was de-emphasized, and as a result is positioned as 'acceptable' when it is seen to be arising as a natural *extension* of the emotional intimacy attained by being-romantic. It could be argued that the effect of this discourse was to render sex in a gender-neutral way. The discursive effect of these discourses could be said to be, on the surface, in line with Giddens' argument about the transformative and equalizing power of intimate, romantic relationships.

However, it was shown above that this discourse is more complex than that, when we consider the implications and the way it is deployed in context. This was evident in the predatory romantic man discourse, identified above. The men participants constructed (some) other men as predatory when being-romantic was only a means to gain access to women's bodies and sexual intercourse. In contrast, the men participants emphasised the importance of emotional intimacy and distanced themselves from the discourse of romance-for-sex. This constructed the romancing of their partner as authentic and their relationship as real and idealised, according to the soulmate discourse. Therefore, for these men in long-term relationships, it seemed to be important to present themselves as having 'purer' motives for romancing their partners – to make their partner happy or to attain emotional intimacy. This seemed particularly important for the men participants to articulate (presumably because of the relationship context), as women participants did not discuss this at all.

In terms of the romantic imperative, it was found that participants positioned everyday life as being routine and unromantic; in contrast to everyday life, being-romantic was constructed as being special and anti-ordinary. Due to this contrast, marriages were constructed as needing 'work' to keep them functioning optimally, as daily life was positioned as sapping the intimacy from relationships over time. Romance (and grand dates in particular) were positioned as able and necessary to do this relationship-work: Emotional

intimacy was constructed as the key outcome of being-romantic; therefore going on grand dates was positioned as being the best way to inject emotional intimacy into married life.

However, two potential issues can be identified with this: Firstly, there is normative pressure on married couples to consume and (re)produce grand dates in order to do marriage-work. Secondly, grand dates were constructed as the most restrictive in the ways that romance can be successfully performed, in terms of its constructed discursive performative script as argued in Chapter 4. Participants did offer some alternatives, but these were simultaneously positioned as intrinsically less romantic. This normative pressure to do romance in particular ways becomes problematic when we consider what identities must be taken on in order to feel like one has successfully performed romance and gained access to this sense of emotional intimacy. The following two chapters (Chapters 6 and 7) will investigate the kind of romantic identities afforded by these romantic contexts, and constructed as necessary in order to 'be-romantic'. I will explore how these are gendered, and examine the implications of this gendering in light of the findings of Chapters 4 and 5.

## Chapter 6: The affordances of romance and the romantic dividend

*“Romance restricts people’s behaviour so that they adopt traditional norms of masculinity and femininity: men are expected to be ardent suitors while women expect to be looked after.”*

*(Broughton & van Acker, 2007, p. 281).*

### 6.1. Introduction

Thus far, I have made the argument that participants distinguished romance from the ‘everyday’ as a context that is different and unique and that provided access to a sense of closeness and emotional intimacy (Chapter 5). Grand dates, in particular, were positioned as more idealised and romantic than the other forms of romance identified by participants and simultaneously as more ‘scripted’ than the other forms of romance (Chapter 4). Successfully being-romantic was positioned as allowing participants to access a sense of emotional intimacy, which was constructed by participants as being vital to doing relationship-maintenance (Chapter 5). This rhetoric (which I have called the romantic imperative) therefore seems to place normative pressure on couples to be-romantic in order to ‘work’ on and sustain their marital relationships. In the description of the emotional intimacy resulting from being-romantic, gender and the accompanying identity roles seemed to melt away, leaving a composite identity made up of two amorphous, non-gendered individuals, positioned as having a strong sense of emotional connection to each other (Chapter 5).

However, there are signs in the previous sections that despite this presentation of romance as a platonic gender-neutral ideal, there were differently gendered responses in the interviews. For example, as discussed in Chapter 5, several men participants referenced the predatory male sex drive discourse (using it to distance themselves discursively from it), which none of the women participants referenced. This suggests that romance is not as gender-neutral as the discourses discussed in the previous

chapters position it to be. Instead, I propose that this organic, gender-neutral closeness is carefully constructed in gendered ways.

This chapter will investigate whether (and how) romance may afford different identity resources and consequences for men and for women. This will assist me in addressing the third research question, namely “What are the (complementary) gender identities that are afforded by the context of being-romantic?”

One of the key gaps identified in the Literature Review (Chapter 2) was the artificial separation of gender identities into studies of masculinities and studies of femininities. This chapter will address that by investigating the co-performances of complementary versions of masculinity and femininity within the contexts of being-romantic, in line with Schippers’ (2007) argument that gender identity is (in certain contexts at least; cf. Messerschmidt, 2012) co-constructed, complementary and hierarchical. I suggested in Chapter 2 that romance, being a context primarily associated with two (in this case, heterosexual) people on a date, is likely to be an excellent context for the application of Schippers’ (2007) argument.

Specifically, this chapter will focus on the forms of gender identities presented as being the idealised, preferred forms of identity, according to the discursive performative scripts. In the discussions that follow, it will be seen that romantic masculinity and romantic femininity have been used in the context of men’s and women’s bodies respectively (cf Schippers, 2007). However, this is not to say that these gendered identities are limited to these kinds of bodies; it rather reflects the focus of this study and this particular sample, which, as described in Section 1.1.1, were heterosexual men and women. I do not mean to argue that these can only be performed by men and women respectively. Rather, and in line with the theoretical stance of this study, I would suggest that romantic masculinity and femininity, and the norms and discourses that shape them (as explored below), form affordances from which we draw identities, roles and actions and through which romance can be performed.

To explore these performative scripts and situated affordances of romantic masculinity and femininity, two particular forms of being-romantic will be focused on

specifically: The grand date as the preferred and most idealised ‘version’ of being-romantic, and romantic gestures which were presented in a (comparatively) more gender-neutral way.

## 6.2. Literature review: The affordances of romantic masculinity and femininity

As argued in the Introduction (Chapter 1, Section 1.1.3.4.), there have been contradictory arguments put forward about whether being-romantic will have equitable or problematic outcomes for men and for women. The arguments in this debate inevitably frame different understandings of *what it means* to be a man or a woman ‘on a date’. These arguments will be explored, particularly focusing on the affordances they give rise to. First, I will examine the argument that romance results in more equitable relationships, and see what affordances this discourse enables. Then, I will discuss the alternative argument, looking at the characteristics of romantic masculinity as they have been constructed in other studies. Next, I will examine femininity with regards to romance, considering what (little) we know about romantic femininity given the existing sources and discourses that could be found. It will be demonstrated that there is a gap in the literature regarding our understanding of how these romantic identities are co-constructed. Next, the data analysis will be conducted, drawing from Shippers’ theory (2007) to understand how romantic masculinity and femininity are constructed in relation to each other.

### 6.2.1. Romance-as-equality and (de)gendered affordances

There have been a number of changes over the past 150 years, which have led away from the perception that the public sphere belongs to men (Lizardo, 2007). As described in Chapter 5 of the Results and Discussion, Coontz (2005) and Shumway (2003) have described the shifts in the institution of marriage across this period, where marriage has become sentimentalized<sup>38</sup> and sexualised (Coontz, 2005). This, combined with greater

---

<sup>38</sup> That is, the perceived reason for marriage has shifted away from more material/political motives to the idea that one should marry for love

gender equality and better education and employment opportunities for women – resulting in a more stable earning power for many women – has meant that now, more than ever, men and women choose for themselves if, when, and on what terms of the marital state they select to enter (Coontz, 2005; Delassandro & Wilkins, 2016).

It has also been suggested in some of the literature on romance and intimacy (see Giddens, 1992; Illouz, 1997) that this change in ‘romantic love’ and how it is constructed at a societal level has brought about a greater equality between the genders, *especially* when we engage in romance. Illouz (1997, p. 184) refers to this as a sense of “androgynous equality” which she argues emerges through the performance of romance. Additionally, it has been proposed that in romance, a man needs to be softer and more compassionate than in other settings, and therefore more feminized masculinities may be acceptable or even desirable in the setting of being romantic, compared to other contexts (Allen, 2007). For example, Allen (2007) postulated that romantic masculinity may be subordinate to hegemonic masculinity because of romance’s close discursive tie to femininity, as well as being implicitly constitutive of feminized attributes (such as being “more caring, thoughtful, and emotionally responsive”, p. 139). Allen (2007) proposed that as such, romantic masculinity might potentially offer a non-hegemonic form of masculinity capable of challenging “oppressive gender relations” (p. 139), as it may allow men and women to interact in a more equitable way.

### 6.2.2. Gender ‘equality’ in the service of inequality

However, it has been argued that in relationships in particular, there are a number of “rules and expectations” geared at governing how we behave in romantic relationships and that these are gendered differently (Delassandro & Wilkins, 2016, p. 98). Thus, it has been suggested that sometimes, where we do work to produce something that ‘looks equal’ (as in the examples above, Section 6.2.1), this work itself may be problematically gendered. A few studies have been found that suggest that we need to be suspicious of the findings and arguments made above (in Section 6.2.1).



For example, Eldén (2011, 2012) examined how gender inequality can be re-enforced through therapeutic discourses geared at heterosexual couples. These discourses have a *prima facie* message of gender equality, but Eldén demonstrated how the performance of these in context and their outcomes validate and further re-entrench gender inequality. This is evident in the example of Markus and Madeleine (Eldén, 2011), who appeared on an episode of a Swedish couples therapy television show. Their presenting issue is an ongoing fight over the distribution of housework in their relationship. One might, in a feminist analysis, argue this is indicative of a broader, gendered structural issue (Morrison, 2010, Natalier, 2004; Thagaard, 1997). However, in the show, this issue is re-interpreted on an individual level. Madeleine is presented with a therapeutic tool to limit her “nagging” and “need to control” others (Eldén, 2011, p. 152), which ultimately undermines Madeleine’s sense of her own experiences and what the issues really are in their relationship; while Markus is told he is to call for couple meetings wherein these expectations and roles can be discussed. The result is that Markus’s control over “the contours of the couple’s communication” and “Madeleine’s role as the one responsible for house-work is reinstated”, which reinforces the underlying gender dynamic in their relationship (Eldén, 2011, p. 153).

Allen’s (2007) starting argument which formed the rationale for her study (as described in Section 6.2.1), was that romance may lead to softer versions of masculinity. However, she (2007, p. 145) found that while invested in romance, her sample of young men talked about romance “in ways that simultaneously invoked hegemonic forms of masculinity”. Most participants sustained and positioned as preferable the “notion of active male and passive female sexuality” (p. 147), as they negotiated what Allen terms “the macho-romantic tightrope” (p. 145). Drawing on Demetriou’s (2001) argument, she suggests that contrary to her starting supposition, hegemonic masculinity appears to appropriate the ‘useful bits’ from subordinated masculinities – in this case romantic masculinity’s success with women, and the likelihood of attracting and seducing them. Therefore, Allen (2007) argues:

This appropriation can be seen as a result of contemporary demands on heterosexual men to meet the romantic needs of their partners, to enjoy the pleasures of romantic experience, and to prove themselves, as one participant coined it, 'sensitive and real macho all at the same time' [...] For young men in this research, the culmination of this process is the development of a hegemonic masculinity that is romantic but not too romantic (p. 148-9).

Similarly, Redman (2001) argued that while a particular discursive repertoire may have the potential to disrupt patriarchy/gender inequality, *the way it is drawn from and enacted* needs to be carefully considered as its performance may be enlisted in the service of inequality. Redman found that romance formed a rhetoric that was drawn from as a way to demonstrate heterosexual, masculine competence and shaped his young participants' transition into adulthood. In other words, romance was drawn from by men participants to justify and endorse more hegemonically masculine goals and identities. For Redman (2001, p. 198), romance "provided a cultural repertoire—that is, a narrative resource or set of discursive practices—through which the boys performatively enacted a particular version of heterosexual masculinity".

Korobov (2009) also demonstrated how men participants used irony to reflexively navigate the confines of hegemonic masculinity within talk about romantic relationships, in performances that were at once resistant and complicit with hegemonic masculinity. Korobov argued that for his participants, "irony is a strategy for rearticulating power at a more prosaic or quotidian level of social practice" (2009, p. 296). In line with Allen's (2007) argument, Korobov (2009) argues that through these displays of irony and expressions of "hard masculinity", romance is (re)claimed as a practice for all men, not just those positioned as "effeminate or sensitive" (p. 297). Furthermore, Quayle et al.'s findings (2017) suggest that women in their sample did not idealise communal masculinity (defined as being soft, caring and potentially effeminate) in romance. Thus, it may be the ironic tension arising from the temporary breaching of 'hard masculinity' (rather than its permanent erasure) that is (a) desirable and (b) explains how romance may become subsumed as a strategy for hegemony (Korobov, 2009; Quayle et al., 2017).

Vincent and Chiwandire (2013) also demonstrate how young South African men, in talk about romance and romantic relationships, reposition rather than contest problematic hegemonic discourses. In line with Redman's (2001) argument, Vincent and Chiwandire argue that romance and romantic discourses can provide the "legitimising substratum" for more problematic and overtly sexist discourses and practices (p. 19).

Bruce (2012) examined the way that traditional gender norms can be perpetuated through the rituals involved in the Westernised 'white wedding', and suggested that part of the way that this perpetuation functions is because weddings are constructed as being so distinct from everyday life. Because it is a 'holiday' from 'reality' women did not seem to mind departing from their expectations of equality as this separation did not "threaten their everyday practices" (Bruce, 2012, p. 64). In Chapter 5, we saw a similar construction of being-romantic as a departure from the mundanity of everyday life. Bruce's findings, therefore, suggested that the constructed apartness of romance may allow for the participation in something potentially problematic (i.e. patriarchal gender identities) without it *feeling* problematic.

All of these findings provide motivation for looking more closely at how being-romantic is performed in order to better understand these nuances and deconstruct its *appearance of equality*. To do this, the ways that romantic masculinity and femininity have been operationalised in the literature will now be examined.

### 6.2.3. The affordances of romance-as-inequality

In the two subsections that follow, I will explore and discuss what literature could be found on the contextual affordances and discursive performative scripts of romantic masculinity and femininity. It was found that while there are a few studies on romantic masculinity, there was extremely limited information on romantic femininity, and no studies looking at how these may be complementary and supportive of each other's expression (cf. Schippers, 2007). In addition, as stated earlier, some of this material comes from different theoretical perspectives to my own, but have been drawn from out of necessity because of the limited literature available, and it has been interpreted according

to my theoretical framework. I will first discuss the situated affordances of romantic masculinity, and then of romantic femininity.

#### 6.2.3.1. Romance-as-inequality: The affordances of romantic masculinity

Some authors have found evidence which suggests that romantic masculinity may be less feminized and 'soft' (cf. Allen, 2007) than had been previously assumed. For example, Frosh, Phoenix, and Pattman (2002), Hacker (1957, as cited in Carrigan et al., 1985), Nelson (2004), Talbot and Quayle (2010) and Quayle et al. (2017) found that traditionally hegemonically masculine traits such as being "a provider, a protector, someone physically and emotionally strong" (Talbot & Quayle, 2010, p. 269) were positioned as preferred by heterosexual women in the context of romantic relationships. This finding is echoed in Vogels (2017), who investigated heteronormative ideals of a strong, protective masculinity in contexts of romance. Talbot and Quayle (2010) and Quayle et al. (2017) also demonstrate that their women participants idealized romantic masculinity, and preferred someone who is active in orchestrating romance rather than being passive, which was positioned as being off-putting in a romantic partner (see also Rose & Frieze, 1993).

Delassandro and Wilkins (2016, p. 113) made a similar argument and showed that both women and men constructed the man in heterosexual relationships as being the "agents of change" in relationships, with women positioned as dependent on men's autonomy and frequently stereotyped as being the cause of the relationship ending, particularly for being "too needy". Men were thus positioned as the ones with more control and agency in the relationship, in terms of the pace and emotional intensity, level of commitment and initiation of sexual intercourse (Delassandro & Wilkins, 2016; Vincent & Chiwandire, 2013, Vincent & McEwan, 2006).

Some other examples included setting the tone of the relationship in terms of rules, such as when they could see each other, and in terms of the activities they do or people they socialise with, with greater focus on *his* friends and *his* hobbies (Vincent & McEwan, 2006). While the men participants in Vincent and Chiwandire's (2013) study argued that they desire monogamous relationships and the emotional connections this

brings, participants also constructed their emotional needs as being the central feature around which the relationships were constructed. There was also some evidence in women participants' data that they constructed emotional immaturity, distance, or unavailability in men romantic partners. However, this was constructed as part of a romantic fantasy where the woman 'tames' and 'civilises' him, overcoming this obstacle in line with romantic narratives such as Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* (Vincent & McEwan, 2006).

It is evident that across several different studies, a fairly uniform image of a man-in-a-relationship has emerged, as one with more control and 'say' in the relationship, whose emotional (and sexual needs) are viewed as more central than his partner's. However, most of this literature has looked at men in romantic relationships, and not 'being-romantic' as a specific social practice. Secondly, literature examining and articulating romantic masculinity and femininity together is extremely sparse, so a gap is identified in the literature that needs to be addressed. First, however, the literature on a 'romantic woman' will be explored.

#### 6.2.3.2. Romance-as-inequality: The affordances of romantic femininity

While there were several sources found that discussed 'romantic masculinity', sources on 'romantic femininity' were extremely limited (reflecting wider trends in the study of masculinity and femininity as discussed in the Literature review, Chapter 2). When doing a Google Scholar search for the term 'romantic femininity', only 123 citations were found and none of these articles contained the term in its title<sup>39</sup>. On closer examination, the actual number would appear to be far less, as a number of the citations were either not relevant or used the term briefly in passing. However, what information could be found about romantic femininity specifically, and being 'a woman in a relationship' more generally, will now be presented.

The lack of literature investigating "romantic femininity" as a gender identity could be indicative of the close alignment between 'romance' and 'femininity', as romance

---

<sup>39</sup> As of 24 March, 2018. A similar search for 'romantic masculinity' revealed three articles with the term in the title and 189 articles with the term contained in-text.

tends to be feminized (Giddens, 1992; Jarvis, 1999; Longhurst, 1998; Rule Groenewald, 2013; Singh, 2013; Vincent & McEwan, 2006; Wilding, 2003), and if this feminization of romance is naturalised, there may appear to be no contradiction or tension to address through research. Thus, this gap may reflect our societal understanding of romance and femininity, an assumption which in itself may be a sign that this is an issue worth investigating and problematizing and will be discussed further below.

As part of this discourse equating romance with femininity, it has been argued that women are generally positioned as *wanting* or *preferring* romance (Jarvis, 1999; Morrison, 2010; Reddy & Dunne, 2007). Studies have examined how the feminization of romance and naturalisation of it as something women 'inherently' desire (Singh, 2013) have demonstrated how this discourse shapes women's interests, from something as innocuous as reading romantic fiction (Jarvis, 1999); to more harmful outcomes such as being more tolerant of inequality, risk of exposure to HIV/AIDS, and/or intimate partner violence within romantic relationships (Reddy & Dunne, 2007). In fact, the latter is sometimes explicitly condoned through the deployment of a 'Beauty and the Beast' discourse, where the "heroine tames, softens and alters the seemingly intractable masculinity of her love object", transforming his initial indifference (or even hostility) towards her into love (Giddens, 1992, p. 46; Vincent & McEwan, 2006).

Furthermore, Vincent and McEwan (2006, p. 40) argue that romantic love was constructed as being "one part of a man's life", whereas for women it is positioned as being an all-consuming focus (p. 40). Singh (2013) demonstrated that for her women participants, their desire to marry was motivated by romantic love, whereas men participants discussed the material benefits and status that the 'possession' of a wife would bring them. Therefore, there seems to be a strong discursive tie between romance and femininity.

As stated above, there were limited numbers of studies found that investigated romantic femininity as a situated identity resource. However, by examining studies that looked at romance and 'women in romantic relationships' more generally, a few common themes across studies have been identified that may form key aspects of

romantic femininity. These were having a desirable appearance, passivity in women and emotional housekeeping.

#### 6.2.3.2.1. Desirable appearance

Firstly, it appears that a woman's appearance is particularly important in being-romantic – more so than their romantic partner's (Schaeffer-Grabel, 2006; Schäfer, 2008; Straub, 2006; Vincent & McEwan, 2006). Rose and Frieze (1993, p. 500) suggest that "(t)he female role as the object of desire reinforces an emphasis on physical appearance among women". Vincent and McEwan (2006, p. 41) argued that women reported feeling normative pressure to present one's "best self" to one's romantic partner. This was meant in the physical sense, but was also relevant in a more abstract sense in terms of presenting as emotionally and psychologically stable (Vincent & McEwan, 2006). Additionally, Schäfer (2008) argued that women face many insecurities in relationships about their bodies being 'good enough' to hold the man's interest. Illouz (1997) argued that women are expected to spend more money and effort to get ready for a date than men.

Therefore, there seems to be evidence that a woman's appearance is particularly important when being-romantic. Messerschmidt (2012) discussed the importance of appearance in general, which can be applied to understanding this effect. Messerschmidt argued that how we embody gendered identities impacts on how we feel about ourselves and how we are treated by others. To be understood as 'a woman on a date', one would need to produce a "situationally appropriate display and behaviour" (Messerschmidt, 2012, p. 43). What we do not currently know, is what exactly is considered to be "situationally appropriate" for men and women while operating within the romantic context, and how this might be gendered differently.

It is likely that women and men may need to produce themselves as being as different as possible in order to effectively produce the preferred forms of femininity and masculinity (Messerschmidt, 2012). There has been some evidence that suggests that women are expected to do more when getting ready for romance, to take longer to get ready, and to engage in activities that produce them as 'other' to men (du Toit & Coady,

2014). Hair removal is an example of how women produce themselves as 'other' (du Toit & Coady, 2014, Terry & Braun, 2013). In comparison, expectations of men have been argued to be mostly concerned with basic hygiene, rather than bodily grooming or the production of masculinity (du Toit & Coady, 2014). Hair removal and grooming practices for men seem to be a lot more flexible (Terry & Braun, 2013).

#### 6.2.3.2.2. Passivity in women

Evidence was also found suggesting that women are broadly expected to be more passive, specifically in the constitution of romance but also in the romantic relationship more generally (Rose & Frieze, 1993; Wetherell, 1995). For example, Schwarz (2010) discussed how the act of photographing your partner or the two of you together was constructed by women participants as making a statement about the relationship. Schwarz (2010, p. 157) argued that, therefore, some (women) participants would avoid taking photographs too early in the relationship, which they framed as problematic as it might seem that they were "put(ting) pressure" on their partner to commit or "seem(ing) *too* in love" or too intense (emphasis added). Thus, participants framed being "too in love" as something that is risky until they are certain in the relationship – that is, until the man has made some movement towards reassuring the woman of his commitment or interest in her.

This emphasis on being more passive also finds its expression in how flirtatious a woman is/is expected to be. For example, while it has been suggested that romantic femininity is associated with being flirtatious (Eschholz, Bufkin & Long, 2002), it has also been argued that being *too* flirtatious is undesirable, with a purer "girlish" innocence being preferred for romantic femininity (Williams, 2007, p. 116). This is evident in Redman's (2001) work on masculinity: One participant, Nick, described the experience of choosing between two women. The first, Helen, is described as pure, chaste, and passive and is therefore positioned as *preferable* in contrast to her friend Mandy, who, while constructed as being prettier was also as "forward" and over-eager (Redman, 2001, p. 196) and therefore *not* as 'girlfriend material'. This narrative presents passivity as the ideal, and



Nick was then able to be the hero-pursuer of Helen, who he described as needing to be 'won over' before she agreed to date him.

Once a relationship has been entered into, it appears that further norms exist which imply women's passivity. For example, Viki, Abrams and Hutchinson (2003, p. 534) looked at what "constitute(s) appropriate behavior (sic) for women within intimate/dating relationships". They argued that paternalistic chivalry<sup>40</sup> may shore up gender inequality within the relationship, as it discourages women from exerting power and rather seeking out relationships where they are rewarded for submitting to men's authority and care.

Furthermore, Vincent and McEwan (2006) argued that the reward of being in a romantic relationship – with its rhetoric of the prince and princess finding their 'happily ever after' – serves as enticement for women to be passive, submissive and to remain in problematic relationships. Vincent and McEwan (2006, p. 52) argued that this is because a woman can only feel like a princess when "she exists in relation to a prince". Likewise, Singh (2013) argued that her women participants in particular oriented to the idea of being incomplete without a romantic partner to complete them. Singh (2013) referred to the discourse of being "swept off their feet", and how this positioned women in a passive way. Furthermore, Vincent & Chiwandire (2013, p. 15) argued that women are positioned as "ruining" romance, if they disrupt it by requests for better treatment or more agency in relationships.

There was very limited literature on the practices of being-romantic, but it is likely that a similar dynamic will exist. Being passive seems to be an integral part of broader discourse about romance. For example, Jill Ker Conway (as cited in Kunin, 1994, p. i) referred to romantic femininity as being a "wom(a)n to whom things happened". Rose and Frieze (1993) found further evidence that the roles taken on by men and women were active and passive, respectively. They found that men were expected to initiate romance by asking the woman on a date and planning the date; exerting control over their environment by driving them to the date, opening doors for her, placing the order and paying the bill;

---

<sup>40</sup> Paternalistic chivalry was defined as an attitude of "extreme politeness and considerate behaviour toward women but (which) also place restrictions on the roles women may play during courtship" (Viki et al., 2003, p. 534; cf. the concept of benevolent sexism in Glick & Fiske, 1996, 2001; Glick et al. 2000)

and initiating physical or sexual intimacy (Rose & Frieze, 1993). Alternatively, women were expected to react to the man's overtures. Their role was positioned as being to dress up, participate in whatever her partner has planned for her, convey enjoyment of the date, and to respond to the man's initiation of physical intimacy (Rose & Frieze, 1993).

Thus, it appears that the situated affordances for women in romance and romantic relationships are largely arranged around strategic passivity. Wetherell has summed up this argument succinctly:

Romantic discourse is frequently contradictory on this issue of power, and perhaps this is part of its ambiguous appeal. On the one hand, romance seems to erase power in its image of mutuality. But, on the other hand, men are often represented as the initiators of romance and women as the receivers. Men are heroic in the throes of love, women are simply in the throes. Indeed, in many genres, for a relationship to count as romance, what is important is that the man, rather than the woman, recognizes it as such (Wetherell, 1995, p. 133).

#### 6.2.3.2.3. Emotional housekeeping

Another aspect that seemed to be common in romantic relationships, with regards to femininity, is that of emotional housekeeping. Emotional housekeeping is a feminist term that is widely used in contemporary discussion, but which has received limited empirical investigation – despite it being argued to be a significant feature of modern intimate relationships (Barker, 2012; Price, 2015). In this discourse, women are emotional crutches for men, supporting their emotional growth (see also Holford, 2012; Thagaard, 1997; Wood & Rhodes, 1992). This discourse positions women as needing to manage their partner's emotions and the wellness of the relationship in addition to their own emotional needs; thus their emotional autonomy is subject to (and often secondary to) these other demands.

For example, Vincent and Chiwandire (2013, p. 17) argued that men participants positioned men as lacking in emotional well-being, and that women's role in romantic relationships was to “complete men, to support them, and to enable them to be the best selves they can be”. Vincent and Chiwandire (2013) argued that women were positioned as being able to play this role because of their exclusion from the hierarchy of

masculinities, therefore men can be vulnerable around their partners without loss of face. This finding provided evidence in line with an earlier argument made in Vincent and McEwan (2006), where women participants had positioned romantic partners as idealised heroes, or, when contradictory information was offered, as the man-child for whom the woman partner must nurture and care for when he is less-than-perfect (see also Holford, 2012). In both alternatives, there was a language of love being something that one *labours* at and this was reported as gendered (Vincent & McEwan, 2006), although the term 'emotional housekeeping' was not specifically used.

Thus, emotional housekeeping can be argued to be a form of unpaid labour (Bryson, 2005) where women are expected to monitor the health and happiness of their partner (as well as any offspring), ensure healthy relationships, smooth over any antagonisms or faux pas, remember key appointments, and be a supportive cheerleader for everyone in the household. These gendered expectations are rooted in the construction of women as more socially and emotionally sensitive, skilled and expressive than men (Barker, 2012; Johnson, 1992; Natalier, 2004; Wood & Rhodes, 1992).

It has been suggested that emotional housekeeping takes a significant amount of time and energy, yet is generally not recognised as a form of labour. It has also been asserted that the kinds of acts that form emotional housekeeping are interpreted differently by men and by women. For women, these acts are constructed as a way of demonstrating care and therefore when men fail to return this care it is interpreted as a lack of investment in the relationship (Natalier, 2004). Men, alternatively, while appreciative of this care, reportedly do not associate it with any deeper meaning (Natalier, 2004).

The dynamics of emotional housekeeping with regards to being-romantic does not seem to have been explored in the literature. However, given the way it has been defined here, and in light of the findings from Chapters 4 and 5 regarding the importance of romance in relation to doing *relationship-maintenance*, it is possible that the burden of initiating romance may fall under the scope of emotional housekeeping. This will be investigated and explored in the data analysis.

#### 6.2.4. Studies investigating the co-construction of gender

Schippers' (2007) conceptualisation of complementary but hierarchical gender identities is the most central aspect of the theoretical model described in Chapter 2 (Section 2.3.1.5). This theoretical framework will be drawn from in this chapter to investigate and articulate the kind of masculinity and femininity that the context of being-romantic affords. It was found in the literature cited here that very little research has been done on complementary co-produced identities at all, let alone from within the same romantic relationships to explore the kinds of gender identities co-produced. Furthermore, of the studies that have been found, there are limitations that can be identified. For example, Rose and Frieze (1993) studied masculinity and femininity on dates, and recruited women and men participants. However, a number of departure/issues could be identified in this work. For example, (1) men generated male scripts and women generated female scripts; (2) the study drew from cognitive script theory, positioning their findings as cognitive structures and not gendered affordances; (3) findings are limited to a 'first date' only, and it may be likely that longer term relationships may establish different relationship norms. This lack of work on the co-productions of masculinity and femininity, therefore, represents a gap in the literature that this study aimed to address.

In Chapter 4, a number of the examples listed as romantic gestures could be defined as labour in the home, such as making a meal. Another area that has been researched using both men and women participants is research looking at discussions about sharing housework, a form of labour that has been historically gendered (Morrison, 2010, Natalier, 2004; Thagaard, 1997).

It has been suggested that women construct men's 'assistance' with the housework as romantic because women construct housework as being a demonstration of care and meaning, whether performed by men or women (Morrison, 2010). For women, housework is positioned as a 'language of love' (DeVault, 1991, as cited in Natalier, 2004), so that doing the housework communicates to their families that they love them. Thagaard

(1997, p. 365) refers to this as an “economy of gratitude”, where these gestures or “contributions” to the running of the household are constructed as a “gift”.

Following this line of argument, men’s frequent failure to contribute to housework has been argued to be interpreted by women as a lack of investment in the *relationship* as well as the home (Natalier, 2004; Thagaard, 1997). Research has suggested that men, on the other hand, construct housework as optional and with no deeper meaning, positioning contribution to household care (or lack thereof) as due to personal preference or motivation.

This, however, contributes to the ongoing gendered division of labour in the home with women retaining the key responsibility for housework (Morrison, 2010), and men constructed as ‘helpers’ but whose work and leisure time is prioritised over housework (Dempsey, 1988, as cited in Natalier, 2004). This effect has been found in romantic relationships *and* platonic relationships between cohabiting men and women (see Natalier, 2004). This gendered effect, which keeps women locked into doing most of the housework, is glossed over as a means to demonstrate care and appreciation – as a language of love. Therefore, Natalier (2004) argued, housework as a language of care becomes equated with emotional labour – or emotional housekeeping – where labour is equated with ‘caring for’.

While this research can help us to understand the dynamics of romantic relationships between heterosexual men and women, the applications (if any) to being-romantic have not been explored<sup>41</sup>. There is still much that remains unarticulated about the identities we perform within the particular context of going-on-a-date, especially in terms of how it is articulated by men *and* by women, as co-produced, complementary identity performances (cf. Schippers, 2007). The context of being-romantic will now be investigated in terms of the kinds of situated affordances and discursive performative scripts it provides.

---

<sup>41</sup> However, this chapter will provide an understanding of how women’s care in the home (and men’s, to a lesser extent) was particularly positioned as an act of romance – a romantic gesture.

### 6.3. Data Analysis

Each of the three romantic contexts described above in Chapter 4 provided different kinds of affordances for participants' identity performances. Gender was practically invisible in the discussion of casual dates – there were no differences described in how men and women might get ready for the dates, and little to no description of how men and women might behave differently on these kinds of dates. The affordances from grand dates, alternatively, were more overtly gendered, with differing identity resources available for men and for women. In comparison to the grand date, romantic gestures were not presented in an overtly gendered way, and therefore had the appearance of being more gender-neutral, particularly when contrasted to grand dates. However, there were subtly different discourses used to describe men's gestures versus women's gestures. Therefore, while both men and women were described as romancing their partners using romantic gestures, these were accomplished with different discursive effects. The gender affordances of the grand date and the romantic gesture will therefore be developed in more detail in the sections that follow.

#### 6.3.1. The grand date

I argued in Chapter 5 that grand dates were positioned as being the preferable way of being-romantic, as it gave the most concentrated and long-lasting access to a sense of emotional intimacy which, according to the romantic imperative, was positioned as being vital to relationship-maintenance in marriage. I also suggested that the more distinct from everyday life being-romantic could be, the more romantic it was positioned as being. It will be argued below that while there is a range of possible identities afforded within romantic contexts, in order to gain access to this experience of intimacy, certain narrowly-defined identities are constructed by the discursive performative script of the grand date as being necessary to the production of a 'successful' date. It will be argued that this construction involves a delicate negotiation and coordination of idealised,

complementary, gendered identities. These will be explored in the following two subsections on romantic masculinity and romantic femininity.

In the post-event individual interviews, the participants were each asked “If I had to use the phrase ‘the romantic man’ - if you think in terms of stereotypes, what would the ‘romantic man’ look like?” with the prompts “what would he do”, and “what would he look like?” (Question 6, Appendix 7D). After participants had answered this question, they were asked “And now can you describe the ‘romantic woman’” with prompts then asking for stereotypes about what she look would like or do and whether this is this different to a ‘woman being romanced’ (Interview Question 6, Appendix 7D). I noted in the interview setting that participants seemed, *prima facie*, to struggle to answer the ‘romantic woman’ question more than the ‘romantic man’ question. Therefore, a content analysis was conducted on participants’ responses to these two questions to establish if this impression was grounded in data.

According to conversation analysis literature, question-answer pairs are a form of adjacency pairs (Hoey & Kendrick, 2017; Schegloff, 2007), where the first part (the question) initiates a specifically formatted response (the answer). Three possible kinds of responses have been identified. The first are preferred answers, where an answer is provided almost immediately; typically provides confirmatory information or a tacit acceptance of the phrasing and structure of the question; and contains little explanatory or hedged content (Gardner, 2010; Stivers, 2010). The second type of response are non-preferred answers, where an answer/ part of an answer is given after some delay and may resist the way the question has been posed, or require justificatory or reparatory ‘work’ in order to save face (Gardner, 2010; Stivers, 2010). The repair work may be self- or hearer-initiated, depending on who has highlighted an instance of the response as problematic (Hoey & Kendrick, 2017). It has been suggested that a delay or hesitancy (such as the use of false starts or filler words) in answering a question suggests there is some problem with the answer to be provided – for example, if the respondent does not know the answer, or feels their answer will be controversial or dis-preferred (Gardner, 2010). The final type of response are non-answers, where no response or answer is provided (Gardener, 2010).

In this instance, all of the participants (ultimately) gave an answer to these two questions so the last form of response, the non-answer, is not relevant in this case. To investigate this, the following were counted per participant: the number of filler words used before each of the questions were answered, the number of false starts in participants' answers, the number of minimisers used in each case by participants, the number of pauses in the participants' answers and the number of times the participants laughed. These counts were averaged across participants to provide a mean estimate per category for the answers pertaining to 'romantic men' and 'romantic women' (Table 1).

**TABLE 1: CONTENT ANALYSIS COMPARING PARTICIPANTS' ANSWERS ABOUT ROMANTIC MEN VS ROMANTIC WOMEN**

	Question about romantic men	Question about romantic women
Average number of filler words used before the question is answered	22	40
Average number of false starts in participant's answer	21	33
Average number of minimisers in participant's answer	11	29
Average number of pauses in participant's answer	32	44
Average number of laughs by participants (alone or shared with interviewer)	2	2
Average length of extract (in words)	677	992

It was found that participants used more filler words before answering the question, had more false starts, more minimisers, more pauses and on average spoke more when trying to answer the question about women compared to when it was about men. This suggests that participants found it harder to answer the question about women compared to when it was asked about men and that the 'romantic man' may be more clearly defined discursively than the 'romantic woman' and are thus easier to narrate. Returning now to the discourse analysis, participants' answers will now be explored in more detail.

### 6.3.1.1. Masculinity in romance: The romantic 'professional'

As argued above, it was found that participants could readily provide definitions of what a romantic man 'looks like' or 'does'. In answer to the specific question,



and more generally across the data set, participants constructed a ‘romantic man’ in very similar and consistent ways, suggesting that a well-defined, and readily-accessed discourse exists about men’s role in the doing-of-romance. There were three key aspects to this discourse: that of not being interested in romance, of being active in the romancing of his partner, and of being attentive and chivalrous while being-romantic.

#### 6.3.1.1.1. The romantic man as not invested in romance

It will be shown in Section 6.3.1.2 that all of the women participants argued for the importance of romance and expressed enjoyment in engaging in it. In contrast, the men participants were a little more ambivalent. All of the men at some point argued that romance was important for the emotional intimacy it brings (as argued for in Chapter 5 of the Results and Discussion). However, in line with the finding in the literature presented above (Section 6.2.3.2) that romance is primarily desired and needed by women (see Jarvis, 1999; Morrison, 2010; Reddy & Dunne, 2007), the men participants also all at some point and to varying degrees minimised their interest in being-romantic, arguing that it was orchestrated more to make their partners happy.

#### EXTRACT 69: INTERVIEW 5.5

1. Nicky: okay (.) u::::m, when you say it<sup>42</sup> was (.) possibly less romantic cause she: tried to do
2. things that you’d like (.) is it (.) like, what does that mean exactly I-like, are you a- less
3. into romantic things, which is fine? ((lau[ghs])) (that’s okay)
4. Tom: [u::::m ja I mean, I would say I
5. am less into (.) like I guess
6. Nicky: stereotypical=
7. Tom: =sta:n- ja, ja standard romance vibes
8. Nicky: ja?
9. Tom: u::::m (.) like (.) w-if we dress up or not, doesn’t really make a difference to me (.)
10. [but it makes a difference to her
11. Nicky: [mhm? okay

#### EXTRACT 70: INTERVIEW 2.2

1. Eddie: I mean- uh I- the- (.) I’ll like to believe I’m pretty romantic ((small laugh)) (.) on- on
2. paper the- [my track (record’s pretty <good>) um]
3. Strauss: [ ((laughs)) .hhh ] ((small laugh))=

<sup>42</sup> Heidi’s date for Tom, which was positioned by both partners as being designed to suit his tastes

4. Eddie: =but (.) ja I b- I mean  
 5. I try and do that like (.) (whenever) I remember (.) buy roses or something [like that]  
 6. Strauss: [ Mm. ]  
 7. Eddie: on the way home [...] I think >we have a<- (.) different sort of idea of romance .hhh  
 8. Strauss: Okay=  
 9. Eddie: =like (.) and ja I think she does kind of understand that she mustn't plan .hhh (.)  
 10. like (.) an evening with dark lights and like (.) <roses and stuff for me, rather> (.)  
 11. organise with a group of friends to go have a camp  
 12. Strauss: (.) Mm=  
 13. Eddie: =and then we go for a walk and >spend some time together by ourselves<  
 14. and that to me:: is like (.) super awesome ro[mantic] .hhh  
 15. Strauss: [ Mm. ]

Both Tom and Eddie position their wives as more invested in stereotypical romance, and themselves as less interested in it. In contrast, for example, Eddie argues that if Robyn would want to romance him, she should plan for them to go camping, instead of the stereotypical romantic night out with “dark lights” and “roses” (Line 10, Extract 70). Likewise, Tom states in Extract 69 that “I am less into [...] standard romance vibes” (lines 4, 5 and 7). Similarly, Heidi argues that to romance Tom, she would plan “something (.) that he’d like to do [...] buy him a gift [...] (or) booked tickets to something that he’d like to see::”, and so on (Interview 5.4). Both Tom and Heidi argue therefore that Tom is less interested in romance than Heidi is. This positions the orchestrating of romance as something that is in itself a gesture of love for their partner, and this affordance therefore carries overtones of self-sacrifice – and therefore, of romance.

#### 6.3.1.1.2. The romantic man as an active romancer

Participants presented ‘a romantic man’ as being ‘active’, that is, as the partner who *should* or who *is* responsible for initiating romance. This discourse was evident across most of the data set. Examples include:

##### EXTRACT 71: INTERVIEW 2.4

Robyn: “((Nicky: what qualities would a stereotypically romantic man have?)) Um (.) just (.) planning dates [...] I- I wouldn't (.) think a woman would do things to be romantic it would always be the man having to do the romantic things”.

##### EXTRACT 72: INTERVIEW 2.5

Eddie: "I normally pay for her ((Nicky: Mhm)) for going out stuff, entertainment and that [...] that was how- what I thought (.) I should do and ((Nicky: Uhuh- as the man in the relationship, o:r??) (.) Ja:: (.) Ja I think it is, sort of, the, y'know, you want to s- (.) woo a young lass ((Nicky: ja(h) ((laughs)))) take her out, buy her like (.) pay for the dinners, and that sort of thing".

#### EXTRACT 73: INTERVIEW 4.4

Johan: "they- they- very- they take their lead [...] they get their women all worked up [...] the women they didn't know what to expect ((Nicky: Okay (.) so like the-mysterious?)) Ja the mysterious thing ((Nicky: Okay ja) [...]) it usually comes down to it's the whole thing the m- it's the man's job. ((Nicky: Okay. (.) Ja) no th-it's- it's like um (.) .hh that's how people see it even if I'm (.) if I'm going to ask you to get married ((Nicky: Mhm)) it's e- I'm going to ask you. ((Nicky: M::hm)) you know it's not like (.) the woman's gonna ask the man".

#### EXTRACT 74: INTERVIEW 4.5

Anika: "I found that with men especially .hhh they will have (.) a general plan ((Nicky: Mhm)) .hhh for if things go wrong (.) they can always have another plan [...] the p- typical romantic guy .hhh doesn't over-plan ((Nicky: Okay?)) He just (.) plans ((Nicky: Plans just enough?)) Ja"

#### EXTRACT 75: INTERVIEW 5.1

Tom (responding to a question about how often he and Heidi do romantic things together): "I would say not- not often enough um [...] when I get stressed about money (.) I tend to sort of (.) think that we can't have dates [...] so I'm pretty guilty of that um [...] and suddenly (.) like Heidi's upset or I'm like 'ah crap' ((both laugh)) I actually haven't made her feel special in a while ((Strauss: Mm, mm [...]) ((Strauss: .hhh uh when you guys go out like i- is there sp- s- like someone specific who initiates .hhh (.) the kind of event or)) (.) U:::m hhh (.) I actually have a reminder on my phone (.) ((Strauss laughs)) once a week like 'have you organised a date' (.) kinda thing ((Strauss: Mm) [...]) I try to do more (.) the one doing the romancing 'cause I think it's more important for her that it comes from me ((Strauss: Ja) [...]) 'cause ja there are times where it j- it hasn't occurred to me in a while ((Strauss: Ja) um .hhh and it's just brought to my attention ((both laugh))"

#### EXTRACT 76: INTERVIEW 5.3

Heidi: "in the movies (.) ((Nicky: mm)) romance will be p- always be portra::yed (.) as, like (.) a ma::n? orchestrating romance ((Nicky: Mhm)) for the apprecia- ((Tom: Mm)) like for the w-woman's appreciation"

[...]

Tom: "I think if Heidi was initiating it all the time she might think jis if I::: (.) didn't do this (.) ((Nicky: mm)) would he ever (.) ask me (.) on a date you know? ((Heidi: MM:::))((Nicky: Mhm?)) [...] like me::: initiating it (.) shows her that I care ((Heidi and Nicky overlap: Mhm))

As can be seen above, the construction of a romantic man as one who actively romances his partner was common across the data set. There is some reference to broader societal influences that shape one's perception of being-romantic – for example, in Extract 72, Eddie talks about it being “what I thought (.) I should do [...] to woo a young lass”. The purposeful use of the old-fashioned words “woo” and “lass” is used for humour in this extract. He uses humour to distance himself from this image of a romantic man even as he lays claim to it (cf. Allen's macho-romantic tightrope, 2007). Thus, he positions the situational affordance of what it means to be a romantic man as coming from an external source.

In Extract 76, Heidi uses a similar tactic by referring to romantic men as they are depicted in the movies, and positions her understanding as coming from there. This was a common tactic, and provided discursive resources for the construction of both romantic men and (less commonly) women. Participants referred to the following sources as providing romantic discursive scripts: “movies” (interviews 2.1, 2.3, 2.5, 3.1, 3.5, 4.1, 4.4, 4.5, 5.3, 5.4); “Hollywood” (interviews 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 5.3); the “media” (interviews 3.1, 3.2, 4.2, 4.5); “TV” (interviews 2.1, 3.1, 3.2, 3.5, 4.2, 4.4, 5.5); “magazines” (interview 2.1); “society” (interview 4.2); and combinations of “pop” or “Western” culture (interviews 1.1, 2.5, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 4.2, 5.3). The participants all seemed to share a similar understanding of romantic masculinity, so it is likely that their understandings have been influenced by these sources of cultural rhetorics; however, the discursive effect of positioning one's understanding of romantic masculinity as *coming from* an external source is to (1) legitimise your explanation and (2) allows an ironic distance as it is not positioned as one's own point of view. This allows the popular versions of these affordances of romance to be utilized without potentially exposing oneself as a dupe, but it also allows romance to be replicated without it losing authenticity.

As can be seen from

Extract 71 to Extract 76 above, the romantic man was positioned as someone who initiates and orchestrates romance. This was an extremely common rhetorical device: Participants used the word “plan” (or derivatives liked “planned” or “planning”) 103 times

in connection to romantic masculinity (Interviews 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 3.1, 3.3, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 5.5). There were two broad exceptions in the cases of Couples 1 and 4 where the women were positioned as being the active romancers in their relationships. This created a tension between conventional affordances of romance and their specific instantiations of it, and these deviations to this discursive script will be discussed in detail in Chapter 7. However, even in these cases the trope of the 'romantic man' as one who actively romances women was referred to regularly (interviews 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, and 4.5).

Part of the romantic man's ability to orchestrate romance was constructed as having access to expendable income (see Illouz, 1997). For men in particular, this was referenced as a key aspect, in particular when defending themselves against any perceived critique that they do not romance their partners 'enough'. For example, Bruce argues that a romantic man is one who is "able to actually roman- like financially ((Nicky: Oh okay)) romance somebody" (Interview 3.5). In both of his individual interviews, Johan (Interviews 4.1 and 4.4) gives an example of a stereotypical romantic gesture which is presented as 'romantic-but-extravagant' and therefore out of reach for many men. Johan says in the movies you would see "the girl- the woman or whatever walks into the room and it's just (.) dozens and dozens of flowers [...] but it's not- it's not something that actually ever happens [...] cause I mean not o- everybody's got the money [...] if I have to (.) decorate this whole room f- b- (.) room here with ((Nicky: Ja)) dozens and dozens of roses it's gonna cost me about three, four grand ((Nicky: Ja. Yoh.))" (Interview 4.4). This defence was part of a larger justification of why it appears that Anika romances him more than he does her and will be explored more in the next chapter (Chapter 7).

Tom uses a similar tactic in Interview 5.5: "like you see all these amazing things that happen on TV like you see sky writing, with a plane ((Nicky: o(h)ka(h)(h)y)) but like, who ha:s (.) R40,000 to: ((Nicky: laughs sjho! Ja)) PAY a pilot to do that (for you), you know that kind of thing ((Nicky: Ja))". Luke (Couple 1), and Bruce (Couple 3) also refer to the expense of romance as being off-putting, in the light of needing to prioritise saving for their wedding. Therefore, having a disposable income available for the consumption of luxury

goods was positioned as idealistically part of being a 'romantic man', but one that is not always realistic. This provided justificatory rhetoric for the kinds of romance that the men participants would orchestrate for their partners.

While a romantic man was positioned as someone who plans romance, this construction was heavily managed in a way reminiscent of Allen's (2007, p. 145) "macho-romantic tightrope". While the men presented themselves (or were presented) as desiring, enjoying, and being invested in the emotional intimacy constructed as arising from romance (see Chapter 5), men were simultaneously constructed as not being particularly interested in romance itself, or at least as not being *naturally* romantic:

**EXTRACT 77: INTERVIEW 5.4**

Heidi: "if I think of it typically romantic (.) ((Nicky Mhm?)) [...] he's doing it (.) because the girl wants to do it (.) Not because he:: really (.) like he'll enjoy it ((Nicky: oka::y, ja)) [...] he would be just as happy (.) to do something (.) enjoyable that's not really deemed (.) romantic [...] if (.) I think okay I'm gonna do something nice for Tom ((Nicky: Mm)) my thoughts wouldn't revolve around romance ((Nicky: Okay)) cause I don't know if he's really that into- interested in it"

**EXTRACT 78: INTERVIEW 2.1**

Robyn: "I'm guessing it's like a restaurant type (.) vibe (.) nothing that I have to: (.) go too crazy for [...] ((Nicky: by 'too crazy', what d'you mean? like, too dressed up or?)) No, like (.) for him going on a date would be 'OH we're doing something fun A::H' ((Nicky: OH)) Ja (.) for me °I like to go to a restaurant° ((both laugh)) [...] when we got enga:ged [...] °it was like his idea of fun° [...] all like (.) adrenalin [...] I don't know what he thinks romantic i::s ((Nicky: Ja)) like (.) I think he thinks fun is romantic [...] he likes to be like THE HERO ((Nicky: laughs)) And I'm like 'OH NO I can't jump off this cliff, o:::h!' He loves that ((Nicky: Oka(h)y)) then he feels super manly ((both laugh))"

In these extracts, their partners are presented as not being too invested in romance as a practice, but rather, as engaging in it for the women's benefit. The men are presented as being more interested in other things. Therefore, a 'romantic man' is positioned as one who is not invested in romance for its own pleasure – or his own – but rather as one who orchestrates romance for the pleasure of their partner. This is in line with the findings of Chapter 5, where authenticity of men's romancing was positioned as being very important, and a defence mechanism against the predatory romantic man discourse. In

other words, the 'romantic man' was constructed as a man who thinks about romance because it is what the woman desires/ will be happy about. There is therefore an element of self-sacrifice to it, which could be argued to increase the perception of it as romantic.

By presenting men as disinterested in romance, their masculinity is kept 'intact' (see Allen, 2007; Redman, 2001). This protects the machismo of the romantic man, as the situational affordance allows them to engage in and reap the benefits from romance, without it being presented as something they desire and seek out. Interest in romance is instead aligned with femininity, as something women are (inherently?) interested in:

#### EXTRACT 79: INTERVIEW 1.2

1. Luke: it's just that perception that people (.) might- what do people see like that's important,
2. not what's re(h)ally happening, what they see is that important
3. Strauss: Okay
4. Luke: So you gotta make sure like, when people see us they can see that (.) hhh I don't
5. know, like I'm treating her well and they can see that she is (.) happy [...] and that's in
6. my mind [...] so (.) I've (gotta st-) I've gotta like (.) like make sure I open the doors,
7. properly and like
8. Strauss: Mm
9. Luke: Open the door for her when we walking in and when I order, it must look like I'm
10. ordering fo:r he:r [...] I don't want there to be anything the whole night where (.) she
11. has to tell me like y'know=
12. Strauss: =o[kay
13. Luke: [ 'you must do this' or (.) because (.) then (.) it's not that
14. >special I don't know< it must be special must be- everything must go right [...] I think
15. (.) you put in a lot more effort to be (.) professional on dates li(h)ke thi(h)s=
16. Strauss: =( (laughs))

#### EXTRACT 80: INTERVIEW 4.4

1. Johan: ja it's just that whole thing of make it her n- making her night I think.
2. Nicky: Okay, alright so okay.
3. Johan: And giving- giving all the attention to her, ma[king] her feel special I think that's
4. Nicky: [ Ja. ]
5. Johan: basically what they get down to doing [...] but also ja that's what they do, they try to
6. (.) to .hhh focus on the women to make her special feel, to make her feel (.)
7. Nicky: Ja.
8. Johan: (.) Ja.
9. Nicky: Okay .hhh um (.) do you think hhh would you describe yourself as romantic?
10. Johan: .hhh (.) Well I dunno hey (.) [...] I'm romantic in a way I mean (.) [you] do t- things to
11. Nicky: [Mm]
12. Johan: make feel special and [.hhh ] you go out of your way to- to surprise
13. Nicky: [Mhm]
14. Johan: her (with ma-) or- or (.) (like) to see her smile .hhh=
15. Nicky: =Yeah

### EXTRACT 81: INTERVIEW 3.3

Bruce: “sometimes I think, especially with work and (.) just the business of life (.) there are times where we actually have to purposefully think (.) ((Nicky: Mm)) ‘okay Bruce, °you (need) to do something (.) to romanticise your wife, you know, like’ (.) u:::m (.) I think ladies- um I think- I think ladies want to know that the:y- that they are beautiful? They want their husbands to make them feel and think that they are beautiful? ((Nicky: Mhm?)) [...] I think women need t- more want to be pursued (.) they want to be:: (.) they want to be pursued, they want to be you know, they want to know that they beautiful, want them to make her feel beautiful [...] she needs to know that now that you’re married (.) you’re not going to stop pursuing her, you’re not going to stop (.) loving her and communicating love and cherishing her”

In these extracts, this discourse of sacrifice and service has been deployed. Participants describe “making it her night [...] make (her) feel special” (Extract 80, line 1, 3); and “pursuing her” and “cherishing her” (Extract 81). The participants here position the goal of being-romantic as the act of making the woman the central focus – romance is constructed as being performed for the woman’s benefit – for her reassurance and appreciation. This affirms the affordance of men being *active*, and by positioning romance as something performed *by men for women*, it positions women as the recipients of romance. Therefore, romance is constructed as desired more by women than men, and women as the (rightful?) recipients of romance.

As can be seen in the extracts above, a large part of the construction of the romantic man is not only the expectation that he be active in orchestrating romance, but that he also adopts a particular way of acting. For example, in Extract 79, Luke describes “open(ing) doors” and “ordering for her” and Johan describes “surpris(ing) her [...] to see her smile” (Extract 80). This way of acting harkens back to chivalric values, and in this construction the romantic man is idealised as being attentive and respectful in the old-fashioned sense – such as holding open doors to allow the woman to enter first, taking her coat, and so on. In other words, there are two aspects to this construction, namely being attentive, and being chivalrous.



### 6.3.1.1.3. The romantic man as attentive and chivalrous

Being-romantic was positioned as requiring specialised behaviour from men. These were constructed as helping to increase the distinctiveness between romance and everyday life and were described as part of creating a grand romantic date (see Chapter 4). This behaviour was positioned as part of what defines romantic masculinity, as we can see in the following extract:

#### EXTRACT 82: INTERVIEW 2.4

Robyn: “((Nicky: what qualities would a stereotypically romantic man have?)) Um (.) just (.) planning dates and (.) .hhh uh hhh I don’t know hh (.) pulling back the chair, opening the door: I s’pose that’s all (.) like buying flowers those kinds of things [...] just healthy, ja, respectful [...] I- I wouldn’t (.) think a woman would do things to be romantic it would always be the man having to do the romantic things”

In both Extract 82 and Extract 79 we see some examples of chivalrous behaviour, including holding the door open for the woman to enter first; and pulling back her chair for her to sit on. Both of these actions were also referenced in Interview 3.2. In addition, several other examples were given of these chivalrous behaviours, such as paying for dates (interviews 2.5, 3.1, 2.3) or being in control of how much they spend on a date (interviews 2.5, 5.1, 5.3); opening the car door for her (interviews 2.4, 3.2); driving her to the date (interviews 1.1, 1.3, 2.2, 2.4, 2.5, 3.3, 4.1); removing her jacket for her (interview 3.2); ordering for her (interview 1.2); pouring her wine or coldrink (interviews 2.4, 3.2); bringing her a coffee (interview 5.1); and/or making a special point to tell her how “pretty” or “beautiful” she looks (interviews 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 4.1, 4.2, 5.1, 5.5). As can be seen, all the couples at some point made reference to this ‘chivalrous’ behaviour.

These affordances were positioned as creating an overall attitude of attentiveness to the woman and her needs, which was positioned as being very romantic. For example, Bruce positions this attentiveness as being a way to show to his wife that he ‘still’ finds her “beautiful” and is “pursuing”, “loving” and “cherishing” her – in other words, that he is not taking her for granted ‘now that he has married her’ (Interview 3.3). This links back to the discourse of romantic emotional intimacy being reduced or marred by married

life that was discussed in Chapter 5. Considered in the light of the situational affordances of romantic masculinity, however, an additional nuance to this discourse can be suggested: when romance is specifically used by men as a tool to romance women, this attentive chivalry could be argued to be a way of reassuring the woman that her husband *still appreciates her*.

Why would a wife need reassurance? It has been argued in the literature that in many respects heterosexual marriage contains many structures and vestiges of patriarchy, in the way that it is structurally organised (Charlebois, 2010; Gershuny, 1997; Lee, Fiske, Glick & Chen, 2010). A key issue that has been identified is the (lack of) sharing of housework and childcare, and control over finances (Gershuny, 1997; Morrison, 2010; Natalier, 2004; Thagaard, 1997).

I therefore propose that romance can be argued to be a form of saturnalia. Saturnalia was a Roman festival which allowed the “symbolic inversion” of slavery (Falassi, 1987, p. 3), where for one day, slaves would be treated like masters (Lévi-Strauss, 1993). This festival served to keep slaves satisfied *just enough* with the existing order not to be disruptive or rebellious through the rest of the year. A saturnalia effect, therefore, is one which ostensibly disrupts an established order while ultimately confirming and strengthening this order (Charles, 1997). Therefore, if being-romantic places a woman as the centre of focus for the duration of the date, and is a way of reassuring her that she is ‘still’ cherished, ‘even’ after marriage, then romance may serve as a way to shore up the patriarchal order as it operates within the micro-level of heterosexual marriages. Thus, romance forms a kind of dividend, paid out to women in return for their part in maintaining the relationship in day-to-day life. The outcome of romance – emotional intimacy and the ‘we-ness’ that forms – can therefore be said to be a romantic dividend.

This would explain why failure to be attentive was positioned as disrupting the romance, and often as leading to conflict between the man and the woman. For example, in lines 9-11 and 13-15 of Extract 79, we see Luke’s concern over demonstrating sufficiently chivalric attention and care; otherwise it would result in her needing to tell him “you must do this” (line 13), which would mean that “then (.) it’s not that >special<” (line

13-14), that is, that it would ruin the romance<sup>43</sup>. Later in that interview, Strauss asked “what-what would happened (.) if (.) like y’know y-you didn’t meet this expectations?” Luke replies “u::m (.) I think she’d get bleak” (Interview 1.2). This would inevitably disrupt the romance and detract from the emotional intimacy that the date provides.

Other suggested causes of disruptions included looking at or answering one’s phone (Interviews 2.1, 2.3, 5.1, 5.3) or watching overhead television provided in the restaurant (Interviews 2.1, 2.3, 2.5, 3.3, 5.1, 5.3) while on a date. These were positioned as undesirable distractions which would interfere with participants’ ability to focus on each other. While it was constructed as *generally important* not to be distracted by these on a date, all the transgressive examples that were given where this occurred were of the men participants – not the women. This suggests it is particularly important for men to remain focused –and attentive of the woman – while being-romantic.

Furthermore, participants argued that without chivalry, the women’s enjoyment of the date would be negatively affected. For example:

**EXTRACT 83: INTERVIEW 3.2**

Bruce: “it might take away from the level of enjoyment ((Strauss: Okay)) um because (.) um .hhh I think she n- I think with Louise she never expected from the word go (.) ((Strauss: Ja)) [...] but (.) hhh it might take away (.) the enjoyment of it for a to a degree [...] she probably won’t say anything [...] but I think i- (.) in her heart it might you know ((Strauss: Okay))”.

**EXTRACT 84: INTERVIEW 5.1**

Strauss: with these expectations um ho- ho- how do you feel that will .hhh like kinda like affect um Heidi [...]

Tom: “well obviously it would upset her I think (.) .hhh I mean I’ve learned the hard way hhh a bunch of times um (.) we (.) I think it would- it would ja- it would u- it would upset her she (.) I would be able to tell that something’s wrong and ((Strauss:

---

<sup>43</sup> This instance is justified by Sue and Luke in ways which work to maintain the overall presentation of their relationship as part of the soulmate discourse (see Chapter 5). Luke identifies these ‘lapses’ in his behavior as cultural differences between them, arguing that the Indian culture is more concerned with the appearance of care on his part, rather than what their actual relationship is like, and this then explains her concern with how they present themselves in public. Sue, on the other hand, de-emphasized racial and cultural differences and instead suggested that she thinks Luke might be on the autism spectrum as he is often oblivious to the social cues and context and needs the occasional prompt from her. The discursive effect of these arguments preserves their relationship by locating the reason for this behavior (her prompting him) in reasons outside of their relationship.

Mm)) (.) we might be able to just talk through it and like get o- like we would- I would apologise and we'd get on with our date, but maybe it would ruin the entire evening [...] I think a d- a date like the (.) the benefits of a date could be like (.) undone quite easily through .hhh perhaps a thoughtless mistake or ((Strauss: Mm)) .hhh um (.) perhaps being insensitive about something um (.) but I mean we- ja we do know each other well enough that like we can sort of .hhh (.) uh (.) perhaps forgive a momentary lapse you know [...] not that we have low expectations, but we have realistic expectations for each other's behaviour, you know? [...] I just, I realise how lucky I am to have Heidi (.) and like I wanna (.) um (.) sort of (.) be worthy of her ((Strauss: Ja)) .hhh so I wanna like try and (.) be thoughtful and .hhh serve her in every way that I can".

In these extracts the men present a failure to be chivalrous as upsetting to their wives; however, we see a number of false starts, justifications and other face management techniques being deployed, suggesting this is a difficult topic to manage. This is because it has the possibility of presenting their wives in a negative light, which they both take pains to avoid doing. Thus, generally, the women are constructed as not asking (or nagging) for chivalric treatment, but as being affected negatively when this is not delivered. This discourse also helps to preserve the men's desire to "serve" their wives through being chivalrous (Extract 84).

There was some data from the women about their stance on this. For example, Robyn argued that it is not something she would expect or ask for, which could be a defence against seeming 'pushy' or 'nagging' for romance, which would be a negative identity position to be in:

**EXTRACT 85: INTERVIEW 2.4**

Robyn: "Eddie? (.) does do stuff but .hhh it's so funny because I can see what his dad does and that's exactly what he does .hhh like he always has to pour my drink (.) ((Nicky: Okay)) but (.) I wouldn't care if I poured my drink [...] ((Nicky: it's quite a weird sort of)) Ja it is a bit weird. Or like opening your car door or something ((Nicky laughs)) like he- he did that (.) in the beginning and now he doesn't but I- I wouldn't expect him to, I mean imagine every time you go in the car you open the car door I'll be like 'okay' ((shared laughter)) 'it's fine'".

Here, the chivalrous act is positioned as a nice 'extra' to have on a date – but not as something she expects her partner to do for her. This discourse functions as face management – to say it is *expected* might be seen as problematic as it could position her as demanding or unrealistic. However, Robyn does also state that she *does* expect/demand

that Eddie be attentive and stay focused on her while they are being romantic (Interview 2.1, 2.3). Therefore it is the attentiveness, not the chivalry, which is positioned by Robyn as desired and expected and the chivalry as negotiable: appreciated but unnecessary and charmingly gawky. To push for chivalrous behaviour would detract from the experienced 'romanticness', as seen in Luke description of what happens when Sue has to correct him (Extract 79).

Attentiveness then, is key to chivalrous behaviour. It was argued in Chapter 5 that it was very important for the men participants that their motives for being-romantic were seen as authentic. Some participants drew from (and distanced themselves from) a discourse of predatory, inauthentic masculinity who used romance to manipulate women into sexual intercourse. Instead, they argued, emotional intimacy and making their partner happy were the reasons they orchestrated romance. Likewise, without attentiveness, chivalric behaviour might seem empty and inauthentic – another means of gaining access to sex. Luke's expression of being a "professional" on a date is meant as a joke (Extract 79), but reflects this tension of the "macho-romantic tightrope" (Allen, 2007, p. 145). Without sincerity and authentic-ness, a 'professional' romancer could be seen as predatory and inauthentic (as seen in Chapter 5) – charismatic, smooth, but insincere (and perhaps a reason that the description of Eddie's somewhat clumsy attempts to be charming create such an authentic romantic narrative in Extract 85 above). Therefore, this emphasis on emotional intimacy (see Chapter 5) and being attentive to the woman's needs acts as a ballast against this 'professionalised', predatory connotation of this discourse.

In summary, there was a fairly cohesive definition of romantic masculinity across the dataset that seemed to be easy to produce, and that was characterised as being active in producing romance for the woman's benefit and for treating the woman in a chivalrous and attentive way. The woman recipient is, however, positioned in a very passive way, as someone who receives romance or to whom romance is *done*. This will be explored more in the following section on romantic femininity. The discursive effect of this rhetoric is to make the act of being romantic a demonstration of love in and of itself, however, it

entails (requires?) its (woman) recipient to do nothing, to sit there, being suitably pleased and grateful.

#### 6.3.1.2. Femininity in romance: Sitting pretty

As argued above, the results of the content analysis suggests that in comparison to romantic masculinity, participants struggled to define romantic femininity. The content analysis is also be supported by fine-grained analysis. For example, only a few participants asked for clarification of the question about romantic men – in contrast, far more participants seemed to struggle to answer it regarding women:

##### EXTRACT 86: INTERVIEW 2.4

Robyn: “That’s funny are women supposed to be romantic (.) is the question [...] I wouldn’t (.) I’ve never heard of a romantic woman”.

##### EXTRACT 87: INTERVIEW 4.4

Johan: “((small laugh)) (uh that’s a-) .hhh that’s a hard question [...] I don’t actually know hey (.) ‘cause I mean usually [...] women really aren’t the- the romantic ones [...] so they don’t really do something for the man”.

##### EXTRACT 88: INTERVIEW 5.5

Tom: “it’s funny, cause the way I see it, like the romantic man is the one doing the gesturing but like (.) the romantic woman is she like the one initiating romance or the- who likes to be romanced [...] it’s (so hard) to: verbalise”.

In these extracts, participants explicitly say that it is difficult to answer the question regarding romantic women – in contrast, this kind of hedging was not used when answering the previous question about romantic men. However, participants did ultimately answer it, and using Schippers’ (2007) argument about the complementary nature of gender identities (particularly in this context of heterosexual couples), we can postulate the identity position that romantic femininity would need to occupy to allow romantic masculinity to function in the way it was articulated above. These were that: women are invested in romance (and romance is therefore feminized); women are passive when it

comes to jointly enacting romance; men need to be attentive and women need to be appropriate targets for that attention by being ‘arm candy’ – that is, pleasing and pleasant company, receptive to and appreciative of the chivalrous overtures made by the romantic man. These will be explored in the sections that follow.

#### 6.3.1.2.1. The romantic woman as invested in romance

As argued above, romantic men were positioned as not being invested in romance for its own sake, but rather as orchestrating romance for the enjoyment of the woman. Therefore, the corresponding identity position is that a woman needs to be interested in and desiring of romance. As it was suggested above, the women partners were positioned as getting upset when they felt that romance was not occurring frequently enough or when men participants were distracted on dates by their cell phones or by televisions in restaurants (Extract 79; Extract 80; Extract 81; Extract 84). This constructs the women as *inherently* interested or invested in romance. Without this construction, the men’s romantic overtures would be superfluous, unappreciated – undesirable. Therefore constructing women in this way gives the men’s actions meaning and desirability.

#### 6.3.1.2.2. The romantic woman as passive

As argued above, men were generally positioned as the partner who actively romances their partner, and asking participants to articulate women’s romantic agency was conversationally disruptive. The corresponding, complementary position available to women would be the passive recipient of romance, and participants articulated this with ease. In the data, generally, women were positioned as being inert:

#### EXTRACT 89: INTERVIEW 3.5

Bruce: “they’re being romanced, and they’re also kind of initiating romance in their own way ((Nicky: ja)) without (maybe) (.) always initiating [...] I think (.) maybe- maybe saying (a bit) that guys (.) initiate more? ((Nicky: Uhuh?)) I think that’s true? ((Nicky: Okay?)) but I think saying girls (.) are- are romantic, is a different kind of romance [...] the woman would be romantic in the sense of (.) of (.) the way she





individualised, de-gendered personal preference, where the onus is on *him* to plan the dates because it means a lot to *her*. He therefore constructs a romantic woman based on this construction of their relationship, as one who makes herself romantically available (by putting effort into her appearance) and who is receptive to whatever form of romance he provides (by not expecting the unreasonable).

This positioning of a romantic woman as one who is passive, who expects romance (in a reasonable way) and “who wants to be romanced” (Lines 12-17) fits in with the broader construction of a romantic woman, as the necessary discursive counterpart to the widespread construction of an active romantic man. Therefore, despite being individualised as ‘just’ being due to her preferences, it is inevitably rooted in the broader discourses of the underlying gender order. Therefore, according to this construction, a romantic woman must be comparatively passive and receive romance – that is, where a romantic man *does* romantic things, the romantic woman *receives* romance, and does so in ways that validate the collaborative production of the romantic event. This reflects a broader argument made in the literature, that “the repression of women’s sexual agency (is) a significant component of gender power inequality in heterosex” (Shefer & Foster, 2001, p. 375). In other words, in this construction, to be romanced is to be feminized. In

Extract 91, we see a similar deployment of this discourse:

#### EXTRACT 91: INTERVIEW 4.4

Johan: “I mean usually [...] women really aren’t the- the romantic ones [...] so they don’t really do something for the man ... now and then but then they also (.) .hhh what they do, the man usually do [...] or they- they’ve got this whole plan in their mind that they gonna try to seduce the guy I dunno [...] woman don’t really (.) go and really do something like (.) like that because of .hhh being seen as (.) women are being forward or cheap or slutty or some things if they do things that guys maybe do”.

Johan also positions the romantic woman as one who is passive: they “aren’t the- the romantic ones”. However, Johan’s construction does allow for some agency, in two limited ways: doing what “the man usually do[es]” (which has consequences, which will be explored in Chapter 7); or else trying “to seduce the guy”, as explored in Chapter 5, Section

5.3.3.2.4. It was argued there that while a 'predatory' male discourse positions the 'smooth guy' as using romance as a tool to mediate access to women's bodies, in one construction of the romantic woman, women's bodies are offered as an act of seduction which was argued in Chapter 5 to constitute an act of romance itself.

This tactic was deployed in In these ways most of the men participants distanced themselves from this trope of the manipulative/predatory man who uses romance in order to have sexual intercourse. However, what was perhaps surprising (in the light of the male sex drive discourse and the have/hold discourse), was that this rhetoric of manipulation or being predatory was also applied to describe women.

Extract 60, Extract 61, and Extract 62. While this was generally presented as problematic – perhaps because the examples given were of women in general and not their partners specifically – there seemed to be a strong discursive connection between women's efforts to actively romance men and their bodies as the tools of this romance (specifically, romantic seduction). In other words, its construction rested on the close association with women's bodies as instruments of romance (rather than with women themselves as agents). This will be discussed further in the next section. On the whole, however, this analysis confirms the argument made in the literature: that to give the affordances of the active romantic man currency, the romantic feminine counterpart needs to be passive.

#### 6.3.1.2.3. The romantic woman as "arm candy"

It was argued in Chapter 5 (and above) that participants drew from a discourse of being-romantic in order to gain access to women's bodies (which the men in particular oriented to and repudiated); and that one construction of a romantic woman that allowed for activeness/agency was one where their bodies were utilised as tools of seduction. In line with this construction of women's bodies as central to romance, it will be argued that participants positioned men *and* women as needing to do more than their average 'beauty' routine in order to get ready for a grand date; however, woman were

described as needing to (or being expected to) *do more* and *take longer* than men to get ready for romance.

First, the data captured on the pre-event checklist (Appendix 7B) will be summarised across participants and is reflected in Table 2. This table reflects only activities that participants would do specifically for a date over and above what they would normally do in day-to-day life. For example, showering/bathing is not listed, because all participants would do this for a date *and* as part of their everyday routine. The number in each cell is a count of how many participants of this gender said they did the specified activity; the numbers in square brackets identify the specific couple number assigned to each participant. For example, [1] in the women participant column would refer to Sue, from Couple 1; [2] to Robyn; and so on. Where N/A appears, this means this option did not appear on their gender-specific check list:

**TABLE 2: ACTIVITIES PARTICIPANTS DID SPECIFICALLY FOR THE ROMANTIC EVENTS, BY GENDER**

List of activities	Total: women participants [Couple reference number]	Total: men participants [Couple reference number]
Washes hair	5 [1, 2, 3, 4, 5]	2 [1, 2]
Uses facial/ beauty creams	1 [4]	1 [5]
Shaves / grooms facial hair	n/a	3 [1, 2, 5]
Shaves (leg/underarm)	4 [1, 2, 4, 5]	n/a
Other body hair removal	1 [4]	1 [2]
Uses expensive cologne/aftershave/perfume	3 [1, 2, 5]	1 [1]
Uses body moisturiser	2 [2, 3]	1 [5]
Uses makeup	2 [3, 5]	n/a
Use of hair styling tools/products	5 [1, 2, 3, 4, 5]	0
Grooms nails	n/a	1 [1]
Uses nail polish/ nail polish remover	2 [2, 5]	n/a
Uses professional grooming services (e.g. waxing/facial/hairdresser/nails/tan etc.)	1 [2]	5 [1, 2, 3, 4, 5]
Polishes shoes	n/a	0
Get outfit cleaned/ ironed/ dry-cleaned	n/a	0
Wears formal or seductive clothing	5 [1, 2, 3, 4, 5]	5 [1, 2, 3, 4, 5]
Wears formal shoes/ high heels	5 [1, 2, 3, 4, 5]	3 [1, 3, 4]
Wears jewellery or accessories	3 [1, 3, 4]	0
<b>Average length of time to get ready for a date:</b>	<b>57 min</b>	<b>25 min</b>

Average length of time to get ready in everyday settings:	19 min	16 min
---	--------	--------

All of the participants stated that they did more and spent longer getting ready to be-romantic, compared to getting ready for other routine activities. However, excluding professional grooming services (which more men said they performed before the date than women did) and wearing more formal clothes than in everyday life (which all the participants said they would do), women described doing *more* activities to get ready for the date than men. Men participated in fewer activities than women (10 compared to 13 activities), and the number of women performing each activity was higher per activity than they were for men.

In terms of the length of time taken to get ready, women reported spending 3 times longer to get ready for a date than they spend getting ready on a day-to-day basis, while men spent only 1.5 times longer to get ready. Put another way, while the average time spent to get ready on a day-to-day basis was very similar for men and for women; when getting ready for romance, on average the women participants spent twice as long as the men on their appearance.

The data above is reported from the ethnographic pre-event interviews. Next, the idealisations and stereotypes generated in the post-event interview regarding what men and women *should* do while getting ready for romance will be discussed (Refer to Appendices 7D and E for the interview questions and checklists used to generate this data). In Table 3, is the combined data generated from the checklists in Appendix 7E. The activities have been re-ordered slightly so that corresponding activities for men and for women fall on the same line for easier comparison. As above, data about women’s activities have been shaded in grey, and men’s activities are in white. Each number is the count of men (M) and women (W) who have endorsed that activity, out of a maximum of 5 each (as 5 men and 5 women took part in the study). The totals in the bottom row are the total number of endorsed activities per men and women respondents, where a maximum of 80 would mean that every man/woman participant had endorsed every activity and 0 would mean no participants endorsed any of the activities:

Women's list of activities	Men's list of activities	Enhance romance if done BY WOMEN		Enhance romance if done BY MEN		Ruin romance if not done BY WOMEN		Ruin romance if not done BY MEN	
		M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W
Showers/bathes	Showers/bathes	4	4	2	4	5	3	5	4
Brush teeth	Brushes teeth	4	4	3	4	5	4	5	4
Washes hair	Washes hair	5	3	3	3	2	1	2	1
Uses beauty creams	Uses facial creams	3	2	0	1	1	1	0	0
Uses body moisturizer	Uses body moisturiser	4	2	1	0	2	0	1	0
Uses make-up	Get outfit cleaned/ ironed/ dry-cleaned	3	2	2	3	1	0	2	0
Uses body make-up	Polishes shoes	0	1	1	2	0	0	1	0
Use of hair styling tools/ products	Use of hair styling tools/ products	5	4	3	1	1	0	0	0
Shaves	Shaves / grooms facial hair	5	4	3	5	4	4	2	2
Other body hair removal	Other body hair removal	3	2	0	0	0	2	0	0
Uses deodorant/ perfume	Uses deodorant/ cologne/ after shave	4	4	3	5	4	3	2	3
Uses nail polish/ nail polish remover	Grooms nails	2	2	2	2	1	0	2	0
Professional services prior to 'event' (e.g. nails, waxing, facials, tan, hairdresser etc.)	Uses professional grooming services prior to 'event' (e.g. wax/ facial/ haircut etc.)	3	2	2	2	1	1	0	0

Wears formal or seductive clothing	Wears formal or seductive clothing	5	5	3	5	3	0	0	0
Wears formal shoes/ high heels	Wears formal shoes	3	5	3	4	0	0	0	0
Wears jewelry	Wears jewelry or accessories	2	4	1	1	0	0	0	0
Totals:		55	50	32	42	30	19	22	14

TABLE 3: TABLE COMPARING MEN'S VERSUS WOMEN'S ACTIVITIES IN TERMS OF IDEALISATION AND EXPECTATIONS

### (1) Findings: Women should be pretty

While the main focus of this analysis is a qualitative, discursive analysis, conducting a chi square is useful in this case as it demonstrates that the differences between the findings for men and women are higher than we might expect by chance alone, especially in the case of the variable 'would ruin romance if not done'. A McNemar's within-subjects chi-square test was conducted on this data using SPSS, and looked at the total counts of activities endorsed by men and by women, comparing gender of respondent to gendered activity. Two McNemar's tests were conducted – one for activities that would *enhance* the romance; the other for activities that would *ruin* the romance if not done. Output can be found in Appendices 11A and B respectively.

The chi square results for activities *enhancing* romance was not significantly different for men and women's activities ( $p = 0.223$ ). Women endorsed 50 of the women's activities while men endorsed 55; and men endorsed 32 of the men's activities compared to women's 42 endorsements. However, the differences in the number of total endorsements (105 total endorsements for women's activities versus 74 total endorsements for men's activities), while not significant ( $p = 0.223$ ), suggests that for women's bodies in particular, the more the woman has done to get ready for romance, the more romantic the date feels.

There was, however, a significant difference between men and women in the findings for activities that could *ruin* romance ( $p = 0.023$ ). Women endorsed 19 of the women's activities while men endorsed 30 activities which, if not done, could ruin the

romance, compared to men's 22 endorsements of the men's activities compared to women's 14 endorsements.

The chi square has also illustrated that the men seemed especially sensitive to these activities and their possibility of ruining romance. While the men participants endorsed more activities for men and for women, they endorsed a much higher number of activities for women than for men (30 compared to 22, respectively,  $p = 0.023$ ). This suggests that if a woman failed to do one of the activities endorsed by the participants, it would affect the perceived romance of the date more than a similar (lack of) action on a man's part.

Looking at the data more closely with regard to killing the romance, it was argued that it was important for both women and men to be hygienic – in terms of showering, brushing teeth and wearing deodorant – in expectation of physical intimacy (as discussed in Chapter 5), as similar numbers of endorsements were made for both genders. However, in addition to these, activities that produced women as different to men were seen as important for a woman to do and failing to do these was positioned as ruining the romance. For example, 3 of 5 men participants argued that a woman not dressing up would have affected the romance negatively (0 men said the same for men dressing up, and 0 women said this for men or women). Additionally, 4 of 5 men and 4 of 5 women said that it would ruin the romance if the woman had not shaved her legs for romance, which was positioned in the interviews as “gross” (Interviews 1.5; 2.1; 3.4; 4.4) or “off-putting” (Interviews 1.5 and 4.4).

In contrast, only 2 of 5 men and 2 of 5 women said it would ruin the romance for a man not to shave, but this was constructed as being due to concern of causing discomfort for the woman while kissing. For example, Johan said that “I think is the one thing where a lot of woman is like that, if you kiss and you got a beard or stubbles (you-) you hurt them” (Interview 4.4). Anika said “I have a sensitive skin... it would actually (make this) so raw that I would get blisters” (Interview 4.5). Likewise, Sue stated that “I don't mind like how he looks with a beard, but it just like ((Nicky: yeah)) it hurts ((Nicky: ja::)) ((both laugh)) scratchy” (Interview 1.1).

In contrast, a woman not shaving on a date was positioned as very unromantic: Participants said that “it’s more- more feminine to be like, cleanly shaven” (Sue, Interview 1.4); “I don’t wanna feel like I’m touching a man [...] it just doesn’t look right” (Johan, Interview 4.4); “like a GIRL with HAIRY ARMPITS? OH NO::: that’d freak me out:” (Robyn, Interview 2. 1); “sjho I’m not into hairy legs, it’s just not my thing [...] I don’t find it very attractive” (Bruce, Interview 3.5); and “for ME:: PERSONALLY, I just like to- (.) by shaving underarms and shaving your legs ((Nicky: mm)) it just makes me feel prettier? In a way?” (Louise, Interview 3.4). Louise expands on this gendered discrepancy in the following extract:

**EXTRACT 92: INTERVIEW 3.4**

1. Louise: some guys look really good with facial hair? And they really don't have to shave
2. [or anything before going on a date
3. Nicky: [mhm ja
4. Louise: (and you know) sometimes ev- even if they don't shave like (.) some girls would like
5. their (.) boyfriends to:: shave? But if they don't it's not a deal-breaker [you know
6. Nicky: [ja(h), ja
7. Louise: (.) u::m (.) [but if a girl like doesn't shave under her arms fo::r a few days, the guy
8. Nicky: [do you think it would be
9. Louise: might be a (little bit you know)
10. Nicky: ja, [(ja)
11. Louise: ['Darling, you need to (.) [sha::ve before I go there' [(laughs))
12. Nicky: [(laughs)) [okay cool, ja

Shaving was therefore a key activity identified by participants as being potentially very disruptive of romance, and was positioned differently for men and for women. Therefore, the data generated by these checklists positioned women’s appearance as crucial to the experience of the date as romantic: when a woman spent a lot of time and effort (and money) getting ready, the date was experienced as more romantic and there were more points of vulnerability to disruption identified in a woman’s appearance that might ruin the romance if not done. Thus, it can be argued that there are different situational affordances for men and for women in terms of one’s appearance.



## (2) Justificatory discourses: The equalising discourses of effort and acceptance

Once participants completed the checklists, this data was explored and accounted for in the interviews. In some cases, participants were very blunt about this gendered difference in how much one should do to prepare for romance:

### EXTRACT 93: INTERVIEW 2.5

1. Nicky: Is there anything you'd like to tell me about the: 'more romantic' ones? uh=like,
2. there's quite a few ticked. [U:::m
3. Eddie: [U:::m? [...] it's (.) something that's (.) slightly out- off of the
4. ordinary
5. Nicky: okay
6. Eddie: So I know I mean Robyn will normally put makeup on, [or that sort of thing But (.) you
7. Nicky: [mhm
8. Eddie: can always sort of tell when it's a little bit more [...] now you tryna like (.) doll yourself
9. up a little bit
10. Nicky: okay
11. Eddie: uh, ja, so:: (.)
12. Nicky: Is that like a personal compliment, or you know like she's [putting effort in or
13. Eddie: [JA:: it is nice if she's trying
14. to look nice for me [...] Then it's: makes me feel better
15. Nicky: okay (.) .hh is it: (.) u:::m (.) this is going to sound like a terrible question, but is it like
16. a personally .hh I-like earlier you mentioned something about sort of other people
17. Eddie: ja
18. Nicky: admiring [( )
19. Eddie: [OH JA, JA I want people to see what's on- ca:ndy on my arm
20. Nicky: oka(h)[(h)(h)y ((laughs)) cool ((laughs))
21. Eddie: (((laughs))

### EXTRACT 94: INTERVIEW 1.5

1. Luke: .hhh u:::h (.) u:::m
2. ((both laugh))
3. Luke: thi(h)s is goi(h)ng to loo(h)k hypocritical o(h)n my si(h)de<sup>44</sup> ((la[ugh)s))
4. Nicky: [NO, NO it's fine
5. ((laughs))
6. [...]
7. Luke: l'(h)m sa(h)ying ye(h)s
8. Nicky: ((laughs))
9. Luke: (This whole thing<sup>45</sup>) (.) £the girl should look (.) pretty£

### EXTRACT 95: INTERVIEW 2.1

---

<sup>44</sup> As he said this, Luke was ticking off activities on the women's checklist, and oriented to the fact that he was ticking a lot more for women than for men

<sup>45</sup> Referring to the women's checklist, and that every activity was important

1. Nicky: D'you think (.) u::m (.) there's different expectations for w-women compared to men?
2. Robyn: Ja:: men don't have to do anything. They don't have to put on make-up or straighten
3. their hair [...] Women, there's wa::y more primping .hh [...] It's like reverse (.) animal
4. kingdom
5. Nicky: ((la[ughs]) )
6. Robyn: (((laughs)) I don't know-] like males in the animal kingdom have to be pretty
7. Nicky: ja ((laughs)) it's true
8. Robyn: I know
9. Nicky: JA:

In these instances, the gender disparity in expectations about how one should get ready for romance are presented matter-of-factly. However, in most instances this was handled using a lot of justificatory rhetoric, and in particular, participants drew from an equalising discourse about effort. Looking at the data in Table 3, one can see that for activities that would make a date more romantic, *more items were endorsed by the opposite gender*: that is, for women's activities, men endorsed activities 55 times, compared to women's 50 endorsements; and for men's activities, women endorsed activities 42 times compared to men's 32 endorsements.

Looking at the interview data, both men and women participants argued that the more effort their partner puts in, the more special the evening feels, because it conveys a message that their partner feels the night is important. For example, Luke says "I like it when Sue - wh- when a girl looks very- if she's put effort into it y'know she's put effort into it then you know it's special to he:r as well" (Interview 1.5). When asked why we dress up for romance, Heidi answers: "I suppose just (.) like showing Tom that like (.) I think he's worth making an effort for" (Interview 5.4). Later, Heidi says "like if Tom did all those things I'd think SHJO (.) this-he really thinks this is an important like, special (.) date" (Interview 5.4). Tom says that it "shows the other person that you've like put more effort into s- (.) the time you gonna spend with them [...] u::M. I think it shows that you (.) care [...] and also like maybe like marks the occasion (.) as like this isn't normal life" (Interview 5.5). Robyn says that "I think if you put in effort, then you feel like, the other person is- you know- actually taken this to heart and made a- er ((Nicky: Ja)) the effort [...] (it) shows that you care, I think" (Interview 2.1). Bruce says that if "I didn't m-make an effort to make myself look good for her I think it could hurt- (.) the romance, cause you [...] aren't saying (.) 'I- you are important to me and I look g-good for you'" (Interview 3.5). In this way, the effort their

partner puts in to getting ready was constructed as a romantic gesture (see Chapter 4), as a message of love and commitment to their partner.

The effect of this discourse is to minimise the gendered differences in the affordances presented above. Furthermore, some of the men participants argued that the *amount of effort was similar* for men and women, despite reporting that women do more and take longer to get ready for a date (possibly because the baseline is lower). For example:

**EXTRACT 96: INTERVIEW 5.1**

Tom: "I guess making an effort .hhh (.) communicates to her that I'm as excited to be spending time with her as she is to me (.) obviously girls- (.) I mean, it would take her f-f- fifty times longer to get ready for something ((Strauss: Ja)) than me (.) but (.) in a way it's the same level of effort"

**EXTRACT 97: INTERVIEW 3.2**

Bruce: "I think- I think we might both (.) uh spend in- (.) give the same amount of effort to look good for the other person ((Strauss: Mm)) We both give san- amo- same amount of effort (.) but time-wise it definitely be less for me ((Strauss: Mm))".

This discourse works to smooth over this discrepancy in the data: if 'effort' is a romantic gesture, and women do more – that is, make more of an effort – this might be taken to mean that men do not care as much. Therefore, by equating their effort and minimising the amount of activities one performs or time one spends to get ready, this discourse works to save face. But it also works to support the narratives that romance is not something that comes *naturally* to men (and possibly also the image of the tamed Beast), constructing relatively small concessions (e.g. shaving) as indicating substantial effort.

The other discursive tactic used by men participants was positioning the amount their partners do as something that will make *her* feel good (which makes him feel good in turn) – but not as something he expects or requires from her (Interviews 1.5; 3.5; 4.4; 5.5). An example of this can be seen in Interview 3.5 when Bruce says "it's more important for me for her to be herself than to look good for me". Tom states "it wouldn't make a difference to me but it makes a difference to her, so then it makes a difference" (Interview 5.5). This individualising rhetoric supported the soulmate discourse (see Chapter

5) that participants generally drew from across the dataset to position their relationships as idealised. An additional example can be found in the following extract:

**EXTRACT 98: INTERVIEW 5.5**

1. Tom: Ja it-it's happened a few times where she hasn't been able to put make-up on and
2. she's like (.) feels self-conscious about it [and I tell her like 'it doesn't matter, like I
3. Nicky: [mhm
4. Tom: think you're beautiful'
5. Nicky: okay
6. Tom: but (.) she wouldn't (.) feel (.) like she looks her best
7. Nicky: okay. Alright. .hh a:::nd shaving?
8. Tom: so it's the same with he:r (.) like [sh- she like (.) if she hasn't shaved her legs or
9. Nicky: [ja:::
10. Tom: something she'll feel like 'a::h (don't touch my legs) I haven't shaved them!'
11. Nicky: okay
12. Tom: and I'll also be like 'it's fine' ((laughs))=
13. Nicky: =ja=
14. Tom: =but she would feel uncomfortable [...] IF
15. she's not feeling it, [then like it's not gonna happen, [like we not gonna feel romantic
16. Nicky: [then it's (.) [ja
17. Tom: together?
18. Nicky: okay

These were all discursive tactics employed by the men in order to navigate this gendered expectation of women, although it was clearly dilemmatic as evidenced by the large number of things listed by men in the checklist as potentially disrupting romance. Additionally, it was found that women also used discursive tactics to minimise the gendered differences in getting ready. Two women described dressing up for a date as being directed at *other* people and not their partners:

**EXTRACT 99: INTERVIEW 4.2**

1. Nicky: why do you think we:- we dress up for romance? Like, [for a date
2. Anika: [I think it's like the whole thing
3. of (.) .pt you must still look better than the OTHER GI(h)(h)RLS on the STREE(h)T
4. Nicky: okay, [okay
5. Anika: [I DON'T KNOW i-er-i-i-I think it's sometimes insecurity [...] I(h)(h) don't
6. actually think I dress up (.) to keep him (.) .hh because I know him [...] he's very loyal
7. [...] we've had a lot of looks [...] 'aha:: nice guy oh ho:w did you::: get hi(h)m'
8. ((laughs)) type of thing

**EXTRACT 100: INTERVIEW 2.1**

Robyn: “sometimes, ja (.) I- lot of dressing up is for other people as well, for if other people are going to be the:re [...] gi::rls (.) judge each other”

By positioning dressing up as being due to an external reason – that of demonstrating to others (especially women) that one is a worthy match for one’s attractive partner – this potentially risky discourse of doing more to get ready than their partner is minimised and the idealisation of romance in terms of the soulmate discourse is protected (See Chapter 5).

The soulmate discourse was also utilised as an additional source of justificatory rhetoric. Women (and some men) participants argued that their partner loved and accepted them for who they are. This discourse de-emphasised the ‘need’ to dress up for romance, which then positions dressing up as ‘optional’. Where this was combined with the discourse of ‘effort’, dressing up is transformed into a gift for their partner, an act of selfless - love – and not as something one must do as the member of a gendered group (which would be unromantic and stigmatising). For example,

#### EXTRACT 101: INTERVIEW 3.1

1. Nicky: um d’ you ever feel like (.) there any expectations about how you as a- a woman
2. should act or dress on a date?
3. Louise: (.) .hhh [...] I think before (.) getting to know Bruce as- as well as I do [ .hhh ] um (.)
4. Nicky: [Mhm]
5. Louise: he was like a very big stigma especially from Hollywood about (.) how women should
6. look
7. Nicky: Uh huh=
8. Louise: =um (.) you know what they should wear .hhh=
9. Nicky: =Ja
10. Louise: how they should act you know to get guys to think that they’re pretty
11. Nicky: Uh huh=
12. Louise: =um but I find that (.) the more that I’m to be myself around Bruce the more (.)
13. he loves me [.hhh ] so (.) even if I went uh you know in jeans and a t-shirt to
14. Nicky: [Okay]
15. Louise: wherever we’re going it wouldn’t (.) really change his opinion of who I am=
16. Nicky: =Mkay

This discourse was evident in interviews with Sue (Interviews 1.1 and 1.4); Robyn (Interviews 2.1 and 2.4); Louise (Interviews 3.1 and 3.4); Bruce (Interviews 3.2 and 3.5); Johan (Interview 4.1); Anika (Interviews 4.2 and 4.5); Tom (Interviews 5.1 and 5.5); and Heidi (Interview 5.2). Partners were presented as loving the participants no matter what

they wore. For example, Sue says that “this relationship is the first time I’ve had someone who’s actually (.) wanted me for like, me:::, like m- <exactly who I am>” (Interview 1.1). This is contrasted to her previous relationships, where her ex-boyfriends wanted a “trophy” girlfriend and “pressured” her to dress up.

Thus, participants argued that their love and attraction to each other is based on their broader relationship, so a “momentary lapse” (Tom, Interview 5.1) such as not dressing up enough for romance was positioned as not affecting their feelings or enjoyment of the date.

Next to this discourse, the unequally gendered nature of the number of activities endorsed by participants for romantic dates seems less important. They become isolated anomalies, not evidence of broader gender inequalities. However, given the data as recorded on the checklists and as recorded ethnographically in the pre-event interview, it is clear that women’s appearance is central to the affordances of being-romantic – but that given the amount of justificatory rhetoric, this could be identified as a problematic claim in the context of participants’ relationships.

Furthermore, an additional argument can be made in terms of the burden of this discourse: participants widely argued that when getting ready for romance, they would use ‘special’, expensive or nicer versions of everyday items when getting ready for romance – for example perfume (Interviews 1.1; 1.4; 1.5; 4.2; 4.5; 3.1; 5.2) or aftershave (Interviews 1.2; 1.5; 2.1; 3.5; 4.2) instead of deodorant; specific clothes (Interviews 1.1; 1.5; 2.1; 2.5; 3.2; 3.4; 3.5; 4.1; 4.2; 4.5; 5.1; 5.2; 5.5) or accessories (for example jewellery, Interviews 1.1; 3.1; 4.1; 4.2; 4.5; 5.2; 5.4; 5.5; or special glasses – Interview 4.2) reserved for special occasions; specific beauty products they would not use on a day to day basis (for example, bronzer or self-tan, 2.1; 5.2); and so forth. Considering that women were reported/ expected to do more to get ready, it is likely that they spend a greater amount of money on this as well – more so than men, if they are expected to ‘do more’ to get ready. As found in the analysis, there is a normative expectation for women to do more or else the romance will be ruined, and this was important to men and women, but particularly to men. Therefore, there is pressure on women to consume expensive products (cf. Illouz, 1997) and

spend a significant amount of time to get ready for romance at the risk of ruining romance and this impact is unequally gendered. Considering failing to do so was linked to potentially ruining the romance of the date, there is considerable pressure on women to get “dolled up” (Eddie, Interview 2.5) for romance.

### (3) Findings: Women should be appreciative, pleasant company

In addition to looking pleasant, there were some indications in the data that while men were expected to be attentive, women were expected to be pleasant company while on a date:

#### EXTRACT 102: INTERVIEW 5.2

1. Nicky: is there any like pressure on you: from any source, e-to look, or act in a certain way
2. on a date?
3. Heidi: (.) probably like (.) I know that I shouldn't be a cow, you know like, [mustn't be in a
4. Nicky: [(laughs)]
5. Heidi: bad mood, [o(h)ka(h)(h)(h)y
6. Nicky: [(laughs)] (.) ja?
7. Heidi: so like (.) be nice and (.)
8. Nicky: ja?=  
9. Heidi: =have a good time (.) [you know, so like (.) try and like (.) like, have fun and
10. Nicky: [mhm mhm
11. Heidi: you know (.) like just be happy I guess [...] not to go on a date and be like (.) like
12. lo::ng-faced, you know?

Here Heidi describes feeling normative pressure to be pleasant company: to “be nice”, “have a good time”, “not... be... long-faced”, not “be a cow” or in a “bad mood”. This may be discursively linked to the normative pressure women face to be receptive to the man’s romantic gestures. It might also potentially link in to the general expectation that positive emotional demeanour (e.g. smiling) is a marker of femininity and the opposite signals dominance (cf. Hess, Adams, & Kleck, 2005).

Having not yet received feedback about the first date for the study, I was at this point unaware that they had had a fight on that date. From what I gathered across the

interviews<sup>46</sup>, Tom had been looking at a television in the restaurant, Heidi got angry, and a fight ensued. Here, Heidi is orienting to that fight, and puts the blame on herself – in a way which surprises me at the time (hence my laughter in line 4 and 6), but which makes sense as the post-event interviews unfolded later. Heidi here positions herself as needing to construct a pleasant and pleasing countenance, or otherwise ruin the romance. In other words, it becomes her fault for the fight, and not his (despite his lack of attentiveness). This would be evidence of emotional housekeeping, as discussed in the literature review above. Heidi is constructing herself as responsible for maintaining the harmony on the date. While this discourse was not widespread in the data set, there were a few other examples of how the romance would be affected by a woman’s failure to do emotional housekeeping:

**EXTRACT 103: INTERVIEW 3.3**

1. Bruce: and um and then Louise was sick for two weeks? [u:::m, and so Thursday’s date (.)
2. Nicky: [mm, and so now the chance to (.)
3. Bruce: and especially (.) I think the medication affected her a bit as well? She was very
4. fuzzy, [she couldn’t really think properly with the medication and she was sick [...]
5. Nicky: [okay
6. Bruce: last night was (.) very different, because last night (.) Louise was feeling better, so we
7. communicate- I think- we should have gone more last [night<sup>47</sup>, hey (.) so last night we
8. Louise: [ja::: hey
9. Bruce: just- we were just able to talk a lot more, [because your brain wasn’t fuzzy [((laughs))
10. Louise: [ja
11. Nicky: [((laughs))
12. shame<sup>48</sup>

In this extract, Bruce minimises the romance of the date that he planned for the study, by arguing that because Louise was ill, the quality of their interactions and the intimacy that the date could bring was compromised.

**EXTRACT 104: INTERVIEW 1.5**

1. Nicky: Um (.) A:nd wha- what was it like planning something like this?

<sup>46</sup> They were vague on the details, and instead focused on constructing these occasional fights while on a date as therapeutic, as discussed in Chapter 5.

<sup>47</sup> I had asked them which date was more romantic. Initially, Louise said that Bruce’s date was more romantic because of their emotional connection to the restaurant he chose. Here Bruce argues that Louise’s date was better because Louise was more mentally present on her date, as she was no longer sick and on strong medication by that point.

<sup>48</sup> Colloquially in South Africa “shame” is an expression of concern and does not index shamefulness at all.



2. Luke: It was fun [...] I don't plan stuff often [...] I enjoyed the (.) I don't know, I enjoyed the
3. date si:de. I enjoyed the- her- just being able to switch off and enjoy it=
4. Nicky: =yeah. Yeah
5. Luke: Yeah she was a lot- she was a lot (.) more (.) like touchy and like comfortable [than
6. Nicky: [okay
7. Luke: she normally is=
8. Nicky: =okay
9. Luke: And I think the reason why is 'cause she had nothing on her mind. So I do like that

As will be discussed in Chapter 7, Sue usually organises their social life (a classic example of emotional housekeeping), including romantic dates. Luke positioned this as stressful for her, as she worries over details, trying to make things perfect. On the date that he planned, Luke constructs Sue as being relaxed, “comfortable”, and as cuddling him (being “touchy”) more than usual. This is positioned as adding to the romance and the intimacy of his date, and as being a boon which makes him planning future dates for them worth the effort.

Additionally, as discussed in Chapter 5, in Extract 50: Interview 5.3 Extract 50 and Extract 51, couple 5 and 3 respectively describe non-conforming behaviour, which is framed in a particular way to present it as romantic. For example, in Extract 50, fighting allows the couple to “recalibrate” (line 18), leading to a more united sense of intimacy.

As argued in Chapter 5, in Extract 51, Louise gives crying as an example of ‘failing to meet or live up to expectations’ on a date (Question 6E of the pre-event interview; see Appendix 7A). This behaviour can be described as undesirable based on the argument made in Chapter 6, which demonstrates that being pleasant company is one of the normative expectations of being romantic. Thus, by crying, Louise disrupts this portrayal of themselves and of their dates as romantic. However (as discussed in Chapter 5) she glosses these instances as being ultimately *very romantic*, as it allows Bruce the opportunity to comfort her. It could be argued that while she has not shown the required appreciation on the date itself (to him for planning the date), by rewriting the event and positioning Bruce as the ‘hero’ of the story that rescues both the romance of the evening and cheers her up, she is ‘doing’ appreciation at this point (another example of emotional housekeeping).

To describe romantic women in this way is heavily idealising: Not only does it frame women as needing to passively wait to receive romance and the boons it brings, but in addition the woman then needs to be appropriately grateful and appreciative. In the following extract, the paradox in this construction is oriented to and poked fun at:

**EXTRACT 105: INTERVIEW 5.3**

1. Nicky: mm (.) U::m (.) the next question is asking who: (.) normally plans or initiates it. I
2. know you've said already that you- you wanting to do more of that, [so like, in the
3. Heidi: [mm
4. Nicky: past would you say it's more (.) you, Tom, [that initiates?
5. Heidi: [mm, I think so
6. Tom: Ja
7. Nicky: okay (.) u::m (.) w- any particular reason for that?
8. Tom: [...] mm= She'll realise before I will that we haven't done it for a while
9. Nicky: [okay
10. Heidi: [ja:: like I'll miss it, but (.)
11. Nicky: ja (.) .hh so would you then like say something about it, [o:r
12. Heidi: [mm I'll say 'oh we haven't
13. gone out for such a long time', or [like, 'we never spend time together'
14. Nicky: [okay
15. Tom: then I'll get defensi::ve=
16. Heidi: =(la[ughs))
17. Nicky: [(la[ughs))
18. Tom: be like 'oo, we've been busy, and [(meh-meh-me::r)' ((puts on deep sounding voice))
19. Nicky: [(lau [ghs))
20. Heidi: [(la ]u[ghs))
21. Tom: [So I'll turn it into a fight
22. ((all laugh))
23. Tom: instead of just saying 'sorry' (.) ( )
24. Nicky: ja
25. Tom: (you know) (.) .hh u::m
26. Nicky: and then you would like, make the restaurant booking, or choose the place or like
27. that kind of thing, like?
28. Heidi: then [Tom will-
29. Tom: [then I'll do it, [ja
30. Nicky: [okay
31. Heidi: [ja, 'FINE! OKAY' [(la[ughs))
32. Nicky: [(la[ughs))
33. Tom: ja
34. Heidi: 'Stop nagging me!'
35. ((all laugh))

In this extract the responsibility for 'remembering' to be romantic falls on Heidi. This is naturalised/ individualised through her statement that she will "miss it" before he does. When women are constructed as passive recipients of romance, who must be

appropriately grateful for what they receive, it means that initiating – or prompting the initiation of romance – is problematic, as seen in this extract. If it is the man's job to romance the woman, it spoils the romance even to have to remind him, let alone the unspoken threat of actually taking the initiative to make bookings. In this extract, we see that Tom constructs his failure to initiate romance as something one should apologise for, but when he becomes defensive instead, it leads to a fight. In other words, orchestrating romance has a moral dimension with reference to the relationship.

A dilemma arises when women are tasked with the emotional housekeeping and nurturing of the relationship (as suggested in the literature), but the man is constructed as having the power/responsibility to practically undertake the romance which keeps intimacy and thus, the marriage, alive. It can be seen in the extract above that being romantic under orders is not authentic; it must be freely given or spontaneously produced by the man in order to legitimately be experienced as 'romantic'. Women are constructed as 'needing' the romance, but being unable to authentically initiate it, thus increasing their passivity.

In this section we have seen that, in the context of the grand date, the complementary position available to women are to be the passive recipients of romance. Women were positioned as needing to be desiring of and invested in romance, so that when it is offered they (should) take it up with pleasure and appreciation. Where it is desired but not offered they must delicately nudge the man towards it without being seen to be dominant or nagging.

In the data there were examples given of ways that women romance men, but many of these were examples of romantic gestures, not grand dates, and will be discussed in the section below. Therefore, in the context of this particular form of romance, the grand date (which, in terms of Chapter 4, was argued to be the most valued in terms of the intensity of the emotional intimacy it brings), women were positioned as being invested in romance, and simultaneously as the passive recipients of romance. This construction handicaps women - it tells them to desire romance, but that they must rely on and wait for men to produce it. Furthermore, taking things into their own hands by actively romancing

men, as will be argued in Chapter 7, is a stigmatising position for a woman to be in. This makes it harder to resist or re-imagine the discursive performative scripts and situational affordances of the grand dates. Romantic gestures, alternatively, were positioned as something that both men and women do (see Chapter 4). Therefore, romantic gestures must be investigated further, as they may offer different kinds of identity positions and more equivalent/ less traditionally gendered identity positions for men and women.

### 6.3.2. The romantic gesture

In contrast to the heavily gendered affordances of the romantic date, romantic gestures were *presented* as gender-neutral. However, as these were investigated more fully, subtly nuanced differences appeared between men and women’s romantic gestures. For example, women’s description of men’s romantic gestures drew from a discourse which positioned their partner as the idealised romantic hero and themselves as the grateful and lucky recipient. This effect was often affirmed through my (the woman interviewer’s) response of “a::w”<sup>49</sup>. This effect can be seen in the following extracts:

#### EXTRACT 106: INTERVIEW 1.1

1. Nicky: ((la[ughs]))
2. Sue: [(laugh)] he actually surprised me at work yesterday with lunch ((la[ughs]))
3. Nicky: [a::w]
4. ((both laugh))
5. Nicky: That’s so sweet

#### EXTRACT 107: INTERVIEW 3.1

1. Louise: he goes into the bathroom and he- he runs a bubble bath and puts candles out
2. [and he’s like ‘why don’t you go have a bath and I’ll start dinner’ and you walk in it’s
3. Nicky: [ Oh (lovely)
4. Louise: like ‘a::w’ [ .hhh u(h)h ] ((small laugh)) .hhh (.) um (.) a couple of times he’s
5. Nicky: [A::w ((small laugh))]
6. Louise: sent flowers to school
7. Nicky: Ja=
8. Louise: =ja .hhh and (.) ja so just doing like little things <unexpectedly>.

<sup>49</sup> “Aw”, as used in this particular context, is defined by the Oxford Dictionary as being “used to express pleasure, delight, or affection, especially in response to something regarded as sweet or endearing” (third definition; accessed from <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/aw> on 8th March 2018).

In Extract 106, Sue had been asked what she does to get ready for romance (Question 5, Appendix 7A), and instead of describing the ways she gets ready to go on a date (as anticipated by the researcher), she describes the different romantic gestures she makes to Luke, such as buying him a “superhero t-shirt” as a surprise gift for him to wear on the date and buying him chocolate. She then volunteers the information from this extract, offered almost as ‘proof’ that he also romances her back by making similar gestures. The interviewer then affirms this description (“aw”, “that’s so sweet”, lines 3 and 5 respectively), which colludes with and plays into this particular presentation of the couple as mutually caring and romantic towards each other. Without this input and the subsequent response from the interviewer, it might otherwise have looked one-sided.

In Extract 107, Louise has been asked what she finds romantic. She lists a number of things that Bruce does for her. By locating her definition of what she finds romantic within examples of what Bruce does for her, Louise is idealising their relationship and her partner – setting him up as this ideal, romantic hero. She describes her response to his gestures as “aw” (line 4), as defined in footnote 36 below. The interviewer mirrors Louise’s response by responding to her “aw” with an overlapping “aw” and some staggered laughter, which mutually positions Bruce’s actions as romantic, idealised, and desirable.

In contrast, the women’s romantic gestures were drawn from and positioned for a different discursive effect. As argued above in Section 6.3.1.2.1, women were positioned as invested in romance, and men in contrast as being less so. Therefore, grand dates were positioned as being planned by men for the women’s benefit, and men were positioned as the ones who should/do plan and execute romance. However, this opened a ‘rhetorical can of worms’, as it then brought into question how the men would know they were loved and appreciated in return. When asked how the women romance their partners in return, women participants were therefore not constructed as planning grand dates for the men; but instead, as showing their affection through the more every-day romantic gestures. For example:

### EXTRACT 108: INTERVIEW 5.3

1. Nicky: .hh so if you were the one always doing it, u::m (.) would you feel like you (.) like
2. Heidi wasn't caring for you enough? or (.)
3. Heidi: Mm
4. Tom: u:m (.) not really, I guess, because (.) .hh Heidi cares for me in so many (.) other
5. ways that aren't neces- like- (.) maybe not necessarily romantic but I know that she
6. cares because she does them

### EXTRACT 109: INTERVIEW 5.5

1. Tom: it makes her feel really special when (.) she knows that I put thought into something
2. Nicky: [...] okay (.) .hh u:::m do you think it's important to-, to feel that back? Like, I mean,
3. does sh-she show that in other ways, o:r, u:::m
4. Tom: (>how do you mean<) <towards me::>?
5. Nicky: Ja::: Ja
6. Tom: u:::m (.) ja, she does, and it is important, like, I do also want to feel like she: (.) like
7. digs me [and wants to spend time with me
8. Nicky: [mm mm
9. Tom: [...] she does quite a lot, actually, so [...] even though she might not be like,
10. necessarily organising (.) dates [...] I know she's- she actually thinks about it a lot
11. Nicky: okay. Ja
12. Tom: so: (.) I do:: (.) feel (.) pretty much all the time that like, she digs me and wants to
13. spend time with me and that's (.) [that's enough ja]
14. Nicky: [sounds great ja ] awesome

These “other ways” provide evidence of Heidi’s “care” and affection for Tom (Extract 108), as a means of demonstrating her love in every day spaces that ‘make up for’ the fact that usually, it is Tom that plans the bigger dates for her. This in turn is justified by the rhetoric that men do not particularly like grand romance (as argued above).

While the women positioned themselves as feeling appreciated as a result of the men participants’ romantic gestures, I do not respond with the same degree of ‘aw’ to the men’s narratives; and I would argue that this is indicative of there being a different discourse at play here – that rather than trying to make a point about their ‘amazing’ relationship (as seen with the women participants), here, instead, is the tactic of saving face. Therefore, one could say that this discourse was used to counter the gendered nature of grand dates, as discussed above: that is, that men were positioned as active on grand dates, but that this should not be read as problematic/patriarchal as she “cares for me... in other ways” (Extract 108). In other words, women’s romantic gestures

made it ‘unnecessary’ for them to plan and initiate grander romance, because they made their men feel special “enough” (Extract 109), loved and appreciated in *other*, more ‘every day’ ways.

As argued in Chapter 4, romantic gestures were the most flexibly defined and diverse form of romance described by the participants. However, typically, the examples given of the women participants’ romantic gestures tended to take a particular form. Tom gives the following examples of things that Heidi does for him: planning a coffee or lunch date; suggesting they go to see an exhibition or show he is interested in; or making him lunch. When I more closely considered the kinds of romantic gestures discussed in Chapter 4 and classified them according to gender, I saw a pattern emerging:

**TABLE 4: INVESTIGATION OF GENDER ACROSS ROMANTIC GESTURES**

	Women’s romantic gestures	Men’s romantic gestures
Gender-neutral	Buying an inexpensive but meaningful present (superhero t-shirt: Sue, Couple 1; whistle: Louise, Couple 3)	Buying an inexpensive but meaningful present (novelty necklace: Eddie, Couple 2; complementary tickets to a show: Tom, Couple 5)
	surprising partners with flowers (Louise, Couple 3)	surprising partners with flowers (Eddie, Couple 2; Bruce, Couple 3)
	Surprising partner at work to take them out for coffee or for lunch (Heidi, Couple 5)	Surprising partner at work to take them out for coffee or for lunch (Luke, Couple 1)
Gender-specific	Doing something with their partner that their partner enjoys more than them (going to the gym, Louise, Couple 3; going to the cricket, Heidi, Couple 5)	Running a candle lit bath (Bruce, Couple 3)
	Cooking a surprise meal for their partners: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• packed lunch (Robyn, Couple 2)</li> <li>• breakfast (Heidi, Couple 5)</li> <li>• dinner (Louise, Couple 3; Anika, Couple 4; Heidi, Couple 5)</li> </ul>	Assisting with the meal preparation (Bruce, Couple 3); washing the dishes (Tom, Couple 5) as a surprise; or making her coffee (Tom, Couple 5)
	Making a handmade gift (Sue, Couple 1; Louise, Couple 3; Anika, Couple 4)	Purchasing an expensive gift (for example boots or perfume, Johan, couple 4)
	Removing his shoes for him (Robyn, Couple 2)	
	Tidying up (Robyn, Couple 2)	

Gender-neutral activities describe activities reported for both men and women participants, while gender-specific activities on the other hand, were those reported for men *or* women.

When we look more closely at the gender-specific romantic gestures, we can see that they are rooted in old-fashioned, patriarchal values. For example, the men's activities are oriented to pampering the woman (running her a bubble bath or buying her an expensive gift) or to providing 'assistance' with household chores. The fact that this is constructed as 'assistance' rather than as 'doing their share', positions these activities as more of the woman's responsibility; which enables the man's gesture to be positioned as romantic rather than routine.

The women's gestures, on the other hand, are more domestically-oriented and are located within the private sphere of the home. However, in line with the construction of romance as something separate to and going beyond the ordinariness of everyday life (see Chapter 5), these situated affordances are positioned as more extreme and old-fashioned than those that would be associated with the day-to-day management of a household. These activities are focused on creating a 'homely' atmosphere for the man. She cooks and cleans for him, and these acts are constructed as romantic gestures. This is the key difference between romance and routine labour – it needs to be target-focused. They are performed not *just* to keep the home running. Instead, they involve actions performed *for him*.

In a post-feminist society, where the sharing of housework is often contentious (Morrison, 2010, Natalier, 2004; Thagaard, 1997), these actions are positioned as romantic because it harkens back to a time when 'the woman's place *was* in the home'. Therefore, performing these actions involves self-sacrifice, a feature commonly positioned as romantic by the participants. We find support for this argument in Morrison (2010), who examined heteronormative ways for women to romance men. Morrison (2010, p. 194) argued that "domestic labour is deemed to be a practical expression of love and is intimately tied to material homemaking routines and activities [...] through which



heterosexual love and home are produced and consolidated". Couple 2, 3 and 5 all give examples of this kind of domestic care and the deployment of this discourse is evident in the following extract, where Robyn is answering the question about defining a romantic women (Question 6C, Appendix 7D):

EXTRACT 110: INTERVIEW 2.4

1. Robyn: I don't know (.) a woman who like cooks o:r (.)
2. Nicky: Okay [(m-)]
3. Robyn: [like] takes his shoe::s o:ff ma::yb[e:: you know I'm] tryna just think on my feet
4. Nicky: [(small laugh)]
5. Robyn: here [ um ] ja (.) he likes it when I take his shoes off ((lau[ghs]) .hhh ja and cook
6. Nicky: [(ja )] ((laughs))
7. Robyn: [...] (.) Ja just (.) doing like (.) dom- .hhh h- not domestic stuff but like homey kind of
8. stuff=
9. Nicky: =Okay=
10. Robyn: =Eddie likes it whe- if I've like tidied up a bit when he gets home 'cause I
11. get home earlier [and ] .hhh
12. Nicky: [Alright] ja=
13. Robyn: =and cook or whatever [things] like that ja
14. Nicky: [Okay.]

Robyn differentiates between “domestic stuff” and “homey stuff” – that is, “domestic stuff” is aligned with the banality of everyday living (see Chapter 5); whereas gestures that are “homey” are here aligned with romance. “Homey” can be understood as actions that increase the sense of being ‘home’ – of increasing one’s sense of the warmth and comfort of a place. The examples she gives of these gestures are cooking, taking his shoes off, and tidying up the house before he gets home. These acts all orient to making the home space a pleasant space to be in. However, these specific examples of “homey” acts are reminiscent of the trope of the 1950’s housewife, as seen in *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet* (as discussed in Coontz, 2005) and the *Good Wife’s Guide*<sup>50</sup> (Housekeeping Monthly, 1955). Robyn’s examples do, in fact, mirror the advice given in the *Good Wife’s Guide* (cleaning, cooking him a meal, removing his shoes). The performance of these acts is positioned as creating a “homey” and welcoming atmosphere for the husband; but are rooted in patriarchal ideas about men and women’s relative ‘place’ and ‘value’, both within

---

<sup>50</sup> While the authenticity of this document is contentious, it is still a symbolic representation of the 1950’s housewife, and thus forms part of a Westernized discursive understanding of what it means to be a ‘wife’

the private spaces of the home and within broader society; and are therefore problematic in relation to patriarchy.

Romantic gestures from women, then, convey to the men that they are appreciated, however (1) because this was framed as one of the few limited ways that women can legitimately romance men (or the only way that they *need* to); and (2) because of the form that these gestures take (as deeply gendered despite being presented as gender neutral); it can be argued that romantic gestures were not the neutral panacea that participants presented them to be. These were also entrenched with patriarchal values and were enacted within affordances that were more gendered than initially appeared.

#### 6.4. Summary

This chapter has demonstrated that in the context of the grand date, there were readily-articulated discursive performative scripts for the romantic man; but participants seemed to struggle to define romantic femininity in comparison. In the texts, the information was vague and implied. However, drawing from Schippers (2007), it has been possible to investigate what identity position would be needed to support the clearly articulated features of romantic masculinity. With that as a guide, features of romantic femininity emerged more readily, as part of a complementary, paired hierarchy of gender identities. In other words, romantic masculinity was located inductively and romantic femininity more deductively, using romantic masculinity as a guideline<sup>51</sup>.

Thus, I was able to address the third research question and found that the context of the grand romantic date offers the following affordances within a heterosexual relationship context: that women should be more invested in romance than men; that men should actively orchestrate romance, while women are expected to be more passive; and that men should engage in chivalrous behaviour while a woman should dress up and be appropriately pleasant, receptive and appreciative of the man's gestures. Therefore, these complementary pairs of 'traits' work together to produce a hierarchical relationship

---

<sup>51</sup> While still drawing from the recommendations of Silverman, 2007; to look for disconfirming cases such as those that form the basis of the next chapter.

between heterosexual men and women that directs and limits how romance can be successfully reproduced.

Romantic femininity was positioned in a more active way in terms of the romantic gestures, but not grand dates. However, the form which a lot of their romantic gestures took, were framed using the discourse of 'the good wife', as illustrated by Extract 110 and Table 4 above.

I argued that these instances were constructed in order to justify why women do not need to orchestrate grand dates: because they were positioned as caring for the men in other ways. That is, it was a justification to show that men also receive love, and the relationship is not one-sided in terms of who loves and appreciates whom.

Focusing on context has been invaluable, as we are able to see that romance is flexibly constituted across contexts, with each form offering different gendered affordances. These different contexts are not equal however: the grand date is more highly valued than other contexts for its constructed provision of emotional intimacy, which was positioned as being necessary for relationship maintenance for long-term couples (Chapter 5). However, the affordances available to successfully do-romance on a grand date seems to require men to take an active role and women a passive role in orchestrating and producing the grand date. It may be possible that other couples have imagined ways of doing romance less patriarchally, but the available affordances would make non-conformity more difficult and require more creativity and effort (see Chapter 7).

If we exclude the justificatory motivation from participants' argument, and consider it purely in terms of the construction of this discourse, this argument takes on a more nuanced significance: Women were positioned as caring for men in daily life, with their 'romance' performed through the discourse of the 'good wife'. This empirical evidence complements the literature on emotional housekeeping which suggests that women carry the burden of protecting and nurturing men and their feelings. And men, in turn, orchestrate grand romance – on occasion. This was constructed as something women desire and men do not, making being-romantic an act of sacrifice (and therefore more romantic):

men do all the planning and are chivalrous, while the woman sits appreciatively, looking pretty.

One can therefore argue that romance can be likened to a Saturnalian festival (see Charles, 1997; Falassi, 1987; Lévi-Strauss, 1993), as it *appears* to turn the gender hierarchy on its head in two ways: (1) by men ‘serving’ women through the one-sided orchestration of romance (constructed as something they have less interest in than their partner, but do for her benefit); and (2) through the feeling of emotional intimacy that comes at the end of a date (traditionally seen as valued more by women, although presented in this study as equally valued by men), which creates a sense of idealised equality (Chapter 5). However, in light of the restrictiveness of these situational affordances and the limits placed on ways women can engage in romance (which equated to housework and emotional housekeeping glossed as romantic care) suggests that romance is not as transformative and revolutionary as Giddens proposed. Instead, it can be argued to be a way of maintaining the status quo through its *appearance* of disruption, but actual re-imposition of particularly patriarchal gender identities.

I suggested in this Chapter that romantic femininity was hard to articulate for the participants. Perhaps, part of the function of that is to collectively repress (cf. Billig, 1999) the more tangible (and thus problematic) aspects of these patriarchal gender performances. On its own, an active, agentic romantic man does not seem that problematic – in fact, it is valued and desired in contemporary society (as seen in the boasts of the women above and my ‘aw’ response). But when the complementary gender position is articulated - and articulated together with the active male counterpart (cf. Shippers, 2007) – we can begin to see why this is problematic: because these identities together act as reservoirs of desirable patriarchal values, and in order to access the meaning and rewards of these we need to voluntarily perform inequality. Therefore we can understand how romance – a seemingly innocuous practice – can actually serve as a “sweet persuasion” (Jackman, 1994, p. 2) to engage with and perform patriarchal gender identities in this particular context.

This illustrates the importance of studying gender identities in situ, as looking at what romance represents or has the potential to create is very different to looking at how romance is actually performed in everyday life and the kinds of outcomes it has (see Allen, 2007). These findings suggest another way that romance could be seen to have a Saturnalian effect: by allowing us – including couples who would otherwise consider themselves to be equal and non-patriarchal – to guiltlessly ‘refresh’ our relationships with the highly patriarchal gender performances we need to produce to gain access to the affective dividends of romance, but without feeling that these festival moments define our relationships more generally (because it is constructed as a ‘holiday’ from everyday life).

The romantic context offers very well-defined affordances, which are tangible, and therefore hard to resist or re-imagine. A key issue for feminist scholars is that these affordances are rooted in archaic, chivalric, patriarchal values. Whether being-romantic can *actually* produce moments of equality or not is beyond the reach of the current data. However, I have demonstrated that romance (1) is idealised and positioned as vital to sustaining the health of a marriage; (2) this idealised version of romance has a clear definition of the discursive performative scripts afforded to participants in order to do it ‘right’; (3) the feeling of intimacy we get from doing romance ‘right’ outweighs any problematic aspects of what participants need to do in order to get that feeling; and (4) the compartmentalization of romance as “out of the ordinary” allows participants to invest in patriarchal identities without experiencing their relationship (in general) as patriarchal.

Additionally, one can argue that because the romantic context has been constructed as necessary for ongoing relationship maintenance and, secondly, is *part* of the “substratum” of everyday life and the way men and women relate to each other (see Redman, 2001; Vincent & Chiwandire, 2013, p. 13), romance does *not* form a set of entirely isolated practices. Instead, the Yin of the niceness of romance sanitizes the Yang of everyday life in a patriarchal heterosexual relationship – that is, it is not a distinct problematic context, but part of the broader structural order that protects patriarchy.

We could then say that this idealised form of romance affords particular gendered identities which encapsulate stereotypical and patriarchal chivalric notions; but

that the 'benefit' of romance (emotional intimacy, which was equated to relationship-maintenance; Chapter 5) acts as a panacea, making us more accepting of gender inequalities in the performance of romance as well as in our day-to-day lives (as suggested through the evidence of emotional housekeeping, seen in the data above).

Despite the fact that contexts vary in the affordances, activities and experiences they give us access to, somehow the experiences and outcomes of one context work to offset the sacrifices made or power imbalances in other contexts. In this way, one can argue that romance forms a romantic dividend that compensates for and maintains the inequities of daily life (Quayle et al., 2017). As Tukachinsky (2008, p. 188) has argued, heterosexual romance allows men to "pay a little to win big". As a context for identity production, it is embedded with a broader social context of norms and values that exert a subtle pressure to engage in these identities and activities. The way that romance has been constructed creates an idealised space that is an escape from and a palliative for "everyday drudgery" (Nelson, 2004, p. 451), which in a patriarchal society, women remain mostly responsible for. Therefore, we make-believe that romance is equality and something we engage in with no external demands, but it is situated within broader relationships between the genders, where women are seen as conquests and commodities to be fought over with rival males (Wo, 2011). Because of the construction of romance as something that is vital to maintaining the health of one's relationship (Chapter 5), there is pressure to negotiate, coordinate and perform these idealised gender identities in order to feel you have been 'truly' romantic. Therefore, while women and men are not coerced into playing these roles in order to experience a grand date fully, I would argue that these are not *completely* voluntary either.

To sum up: (1) Romance serves as a point of extremely positive intergroup contact between men and women (see Dixon et al., 2010; Durrheim et al., 2014; Jackman, 1994; Jacobs et al., 2013; Jost, 2017; Jost et al., 2017), because it is constructed as creating and maintaining the vital emotional intimacy necessary to do relationship maintenance; (2) but in order to be-romantic in the performative sense, we need to perform problematic romantic gender identities. Thus, when men do these grand gestures, it has a Saturnalia

effect – it is a way of making up or paying the dividend for this which maintains the overall sense of it all being worth it. This, in conjunction with the complementary role women need to take when being-romantic, means that doing romance is not the panacea that Giddens conceptualises. In the next chapter, I will examine instances of resistance to the affordances of being-romantic, to explore how participants discussed alternative ways of building intimacy with each other.

## Chapter 7: Resisting the affordances of romance

*“We cannot fight for love, as men may do.  
We should be wooed and were not made to woo”*

(Helena, Shakespeare’s  
*Midsummer Night’s Dream*,  
Act 2, Scene 1, lines 248-249)

### 7.1. Introduction

In the quote above, Helena expresses her frustration with being forced to pursue (both metaphorically, and literally) her love interest, Demetrius. He had paid court to her previously, and then had transferred his attentions to Helena’s friend, Hermia. Helena rejects this and pursues him, berating him for his treatment of her. In her pursuit, therefore, Helena ostensibly resists the notions of accepted (passive) romantic femininity. However, in this extract, Helena orients to this essentialized construction, positioning her pursuit of Demetrius as ‘unseemly’ or ‘inappropriate’ and herself as an object of pity for being ‘made’ to pursue him. Therefore, while she resists the constraints of traditional femininity, she still endorses the overall system: that women “should be wooed and were not made to woo”.

As was seen in the previous chapter (Chapter 6), the idealised gender positions constructed as being desirable and necessary to the successful doing-of- (heterosexual) romance are the same as those constructed in this play, published in 1600: that men should be active, attentive and chivalrous in their pursuit of women; while women should be passive and receptive to and appreciative of men’s gestures. It is sobering to think that despite the progress and advances in gender equality achieved since this play was published, idea(l)s about how men and women should behave in romantic pursuit have not changed. Or have they? The following chapter will consider instances of and discourses about resistance in this particular context. This will assist in addressing the fourth research



question, namely “Were these affordances resisted and what alternatives to these affordances exist?”

To do this, I will isolate and discuss deviant (cf. Silverman, 2005) expressions of masculinity and femininity, using Schippers’ (2007) framework to consider which complementary identities are required to make these alternatives ‘work’ within these contexts of (ostensible) resistance. In particular, I will discuss how participants negotiated the ‘dis-preferred’ identities of active romantic femininity and receptive romantic masculinity.

As argued in the literature review (Chapter 1, Section 1.1.3.4), some authors (Allen, 2007; Illouz, 1997; Giddens, 1992) have suggested romance may operate as a (potential) site of resistance to the less sensitive arenas of hegemonic masculinity; in particular, the male sex drive discourse and the have/hold discourse which positions men as unemotional/ unsentimental and as primarily focused on achieving sexual intercourse with as many partners as possible. In contrast, romantic masculinity has been argued by some authors to be a panacea to these versions of hegemonic masculinity.

However, as we have seen in the previous chapter (Chapter 6), romantic gender identities are not as neutral as they appear. I argued that the romantic context (of the grand date in particular) affords idealised, gendered identities and roles that are (re)enacted in order to feel like you’ve ‘done romance *right*’. This context affords a chivalric, active romantic masculinity, and a passive femininity with a strong emphasis on being receptive to the man’s advances and on being well-groomed and appreciative. These identity positions were constructed as offering optimal access to the dividends of romance (that is, emotional and physical intimacy, as described in Chapter 5). While these were argued to be the ideal by all participants, some participants in particular presented themselves as trying to resist these idealised affordances, using different tactics to find alternative ways of ‘being romantic’ together.

Some of the authors that will be discussed below have investigated contexts of romance, gender and resistance; but generally these examined the use of romance to resist *something else*. For example, Allen (2007) and Redman (2001) looked at instances

where romance is used to resist hegemonic masculinity, but in ways that do not disrupt or re-imagine either romance or gender hegemony. Thus, while some authors (Allen, 2007; Redman, 2001; Vincent & Chiwandire, 2013; Vincent & McGowan, 2006; Wetherell, 1995) have identified romance as being problematic, I could not find any sources that explicitly examined resistance to *romantic gender identities* (and certainly not in the way that these are co-produced by men and women, as recommended by Schippers, 2007). Thus, an analysis of these resistances and their implications for co-constructed gender identities would address this gap by investigating to what extent participants were able to re-imagine romance in less patriarchal ways.

## 7.2. Literature Review: Theorising resistance

As stated above, there seems to be limited literature that focuses specifically on resistance to romantic gendered identities. However, some literature could be found on resistance to romance and will be discussed in this chapter; but first, some literature on how to theorise resistance will be explored.

### 7.2.1. Individual versus collective resistance: Social psychology and the contact hypothesis

As argued in the Introduction (Chapter 1, Section 1.1.3.2.), heterosexual romance is a context where two different groups who are privileged differently by a broader, existing system of inequality meet; and this meeting point is constructed as (1) extremely positive and (2) as desired mostly by the subordinate group. This positions romance as a desirable and beneficial practice. To understand this context of being-romantic, as well as any resistance to this, it is helpful to turn to theories about social change and intergroup contact.

In the critical social psychology literature, two different theories of social change have been proposed, which can be applied to assist us in understanding resistance in romance. The first of these approaches – the prejudice reduction model – sees intergroup conflict as being due to negative intergroup stereotypes and prejudice (Dixon, Durrheim,

Kerr, & Thomaes, 2013; Durrheim et al., 2014). Therefore, proponents focus on 'curing' prejudiced individuals of their prejudice, and so improving the relationship between groups overall.

This is the approach typified by the contact hypothesis (see for example, Allport 1954; Dovidio, Gaertner & Kawamaki, 2003; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; among others), a widely accepted means of reducing intergroup conflict (Durrheim et al., 2014). In brief, the contact hypothesis proposes that, under certain (ideal) conditions, positive intergroup contact will result in the reduction of prejudice in individual group members and, therefore, decrease intergroup conflict (Durrheim et al., 2014). A large body of research provides empirical support for this hypothesis, as demonstrated in Pettigrew and Tropp's meta-analysis (2006).

The argument made by Giddens (1992) and Illouz (1997) essentially likens romance to this conceptualisation of positive intergroup contact. There, heterosexual romance was conceived of as a positive tool for creating harmony and intimacy between couples and it was argued that this should improve relationships between men and women more generally. This construction was also evident in the discourses about being-romantic and intimacy, as discussed in Chapter 5. However, this approach has been problematised (see for example Allen, 2007 and Redman, 2001), as it has been suggested that when we consider the way these discourses are *actually* deployed in context limits the tangible ways these discourses may lead to equality. For example, it was shown in Chapter 6 that to achieve the sense of emotional intimacy positioned as stemming from being-romantic, entails the production of highly idealised and gendered complementary identities. Eldén's work (2011, 2012) also demonstrates how problematic this idealised conception of modern romantic relationships is; in terms of the way that gender is obfuscated, especially in Giddens' (1992) conception of the 'pure relationship'.

As discussed in Chapter 6, Eldén (2011, 2012) argued that stereotypes about gender are submerged within this neutral-appearing construct. To recap briefly, Eldén examined Swedish talk shows providing therapy for couples and argued that these "gender-neutral tools" that appear so innocuously innocent "turn out simultaneously to obscure and

reproduce gender” (Eldén, 2011, p. 152). In this way, women participants on the show were subtly resigned to their contexts and given the tools to cope with it, without addressing the underlying, structural gender power imbalances in the relationship.

Part of the success of these therapeutic methods were to position these issues as being the issues of individuals. This individualisation of disturbances in the ways men and women relate to each other in heterosexual romantic relationships undercuts any collective recognition and resistance to any broader underlying issues (Eldén, 2011, 2012; Shefer, 2004). Therefore, Eldén (2011) suggested that Giddens’s argument for the emancipatory potential of the ‘good couple’ is not being realized in the way these identities are being performed, because of the indirect way that it affirms gender stereotypes (cf. Nelson, 2004; Jamieson, 2002; and Shumway, 2003, for a similar argument).

Therefore, contact between groups privileged differently by the existing system does not always have a positive field-levelling outcome. The contact hypothesis has thus been critiqued as obfuscating the process by which positive contact may have an effect that is converse to what is expected/desired (i.e. bolstering rather than undermining hierarchical relations between groups). This will be discussed further below (see Section 7.2.3).

Where the first approach oriented towards getting the individuals from the privileged group to like the subordinated group more and therefore discriminate less against them; the second approach – the collective action model – focused more on engendering collective awareness of (and thus resistance to) an existing system of inequality, typically in the group that is being oppressed by this system (Dixon, et al., 2013; Wright & Lubensky, 2009). One may resist on an individual level or on a collective level, and it seems sensible to suppose that the more support individual resistance receives at the collective level, the more likely it may be to lead to real systemic change.

Wright (2009, p. 860) defines collective action as action taken by an individual in their capacity as a representative member of a particular group, where this action is meant to improve “the conditions of the group as a whole”. In this formulation, collective resistance does not require multiple group members to be present before

collective resistance can be said to exist – rather it depends on how an individual is categorising their identity along the individual-group continuum (Baron et al., 2012; Haslam & Reicher, 2012). Similarly, the intention behind the behaviour is central, as “action produced by personal self-interest would not qualify as collective action” (Wright, 2009, p. 862). In that case, this would be understood as individually-motivated resistance. As mentioned above in the introduction to Chapter 7, some evidence of resistance was found in the data set and this will be investigated in the data analysis. Thus, part of the ‘work’ of this chapter will be to unpack this resistance in terms of these definitions of collective and individual resistance, to see if this resistance occurred *in participants’ capacity as men or women* (collective resistance) or whether this occurred at an individual level.

I will next explore further literature specific to resistance and romance, and then return to these theories of intergroup contact to critique and apply them to the context of being-romantic.

## 7.2.2. How to theorise resistance in romance

Wilding (2003) offers a useful framework for categorising and interpreting literature on resistance, romance and gender. Wilding looked at media representations of love and marriage and how these meanings are taken up or contested by participants. Wilding describes two different approaches that have been taken with regard to understanding the way that cultural artefacts (like ‘the media’ and ‘romance’) influence, shape and direct individual behaviour. These two positions will be outlined below and linked to other literature that takes similar view points. The limitations of these two positions will also be discussed and Wilding’s recommendations will then be considered, in light of the theoretical approach of this current study. Finally, a framework for interpreting the data of this study will be outlined.

### 7.2.2.1. First approach: The cultural artefact as object of study

The first approach described by Wilding (2003) has typically focussed on the study of the cultural artefact itself. For example, Wilding found a similarity between

participants' descriptions of falling in love and getting married and representations of love and marriage in cinema. Wilding argues that if one were to adopt this first approach and focus solely on studying the cultural artefact in itself, one might assume that cultural representations of the wedding, as seen in cinematic representations, might be 'duping' audiences into accepting and desiring this form of wedding.

This approach could offer valuable insights into the potentially problematic nature of the cultural artefact 'romance', by suggesting why we *should* be motivated to resist it. However, Wilding (2003, p. 382) identifies two potential limitations in this kind of approach: firstly, that they imply the presence of a "singular, all-powerful 'culture industry'" which colludes to manipulate an audience for some greater nefarious purpose; and secondly, they assume that there is a 'mass public' who are inert, unreflexive consumers of mass culture – which, Wilding argues, ignores "the full complexity of contemporary social and cultural life" (ibid.). Any academic tendencies to treat the public as cultural 'dupes' have been critiqued more generally (see for example, Durrheim, 2012; Durrheim et al., 2014; Gavey, 2005; Hayfield & Clarke, 2012; Heise, 2015; Jackman, 1994; Jackson, 1995; Jarvis, 1999; Macgilchrist & van Hout, 2011; Phoenix, 2004; Theilade, 2011), and this is the position of the present study as well.

#### 7.2.2.2. Second approach: People's *interaction* with a cultural artefact as the object of study

The second approach identified by Wilding (2003) focuses on analysing the actual "moment of consumption" (p. 382), and looks at how media (and other cultural artefacts) are interpreted, reformulated and resisted. The benefit of this approach, she argued, is that it shifts the focus to individual agency, looking at how individuals' different contexts and subject positions result in "mass culture" being seen as a "contested terrain" [...] a site where producers and receivers of cultural commodities engage [...] in a multifaceted struggle over meaning" (Traube, 1992, p. 4 as cited in Wilding, 2003, p. 374). This, therefore, enables us to better account for the complexities of meaning-making in everyday life as it recognises the agency of both the producers and consumers as well as the multiplicity of meanings that could be generated.

One example of this kind of approach can be found in Singh and Myende (2017), who studied South African women university students. Most participants identified 'love' as being a problematic construct, and as contributing to ongoing gender-based violence in romantic relationships in their community. Some participants resisted traditional conceptions of what love 'should' look like and redefined love in ways that involved less self-sacrifice.

Another example is Tukachinsky's (2008) study, where clips from the American television series *Sex and the City* were used to spark discussion in Israeli women focus groups about the way romance was presented in the show compared to how it occurred in their everyday lives. Some of Tukachinsky's participants positioned themselves as particularly resistant to romance and the gendered identities needed to produce it. They described romance as a "social regulation mechanism" which gave women a "momentary advantage" for which they are required to "compensate on a daily basis"; or, as one participant stated, "'(r)omance serves men because they pay a little in order to win big'" (Tukachinsky, 2008, p. 188). These participants linked romance to old-fashioned chivalry, and argued that it was incompatible with gender equality. Thus, by refusing buy-in to romance and the ideological gendered identity positions it creates, these participants described feeling better able to negotiate a fairer division of labour in the home with their romantic partners – although in ways that were admittedly limited ("If the test is who does the laundry", Tukachinsky, 2008, p. 188).

These are some of the ways that participants' active (and at times, resistant) interaction with cultural depictions of love and romance have been studied. However, approaches such as these are also subject to critique for not fully placing this resistance in context. For example, Wilding argued that at times, authors may presume active resistance where this is not intended as such by participants. Another issue identified has been the labelling of actions as 'resistant', when these may be mere "*temporary avoidance* that nevertheless fails to challenge the structures of inequality" within their relationships (Wilding, 2003, p. 374, emphasis added).

One might suggest that Tukachinsky's findings as described above fail to explore this. Two participants are described as being very resistant, however using as a 'litmus test' the division of housework shows that their resistance to romance does not carry automatically over into negotiations in other spheres of their relationships, such as over the division of labour; and no explanations are offered as to why this may be the case. Thus, the drawback to this second approach may be a tendency to *decontextualize* acts of resistance, which means the broader context in which they take place and which acts on and shapes the way that resistance occurs is not accounted for in these explanations. Thus, these explanations can obscure the means by which "resistance is always subject to a larger context in which continued oppression is secured, sometimes through the very acts of resistance" (Wilding, 2003, p. 382).

This critique is echoed in Storey and McDonald (2013) and Quayle et al. (2017). As described in Chapter 4, Storey and Macdonald (2013) argued that social resources such as the media do provide us with discursive performative scripts to recognise and perform romance which we take on, adapt and perform agentically in our lives; however, we are constrained by these narratives as well – for them to have meaning and to be recognised and identified by others as such, they need to stay within the discursive bounds of these practices. Similarly, Quayle et al. (2017) argued that resistance, if it occurs, might be contextually bounded; and that minor gains in one context might justify larger losses in another. Therefore, one's agency to resist and re-imagine ways of performing romance may be present, but limited – if we stray too far, will these performances still be recognised (and experienced by ourselves) as such? And how might this resistance impact on the broader narrative of our relationships?

Therefore, neither of these approaches are entirely satisfactory, and thus there stands the following conundrum: "How do we explain the force of culture (as both symbols and meanings) while acknowledging that culture (in whatever concrete form it takes) does not *make* anyone do anything?" (Strauss & Quinn, 1997, p. 20; as cited in Wilding, 2003, p. 383). Wilding (2003, p. 375) proposed that rather than debating whether individuals shape the discourses drawn from in the media or whether media shapes the way



individuals enact romance, we should instead conceive of both individuals and of discourse as being embedded within a wider “cultural logic” which simultaneously affords and limits the expression of romance. Social identity theorists have coined the term “interactionism” to describe the way that social structures such as discourses, norms, stereotypes, discursive scripts and so forth provide a platform for action which individuals engage with agentically and creatively, impacting on and shaping these social structures in turn (Haslam & Reicher, 2007; Haslam & Reicher, 2012; Haslam, Reicher & Reynolds, 2012; Turner & Oakes, 1986).

Wilding (2003) adopted this approach and drew from theories on cultural schemas to explain how cultural signs and signifiers such as those found in romance, romantic love and weddings, can inform and guide individuals’ representations of these, without dictating exactly what form they will follow. To Wilding, there are multiple sources of these signs, forming a cultural schema which is learnt, and through repetition, becomes reproduced and accepted as the norm.

### 7.2.3. My theoretical approach to resistance in romance

At this point, I diverge from Wilding (2003). According to the theoretical stance of this study, rather than viewing romance and gendered identities as part of a cultural schema that is taught to and reproduced by us, I argue instead that romance affords particular identity resources facilitating the production of certain identities and inhibiting others in the production of romance. As I argued in Chapter 6, an active, attentive, chivalrous masculinity and passive, appreciative femininity were jointly produced and positioned as the idealised and best means of producing a grand romantic date and the rewards that it produces (see Chapter 5). However, individuals and couples are able to *choose* how they take these up: whether this be wholesale reproduction; re-imagining them in part; or whether to resist them. It has been argued that all individuals are motivated to make the choices that – given our individual context and resources – might give us access to the best and most meaningful outcomes (Jackman, 1994).

However, Wilding’s emphasis on the importance of the broader structural context in which both individuals and discourses are embedded is important. It is likely that

only when this perspective is adopted that the ways in which individual acts of resistance contribute to (or detract from) collective resistance will be better understood in terms of its possible contributions to broader structural reform.

As I have stated already, I propose that heterosexual romance is a form of contact between men and women constructed as highly positive. As briefly discussed in the Introduction (Chapter 1, Section 1.1.3.2.), contact hypothesis theory has been critiqued for its inability to explain why sometimes positive contact can actually *maintain* the relationship of inequality between groups, rather than improve equality as originally proposed (Dixon, Durrheim & Tredoux, 2007; Durrheim, et al., 2014; Jacobs et al., 2013; Jackman, 1994; Loveman, 1998; Roscigno & Hodson, 2004; Saguy, Tausch, Dovidio, & Pratto, 2009). For example, Jackman (1994, p. 2) argues that “sweet persuasion” is (1) far more effective at maintaining hierarchical relationships; and (2) a far more ubiquitous feature of intergroup relations than conflict. Hence, instead of seeking to understand intergroup conflict, Jackman argues we should seek to understand the “subtle and insidious” ways that super-ordinate groups “emotionally disarm” subordinate groups in ways which preclude the possibility of collective resistance (Jackman, 1994, p. 2). Jackman argues that we should thus look to the *intimacy* between men and women to understand how women may be made less likely to resist collectively as intimacy “swathe(s) the unequal exchange... in the warmth of personal affection”, therefore occluding any potential, explicit considerations of power (Jackman, 1994, p. 81-82). It is only by articulating these interactions within the broader social contexts they occur that this can be explored and unpacked.

In application to romance and gender, Redman (2001); Vincent and Chiwandire (2013); Allen (2003; 2007) and Schepers and Zway (2012) also considered the role of the wider context in which the expression of resistance in relation to gender and romance functions. As discussed in Chapter 1 and Chapter 6, Redman (2001) looked at how broader discourses of romantic love impacted on teenaged boys’ productions of masculinity. Redman concluded that discourses of romance and masculinity acted as resources to resist a more hegemonic discourse of masculinity, described as ‘the lad’. This

discourse of 'the lad' was constructed similarly to the predatory male discourse discussed in Chapter 5. However, this broader context of heteronormative sexism still acted on his participants and shaped their responses, at times drawing from more sexist/heteronormative discourses even while participants were resisting them. Thus, Redman states that:

The fact that the boys used romance to locate themselves in opposition to the figure of the lad does not, however, indicate that it placed them beyond the boundaries of heterosexual power relations. On the contrary, romance was deeply implicated in the reproduction of these (Redman, 2001, p. 196).

Similarly, Vincent and Chiwandire (2013, p. 13) argued that romance as a discourse and a practice forms the "legitimising substratum" that enables patriarchy to function. They argued that the patriarchal practices which are more overtly harmful or hostile to women actually form one end of a continuum of practices. On the other end of this continuum, they argued, were warmer expressions of patriarchy, such as the chivalry described in Chapter 6. These benevolent expressions were positioned as "revision(s)" and "interruption(s)" – in other words, *resistance* – to the construction of a more hegemonic/harmful masculinity in their study; but the authors argue that these performances "confirm rather than challenge" the broader precepts of this harmful masculinity, despite looking different in appearance (Vincent & Chiwandire, 2013, p. 19).

Allen (2003; 2007) has also argued for the importance of incorporating context into the analysis of discourse, gender and romance. Allen (2003) found examples of both men and women participants' resistance to gendered sexual identities. However, there was a disjoint in the data between these discourses of resistance, and evidence of any tangible change in their contexts achieved by these discourses. Allen (2003, p. 224) therefore argues that there is a disjuncture between positioning oneself as resistant and "actually having access to material power" in a given context. By taking into account the broader context, Allen (2003) is able to locate discourses of resistance in the wider contexts in which individuals and discourses are embedded, to show that these individual acts of resistance are limited in the ways they can challenge broader power structures.

In Allen (2007), the importance of context was demonstrated in a different way: Allen examined the nuances of how discourse is deployed and the implications thereof. Allen (2007) found that her participants carefully managed romantic masculinity with more hegemonic concerns. This allowed them to present themselves as invested in and desiring romance – but not overly so. While not explicitly referring to these performances as resistant, Allen showed that the New Zealand idea of a ‘hard man’ as someone emotionally distant was resisted through the endorsement of romance as desirable. Simultaneously, by endorsing romantic masculinity through performances of a ‘harder’ masculinity, participants could resist the feminizing effect of romance (by not presenting themselves as too invested in it). As referred to above, Allen argued this tension could be referred to as the “macho-romantic tightrope” and argued that because of the way it was performed, romantic masculinity was not a competing alternative form of masculinity, but rather its tactics and identity position was “hybridised” (cf. Demetriou, 2001) and subsumed by hegemonic masculinity to further its own goals of maintaining the overall gender hegemony. This presents men’s resistance to hegemonic masculinity through investment in romance as ultimately being only able to temporarily disrupt the status quo. As also discussed above, the limitation of this study is that romantic femininity is not considered.

Finally, Schepers and Zway (2012) investigated how female South African teenagers resisted and rejected romance but drew from it to make sense of their experiences. Participants generally (1) positioned ‘romance’ as an idealised construct and distanced themselves from it; and/or (2) positioned everyday life, especially in the particular context of the data (poverty stricken, characterised by violence, gender inequality and drug/alcohol abuse), as not *allowing* for romance. The authors framed this as resistance to romance; but actually, in the light of the previous chapter, I would argue that it supported traditionally gendered romantic identities instead. Participants here are not resisting romance *per se*, but rather the relationships they witness being characterised as ‘romantic’ because they are not, they argue, being performed in the ways they understand to be ‘romantic’.

In other words, even though their participants resisted more patriarchal and dominating expressions of masculinity and presented themselves as invested in romance, these articles argued that individual expressions of resistance confirmed rather than competed with broader understandings of gender and romance. Therefore, this resistance would be referred to as individual, rather than collective resistance, according to the definitions given above.

Thus far, the importance of context has been argued for (cf. Bruce, 2012; Helman & Ratele, 2016; Moore, 2015; Shefer et al., 2015; Singh, 2013), and two kinds of resistance have been identified, namely individual and collective resistance. As stated at the start of this chapter, very few readings could be found that looked at the context of being-romantic and resistance, especially in terms of the gendered affordances made available in specific romantic contexts. Therefore, a gap exists in understanding the way that individuals take up or resist the identities and practices afforded by the romantic context. This chapter will now examine instances of re-negotiation of meaning and resistance to the idealised romantic gendered identities described in the previous chapter. In so doing, I will seek to investigate individual performances; however, the broader structural context in which these performances take place will be included in the analysis, to seek to understand them as performances within these particular contexts. In this way, resistance at the individual and collective level will be explored.

### 7.3. Data Analysis

Overall, participants endorsed being-romantic as a key way to do relationship maintenance (Chapter 5) – especially the more costly grand date enacted according to the romantic imperative (Chapter 4). They constructed particular gendered identities afforded by the romantic context (Chapter 6) as the best way to gain access to this sense of having ‘done’ romance ‘right’ and thus access/lay claim to the emotional, physical and identity rewards that follow from it (Chapters 4-6). Deviations from these affordances were constructed as disruptive to the production of authentic romance. However, pockets of resistance to these discourses were evident across the data set. These will now be explored.

First, I will explore examples where participants present themselves as resistant, but analysis will demonstrate that this resistance was for individualised reasons and when examined in context I will argue actually endorse the existing ways of being-romantic rather than disrupt it. Then, I will discuss resistance which was positioned as being much more disruptive than the previous strategies, namely resistance to the expectation of passivity in romantic femininity. In both instances, these pockets of resistance will be considered using Schippers' conception of complementary gendered identities to understand these resistances within the broader relationship context, in the light of the kinds of identity positions this discursive performance leaves open for their partners.

### 7.3.1. Individualised resistance: When is it 'resistance', not *resistance*

As argued above, participants endorsed the idealised gendered affordances of the context of being-romantic overall. However, in some instances in the data set, participants presented themselves as 'chafing' at the boundaries of these affordances, especially in the context of the more restrictive discursive performative scripts of the grand date. These accounts of 'resistance' will be examined within the context of the interview as well as within the broader scope of their relationship to assess what discursive effect this talk has and what subject positions it necessitates for their partners (cf. Schippers, 2007). I will argue that this talk was positioned as 'resistance', but had very little transformative or disruptive effect and instead served to justify the existing system while excusing participants from failing to meet these idealised standards. I will focus on 'resistant' talk regarding the idealised affordances of appearance in romantic femininity and the ideals of attentiveness and chivalry in romantic masculinity.

#### 7.3.1.1. Women participants: Resistance to ideals of appearance

As discussed in Chapter 6, producing romantic femininity required spending more time and effort on appearance for a date compared to romantic masculinity. It was also evident that the women participants chafed under this idealised expectation of them. One way of diffusing this unrealistic expectation was through a common discourse utilised

by both men and women participants, which was that their partner loved and accepted them for who they were – no matter what their appearance. Most of the women<sup>52</sup> used this rhetoric to defend against any potential failures to meet idealised expectations of a woman-on-a-date's appearance. As argued in Chapter 6, the crux of this discourse was the message that 'I'm loved and accepted by him no matter what' and that he 'makes me feel comfortable and beautiful'. For example, as discussed in Chapter 6, Louise states that "the more that I'm to be myself around Bruce the more (.) he loves me" (Interview 3.1); and Sue refers to Luke as "someone who's actually (.) wanted me for [...] exactly who I am" (Interview 1.1).

As argued in Chapter 6, this discourse was evident in interviews with Sue (1.1 and 1.4); Robyn (2.1 and 2.4); Louise (3.1 and 3.4); Bruce (3.2 and 3.5); Johan (4.1); Anika (4.2 and 4.5); Tom (5.1 and 5.5); and Heidi (5.2). This discourse therefore feeds into the broader narrative of the 'soulmate' discourse, with the message: 'this person loves me for who I am'.

Dressing up more for romance than men was one of the most tangible and easily expressed affordances of romantic femininity, and it could be argued that being more tangible could, therefore, make it potentially more blatantly degrading in comparison to the other more ephemeral identity affordances of romantic femininity, such as being pleasant and appreciative in response to chivalry. Therefore, in addition to the discourse of acceptance, another means of resisting this expectation was to contrast a past experience where they were 'prey' to this unrealistic expectation, in comparison to their current partner's acceptance of their appearance. This identified this expectation of dressing up as unrealistic, in contrast to the discourse of acceptance. Therefore, for the women participants, this discourse of acceptance was deployed in a way that was unique to the women. For example:

---

<sup>52</sup> Excluding Robyn, who instead navigated between presenting herself as not caring what he thought, arguing she dressed more to make a good impression on anyone who might see them on the date together ("I- am (.) quite worried about judgmental people, I don't know [...] I don't care what he ((small laugh)) ((Nicky: oka(h)y laughs)) what he sees me wearing, you know?"; Interview 2.1); and feeling like her experience of the date would be ruined if he didn't like what she was wearing ("if he says to me like, in the ca::r hh u::h 'that's a bit frumpy' (.) then I'm like (.) 'well you could have told me earlier' (.) then I feel like 'a::w' the whole time I'm like 'a:w. I'm (shlupping) around"; Interview 2.1).

#### EXTRACT 111: INTERVIEW 1.1

Sue: “like in the Indian culture, you’ll see the girls really get dressed up ((Nicky: mhm)) and their guys (.) u:m (.) will look at them like trophies? [...] I had (.) two Indian boyfriends before and ((Nicky: Ja)) they had- they put that pressure on me [...] eventually I said no [...] I’m not gonna dress like just to make you comfortable [...] I’ve always like clashed heads with my mom about it. [...] with Luke, he- he generally like (.) he’s never had (.) huge expectations of me [...] he thinks I look (.) amazing in just track suit pants y’know”.

#### EXTRACT 112: INTERVIEW 3.1

Louise: “I used to wear a lot of make-up um ((Nicky: Mhm)) when I was at ‘varsity [...] cause I thought you know that’s what guys want, they want someone who wears lo- lots of make-up and wants to look pretty and stuff [...] the people that I hung out with at varsity all wore make-up so I thought I had to fit in [...] I might put like a little bit of make u(h)p o(h)(h)n<sup>53</sup> .hhh Bruce doesn’t like a lot of makeup [...] once like I really like (.) put on like a lot of make-up .hhh and Bruce just kind of looked and was like (.) ‘why did you do that?’ [...] ‘you are pretty without make-up, you- you don’t need all that”.

#### EXTRACT 113: INTERVIEW 4.2

Anika: “I’m (.) STAGE fright, though I’m a singer I have this thing so, every time I go onto stage, I would usually put on a lot of makeup, to hi:::de [...] that I’m actually afraid [...] .hh in the beginning, RIGHT in the beginning I would put on .hh a lot of makeup, because? ((Nicky: ja?)) I- I-I had this thing .hh if you put on makeup it’s like a ma::sk, the person won’t see through you? ((Nicky: uhuh)) he will- (.) ja u:-s: (.) I don’t know how to put it, it’s like .hh a mask you put on to the world to th- let them not get to know, the whole, you er and whatever [...] but (.) I:: think it was like 3 months into our thing, I stopped wearing makeup [...] I’m very comfortable with him [...] it’s more my vulnerable si:::de ((Nicky: do you think like a lot of make-up would make you look stronger?) I think the thing like is a lot of make-up hide (.) the true you”.

#### EXTRACT 114: INTERVIEW 5.2

1. Heidi: I would normally wear the same kinds of makeup<sup>54</sup>
2. Nicky: okay, ja
3. Heidi: j:::a
4. Nicky: u:::m. And then- what- just differ in how you apply it? O:r
5. Heidi: .hh u:::m (.) hhh (.) I probably wear a bit less?
6. Nicky: on a date? ((sounds surprised))
7. Heidi: j:::a
8. Nicky: okay? [ja?
9. Heidi: [like (.) I-I sometimes feel like it takes more effort to put (.) less make-up on

<sup>53</sup> To go on a date with Bruce

<sup>54</sup> On a date with Tom, compared to going to work



10. better=  
 11. Nicky: =mm  
 12. Heidi: then it does like for work to just like slap on [...] for a date, it's like (.) you wanna look  
 13. pretty so like (.) maybe more colour  
 14. Nicky: okay, [alright  
 15. Heidi: [whereas for the office (.) could be like (.) a lot of makeup but all: (.)  
 16. Nicky: like, more severe? [e-uh-e  
 17. Heidi: [JA: more severe, [ja exactly  
 18. Nicky: [okay alright

In these extracts, the women participants use the discourse of acceptance to justify wearing less make-up – in other words, ostensibly putting in less effort – while being-romantic with their partners. This discourse is heightened by contrasting their partner with another relationship context. For example, in Extract 111, Sue uses her relationships with two previous boyfriends and her mother to demonstrate the expectations on her as an Indian woman to dress a certain way. In contrast, Luke is positioned as accepting and appreciating her for who she is.

In Extract 112, Louise argues that when she was a university student, she would wear a lot of makeup because she thought that was what was expected, “what guys (would) want”, and it was what her friends did. In contrast, Louise argues that Bruce prefers it when she wears *less* makeup. She draws from the discourse of acceptance to argue that Bruce thinks she is “pretty without make-up”. By positioning the wearing of little-to-no makeup as following his preference, it becomes romantic as she is *doing what he likes*, even though it runs contrary to the discourse that a woman should dress up on a date.

In .

Extract 113, Anika aligns the use of heavy make-up with wearing a mask that one would wear to create a protective barrier to prevent others from “see(ing) through you”. In particular, she describes wearing more makeup to conceal her stage fright when she sings in public. In contrast, Anika describes stopping “wearing makeup” with Johan three months into their relationship. When contrasted to her previous use and construction of makeup, this signals a symbolic surrendering of these defences, of making herself vulnerable to Johan. The wearing of less makeup therefore becomes a romantic gesture.

In .

Extract 114, Heidi positions makeup application as a way to seem fresher, innocent and “pretty” – in other words as vulnerable. In contrast, at work she puts in less effort by “slap(ping) on” the makeup, in a style we constructed as “severe”. Even though this requires more product and a more obvious end look (which one might expect to be preferred in a romantic setting, as per my confusion in line 6), Heidi positions her date night look as requiring *more effort* (and therefore being more romantic, as per the argument made in Chapter 6). Elsewhere in this interview, Heidi describes how “male-dominated” her work space is (“it’s very like a male-dominated work [...] people are aggressive”, Interview 5.2), so by looking severe through her makeup she feels more confident when she needs to assert herself (“I would feel a lot more confident ((Nicky: Mm)) like being s- like firm with someone about something if I was dressed in a way that looked like I had the right to::?”; Interview 5.2). In contrast, she positions being able to be vulnerable with Tom, and this is reflected in the way she applies her makeup.

In the following extract, we see a different dynamic. Here, Robyn is trying to navigate the topic of how she gets ready. She presents Eddie as being teasing about her appearance and says “he says I’m (.) like a *poppie*<sup>55</sup> I’m like, not so much now, I used to be more” (Interview 2.1). Robyn then says:

#### EXTRACT 115: INTERVIEW 2.1

Robyn: “Ja, I used to dress up a lot ((small laugh)) always (.) like (.) prancing around in high heels (.) like (.) in high school ((laughs)) ja (.) so::: (.) I’m not so much no:w ((Nicky: Is that like in terms of ti::me and like practicality, or)) I don’t know why [...] it sounds ba::(h)d (but) you don’t have to impre(h)(h)ss anyone ((Nicky: Ja)) £a:::w I should try to impress him, but I’m just trying to be comfortable now£ ((small laugh)).”

In Extract 115, we see a slightly different deployment of this discourse. Robyn also uses an example from her past to contrast the way that she dresses now on a date, but

---

<sup>55</sup> Refer to Footnote 30, page 155 for a definition of this term.

the dynamics of this discourse is subtly different to the other examples above. Robyn states that in high school she would “dress up a lot”, “prancing around in high heels” and going to the mall with her girlfriends: “that was basically what we did every week:nd! ((laughs)) [...] we liked to (.) walk around the movie theatre with our (.) fancy clothes on [...] so lame .hhhhhhh with like, no guys ((both laugh)).” This past construction of herself is disparaging – she is “prancing around”, “so lame”, and so on. Robyn argues that because she and Eddie are married now, he sees her in all kinds of states so she no longer has to dress to impress him. However, she orients to the potential social undesirability of this statement by saying “it sounds bad” and “I should try to impress him”. Instead, she presents “comfort” as being the key requirement when she gets ready to go out with Eddie.

Eddie is presented as teasing her about how she used to dress, for example, asking if her “earlobes (are) getting a work out?” (Interview 2.1), when she used to wear “big, dangly earrings”. Robyn adds “£so now I don’t do that anymore£”. As argued above in Footnote 52, Robyn presented conflicting viewpoints, on the one hand arguing that she does not care what Eddie thinks of her appearance; but on the other hand, giving examples that suggest that what he thinks and teases her about matters deeply to her.

Therefore, while she follows a similar tactic to the other women participants in that she contrasts her current dress style to a past context, and positions herself as putting in less effort into her appearance now in contrast; without the discourse of acceptance used by the other women, her account requires more justificatory rhetoric. She tries to resolve this by arguing that she doesn’t need to impress him anymore now that they are married, and by using humour to orient to and diffuse any undesirability to save face.

As argued in Chapter 6, it was widely argued that women do and should put more effort into their appearance for romantic dates. However, here, we see how women took up that affordance within their relationship context, by contrasting their relationship with their partner with some other relationship context. Through this contrast, women participants were able to resist to some extent this expectation that they should dress up more for a date. In their alternative examples, generally quite a lot of effort was required or expected, and typically the wearing of heavy makeup. Being-romantic with their partner

then was contrasted to this other relationship context. Generally speaking, they positioned their partners as accepting and loving them no matter what, and thus as having more freedom to dress in a more casual or comfortable way. This appears to be, on the surface, resistant of the expectation that women need to be very dressed up on a date.

However, we can see in the examples above that they were not positioning themselves as having unrestricted say over how they got ready for a date; rather, they tended to dress in a way designed to please their partner's tastes. In the extracts above we see the following examples: not wearing earrings he thinks is silly (Robyn); or wearing lightly-applied makeup in a style designed to please him (Heidi, Louise). Other examples in the broader data set included: styling their hair in a way he would prefer (Interviews 1.1; 5.2); choosing clothes they know he would like (Interviews 2.1, 3.1, 4.2, 5.2); selecting jewellery (Interview 3.1) or perfume (Interviews 2.1, 5.2) that he has purchased for her; or avoiding jewellery they know he does not appreciate (Interviews 2.1, 5.2).

In most of these examples, it entails 'dressing down' rather than 'dressing up' for the romantic date; which may appear, on the surface, to be resistance to the affordances of the rather idealised romantic femininity I presented in Chapter 6. However, this 'resistance' still requires a lot of effort to produce, but is glossed as the construction of more of a mellow, 'pretty', feminine look tailored to please her partner's *specific* tastes/preferences. Thus, this is closer to Connell's (1987) original formulation of emphasised femininity than the modes of resistance discussed above, limiting the transformative power this construction may have. Rather than positioning themselves as following some idealised version of what a woman should be on a date, this discourse of 'a woman on a date should dress up' is (re)positioned as meaning dressed up to *his taste*; and in this way participants were able to resist *and* not resist this imperative for women to look nice for/on a date.

Therefore, this is an example of a discourse which was presented as 'resistance', but which one can argue is not really very revolutionary as it supports rather than upsets the status quo. This contradictory effect is masked because participants presented this discourse in an individualising way (that is, as individual resistance),

according to what their specific partner prefers; and also by presenting it as a romantic gesture – something requiring effort to show their partner that they care.

In terms of articulating a complementary identity for men in terms of Schippers (2007), in the interviews it was evident that the men participants, when answering the checklists in the post-event individual interviews (see Appendices 7D and 7E), were orienting to the expectation that women must look pretty and put lots of effort into their appearance; but in most cases this was navigated strategically. In two cases, the men argued that one should distinguish between ‘women generally’ and their partner, for example:

**EXTRACT 116: INTERVIEW 1.5**

Luke: “This is really hard (.) Sue (.) ((Nicky: Mhm?)) We will go out to a formal function like (.) to: (.) a friend’s engagement party or something like that, then we’ll dress up f:::ully formal and Sue won’t put a (.) piece of make-up on ((Nicky: Mhm)) (but) (.) now with my sisters, now they need make-up ((Nicky: Yeah?)) ((both laugh)) and Sue doesn’t so I don’t know how to answer this”.

This was evident in Bruce’s interview as well (Interview 3.5). Here, this rhetoric allows the men participants to draw from the discourse of women ‘needing’ to dress up more for a date, while simultaneously avoiding holding their partner to these standards. Additionally, as discussed in Chapter 6, the other discursive tactic used by men participants was positioning the amount their partners do to get ready as something that makes *her* feel good (which makes him feel good in turn) – but not as something he expects or requires from her (Interviews 1.5; 4.4; 5.5). This supported the soulmate discourse (see Chapter 5) that participants generally drew from across the dataset to position their relationships as idealised. Additionally, this discourse also preserved the ‘romance’ of the gesture that the women are making: as, if the men demanded this from the women, it would dampen the romance as it is no longer a free gesture with sacrificial overtones. Therefore, these discursive tactics protect the men participants from appearing sexist by demanding that their partners do more than they do to get ready for a date.

In other words, the women’s ‘resistance’ described above, has minimal impact on the affordances of the men, besides the minor repair work described above. By

positioning their appearance-management as being tailored for their partner, a woman dressing up for romance is protected from unrealistic idealisation, while being presented as an individualised romantic gesture for their partner. Rather than being disruptive of the status quo, however, this is a re-formulation of this discourse that a woman should dress up more rather than resistance *per se*. Instead, the data suggests participants sought to find a way to manage these idealised/unrealistic expectations so that it does not seem so discordant with their presentation of their relationships in terms of the soulmate discourse.

#### 7.3.1.2. Men participants: Resisting the attentiveness and chivalry of romantic masculinity

As described in Chapter 6, the affordances of romantic masculinity were positioned as being less invested in romance than women; being active in orchestrating romance; and in being attentive and chivalrous to the woman while on the date. At times, some of the men participants constructed themselves as resistant to these expectations. For example, in Extract 79 (p. 238), Luke positioned doing chivalric things on dates as a way to keep Sue happy. Conversely, in the other examples described in Chapter 6, men participants described attentive chivalry as a means of showing respect, adoration and appreciation for their partner: for example Bruce positions this attentiveness as being a way to “cherish” his wife (Interview 3.3); and Tom constructs chivalry as a way to “be thoughtful”, “serve her” and “be worthy of her” (Interview 5.1.). In contrast, in Extract 79, Luke presents chivalry as a way of showing to *others* that their relationship is good, and *therefore* is a way of keeping Sue happy. This in turn will ensure she does not feel the need to nudge him into these chivalric acts, which he argues would ‘spoil’ the romance.

In this construction, chivalry is not the innate response of a ‘man-who-is-on-a-date’ as it was generally described in Chapter 6; rather, it is presented as something one can do for strategic purposes. I submit that Luke is not directly resisting the normative pressure to be chivalrous as he is not positioning the act itself in a negative light. However, he is presenting it as allowing him to meet the societal expectation of the caring, attentive boyfriend – which he performs for the benefit of *others* (i.e. for public consumption).

Therefore it is presented as the ‘playing of a role’. However, chivalry itself is not especially questioned or undermined, which limits how de-stabilising this discourse may be.

Additionally, there was evidence of men participants’ resistance to the expectation that men should be the one to plan the date. As discussed in Chapter 4, a number of justifications were given for why grand dates were not orchestrated frequently. Examples included the expense, effort, how time-consuming they are, and so on. Of the 52 counts of reasons given for not engaging in grand dates frequently, 34 of these came from men participants (65%), possibly suggesting that men participants perceived they were being held accountable or constructed themselves as feeling responsible for initiating grand dates, and were providing more justificatory rhetoric than women as a result.

This appears to link back to the “macho-romantic tightrope” (Allen, 2007, p. 145), as discussed in Chapter 6. This tightrope allows men to navigate this line between being too invested in romance versus not being invested enough. That is, this strategy allows men participants to offer resistance in the interview context as a way of appearing masculine (according to the construction of men as not invested in romance); while still being able to enjoy the benefits of romance. We can see this in more detail in the following extract:

#### EXTRACT 117: INTERVIEW 2.5

1. Nicky: Oka:y, u::m (.) .hh This is another weird question (.) If you had to think about (.) like
2. the stereotypical ‘romantic ma:n’ (.) what would that look like?
3. Eddie: (.) uh (.) like a woman
4. Nicky: [...] So (.) d’you think (.) like (.) like a ‘manly man’ can be romantic? Or=
5. Eddie: =Ja, to me
6. that-th- hhh (.) <not in the stereotypical sense> [u::m I- I like I think of myself as quite
7. Nicky: [mhm
8. Eddie: masculine?
9. Nicky: yeah?
10. Eddie: and (.) I still do those things (.)
11. Nicky: mhm
12. Eddie: but it’s (.) I tend to not want anyone to ever even know about them (.) [but not ‘cause
13. Nicky: [okay
14. Eddie: I’m embarrassed, I’m not gonna be like ‘oh, shut up’, I’ll claim them whe::n Robyn
15. brings it up, I’ll be like ‘Ja, I’m flipping romantic’=
16. Nicky: =ja

In this extract, we see Eddie trying to identify as both masculine and romantic, and Allen's (2007) "macho-romantic tightrope" is evident. Eddie states that he "still does those things," (where the word "still" suggests that he does them *in spite of* rather than *because of* his self-professed manliness; that he "does [...] things" distances his core identity from the things -- he *does* them, rather than *is* them). But he also "tend(s) to not want anyone to ever even know about them". By positioning himself as being reticent, he attempts to maintain this 'manly' presentation, in line with a disinterest in romance (as argued in Chapter 6, investment in romance was positioned as being feminized). He then tries to repair this statement in order to save face, by saying "but not 'cause I'm embarrassed"; however this is clarified by saying that if/when "Robyn brings it up", then he will "claim" it (positioning himself as proud of his romantic gestures). Eddie seems to be trying to strike a balance between being too obviously invested in romance with being just romantic enough to keep his wife happy. This in itself could be constructed as romantic – Eddie is not romancing his wife in order to gain status amongst others; instead, he positions it as something that occurs behind closed doors. Thus, Eddie navigates between being "macho" and "romantic" in this extract, as described by Allen (2007).

This suggests that a 'manly man' who is a little romantic may well be constructed as more romantic than a very romantic man, who might be feminized by being *too* invested in romance or, if too 'smooth,' vilified as inauthentic. This discourse is reminiscent of the *Beauty and the Beast* argument made by Vincent and McEwan (2006), as discussed in Chapter 6 – where if a 'manly man' is a little romantic, it could be taken up as a sign that your 'man-improvement' project is working – you are taming the beast. But if he becomes too romantic, than it may be seen as off-putting as it could be positioned as feminizing (discussed further below in Section 7.3.2.3.2.1).

In terms of the complementary positions available to the women participants when men resisted, there was some evidence that women would become upset with their partners if they were not being attentive on dates. For example, in Extract 37 (p. 153), Robyn describes her frustration when Eddie plays with his cell phone while they are trying to be-romantic. Heidi is described as becoming upset/angry when Tom watches television



while on their date (see discussion under Extract 102, p. 262). As argued in Chapter 6, in terms of broader social discourses, women are positioned as being responsible for the psychological health of the relationship in terms of emotional housekeeping. As a result, I argued that women are invested in making romance happen as a viable means of doing relationship maintenance (as argued in Chapter 5). However, as I argued in Chapter 6, when the woman has to prod her partner into being-romantic, it detracts from the sense of being-romantic and the potential effect the romance may have on maintaining the relationship. Thus, if romance is seen as being the reward for the drudgery of everyday life and the man's way of showing appreciation and dedication to his partner, having a male partner insufficiently invested in that brings into question the relationship.

This may explain why in the examples discussed in this section, the validity of the constructed affordances of romantic masculinity were not questioned; but rather, these 'resistances' were positioned as justifications and excuses as to why they had not performed romantic masculinity in the idealised, preferred way described in Chapter 6. That is, the men participants were not debating whether romantic men *should* be attentive, chivalrous, and actively romance their partners. It is implied, therefore, that their partners were to some extent justified in feeling annoyed; as seen for example in Extract 105, p. 265, where Tom positions an apology as the *correct* response (albeit one he does not always do). Therefore, as in the previous section, I submit that this 'resistance' is unlikely to be disruptive or transformative.

Therefore, at times participants seemed to chafe under the constructed 'requirement' that men should be active in planning dates and should be chivalrous and attentive on dates, presenting subtle critiques or resistances to this notion. However, overwhelmingly, these affordances were not overtly undermined by the men participants. The men participants themselves did not de-legitimise romance or the gendered identities it affords. Instead, these 'resistances' here could be understood as justifications to save face in the interview settings, in response to any implied critique that they do not romance their partners enough.

Therefore, in both the women's and the men's examples of 'resistance' thus far, I have argued that these discourses do not work to de-stabilise the discourses of romance and gender; but instead work to justify why they could not fulfil these affordances in the idealised way they were described in Chapter 6. Therefore, this talk still buys into these normative, idealised discourses; suggesting their power and persuasiveness, and the difficulty in imagining romance differently. Next, I will examine instances where the resistance participants described was more disruptive to the affordances of being-romantic, resulted in a more tangible impact on the complementary affordances available to their partners, and required the deployment of discourses not seen in other contexts.

### 7.3.2. A 'more robust' resistance: Resistance to ideals of passive women in romance

In the data set there were two ways identified for the women participants to be an 'active romancer' of their partners. As discussed above in Chapter 6, the first way that women were positioned as having access to was the romantic gesture. Despite being presented as an equalising means of showing affection, on closer investigation it appeared that while some of the examples of these gestures were gender-neutral (described as being performed by men *and* women), others were heavily reminiscent of a 1950's 'housewife' discourse, where domesticized activities were described as being done *for him*, in order to create a 'homey' environment (refer to Chapter 6 and to Connell's hegemonic masculinity and emphasised femininity).

This construction of old-fashioned, feminized romantic gestures was used as a justificatory response to talk about the men romancing their partners; and it was used to demonstrate that the love and affection from men was *reciprocated* by the women. Some men participants presented this as something that was 'enough' to show their partners loved them and were thinking about them, without her needing to 'resort' to planning grand dates (which was constructed as their 'job'). Three of the five women participants<sup>56</sup>

---

<sup>56</sup> Louise is included in this categorization, because while she did describe an instance that could be classed as a grand date (interview 3.1), overall the dominating way that their relationship was presented was through reciprocated romantic gestures, some gender-neutral and some gendered.

were positioned as (only) romancing their partners using romantic gestures<sup>57</sup>. In Chapter 6, this discourse was problematized in terms of the limits to disruption it can cause to the discourse that women should be passively romanced.

In terms of the literature discussed above, calling the activeness of the feminized romantic gesture 'resistance' would be a fallacy, for several reasons. Firstly, it draws from an old-fashioned femininity that is very supportive of gender hegemony. This would place it within the umbrella of emphasised femininity (cf. Connell, 1987). Secondly, within the context of the interview, it provides justificatory rhetoric as to why *women do not need to romance men*, making it unlikely to disrupt the status quo. And finally, it allows a sense of agency in women, but is limited by the more dominant discursive performative scripts of being-romantic and the constraints and affordances this offers within the context of their relationships.

For the other two women participants (Sue, Couple 1 and Anika, Couple 4), there were some instances of this kind of domesticated care, and examples included making their partner a special dinner (Anika) and a home-made present (Sue and Anika). However, what characterised their accounts was rather the *active* and *resistant* role they took in initiating and orchestrating romance.

Couple 1 and 4 each used rhetorics unique to their relationship contexts to explain and justify the active romantic femininity of Sue and Anika. However, while the rhetorics themselves may differ, their discursive effect was similar in each of these two relationship contexts. Therefore, I will compare and contrast these explanations of resistance to understand how they fit (or not) within the relationship context.

First I will provide evidence that Sue and Anika presented themselves as being the active orchestrators of romance in their relationship. These assertions were, however, accompanied by a number of justifications. These will be explored and I will look at how the men in turn explained and justified their identity as 'a man who is romanced'. Their explanation can be compared along two lines: endorsement and support, versus talk

---

<sup>57</sup> Anika and Sue's cases are excluded from this count and differentiated from Louise's, as overall they were presented as taking the lead in their romantic relationship and organizing dates more often than their partners, as will be discussed in the sections that follow.

containing minimisers or denials. Finally, the psychological costs of this kind of relationship context will be discussed, in terms of the costs for both the women and the men.

### 7.3.2.1. The woman as the active romancer: How this was framed by the women

#### 7.3.2.1.1. Evidence of being the active romancer

Sue positions herself as being the one who arranges their social calendar, including romantic dates. For example, she says to me in Interview 1.1 that “this- like whole thing<sup>58</sup> has actually made me realise [...] we’ve both just slipped into (.) routine [...] I said to Luke, I was like even like when we get married, it’s like one of the things that I want to do is go out, y’know? ((Nicky: ja))”. Later she adds that “the one idea I actually got was [...] at our wedding is (.) giving people- [...] the guests get to write a- a- date idea [...] it’s like a- a date jar? And you pick out a date ((Nicky: oka::y)) and you do: whatever’s on the:- on the sti:ck [...] I said to him, like, I’d love to do something like that, just to be able to keep, y’know? ((Nicky: ja)) keep things different”.

In these quotes Sue is constructed as the active one, the one who plans ahead: “made me realise”; “I said to Luke”; “the one idea I... got”; “that I want to do”; and so on. In this construction, Sue’s agency is emphasised and individualised – Luke is positioned as passive and inert, with Sue positioning herself as the one who will actively think about and orchestrate romance.

This construction is re-iterated in the post-event individual interview (Interview 1.4). I ask Sue about the experience of participating in the study. She describes the difficulties she experienced in finding time to plan her event, and then states “it taught me how to prioritise a little bit [...] I need to actually get (.) this done [...] it is (.) a major part of my life [...] I’d like to be able to do things like this<sup>59</sup> and not be (.) y’know (.) come up with a whole bunch of excuses [...] I would really love to take him to Roma [...] I’ll- I’ll do that definitely sometime this year”. Here again, Sue takes ownership over the planning of dates

---

<sup>58</sup> Participating in the study

<sup>59</sup> Specifically, being-romantic after marriage

– it is positioned as being up to her to make things happen. She is framed as the active one, with Luke positioned as the passive object of the sentence.

Similarly, when asked about what kind of romantic things she and Johan do, Anika describes the following examples of how she actively romances Johan:

**EXTRACT 118: INTERVIEW 4.2**

1. Nicky: d-do you guys often do anything for-formal or like that kind of- you know- (.)
2. Anika: WELL (.) hm, let me think. We've had weddings?
3. Nicky: ja?
4. Anika: In the last year we had two weddings [...] a:nd (.) for our 6 month anniversary? I
5. surprised him with a-er-a-a dinner
6. Nicky: okay
7. Anika: and that was also fancy, I dressed very fancy for that
8. Nicky: okay
9. Anika: and um (.) yes, I think we've done a few times, [we have done a fe:w (.) [fancy dress
10. Nicky: [ja:: [ja
11. Anika: eating and ja:
12. Nicky: cool. Okay.
13. Anika: ja, we TRIED to do it on our anniversaries [because it's usually .hh m- it makes it
14. Nicky: [yes, ja
15. Anika: more special [for us, so ja
16. Nicky: [ja::, definitely

In this extract, Anika describes some of the grand dates that they have had, since starting their relationship. Where Sue and Luke are quite blunt about constructing Sue as the one who organises their romantic and social agendas, Anika positions her agency in a more implied way, and in this extract we can see evidence that where she can, she positions it as collective decisions, rather than as her driving the decision-making. For example she states that “I surprised him with a-er-a-a dinner”, but then as she continues speaking she uses “we” instead of “I”: “we’ve done a few times”; “we have done a fe:w”; “we TRIED to do it”; “more special for us”. Thus, we see even as she begins to describe her active romancing of Johan, so she immediately begins de-emphasising her role in it and positioning it as a mutual decision-making process.

This is a common tactic she draws from across the interviews. She described her date as disappointing (“for me (.) it was disappointing because all of a sudden my whole date felt like it fell apart [...] everything °just was against my date°”; Interview 4.3), because most of the activities she had planned, she was unable to do for a variety of reasons

(including the weather and an international soccer match<sup>60</sup> occurring at the local stadium, which prevented them from going to one of the locations she had planned). However, she positions the date as successful, even arguing initially in the interviews that she preferred her date, because they were able to decide together what to do, rather than it coming from one side (“he started planning with me [...] out of a complete screw up it was actually more fun [...] it was more fun for me than a planned date [...] it ended up being a more romantic day [...] the fact that we both planned that together [...] made it more special [...] I actually enjoyed the first one more- not because it’s mine .hhh but it was because .hhh we could plan it together”; Anika, Interview 4.3). This mutual decision-making she positioned as being deeply romantic. She therefore positions their usual dates using very inclusive language; but there are numerous other examples in their data that demonstrate that it is Anika who orchestrates romance more generally (“I have the tendency to sometimes pl(h)an things”, Anika, Interview 4.3), and the grand dates specifically (“for anniversaries we try to do (.) planned thing”; Anika, Interview 4.3), in their relationship.

#### 7.3.2.1.2. Justificatory rhetoric

Sue and Anika used differing tactics to explain and naturalise their romancing of their partners. However, there was a similar discursive effect: both sets of explanations individualised the behaviour, making it seem unique to themselves. Sue explains it in four ways: (1) her mother taught her to care for others (her upbringing); (2) she wants to care for people (her personality); (3) organisational skills (natural skills or inclination, especially in contrast to Luke); and (4) her love language as giving.

In Anika’s account, there is some overlap in this reasoning: (1) she comes from a very romantic family, so this is how she was raised (her upbringing); (2) she loves surprises (her personality); (3) her creativity and inventiveness (natural skills or inclination, especially in contrast to Johan). Anika and Johan were the only couple who did not mention ‘love languages’.

---

<sup>60</sup> Liverpool FC Legends versus Kaiser Chiefs Legends, Moses Mabhida Stadium, 16 November 2013

For both women, these arguments made it seem natural and obvious that they should be the one who takes the lead in orchestrating romance. For example, in interview 1.4, Sue responds to a question about Luke being in control, and it sparks a stream of justificatory rhetoric. As this extract (Extract 119) is long, I will break it down into smaller segments across the sections that follow for analysis:

**EXTRACT 119: INTERVIEW 1.4**

1. Nicky: =was it nice (.) h-him having complete control? [u:::m (.) okay cool (.) [(so) ( )
2. Sue: [ja [I do enjoy that=
3. Nicky: =j]a
4. Sue: [it's just like [...]

Sue positions herself as “enjoy(ing)” when Luke has “complete control”, but immediately begins to justify why she takes control of their social engagements (“it’s just like [...]). This suggests she could be interpreting or positioning her romancing Luke as potentially problematic, and as requiring justification or repair work. Likewise, Anika also uses a lot of justificatory rhetoric to explain, excuse, and naturalise the fact that she is the active romancer in their relationship. Some of these rhetorics will now be explored across the dimensions described above.

**(1) Upbringing**

Both participants positioned their upbringing as being an influence on how they romance their partners. In the data presented below, Sue explains:

**EXTRACT 119: INTERVIEW 1.4 (CONT.)**

4. Sue: [it's just like (.) I think I get it from my mom? ((laughs)) w-we enjoy ho(h)sti(h)ng
5. e(h)ve(h)nts [and you know (.) being- making sure that everything's in order=
6. Nicky: [((laughs)) =ja (.) ]ja
7. Sue: [so::
8. (.) like I- I've been like that growing up be[cause (.) wi- my mom (.) y'know (.)-
9. Nicky: [mhm
10. Sue: planning just having family (.) over, like yesterday we had family over
11. Nicky: j]a
12. Sue: [and it was just >y'know< (.) making sure that everyone's comfortable
13. Nicky: ja=
14. Sue: =and there's enough food and enough you know of everything [( )
15. Nicky: [it sounds like part of

16. your caring [like your love langu[age as well=  
 17. Sue: [ja [ja = exactly, ja

Sue here presents her upbringing – and in particular, her mother’s example – as influencing how she romances Luke today. Sue argues her mother set the example of making sure that everyone is taken care of – that they are “comfortable” and have “enough food” as a way of showing care. Likewise, Anika also positions her upbringing as having an influence on her. When she is asked about what images come to mind when she imagines a ‘romantic man’ (see question 6, Appendix 7D), she replies:

**EXTRACT 120: INTERVIEW 4.5**

Anika: “hhh ((laughs)) .hhh You f- you forget I come out of uh that stereotypical (.) male .hhh well m- m- males in my (.) my family (.) and males in real life (.) ((Nicky: Ja?)) I can compare the two because my brothers are v- .hhh we are- we as a family are hopelessly romantics. We will plan the beach and we will plan the .hhh the e- e- what’s it (.) hh um candlelight dinners and we will do that”.

Anika ostensibly draws from her experience with her (male) family members in order to answer this question. However, even though she is describing romantic masculinity, she groups herself as part of this explanation, through the use of the word “we”. This includes her in this construction of an active romantic masculinity, through the repeated use of the phrase “we will plan”. This aligns her with this active romantic identity, positioning herself as the one who romances Johan.

Therefore both participants position their upbringing as influencing why they engage in the ‘deviant’ behaviour of romancing their partners. This positions being the active romancer as an integral part of their identity.

**(2) Personality**

Similarly, both participants referred at some point as well to their personalities, positioning this as another key reason as to why they actively romance their partners. For example, Sue says:



EXTRACT 119: INTERVIEW 1.4 (CONT.)

17. Sue: [ja [ja = exactly, ja so (.) so for me if I want to do  
 18. something, I want to do it properly=  
 19. Nicky: =j[a  
 20. Sue: [y'know? Even if (.) we going out (.) t-to see his  
 21. sister and stuff, like (.) last night I went out u:m (.) go to see Luke, 'cause he wasn't  
 22. feeling well, so I took him like, some food and he'd invited a friend over and so I was  
 23. like "okay well, make sure that there's food for him as well"  
 24. Nicky: okay  
 25. Sue: and then I realised ALAN would be home  
 26. Nicky: ok[ay  
 27. Sue: [his brother-in-law, [his] wife's still in the hospital [so I was like] "kay, have enough  
 28. Nicky: [ja ] [oh shame ]  
 29. Sue: food for Alan as well"  
 30. Nicky: ja, [ja  
 31. Sue: [so it's like you know just making sure that everyone is (.) [see:n to ]  
 32. Nicky: [taken care] of [ja  
 33. Sue: [and  
 34. y'know (.) don't want to kind of just make them feel like "oh it's last minute" like  
 35. ((both laugh))  
 36. Sue: "kinda don't have enough for you:::", y'know?  
 37. Nicky: ja  
 38. Sue: but um ja. That's just my type of (.) personali[ty

Here, Sue constructs her personality as being a key influence. She uses similar words and examples as discussed under family influence (for example "everything is in order", line 5; "everyone is comfortable", line 12; and "everyone is seen to", line 31), which re-iterates her 'desire' to care for others by ensuring all their needs are met. Here she links it to her being "just my type of personality" (line 38), which positions this desire to care for others as being due to internal or innate factors, in addition to the environmental factors constructed above.

Anika also attributes her active romantic femininity to her personality. She positions herself as one who loves to surprise others, so romancing Johan 'comes naturally' to her as a result:

EXTRACT 121: INTERVIEW 4.3

1. Anika: 'cause I love surprising him [I actually- I'm [(laughs)] I- I love surprise [.hhh When  
 2. Nicky: [Yes [(small laugh)]  
 3. Johan: [Ja she (.) she surprises me a lot  
 4. Anika: he was still living down like he was d- living down the road .hhh [and the one day he  
 5. Nicky: [Ja  
 6. Anika: was walking back from work .hhh and I jus- w- we were in my f- grandfather's car

7. back then .hhh 'cause my car was somewhere a- or another  
 8. Nicky: Mhm  
 9. Anika: and I actually just j- j- I saw him there (.) I jumped out of the car I just (.) gave him a  
 10. kiss and got back into the [car (.) going off and we] drove off  
 11. Johan: [Ja I was like ( ) (.) ( )]  
 12. Nicky: You got a hit [and run ( )]  
 13. Anika: [((laughs))]  
 14. Johan: [((small laugh)) exactly [serio(h)usly]  
 15. Anika: [And he was] so confused

Anika gives an instance of surprising Johan, which is positioned as being spontaneous and romantic. This love of surprises is therefore used as justification for her taking a more active role in their relationship in terms of romancing him. It naturalises what might otherwise be perceived as one-sidedness, as it becomes a natural extension of her personality. Most of the grand dates or romantic gestures that she organises for Johan are positioned as being surprises (for example a surprise dinner for his birthday and for their 6 month anniversary; making him a homemade present; et cetera).

By positioning being-romantic as part of their personality, participants further shore up the argument that their romancing of their partners is due to internal, enduring reasons, which make them 'naturally' suited to taking this active role.

### (3) Natural skills or inclination (especially in contrast to partner)

Sue and Anika also contrasted themselves with their partners, to further emphasise why their own natural skills or inclination to orchestrate romance made them the more active romantic partner:

#### EXTRACT 119: INTERVIEW 1.4 (CONT.)

38. Sue: but um ja. That's just my type of (.) personali[ty  
 39. Nicky: [ja  
 40. Sue: whereas Luke would be like, "well", y'know? ((laughs))  
 41. Nicky: "make it up as you go" [(ja like sort of)  
 42. Sue: [JA "they can (.) see to themselves" y'kno(h)w?  
 43. Nicky: ja, ja(h)  
 44. Sue: "have some toast [if they want" y'know? Whereas for me it's like "no [they have to  
 45. Nicky: [((laughs)) [ja  
 46. Sue: have something, if everyone's having it, everyone's gonna have it y'know?  
 47. Nicky: cool (.) okay  
 48. Sue: but ja  
 49. (.)

50. Sue: ((laughs))

While generally positioning Luke's laidback approach in an extremely idealised and positive approach, in this extract Sue positions it more negatively, as it may lead to others feeling hurt or excluded ("for me [...] they have to have something, if everyone's having it"). Therefore, Luke is positioned in contrast to herself, to further justify how she is more organised or thoughtful in the way that she plans both their social events and their romance. This helps to justify why she is the one who organises romance.

Additionally, Sue claims that Luke made use of her planning abilities to ensure that their engagement party was a success. Luke argued that he arranged to propose on his birthday ("I organised it on my birthday ((Nicky: Mhm)) so that she wouldn't suspect why everyone was (.) w- o- organising something", Luke, Interview 1.3). Therefore, Luke admits, the birthday party that she thought she had been planning for him was actually her own surprise engagement party ("you (.) said <"if this whole thing" (.) she sa- er a- "this whole thing- your birthday party is for me p- j- you tricked me to plan our engagement party ((Sue laughs)) I can't even remember, you threatened me ((Sue laughs)) [...] I was like (.) 'oh crap'", Luke, Interview 1.3).

However, Luke argued this was a way to keep her distracted, because she had told him she wanted two things from the proposal: "Sue had said to me (.) a few years ago that (.) when she gets engaged the one thing she wants is she wants to be surprise:d ((Nicky: Mm)) and the second thing she wants (.) when I propose she doesn't >want everyone there<, but she told me that if I don't get her to her frie(h)nds qui(h)ckly she's £gonna be on the phone fo(h)r the re(h)st of the evening" (Luke, Interview 1.3). Therefore, he argued, this was his solution to that challenge, as can be seen in lines 22-26 of Extract 122 below. Sue, however, positioned Luke's plan as a means of making sure that the party was properly organised and everything was taken care of (lines 1-21):

#### EXTRACT 122: INTERVIEW 1.3

1. Sue: I wasn't- I wasn't upset about it
2. Nicky: okay cool
3. Sue: but like he said to me he was like, he sucks at planning things?

4. Nicky: uhuh?
5. Sue: like (.) we had a braai<sup>61</sup> with friends on Saturday and (.) [he (.) just told them to bring
6. Luke: [it went off ama::zing
7. Sue: meat? And I'm like, "oka:y so who's bringing rolls, [who's bringing salad who's doing
8. Nicky: [(laughs)]
9. Sue: >y'know< we need stuff and [he was like (.) "I didn't think [that fa:r"]
10. Nicky: [(laughs)] [(lau ]ghs))
11. Luke: it [went off perfectly
12. Sue: [so that's why like for (.) he said, he felt better knowing I'd planned it?
13. Nicky: ok[a(h)y
14. Sue: [so everyone we'd need there would be there (.) [the stuff that we'd need wou(h)ld
15. Luke: [(laughs)]
16. Sue: be there
17. Nicky: ((la[ughs))
18. Sue: [(laughs)) it's like if he did it, there would be stuff missing
19. Nicky: ok[a(h)y
20. Luke: [(like at [the braai
21. Nicky: [the essentials were like (.)
22. Luke: ja no I (.) I also knew if I tried to plan anything Sue would catch on (.)
23. Nicky: o[kay
24. Luke: [And I had to make her not- but doing enough to keep her distracted for her not to
25. Nicky: okay
26. Luke: catch on

This construction of the proposal and Luke's motivation for planning it the way that he did positions her, in some way, as innately superior to Luke in terms of her organisational skills. This suggests that the engagement party (and other social events, such as Luke's braai or romance more generally) will not be a success unless she takes control of the organisation. Luke, however, contests this reading of their engagement party (and the braai), protesting that his braai "went off amazing" (line 6) and "went off perfectly" (line 11). Luke's resistance to Sue's active romancing, and his counter-construction of it, will be discussed further in Section 7.3.2.2 below.

However, by positioning Luke in a way which suggests she can orchestrate romantic events more than he can, it further argues for and naturalises her taking on the active role in their relationship. Anika, similarly, positions Johan as lacking in some of the key qualities required to actively romance someone:

#### EXTRACT 123: INTERVIEW 4.2

1. Nicky: so what kinds of things do you guys do [(when you want to be romantic)]?
2. Anika: [(laughs)] ] We very u-

<sup>61</sup> South African word referring to a barbeque

3. I think (.) I think that comes more from me::?
4. Nicky: okay?
5. Anika: I try to be more s- I-I very- u:h ja *spontaan*, I don't know what that word [jis
6. Nicky: [spontaneous
7. Anika: I'm [spontaneous
8. Nicky: [ja ja
9. Anika: I'm very spontaneous and I love (.) challenges?
10. Nicky: mhm=
11. Anika: =and I love (.) .hh I love being creative
12. Nicky: okay
13. Anika: I THINK THAT'S one of the things, [we- we differ on, because [he's not very creative?
14. Nicky: [ja [mm
15. Anika: BUT I (.) I'm always thinking of new ideas t-to do things=
16. Nicky: =okay=
17. Anika: =and to do things with
18. him
19. Nicky: ja

Anika lists a number of attributes she constructs herself as having, namely being “spontaneous”, “love challenges”, and “love being creative”. She argues that it is the creativity in particular that enables her to plan these very romantic grand dates and romantic gestures for Johan, who is positioned as “not very creative” in contrast to her. As with Sue, this argument provides justification and naturalises Anika’s being the active romancer in the relationship, as she is positioned as having attributes that make her better suited to doing this *in contrast to her partner*.

#### (4) ‘Love language’

In Interview 1.1, when Sue is asked about how she is romantic, she first explains her ‘love language’ (the giving of gifts), giving examples of how she shows Luke love. Sue then describes Luke’s ‘love language’ (physical affection of closeness) and how she (must) show love to him in order for him to feel loved (cf. Chapman, 1995). This description is a very active description of her, whereas Luke is positioned more passively. I ask Sue “generally speaking, when you get ready to do something romantic with Luke, do you:: u:m (.) like (.) what kinds of things do you (.) do to get ready (.) for like (.) for romance (.) °do you know what I mean°?” This question was supposed to refer to appearance-management strategies, in terms of doing anything out of the ordinary to get ready to go on a date. However, Sue replies:

**EXTRACT 124: INTERVIEW 1.1**

1. Sue: Well: (.) like again, with my love language is (.) buying stuff for him?
2. Nicky: Mhm
3. Sue: So I'll get him like [...] like, he loves superheroes?
4. Nicky: o:h cool=
5. Sue: =so I'll always manage- like if we're doing something (.) special [...] I'd go
6. buy him like a superhero t-shirt [from Pick n Pay or something, they [have those cool
7. Nicky: [coo::l [ja
8. Sue: nice t-shirts? And he loves those

Her 'love language' of "buying stuff" (or gift-giving, to use Chapman's term, 1995) is positioned as the way she gets ready to be-romantic. Using this discourse of the 'love language', her gift giving – which is positioned as actively romancing him – is used in contrast to this construction of Luke who, again, is presented in a more passive way. Sue and the interviewer jointly re-iterate this in Interview 1.4, in Extract 119 above, lines 14-17:

**EXTRACT 119: INTERVIEW 1.4 (CONT.)**

14. Sue: =and there's enough food and enough you know of everything [( )
15. Nicky: [it sounds like part of
16. your caring [like your love langu[age as well=
17. Sue: [ja [ja = exactly, ja

Thus, Sue draws from the discourse of 'love languages' to make sensible and justify her active romancing of Luke.

### 7.3.2.2. The woman as the active romancer: How this was framed by the men

I have discussed above how Anika and Sue framed and justified their active romancing of their partners. In this section, I will discuss how their partners talked about the women as active romancers. Both Luke and Johan used defensive and justificatory rhetoric, although, as with the women, used relationship-specific arguments. Their strategies were also a lot more variable than the women's. At times they reported and endorsed their partner's active roles in producing romance; at other times they minimised or denied it; and, as will be discussed in a section that follows ('Men as the passive partner', Section 7.3.2.3.2), at other times they promoted their own romantic gestures. I will argue in

the section below that the strategies explained in this section and the next demonstrate that for men, the position of 'being-romanced' is feminising and problematic.

#### 7.3.2.2.1. Endorsement and support

At certain points of the interviews, Johan and Luke presented the active romancing they receive from their partners in an extremely positive light. For example, in Interview 4.3, Couple 4 initially position themselves as being equally romantic:

##### EXTRACT 125: INTERVIEW 4.3

1. Nicky: .hhh Cool .hhh um okay so (.) normally when you guys, you know on a day-to-day or
2.           whatever when you do something romantic um (.) is there one- one person who
3.           would normally be maybe plan or suggest it or decide what to do?
4. Anika: Mm we pretty similar
5. Johan: Ja we (.) they- both of us do

However, while Anika and Johan initially both work to present their relationship as equal in terms of who romances who (lines 4-5), as Johan continues, this positioning alters as he starts to describe how Anika romances him. He gives examples of two instances she planned for him as a surprise: one on their six month anniversary, and the other on his birthday. He describes how Anika dressed up for this occasion ("this red dress [...] like that, lady in red (you know)"); decorated the house ("balloons on the gate"); and organised or made special food for the occasion, despite being ill on one of these occasions. This construction of self-sacrifice and surprise as increasing the sense of romance was discussed in Chapter 4, and is used for similar effect here, to construct these events as more intensely romantic than they would be without these elements. Johan here is positioning being romanced by Anika in an extremely positive light.

Similarly, Luke describes being romanced by Sue in a very positive way, as in the extract below. Luke is describing Sue's date that she planned for the study:

##### EXTRACT 126: INTERVIEW 1.3

1. Luke: U:::m (.) and then (.) she had made, like (.) Sue likes, to plan things? (.) And Sue's
2.           love language is gifts?

3. Nicky: mhm
4. Luke: so she likes to make little (.) gifts and messages and stuff like that? So she had made
5. like this- this- she got this box. And in the box she had made five little (.) £Mario coin
6. boxes£? [...] and then at different points of the evening she would like (.) 'okay you
7. can open that one now' (.) and then I'd take it out and open it and it would be like little
8. (.) letters and like u-o-object of some sort (.) that went with the message [...] it was-
9. really nice it just (.) it made me feel special [...] I really appreciated it (.) and the::n (.)
10. °I ordered steak and it was amazing° [...]
11. Nicky: okay a:nd u:m so:: (.) w- what was romantic about Sue's date?
12. Luke: u:m (.) th- it was very intimate, Sue - the- the fact that she had put in little gifts and
13. that [...] she had (.) put so much into it and <this was (.) what she does>
14. Nicky: ja
15. Luke: I felt very, very loved (.) that what- that was (.) to me that was a big part- I just felt
16. very loved (and) ( )
17. Nicky: okay
18. Luke: I enjoyed it. £And I enjoyed the food£
19. Nicky: [(laughs)]
20. Sue: [(laughs)]

An image of Sue's homemade gift box can be found in Appendix 12. Luke describes Sue's date in Interview 1.3, and in the extract above describes the gift that Sue made for him – a love letter divided across five small boxes, each one accompanied by a small symbolic gift representing the theme of that letter. Luke repeats twice that this kind of meaningful, homemade (and therefore effort-laden) gift is typical of Sue: "she likes to make little (.) gifts and messages and stuff like that" and "this was (.) what she does". He therefore presents this date as representative of the way she normally romances him. This gift took a lot of effort to produce – Sue describes it in more detail in her individual post-event interview (Interview 1.4): "its- it takes (.) time [...] like doing little boxes and stuff, I have to do it after work when I come home, y'know? (.) and so like I'm ti:red". Therefore, in Extract 126 Luke positions the effort that Sue puts in to romancing him as extremely romantic. He positions this in an extremely positive light, as demonstrations of her love for him that make him feel "special" and "very, very loved".

In the extract that follows, Johan presents himself as supporting Anika's active role in orchestrating the romance in their relationship. He presents Anika as feeling ashamed "sometimes" of being a "bit dominant"; which, as we saw in Chapter 6, is non-normative and therefore transgressive (the psychological costs of the active-woman/passive-man construction of partnership will be discussed in Section 7.3.2.3 below). He then describes how he reassures her:



EXTRACT 127: INTERVIEW 4.4

1. Johan: sometimes sh- she feels that um .hhh she's a bit dominant.
2. Nicky: Okay.
3. Johan: Ja so I said to her 'no man, I'm laid back', I mean if you- if you wanna do something
4. you wanna do it, if you wanna [plan] something, you wanna plan it' .hhh [ and] with
5. Nicky: [Mm.] [Cool]
6. Johan: me if I feel I wanna go do something then I'll tune her and then we go .hhh=
7. Nicky: =Okay.
8. Johan: if you know so it's ja (.) it's nothing about being dominant or wearing the pants
9. Nicky: Ja=
10. Johan: =or whatever [thing] like that you know just (.) ja. You have to feel that you can
11. Nicky: [ Ja. ]
12. Johan: also do some things you wanna do something 'cause [I mean] a woman also
13. Nicky: [ Mhm ]
14. Johan: shouldn't be a puppet .hhh
15. Nicky: Mhm=
16. Johan: = 'cause I mean (.) like the guy could just do with her what he wants to or=
17. Nicky: =Mm=
18. Johan:
19. =.hh everything he says goes
20. Nicky: Ja
21. Johan: in the end of the day- 'cause I mean (.) well I- I personally wouldn't want a
22. relationship like that you know [where] you just .hhh I can't imagine you just sitting
23. Nicky: [ Ja. ]
24. Johan: there and she just keeps quiet and she doesn't talk back or
25. Nicky: Ja=
26. Johan: =she can't=
27. Nicky: =disagree with you [h(h)hh]
28. Johan: [ d- ja ] disagree with you or think for herself [...]
29. Nicky: Ja, ja (.) okay cool .hhh so do you think um (.) .hh like a successful relationship is
30. more about being a partner? (.) sort of than a
31. Johan: Ja [par]tner than being [ja]
32. Nicky: [so] [ja] okay cool interesting

To understand the context of this extract, Johan had just been asked what a romantic woman was (see Question 6, Appendix 7D), and described an active romantic woman in highly stigmatised terms, where:

Johan: "women really aren't the- the romantic ones [...] I see a woman (.) they als- even though that they do things out of their own? (.) ((Nicky: Mhm)) really it usually comes down to it's the whole thing the m- it's the man's job [...] so I think public has actually made it [...] being seen as (.) women are being forward or cheap or slutty [...] if they do things that guys maybe do" (Interview 4.4).

This will be explored in detail in a section that follows (Section 7.3.2.3).

However, at this point of the interview, Johan is describing women generally (i.e. a

description with low personal accountability) and positions romantic femininity as undesirable because of the way society stigmatises it. I then ask him “Do you think that changes when you guys are like (.) so t- t- take you guys for example, do you think it’s changed now that you’re in an established relationship”? This shifts the focus of his answer explicitly from general to specific, and implicates him directly in any opinion that follows. We thus see the shift that appears in Extract 127 above.

At the start of Extract 127, Johan presents himself as being individually resistant to the idea that women should not romance men. He positions the concern about being non-normative as coming from her, not from him; this positions himself as being non-critical of the active role she plays. Instead, this positioning allows him to construct himself as supportive, which, in light of the dialogue that preceded Extract 127, could be seen as repair work. Johan then argues explicitly that he reassures Anika by saying “no man, I’m laid back”, positioning himself as different to men in general, and as not being concerned (or threatened) when she actively romances him.

He then draws from their collective social identities in order to present himself *as a man* contesting the status quo for *women* (“a women also shouldn’t be a puppet” – that is, as directly resisting the normative ideals of an active romantic masculinity and a passive romantic femininity. According to our definition above, this could be seen as a shift towards collective resistance. He uses progressive, gender-equitable arguments as to why, as a man, he should not try to deter Anika from being-romantic. Through this defence, Johan protects himself from any potential critiques of him or their relationship, for example, in terms of it being one-sided or being lazy/ unromantic and so forth.

In this section we have seen how at times Johan and Luke presented the active romancing they receive from their partners in an extremely positive light, thus resisting normative ideals about how men and women should ‘behave’ while being-romantic. While these constructions were mostly individualized, there was some evidence of collective resistance, which has the power to be transformative, as argued in the literature review above. These constructions present the woman partner as the one who is

both 'better equipped' and 'more interested/invested in' planning romantic events, which assists in justifying their non-normative relationships.

However, the men did not take one singular stance in their interviews, but instead moved between different arguments and ways of positioning active romantic women. We have just looked at the more positive constructions and the discursive effect they had. I will now turn to the ways that Johan and Luke minimised or denied the active role of their partners.

#### 7.3.2.2.2. Minimisers or denials

Instances could be found where Luke and Johan offered statements which directly contradicted the overall narratives of their relationship they were constructing; namely, that *they* were the ones who orchestrated romance. For example, Luke says to Strauss "Usually I would plan everything" (Interview 1.2). Johan says to Strauss that "if it comes romanticic in a sense of having a romantic (.) dinner or something like that [...] if you (.) take her to Spur she's happy [...] she's con- a very b- (.) down to earth type of girl so you don't really need to do much to- to .hhh impress her" (Interview 4.1). In both of these instances, participants are emphasising *their agency* in orchestrating romance (and implying that if more direct action was needed to impress then they would be up to the challenge), which directly contradicts the overall way their relationships are presented in the interviews. Additionally, in both cases these statements were made to Strauss, the male interviewer, early in the pre-event interview (which was the first interview conducted with each participant). I would argue that because of these two contextual influences – (a) talking to another man about romance; and (b) their first interview – these could therefore be understood as displays of more normative forms of masculinity appropriate to this context (in this case, of the active, agentic romantic masculinity described in Chapter 6). However, once a rapport had been built up with Strauss and later with me, different kinds of stories emerged, which positioned Luke and Johan as mostly *receiving romance*.

These blatant denials were rare and, in contrast, minimisations of their partners' active romancing was a more common tactic, particularly by glossing Sue and

Anika's romancing in a different, slightly negative light. For example, at multiple points across the data set, Luke constructed Sue's active romancing as stemming from a need to be in control. For example, in interview 1.3, Luke says – amidst laughter from Sue and myself – “I liked having secrecy be part of my one because (.) Sue (.) controls (.) <everything> (.) Sue has to be the one in control, I CANNOT plan something because Sue will take over (.) so there's no point even trying, >I just do a bad job on purpose now< it doesn't matter what I do, Sue will take over ((laughs))”.

In interview 1.2, Luke says “Sue is one of those people that (.) like (.) plans when they- she hates not being in control, she has to be in control and she plans things like metic-ulously? [...] she gets- get a bit bleak? (.) if things don't go on <as she planned>”. Later in interview 1.2, Luke continues: “I must make sure I fall in to her plan for her to be happy and meet her expectations (.) but I don't really have expectations [...] I just, < let her plan things> ((Strauss and Luke laugh)) [...] I(h)'m not fa::zed, she is, she must plan them”.

This construction is re-iterated in the following extract from Interview 1.5. I ask Luke “what was it like planning something like this?” He states “it was fun ((Nicky: Yeah?)) I get to plan something, I don't plan stuff often”. I then ask “Do you think that's something you gonna wanna er- do more of?” and Luke responds “U::M I don't think I enjoy planning that much ((Nicky: laughs))”. In other words, for Luke, being the active romancer is optional and he is able to opt out in the knowledge that she will “take over” and ensure the date/social gathering is a success.

While Luke's construction of Sue as “control(ling)” was positioned and responded to as a joke in the interviews, it was referred to several times and seems to be an anchoring point in his construction of their relationship and style of being-romantic. Luke positions Sue as the one who controls and plans everything; but it is presented as more than simply being the active romancer – it is presented as almost pathological. He links her active romancing to a need to “control” the details of dates and other social occasions. This becomes a rhetorical device to justify his “letting” her be in control, because she “has to be the one in control”; “Sue will take over”; “there's no point even trying”; she is the one who is “fazed” – therefore, she is the one who must be (is left to be?) responsible for it. This has

an individualizing effect – she is presented as organising social and romantic events because of some intra-psychic need to have things ‘go perfectly’, which renders less visible the fact that generally, in patriarchal societies, women are responsible for being the ‘social secretaries’ of relationships and are judged on that basis (see Chapter 6; Bryson, 2005; Johnson, 1992; Natalier, 2004; Price, 2015; Wood & Rhodes, 1992). So what is the subject position available to her? Because he is not fazed, she *has to be*. As argued above, women are under normative pressure to maintain the psychological health of their relationships, therefore one could argue that it would reflect badly on Sue if these social occasions went badly – whether she was actually the one organising it or not. Therefore, this construction of Sue’s active of romancing as being due to a ‘pathological need for control’ glosses any underlying gender dynamics at play in this context and relieves Luke of responsibility and labour.

I will now discuss Johan’s use of minimisations with regards to Anika’s active romancing. As argued in the section above, Johan positions Anika’s romancing of him in an extremely positive light. However, he also argues against the kinds of formal dates that take a great deal of planning. He says “our dates are mostly spontaneous [...] we’ve seen m- m- m- more than one time that you can’t (.) plan something [...] there’s a couple of times that we wanted to go to do something and it just doesn’t work out ((Nicky: Ja)) The times that we do something spontaneously, that’s when it’s the most fun” (Interview, 4.3).

Johan reiterates this in Interview 4.4: “now ‘cause you don’t have a plan .hh (.) you know like say anything will do, anything is fun eh- but ja (that’s) .hh I think you put more stress on yourself when you have a plan? ((Nicky: Mhm?)) because now .hh you want to do it because you planned for it [...] you have to be .hh there this time [...] as soon as you start la- running late as well you starting to stress [...] but [...] if you do something spontaneously [...] there’s no stress I mean if you don’t do it .hhh ‘aah we can always do it next time’, you know”.

However, this is not a neutral argument. Anika is positioned by both Johan and herself as being the one who orchestrates those romantic events which take a great deal of planning. Therefore this ‘over-planning’ is aligned with Anika’s style of being

romantic and is simultaneously positioned by Johan as negative. In an implied contrast to Anika's version of romance, Johan argues that "the times that we do something spontaneously that's when it's the most fun" (Interview 4.3). This is presented as a more ideal version of romance, as its fluidity makes it less likely to lead to disappointment. Thus, there is a very subtle critique of her style of romancing him, arguing that being so prescriptive opens oneself up to failure. This devalues and irrationalises Anika's version of romance, and provides a means of defending his comparative lack of active romancing.

However, her version of romance was still constructed as being vital to defining key points of their relationship, such as the celebration of anniversaries and birthdays. For example, Anika says in Interview 4.3 that "for anniversaries we try to do (. . .) planned thing". Therefore, Anika's active romancing is critical to their broader relationship narrative. However, Johan's version of preferred romance requires minimal effort compared to the grand romance that Anika orchestrates. Therefore, there remains a higher burden of cost (in terms of time, effort and money) on her, which is being devalued here.

In this section I have argued that Luke and Johan used strategies which variously supported or minimised the active romancing of their partners. While their main approach was to endorse and support it, there was a subtle underlying construction which detracted from and minimised the woman's romance. While these tactics were relationship-specific, the discursive effect was similar in both cases. This suggests resistance to being placed in the position of being-romanced, which we argued above was feminizing and thus suggests there is a cost or negative consequence for men to be romanced by women.

Therefore, I will next discuss the constructed costs on the woman and her partner where a woman is the active romancer. It will be argued that both men and women partners were constructed as being in a psychologically 'tricky' position as a result of the woman being active in orchestrating romance. This will then be discussed in terms of how legitimate women's resistance to the affordances of a passive romantic femininity were constructed as being.

### 7.3.2.3. The costs of active romantic femininity

Participants constructed an active romantic femininity as being problematic both for the women and men partners (cf. Schippers discussion of male femininities and pariah femininities, regarding the consequences of men performing feminized identities and women masculinized identities, respectively). These differing costs will now be discussed, first for the women and then for the men.

#### 7.3.2.3.1. The stigma of being an active romantic woman

In addition to the justificatory rhetoric described above, participants positioned an active romantic femininity as incurring certain psychological costs for the women, which suggests this position may be problematic. In Sue's case, both Sue and Luke describe this role as making her very stressed or anxious. In Anika's case, both Johan and Anika orient to the social stigma of being a woman who actively romances their partner. Additionally, for both women, the effort required to be-romantic seemed much greater than it did for active men orchestrating similar romantic endeavours across the data set. These will now be explored in more detail.

Luke frequently described Sue as becoming stressed or anxious on dates or prior to other social events, which was constructed as resulting from her desire to control them to ensure their success. As stated above in the section on minimisers, Luke says in interview 1.2 that Sue "gets- get a bit bleak? (.) if things don't go on <as she planned>" and that she gets "fazed" about how successful the date is. Later in this interview, Luke says:

#### EXTRACT 128: INTERVIEW 1.2

Luke: "however the date goe:s or whatever happens in the evening, I'm (.) I'll (.) look back and go 'that was nice', where she'll like (.) AFTERwards be like 'ah we could have done this, or this should have happened and actually I wanted this to happen and it happened this wa::y', and I'm like (.) ((knocks once on table)) I'm- so I wanna make sure everything happens right so she doesn't do that for the next week".

Luke's construction was discussed above as a strategy to minimise Sue's active romantic femininity. It also, however, positions her as becoming very stressed about

making things perfect, and as “go(ing) on and on” (Luke, interview 1.2) about it if it is not. In contrast, when Luke plans a date Sue is positioned as “get(ting) to switch off” and can “just relax and enjoy it” (Interview 1.3). This is re-iterated in Interview 1.5, where Luke suggests that as a result of being able to “switch off”, Sue is able to not only feel more “comfortable”, but is more “touchy” as a result – which feeds into Luke’s ‘love language’, physical intimacy. This construction of Sue positions her-being-romanced as the *natural order*, thus confirming and reinforcing the broader, conventional discourse of the active man and passive woman and suggests at some level that Sue’s active romancing (and difficulties in accepting contingencies as they arise) is ‘wrong’. Thus, this construction positions accepting, receptive femininity as preferable to active femininity, which is positioned as a questionable, problematic and difficult to navigate alternative to mainstream romantic gender identities.

Sue generally rejects this presentation of herself, reformulating it as discussed in the justificatory rhetoric section above (see p. 308 on). However, at one point of Interview 1.3, she also orientates to feeling anxiety in orchestrating social occasions (both romantic and non-romantic):

**EXTRACT 129: INTERVIEW 1.3**

1. Sue: He was getting so sentimental, he was being like all like y’know ho:w like “what do
2. you remember from our first da:te, how did [you feel] getting rea:dy” and like all of
3. Nicky: [mm ]
4. Sue: that stuff [and I] was like “I don’t have a clue” [“Why you asking me this?” ]
5. Nicky: [ja ] [((laughs)) ]
6. Luke: [I was trying to set the moo:::d] ((small
7. laugh))
8. Nicky: Was that actually before he actually=
9. Luke: =[yes [j]-just before I proposed
10. Sue: =[yes [b]-before he proposes
11. Nicky: Oh ja?
12. Sue: And like (.) like I was getting all annoyed because he’s trying to get me to get out the
13. car=go walk on the beach=
14. Nicky: =ja
15. Sue: and like, I just want to sit and relax, [...] I’m (.) pretty much hosting this event<sup>62</sup> (.) so
16. [y’know (.) I’m thinking I don’t wanna put all this pressure on his mo::m [...] so like I’m
17. Luke: [((laughs))
18. Sue: stressing, I didn’t want to lea:ve (.) the house at first, and then his mom was like

<sup>62</sup> what she imagined to be his birthday party, which she was organizing for him (but which was actually their engagement party)



19. adamant that “no, we must go” [and all of that], so (.) u:m ja so like I’m sitting in the  
 20. Nicky: [okay. Ja ]  
 21. Sue: car and I just wanna relax, I just wanna >y’know< [((laughs))  
 22. Nicky: [((laughs))  
 23. Sue: NOT STRESS ABOUT [ANYTHING and he’s asking all these questions=  
 24. Nicky: [ja, ja =((laughs))

Sue is presented in this extract as being uncooperative in Luke’s efforts to create a romantic setting for him to propose. This may be seen as potentially jeopardising of Luke’s efforts in a crucial element of their broader life narrative (their engagement story) and could therefore open her to critique. This is managed in this extract by positioning her lack of cooperation in Luke’s proposal as being due to her anxiety over preparing for the party she was hosting for Luke. Therefore, she says that she “didn’t want to leave the house at first”; she refuses to “get out the car” to “walk on the beach”; and she rebuffs his attempts to reminisce about the start of their relationship (“I don’t have a clue. Why you asking me this?”). I contend that the key objective in this extract is to excuse and justify Sue’s non-collaboration with Luke’s efforts to “set the mood”, which could otherwise be argued to be putting his proposal in jeopardy. However, it also reveals the anxiety she feels when planning social events. Therefore, while this is the only example in their interviews where Sue refers to any emotional cost of her planning social/ romantic events, I would argue this extract is significant.

Sue positions herself as initially reluctant to leave the party preparation, as she feels responsible for it (“I don’t wanna put all this *pressure* on his mom”, emphasis added). Forced to leave, she then constructs herself as wanting to use this brief hiatus as an opportunity to relax (“I just wanna *relax... not stress* about anything”, emphasis added). This positions Luke’s “getting so sentimental” as inappropriate and her “annoy(ance)” with him as understandable in contrast. My added emphasis in these quotes show how planning events is positioned as stressful for her. While she generally argues for and justifies her active role in planning social and romantic events, she here constructs this role as having a psychological burden as well.

Anika and Johan also construct active romantic femininity as an identity which carries a psychological burden, but they align this burden not as being due to

individual reasons (as rationalised by Sue) or to the disruption of the social order (as drawn from Luke’s account), but rather because active romantic femininity is (unjustly) stigmatised against:

**EXTRACT 130 : INTERVIEW 4.5**

1. Nicky: okay to now turn it on the flip side w- how would you describe a romantic woman?
2. Anika: ((small laugh)) .hhh well I think a romantic woman is also a perspective thing [...] like
3. as I see myself as romantic [.hhh] um it sometimes end up as being bossy. They will
4. Nicky: [ Ja. ]
5. Okay?=  
6. Anika: =throw it around- so[ciety ] will throw it around that we are bossy [.hhh ]
7. Nicky: [Okay] [Right]
8. Anika: because we planned everything to the tee [...] [So] society .hhh um yes they do have
9. Nicky: [Ja]
10. Anika: a specific way (.) that [you] have to look, you have to dress, you have to do this [.hhh]
11. Nicky: [ Ja.] [ Ja. ]
12. Anika: you have to be .hhh dressed in this [...] and then (.) if you go and you s- you’re a (.)
13. against all of that you’re a rebel.
14. Nicky: Okay
15. Anika: Or if you are a over-romantic person planning everything to the tee [.hhh] you are
16. Nicky: [Mm ]
17. Anika: bossy.
18. Nicky: Okay=  
19. Anika: =because now you’re bossing (.) your husband around [or .hh]h you’re making
20. Nicky: [Okay.]
21. Anika: all the decisions

In this extract, Anika distinguishes between two kinds of resistance, and positions each of these as non-normative and problematic in the eyes of “society”. Firstly, she contrasts how a romantic woman is ‘supposed’ to “look” and act (lines 10, 12, 13) with the resistant position (being “against all that”) which is framed as being a “rebel”. Secondly, she frames an active romantic femininity as problematic not only for being “over-romantic” and “planning everything to the tee” – itself a critique – but because the woman is constructed as being “bossy” and “bossing your husband around”. Anika differentiates between the two available roles for women – that of being accepting and complicit, versus being resistant and alternative and constructs these as two dichotomous options with no socially acceptable middle ground available to her. The discursive effect of this argument is to present society’s construction as extremist and unjust, and justifies her (non-normative) rejection of this in favour of a more active romantic femininity.

In Extract 127 (p. 318) above, Johan positions society's expectation of women in a similar way to Anika (Extract 130). Here, again, two dichotomous positions are presented as being available to women: passive, as the accepted or preferred form of romantic femininity; versus active and stigmatised (being "forward", "cheap", "slutty"). Anika's discomfort at being an active romantic woman is mentioned here (feeling a "bit dominant" or "wearing the pants"). Johan reassures her by saying "no man, I'm laid back". "Being dominant" and "wearing the pants" here refers to being masculinized, which, according to Schippers, means that the corresponding position (that of receiving romance) would be feminizing. Johan's response (of being "laid back") works to provide reassurance that he is not going to become upset or feel his masculinity is threatened by this reversal of roles and/or power. By arguing that she only *appears* "bossy" in contrast to his extreme laid-backness, Johan does not challenge the notion that being bossy is a negative position for a woman – just that Anika only *appears* to be bossy in relation to him.

However, Johan does argue that society's preferred form of romantic femininity – which he constructed as being a "puppet" – is undesirable to him (he "personally wouldn't want a relationship like that"). He positions the power that would come with a traditional, patriarchal romantic relationship (where "everything he says goes") as being psychologically unhealthy and undesirable. In contrast, a relationship where both partners have a hand in the production of romance is positioned not only as preferable for him but a healthier alternative to society's construction of the ideal romantic man and woman.

I have suggested here that all four of the participants within these two couples where the woman was positioned as being the active romancer positioned an active romantic femininity as incurring certain identity costs for the women (the costs for the men will be discussed in the next section). I demonstrated that in Sue's case, both Sue and Luke describe this active romantic femininity as having a psychological burden. In Anika's case, both Johan and Anika orient to a broader social stigma of being a woman who actively romances their partner, leading to her feeling uncomfortable or judged for "wearing the pants" in their relationship (Extract 127, Line 8, p. 318).

There also appeared to be an additional implicit burden on active romantic women, in that it appeared that in comparison to men’s romance, women’s romance appeared to require more effort to produce. In contrast, the given examples of instances of romantic masculinity would typically involve less effort but the expenditure of money. If we return to some of the examples given in Chapter 4, illustrating the different forms of romance produced by participants, and consider more closely *who* was doing *what*, then we can see there is a gendered difference in how much work it takes to produce this romance:

**TABLE 5: COMPARISON OF ROMANTIC GESTURES BY GENDER AND EFFORT VERSUS SPENDING OF MONEY**

Activity primarily involves effort	Activity primarily involves spending of money
handmade gifts (Sue, Couple 1; Louise, Couple 3; Anika, Couple 4)	more expensive purchased gifts (examples: boots and perfume by Johan, Couple 4; superhero t-shirts by Sue, Couple 1; Africa pendant by Eddie, Couple 2; tickets for the Playhouse by Tom, Couple 5)
cooking surprise meals for their partners (Robyn, Couple 2; Louise, Couple 3; Anika, Couple 4; and Heidi, Couple 5); making him lunch (Robyn, Couple 2), breakfast (Heidi, Couple 5), or coffee (Tom, Couple 5)	surprising partners at work with flowers (Louise and Bruce, Couple 3)
running a candlelit bath for their partner (Bruce, Couple 3)	take them out for coffee or for lunch (Luke, Couple 1; Heidi, Couple 5)
Number of examples from women: 9	Number of examples from women: 3
Number of examples from men: 2	Number of examples from men: 5

While there is not much of a difference across genders in the examples of romantic gestures primarily requiring money to produce, this was not the case for romantic gestures requiring effort. Looking at the latter, we see that typically more examples were given of these kinds of gestures from women when compared to men. Additionally, this difference in effort seems to extend to the orchestration of grand romance as well, as can be seen in the following extract:

EXTRACT 131: INTERVIEW 2.2

1. Strauss: Who do you think >usually< like <you know> initiates:?
2. Eddie: (.) U:m:? (.) I think on the s- on the general (.) small scale would be Robyn [...] um
3. the sort of gra:nder, bi:gger things I do.
4. Strauss: Okay.
5. Eddie: (.) Ja like (.)
6. Strauss: Wha- wha- what would you say'd be like a- a bigger thing, what would you see as (.)
7. Eddie: Well I mean (.) f- (.) for example our last anniversary .hhh↑ like (.) Robyn will say no
8. she's doing something the week before and we'll have- like she'll [make] me a nice
9. Strauss: [Mm. ]
10. Eddie: dinner [that] kinda thing .hhh and (.) my (mind-set) is like .hhh (.) okay on the day (.)
11. Strauss: [Mm]
12. Eddie: we go spend a night in a:: like (.) <a nice- hotel- or something>=
13. Strauss: =Mm
14. Eddie: (.) like I:: (.) ja I'm not really good at the small-scale romantic £all [the time]£ kinda
15. Strauss: [ Okay ]
16. Eddie: thing.
17. Strauss: Okay=
18. Eddie: = I'm pretty terrible at that, I'm prob'ly a bit of a ba::stard mo(h)st of
19. [the ti(h)me .hhh bu(h)t I tr(h)y make up for it with a]
20. Strauss: [ ((laughs)) .hhh ((laughs)) ] .hhh
21. Eddie: the top of the (graph) (.) [£(just) once in a whi(h)le£ ((small laugh)) .h]hh ja but (uh) (.)
22. Strauss: [ ((laughs)) .hhh ]
23. Eddie: a::nd hhh (.) (quite to) (.) I don't know it seems though I do kind of (.) throw (.) or buy
24. her something (.) [like (to) (me that) (.) .hh but I- I- I like to think I'm attentive enough
25. Strauss: [Mm

In this extract, Eddie positions himself as doing 'big' romantic things on occasion, which serve to 'make up for' any lapses in attentiveness in their day-to-day lives. These bigger things are minimised and positioned as a gesture which is "throw(n)" her way (line 23). In contrast to this construction, Anika and Sue are both positioned as putting in a lot more effort into their grand dates for their partners (refer to the evidence presented above in Section 7.3.2.1.1). This is even more evident in the dates they planned for the study. Both Anika and Sue crafted something hand-made for the date (a 'menu' of planned activities and a love letter divided across hand-made boxes, respectively) and planned multiple activities for the date, compared to the majority of other participants who, for the most part, booked a table at a restaurant.

In this section I have discussed the constructed 'costs' of an active romantic femininity – that it had psychological costs, in terms of causing stress or anxiety (Sue) or carried social stigma (Anika); as well as a cost in terms of the amount of effort it seemed to

require from women in comparison to men. I will now discuss how men as the recipients of romance were constructed.

#### 7.3.2.3.2. Men as the passive partner: How was this defended and justified?’

The position of *being-romanced as a man* was also constructed as being problematic. Firstly, similarly to the argument made above that active romantic women needed to put in more effort than a man on similar occasions, it seemed like romanced men also had to ‘do more’ than women when being-romanced. Both Luke and Johan discuss feeling a certain pressure to act appropriately on dates and to ensure their partner has as enjoyable a time as possible.

For example, Luke says “she’s one of those people who likes to plan everything and I must make sure I fall in to her plan for her to be happy and meet her expectations (.) but I don’t really have expectations [...] I just want everything to be right for her [...] because ja she (.) she lets things get to her, I don’t, so I just wanna make sure that things don’t get to her [...] (and) that everything’s right for her” (Interview 1.2).

Johan draws from a similar discourse in response to question 6F, Appendix 7A (“When you’re getting ready for a romantic event, what kinds of thoughts or feelings do you have?”). In response, Johan says “just try to make it special [...] and (.) keep her happy [...] make the wor- the night (.) work out basically” (Interview 4.1).

Both of the typically-romanced men therefore talk about ‘needing’ to try and make their partner happy, and live up to her expectations. In contrast, the three other men, when asked the same question in their interviews, do not respond like this at all. For example, Eddie talks about how Robyn will appreciate the effort he put in to get ready for the date, and he will be able to “jump on her coat tails”, meaning that he will find enjoyment in what they are doing if he can see she is enjoying it (Interview 2.2). Similarly, Tom says “it’s super-relaxing ‘cause I don’t have to do anything” (Interview 5.1). Thus, these other men, who are positioned as in their data sets as being more active in orchestrating romance, do not convey the same anxiety or pressure to manage their partner’s experience of a romantic date that she has planned.

As discussed above in Chapter 6, in their construction of a 'normal date', a romantic man's attentive chivalry is positioned as being to ensure their partner has a good night. However, as seen in extracts from Luke and Johan, when it is the date of the women who are typically the active romancers, these particular men *still* position themselves as *needing* to ensure she has a lovely time, where this rhetoric is absent in the men who are usually the active romancer when being-romanced for the study. As the partner receiving the romance (and furthermore, of a romance that is constructed as requiring more effort than the average date, and thus having 'higher stakes'), Luke and Johan possibly have limited power/agency to ensure the date goes well, because *she* is the one who plans the date. Therefore, Luke and Johan present themselves as trying to be attentive and chivalrous, but within the bounds of being the passive partner on a date and they are put in a position of needing to meet her expectations so she has a sense of it going well. They thus present themselves as being limited in the affordances they have access to, to trying to live up to her expectations on a date. This discourse is completely absent from the women's narratives (as typical 'receivers of romance' who do not have the added expectation of being attentive and chivalrous), and is limited in the other men's accounts.

There were other discourses signalling that being romanced as a man is psychologically difficult. First, I will describe the justifications given as to why Johan and Luke were unable to be the active romancers in their relationship, and will argue that the presence of these justifications suggests that there is some stigma attached to being-romanced, as a man. Secondly, I will look at some of the other defences that were drawn from to construct the men as *active in other ways* within the relationship. Finally, I will discuss how the participants from Couples 1 and 4 positioned Luke and Johan as being the active romancer in the 'really key' romantic instances (namely, initiating the relationship and proposing marriage) in their relationships, and show that this protects not only the men's activeness and agency (and therefore masculinity), but also presents men-as-active as being the 'correct' order of things. I will argue that these discourses protect how these men were presented and work to save face, but simultaneously undermine the women's attempts at resisting and re-imagining the romantic gendered order.

### 7.3.2.3.2.1. Justifications as to why the men cannot romance the women

It was found that there were some commonalities in the tactics used by the participants from Couple 1 and 4: Johan and Luke both gave justifications as to why they were unable to romance their partners, while Anika and Sue both emphasised the thoughtfulness and romance of their partner’s romantic gestures, frequently eliciting an “aw” response from the interviewer. As the latter served a slightly different discursive purpose, it will be explored further in the section that follows.

While both men gave justifications as to why they are unable to take the more active role in orchestrating romance, these differ slightly in their content. Johan, for example, in his descriptions of Anika’s romancing of him, weaves in excuses about why/how he is unable to do the same for her: “I came home, I was like ‘hey!’<sup>63</sup> [...] unfortunately in my (.) my case I can’t do that because .hhh I can’t work .hhh leave work earlier (.) .hhh and also I work a bit further than she does [...] very difficult for me [...] just impossible to do it” (Interview 4.1).

This is emphasised to Strauss in interview 4.1, and reiterated to me as well, in Interview 4.4: “I’ll come home ‘cause she finishes work before me, I’ll come home and [...] the whole (.) .hh sushi platter going there [...] and that is her being romantic”. In both extracts, Johan weaves in the justification that he is unable to surprise her in the way she does him, because she is always home before him. Other justifications included:

TABLE 6: CATALOGUE OF JOHAN’S JUSTIFICATIONS

Excuse	Extract
A lack of transport	Johan: “I mostly walk (.) .hhh ‘cause I take public transport to- to work [...] Ja so that’s it’s impossible for me to do that to her” (Interview 4.3).
Anika’s confusing or contradictory taste in items like perfume or jewellery,	Johan: “There’s certain things ja [...] especially with kinds fragrances I have no idea what she likes [...] She’s very difficult to buy something for [...] even last night we went there .hhh (.) sniff-sniff you know [...] ‘I like this (but no) I

<sup>63</sup> Referring to the celebration of their anniversary, where Anika had organized a sushi dinner, dressed up, and decorated the house in order to surprise him



making it difficult for him to (secretly) buy her a present	don't really like it' ((Nicky and Anika laugh)) [...] so I'm like ja I dunno (.) I dunno anymore" (Interview 4.3)
A lack of access to the house to set up a surprise for her	Johan: "she's always (.) at home before me ((Strauss: Okay)) so for me to be able to do something romantic say for instance when she walks into the house everything is there ((Strauss: like in the movies, laughs)) Ja like in the movies (.) it's gonna be impossible [...] and I also don't have keys for the house" (Interview 4.1).
Financial restrictions	Johan: "and .hhh coming home and the whole house is full of <u>flowers</u> (.) like red roses like in the movies I mean ((Strauss: it kinda (.) puts you back)) ja I mean [...] you're gonna look at about five <u>grand</u> or something I mean that's just for the flo(h)wers ((Strauss: Ja)) so it's (.) unrealistic [...] for us normal people" (Interview 4.1).

These justifications serve a particular purpose in the interviews: they construct Johan as desiring to romance Anika, but that due to these constructed circumstances he is limited in his capacity to do so. This works to defend him from two potential critiques, namely of being an insensitive or uncaring partner, as well as defending his agency as a romantic man (because he *wants* to romance her, but cannot).

Luke defends himself in a different way. Through his construction of Sue as being anxious and controlling (as illustrated in Section 7.3.2.2.2), he provides a justification for why he does not actively romance her. For example, in Interview 1.3, Luke states "I CANNOT plan something because Sue will take over (.) so there's no point even trying, >I just do a bad job on purpose now< it doesn't matter what I do, Sue will take over ((laughs))". While this is taken up as a joke at the time (the statement is made amidst the laughter of Sue and myself), as argued in Section 7.3.2.2.2, it is repeated numerous times throughout his interviews, therefore suggesting it is a key line of defence for Luke in his construction of their relationship. Through this insinuation that Sue's control over their romantic (and social) activities is psychologically unhealthy, he provides justification for why he is not more active in initiating romance – he is unable to plan anything, because she "take(s) over".

These defences suggest that there was something problematic about being 'a man who is romanced by a woman' and, conversely, an agentic woman who is insufficiently accepting of her partner's romance attempts. In the following extract, we see the dilemma

of being ‘a man romanced by a woman’ in action. In this extract, Luke is describing his favourite moment from the experience of participating in the research process; namely, the intimacy arising from Sue’s date:

**EXTRACT 132: INTERVIEW 1.5**

1. Nicky: A- a- and as a whole, what was this experience like [...]
2. Luke: it was very good I didn’t realise how (.) nice having big dates was [...] I didn’t think it
3. would be like (.) it w- w- everything would be different, the whole atmosphere was
4. different [...] it was just more intimate [...] after Sue’s date I- I felt (.) I felt, very (.) I
5. felt a lot closer to Sue like [...] We had had this ama:zing time together [...]
6. Nicky: was that kind of like intimacy kind of like the two of you, like did that- was that what
7. made it romantic, or?=  
8. Luke: =Yes
9. Nicky: okay=  
10. Luke: =it would be [...] I definitely felt like a better connection
11. Nicky: okay

As demonstrated in Extract 19 (p. 140 of Section 4.3.1.3.2) and Extract 126 (p. 317 of Section 7.3.2.2) Extract 126, in Interview 1.3 Luke constructed Sue’s date as extremely romantic. To recap, Luke described her date’s venue as being a “larney little (.) hotel restaurant” which was “really nice”, “intimate” and with delicious food (the “steak [...] was amazing°... it was the best (.) meat I have ever had in my life”). In his one-on-one interview as cited in Extract 132, lines 1-11, he reiterates this construction of Sue’s date as being an extremely romantic date, aligning it with the discourses of the grand date described in Chapter 4; as well as with the resulting emotional intimacy positioned as arising from these kinds of dates, as explored in Chapter 5. The interview continues below:

**EXTRACT 132: INTERVIEW 1.5 (CONT.)**

11. Nicky: okay
12. Luke: I remember looking at her at the end of the night and just feeling so lucky
13. Nicky: °a:↓w°=  
14. Luke: =like it was just something- you not supposed to “a::w”
15. Nicky: ((laughs)) >I can’t help it< I’m a gi::rl
16. ((both laugh))
17. Nicky: Yea(h) so(h)rry
18. ((both laugh))
19. Luke: £you’re making me feel (.) gay£ (.) [((laughs))]
20. Nicky: [NO::: ] £not at all£
21. ((both laugh))
22. Nicky: [((laughs)) ]

Luke's description of the intimacy arising from Sue's romantic date elicits an "aw" response from me, similar to the "aw" responses described in Chapter 6, Section 6.3.2. In that section, I suggested that these "aw" responses affirmed women's description of their partner as a romantic hero, and themselves as the lucky and appreciative recipient of these romantic gestures. Excluding Extract 132, the only time "aw" was used by the interviewer was in this context – of affirming the romance and desirability of a man participant's act of romance (Interviews 1.1; 1.3; 2.3; 4.2; and 4.3). Furthermore – again, excluding Extract 132 – this expression was not used at all during the one-on-one interviews with the men, whether conducted by the man or woman interviewer. It was only used by the woman interviewer in the one-on-one interviews with the women (4 instances), or in the couple interviews (10 instances). This suggests that this "aw" response was gendered: it was performed to (primarily) to a female audience, in recognition of the value and desirability of the men's romantic gestures.

In the case of Extract 132, lines 12-22, I respond to Luke's description of the romance and emotional intimacy he experienced with an "aw" response. Luke resists my response, saying "you not supposed to 'a::w'" (Line 14) and "£you're making me feel (.) gay£" (Line 19). I would argue that "gay" here is not meant as a reference to homosexuality; but instead was intended in a colloquial sense to mean either being "lame" or "uncool" (Lalor & Rendle-Short, 2007; Winterman, 2008), or as a reference to being 'overly sentimental' or 'overly feminized' (Woodford, Howell, Kulick, & Silverschanz, 2013).

This has been argued to be a common use of this phrase amongst younger generations, compared to older generations who understand it solely as a reference to sexual orientation. For example, Woodford et al. (2013) found that the expression "that's so gay" was commonly used in this way by American male, heterosexual university students, with almost 90% of participants reporting having heard the expression used on campus and 65% of participants reporting having used the expression "that's so gay" at least once within the past year. The use of this expression in this sense has also been reported in similar age groups in the United Kingdom (McCormack, 2011; Winterman, 2008) and in Australia (Lalor

& Rendle-Short, 2008), and can therefore be argued to be a part of a global Westernized, Euro-centric discursive repertoire, which Luke, as a white English-speaking South African would likely be familiar with.

The use of this phrase has been argued to be problematic in terms of its potential psychological impact on the LGBTQ+<sup>64</sup> community (Woodford et al., 2013) and because of its impact on implicit attitudes towards homosexuality (Nicholas & Skinner, 2012). However, it has also been argued that younger generations do not automatically associate this expression with being homophobic, and it has even been shown to occur in positive, LGBTQ+ supportive contexts (McCormack, 2011; Pascoe, 2005; Woodford et al., 2013). Therefore, it has been suggested that its intended meaning depends on the cultural context and the user's intended effect (McCormack, 2011). Within contexts that are less tolerant of homosexuality, one of this term's key contemporary uses has been shown to regulate masculinity in heterosexual men (rather than to derogate homosexual men), and thus serves to police gender non-conformity (McCormack, 2011; Pascoe, 2005; Woodford et al., 2013).

Therefore, in the instance appearing in Extract 132, I would argue that Luke is drawing from this contemporary use of "gay" to resist the discursive effect of my "aw" response, which, I contend, was perceived to discursively impinge on the performance of his masculinity. That is, if we assume – according to the discourses discussed in Chapter 6 – that 'to romance' is masculine and 'to be romanced' is feminine, then his description of being-romanced as something he enjoyed and is grateful for (similar to the women participants described above), could be understood as problematic for the performance of his masculinity. My "aw" in this case is affirming the emotional vulnerability of his performance, which makes the feminization of his being-romanced too explicit. Thus, his remonstrations in lines 14 and 19 make sense only if we assume that, in this context, he was already in a vulnerable position in terms of his masculinity, and my "aw" response made his performance *too* feminized (cf. Allen's, 2007, concept of the macho-romantic tightrope). My reaction in line 15 is oriented to his critique of our production of gender in the interview,

---

<sup>64</sup> Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans\*, Intersex, Queer/Questioning and related communities

when I say “>I can’t help it< I’m a gi:::rl”. This can be seen as an attempt to attribute this ‘excess of femininity’ as being due to my gender and not his performance, but is not accepted by him, as he adds the further critique in line 19. This admonitory “you’re making me feel gay” further acts to regulate the presentation of his masculinity, and my reassurance in line 20 (“NO::: : £not at all£”) offers enough of a repair to allow Luke to continue his narrative:

**EXTRACT 132: INTERVIEW 1.5 (CONT.)**

22. Nicky: [((laughs)) ]  
 23. Luke: [(there’s) £there was- there] was£ definitely- I remember like ja just looking at her  
 24. like “wow this is amazing”  
 25. Nicky: mhm  
 26. Luke: I remember (immediately after) just walking on the beach I- I just remember thinking I  
 27. c- “A::h (.) I can’t believe I’m marrying her, this is <ama::z:ing>=  
 28. Nicky: =a:w  
 29. Luke: like that’s what I was thinking [((laughs)) ]<sup>65</sup>  
 30. Nicky: [sorry ((laughs)) sor- sorry ] ((laughs)) (.) Cool. Sorry.  
 31. I’ll be more (.) [ma↓nly (.) but u:::m that’s-] that’s great though. That’s- that’s goo:d  
 32. Luke: [((laughs)) ]

Luke tries to continue his description of her date, but I (unintentionally) slip out another “a:w” in line 28. I then attempt further repair work (“I’ll try to be more ma↓nly”, line 31) and then offer endorsement (“that’s great though. That’s- that’s goo:d”, line 31) in an attempt to further repair my unintended “aw” response. My choice of repairs suggests that we were mutually responding to the underlying gender dynamics at play, and that the interpretation of the use of “gay” in this context is meant to regulate the presentation of his masculinity, rather than being a reference to homosexuality *per se*.

In Extract 132, the implications for Luke’s production of himself as a heterosexual, masculine subject who is simultaneously being-romanced is evident. I have aimed to show that being-romanced is a feminizing position to be in, based on Luke’s resistance to my “aw” response which he argues is feminizing him too much. A potential alternative analysis of this interaction might aim to suggest that the “aw” response is in response to his endorsement of the intimacy and a sentimental gratitude – not any

<sup>65</sup> His laughter was in response to my making a face, as I realized I had unintentionally said “aw” again

underlying gender dynamics such as the feminization of a man-being-romanced. However, similar statements from the men-who-romanced did not receive a similar response from myself – but similar statements from romanced women did. Additionally, the men who were typically the romancers in their relationships did not exhibit this same vulnerability/reactiveness when discussing the intimacy, and did not enlist the numerous justifications, minimisers and defences evident in Couples 1 and 4, which were used to protect the masculinity of Luke and Johan. This suggests that my interpretation of Extract 132 as being the result of the feminization of a man-being-romanced is likely to be a reasonable one.

Next, I will briefly explore some of the other ways that these romanced men's agency was protected by the women participants; and then I will show that the men's agency in traditionally important aspects of heterosexual relationships – namely initiating the relationship and proposing marriage – was preserved and emphasised in the data. I will suggest that these two arguments worked to defend against the feminisation of the romanced men.

#### 7.3.2.3.2.2. Defence of the men's agency

As suggested above, there were two key aspects to the defences made of the men's agency in Couples 1 and 4. Firstly, general defences were provided by Anika and Sue, who both worked to present their partners as romantic *in their own way*, that is, in alternative ways to the discourses described in Chapter 6. Secondly, specific defences were provided by Couple 1 and 4, which asserted the men's agency and control over two key points of their relationship narratives: how they became a couple, and how they got engaged.

Firstly, Sue and Anika both give (some) examples of romantic gestures made by their partners: for example, Sue states that Luke will “buy me little chocolates and sweets and [...] little teddies or y'know, not very often but he does it in moments where it's like 'okay wow' and I actually (.) <appreciate it> [...] he actually surprised me at work yesterday with lunch ((Nicky: A:::w ((both laugh)) That's so sweet))” (Interview 1.1). These gestures are positioned as intentionally mirroring her love language, to ensure that she

feels loved. Therefore, rather than the act itself, it is the effort and symbolism behind the act which is presented as important to Sue.

Anika makes a few limited references to direct ways that Johan romances her, for example: “he comes over sometimes as very .hhh nonchalant [...] but it um ja he did he did plan things for last night [...] Johan is like that [...] (he) will have (.) a general plan [...] if things go wrong (.) they can always have another plan [...] they try and see what you like .hhh and then they would (.) get something close (.) enough to what you like ((Nicky: Mhm)) .hhh It’s >not necessarily< always <what you like> or what you prefe: ↑r (.) or what you would’ve even thought about yourse ↑f .hhh ((Nicky: £Okay?£)) but it’s (.) at the end of the day it’s just as special” (Interview 4.5). Here Anika is de-emphasising the actual gestures that Johan makes (suggesting that it is not always “what you like”), and instead emphasising that it is the intention and effort that makes it special for her. Note how this constructs romance as a joint project between a (potentially bumbling) agentic man and a receptive woman willing to accept things as special, even if they are not what she would have liked, preferred, or even thought of herself. It is the woman’s receptiveness that produces romance as much (or more than) the man’s agency.

In both instances, it is the effort that is positioned as important, rather than the acts themselves, and the effort is receptively constructed as making them feel loved and appreciated. Furthermore, to a greater extent than the other women, Sue and Anika draw from the soulmate discourse to position their partners as being accepting of them in an exceptional way – of making them feel comfortable *just the way they are*. The way her partner makes her feel is thus constructed as central to the romance of their relationship in both of these instances, rather than any specific thing he does.

For example, Anika says that “I’m very comfortable with him ((Nicky: Ja)) and he accepts me for who I am [...] being the person he is [...] he will tell me I’m the most beautiful girl in the world, or he will just kiss me (.) on the cheeks” (Interview 4.2).

Similarly, Sue states that “for both of us, we’ve never really (.) judged each other [...] he’s never put pressure on me, for anything [...] He’s always made the effort, no matter what ((Nicky: ja)) especially with him being on his motorbike? Like, he used to ride

here in the rain and the cold ((Nicky: ja)) Y'know? All sorts o- of weather and (.) come through y'know just to see me, even if it was just for like, ten minutes ((Nicky: wo:::::w)) [...] For him, he just knew from the beginning it was- ((Nicky: Mm)) it was a relationship worth doing <anything> for [...] this relationship is the first time I've had someone who's actually (.) wanted me for like, me:::, like m- <exactly who I am> [...] like I look at lots of my friends' relationships and it's just like I can't believe how blessed and how lucky I am to have someone's who y'know ((Nicky: Ja)) so genuine [...] and not y'know just trying to do some things to make me happy" (Interview 1.1).

Thus, the women de-emphasise the importance of explicit gestures from men, and rather highlight the acceptance from their partners and the effort behind the gestures they *do* make, as being central to the idealised romanticism of their relationships. Sue and Anika therefore draw from the soulmate discourse to position their partners in an idealised way, which circumnavigates any potential discursive 'trouble' regarding whether he actively romances her or not. Therefore he is positioned as agentic in other ways, which demonstrate his love for her.

Finally, Johan and Luke's agency are protected in one other key way: by presenting them as being responsible for the initiation of the relationship and the formalising of their relationship, by proposing to the women. Therefore, in these two instances that are key to their larger life narrative as a couple, the men were 'still' positioned as being active in the traditional sense.

For couples 2, 3 and 5, the women took notice of their (prospective) partner, made themselves available for pursuit by him, but made sure they were not too forward in this. The men were constructed as being the pursuers: they initiated social contact outside of the setting in which they routinely saw each other; and/or asked for the woman's phone number; and/or initiated a conversation with the woman. This was described as eventually leading to the man formalising the relationship, by asking the woman to be his girlfriend.

For the two 'deviant' couples of Couple 1 and 4, similar tactics are used to describe how their relationships began. Anika describes having seen Johan around their community, but not as having had much contact with him. One day, she performed a solo in



church, and Johan came up to her afterwards to compliment her singing. The next day, she went on to Facebook to look at his profile. This served as a catalyst for the initiation of their relationship:

EXTRACT 133: INTERVIEW 4.2

1. Anika: U:::M so I went, onto Facebook and I looked at his picture and I::: hhh just looked
2. who he was, [what's about him .hh (.) a:nd (.) I dunno how it happened? But you
3. Nicky: [mm
4. Anika: know how technology sometimes [work?
5. Nicky: [ja- ja?
6. Anika: .hh I INVITED him
7. Nicky: okay
8. Anika: °I didn't invite him?°
9. Nicky: ja(h)
10. Anika: but (.) like (.)
11. Nicky: your profile sent [out an invite?
12. Anika: [MY PROFILE, [ja, it sent out an invite and=
13. Nicky: [(laughs)) =that's ama::zing
14. Anika: AND (.) he actually replied the next day [...] and we spoke and we spoke and we just
15. connected [...] he said 'NO, I want to meet you'

Anika positions Johan as being active and agentic in his pursuit of her: he initially approaches her to start a conversation and he tells her “I want to meet you” (line 15). Her Facebook friend request is initially phrased actively and both the participant and interviewer orient to this as a particularly problematic construction – as her pursuing him. Instead they jointly renegotiate it as passive (“MY PROFILE ... sent out an invite”) – something that was *unintended* on her part, but that resulted in contact and thus the initiation of their relationship. By positioning the Facebook friend request as something coordinated by technology (sending a digital signal of availability) it preserves the narrative of him pursuing her. This construction of Johan as having the fate of the relationship in his hands is continued below:

EXTRACT 133: INTERVIEW 4.2 (CONT.)

15. Anika: connected [...] he said 'NO, I want to meet you'
16. Nicky: okay? [...] How did [the relationship progress further?
17. Anika: [okay What we did then (.) hh he

18. immediately said to me (.) [he is with me, you know [that thing they call it *saamwees*<sup>66</sup>  
 19. Nicky: [mm? [O:kay  
 20. Anika: [...] so he said to me (.) u:m (.) he wanted to get me something  
 21. Nicky: mhm  
 22. Anika: to actually tell me that (.) he (.) we now official [...] he got m-me the most beautiful  
 23. earrings [...] he said to me 'come into er- just come into my room' [...] he was very  
 24. serious, I mean (.) I ACTUALLY thought he was breaking [up with me type of serious,  
 25. Nicky: [o::h go:::sh:::, ja  
 26. Anika: he was serious [...] and he said to me (.) 'will you go(h) ou(h)(h)t wi(h)(h)th me(h)(h)'  
 27. [and he gave me the earrings  
 28. Nicky: [oh no

Again, Johan is positioned as being the one who controlled the level of intimacy and commitment of the relationship. Anika is constructed as being subject to his decisions, which puts all of the power in his hands.

In couple 1, Sue and Luke are also positioned as following this trope of the man pursuing the woman. Sue, as the friend of Luke's younger sister, is constructed as not having noticed that Luke had been trying to flirt with her (Interviews 1.1, 1.2). Eventually, he orchestrates an evening together with Sue, his sister and his friends ("he's gonna get his mates and they were gonna try and crash our little (.) girl evening", Sue, Interview 1.1), and Sue realizes that he is interested in her:

**EXTRACT 134: INTERVIEW 1.1**

Sue: "I started realising that y'know he was actually being (.) y'know (.) super-friendly [...] he put his hand on my lap and everyone was joking? And like (.) I smacked (.) his hand? [...] so then he got a bit distant [...] so eventually I put my hand on his lap and then (.) ja (.) like after that we (.) just (.) y'know we both were like "kay we're both interested in each other' [...] Then by the end of that evening, he(h) had asked me for (.) um (.) for my number? [...] the next night when he EVENTually sms'd me [...] how much he like y'know (.) he's (.) wants to make this work, and he's not gonna be in it just for the fun of it, kind of thing (.) um (.) .hh ja and my reply was just 'it's about damn time' ((shared laughter))".

In this instance as well, Luke is constructed as the pursuer, and Sue as the chaste and inert object of his interest. She protects her honour by batting his hand away, but gives him enough encouragement ("eventually I put my hand on his lap") to encourage further pursuit. Her restraint is emphasised by the construction of the next-day message as

<sup>66</sup> Afrikaans expression, translated literally means "together-ness"; refers to being in a romantic, committed relationship

arriving “eventually.” This description places them within the discursive bounds and affordances of the agentic romantic man and passive romantic woman, positioning their relationship as ‘typical’ in that regard.

Therefore, with both couples, the men are presented as the active partner who pursued the women originally and initiated a romantic relationship with them. They were also constructed as the ones who were positioned as formalising the relationship, by proposing to the women. Luke is positioned as going to extraordinary lengths to keep the proposal a secret from Sue: based on what she had told him, he described wanting to “propose in front of no one and then get her to her family or friends” (Luke, Interview 1.3). To keep it a secret, Luke “came up with this whole thing, on how I was planning to ask Sue >to marry me and everything< but it was all going to happen in December [...] and I’d actually planned it for November [...] I organised it on my birthday [...] so that she wouldn’t suspect why everyone was (.) w- o- organising something [...] so Sue planned my whole birthday party for me (.) with my family (.) which was actually our engagement party” (Luke, Interview 1.3). Luke then took her to a meaningful place (a beach-side restaurant where they had celebrated a key moment in their relationship) and proposed to her there.

With Johan’s proposal, one night while Anika was in her room getting ready for a date, he sat down with her parents and asked permission to propose to Anika. After “as they say in Afrikaans, *‘lees jy die viete voor*<sup>67</sup>” (Johan, Interview 4.3), the parents consented and when Anika came into the room she saw that “it was all hugs” (Johan, Interview 4.3), and “I knew something wa(h)s u(h)p” (Anika, Interview 4.3). Anika describes the actual proposal: “it’s very strange that my parents would be hugging him [...] I came down and then he s- he k- he took me (.) by the hand .hhh and he got onto his knee ((laughs)) and he just asked me ((small laugh)) ((Nicky: A:w, laughs))” (Interview 4.3). While the spectre of the stern parents dominates this narrative somewhat, the initiative is positioned as coming from Johan and Anika is positioned in a passive way in comparison.

---

<sup>67</sup> This is a reference to an Afrikaans saying, “*lees vir hom die Leviete voor*”, which refers to a ‘sugar-coated warning’. In this instance, Anika’s parents described the kind of behaviour they felt was appropriate in a son-in-law: “Our parents gave him a very big speech ((laughs)) You know that usual one .hhh if you ever hit my daughter I will ((laughs)) [.] you know [...] what is right, what is wrong [...] what I expect of you” (Anika, Interview 4.3)

In both instances therefore, the men are presented as agentic and as the ones who establish and direct the initiation and formalisation of the relationship, in a similar way to the other participants in this study. In other words, they are presented as acting in line with the idealised, stereotypical romantic man, as described in Chapter 6. In the light of their interview data as a whole, this assists in ‘balancing out’ the women partners’ active romantic femininity, by demonstrating that the men took an active role in the really key instances of their relationships. This protects the women, by not presenting them as being too “forward” (Johan, Interview 4.4); and it protects the men, by presenting them as active and agentic.

#### 7.4. Summary

In this chapter, I have examined instances of resistance to contextual romantic affordances and specifically to the discursive performative scripts of grand dates, as developed in Chapter 6. In the first part of the discussion, I examined instances of resistance, namely, women participants’ resistance to expectations of women’s appearance on a date; and men participants’ resistance to expectations of men’s attentiveness and chivalry to women while on a date. However, I argued that these instances, while presented as ‘resistance’, did not question or undermine the discursive performative scripts of grand dates. Instead, they can be understood as individualised justifications as to why participants were limited in successfully reproducing these affordances. Thus, I suggested, this is not ‘resistance’ *per se*, but rather a means of recovering positive identity in the interviews.

In the second part of the discussion, I focused on two of the participant couples, Couples 1 and 4, whose constructions of resistance appeared to be more disruptive to the established discursive performative scripts of being-romantic. Here, the two women participants were presented as actively romancing their men in ways that could be seen as ‘encroaching’ into the active romantic masculinity I described in Chapter 6. These two couples argued that they resisted the discursive performative script that the romantic man romances a passive woman; and instead presented the two women partners as being the active romancers in their relationships.

On the surface, this initially seemed to be a promising area of investigation in terms of how romance could be re-imagined as a practice which is more gender-neutral. However, there was a large amount of justificatory rhetoric that accompanied these narratives of agency and resistance. Again, through an application of Schippers' (2007) concept of complementary gender identities, I investigated the kind of situationally-afforded femininity and masculinity needed to produce a romance where the woman is the active romancer. I found that for both men and for women, instances when the woman romances the man were constructed as highly problematic, particularly when stepping beyond 'romantic gestures'.

I first presented evidence that in Couples 1 and 4, the woman is the active romancer of her partner; and then I examined the women's justifications of why this is the case, and showed that these justifications positioned the romancing of their partner as the result of individualised factors. These factors drew from a combination of innate factors (like their personalities) as well as external factors (like their upbringing) to provide a justification as to why they romance their partners. This positioned their active role in orchestrating romance as logical and natural within their relationship context.

Secondly, I presented the men's constructions of their partners' romancing. I showed that these constructions were ambivalent – at times extremely positive and grateful, but at other times the romancing by the women was discursively minimised or denied.

These discursive tactics of justifications and defences from both the men and the women suggested that the construction of an active romantic woman and a passive romantic man was problematic in some way. Therefore, I next looked at the constructed costs to these active women and romanced men. I argued that both couples positioned being an active romantic woman as stigmatising in some way. The construction of Sue and Anika suggested that their romancing of their partners carried psychological costs, in terms of causing stress or anxiety to Sue or carrying social stigma for Anika in terms of being associated as forward/ bossy/nagging. In addition, there was a constructed cost in terms of

the amount of effort it seemed to require from them, in comparison to active romantic men participants in the dataset.

I then looked at the construction of the men as passive recipients of romance, and showed that this too was presented as a stigmatising position to be in. I argued that the men participants presented themselves as being under pressure to act and respond in certain ways to ensure their partner's romance is successful, but *within* the bounded affordances of being a passive recipient of romance; and this was not evident in the other men and women participants' accounts. Furthermore, I have suggested that, based on the evidence of Chapter 6, that 'to be romanced' is a stigmatising position for men to be placed in because it is feminizing. We can see this conflict arising in Extract 132 above with Luke, who struggles to describe being-romanced as something he enjoyed and is grateful for while presenting himself as masculine, and admonishes me when my response as interviewer makes the feminization of his being-romanced too explicit.

Consequently, I have suggested that an active romantic woman and a passive romanced man was constructed as problematic<sup>68</sup>. I identified a number of justifications given by these two couples that worked to protect the presentation of the male partners, and reposition them in a more positive light. Firstly, I looked at reasons provided by participants as to why Johan and Luke were unable to be the active romancers in their relationship, which again worked to naturalise and legitimate the active role the women take in their *specific* relationships. Secondly, I showed how the men were constructed as active and romantic *in their own way* within the relationship - that is, in ways constructed as alternative to the affordances discussed in Chapter 6. I argued that by de-emphasising the role of explicit gestures from their partners and highlighting an acceptance from their partners and the effort behind the gestures they do make, Anika and Sue positioned their partners in idealised ways which circumnavigated any potential discursive 'trouble' regarding whether he actively romances her or not. Particularly, the joint construction of their partners' romantic ineptitude constructs their own receptivity as superhuman. Since

---

<sup>68</sup> Note that the active-active and passive-passive permutations were not referenced at all in the dataset and are possibly even further beyond the bounds of acceptability.

receptiveness was constructed as a key component of romantic femininity throughout, this partially rescues their femininity from the threat of over-agency (e.g. being positioned as 'bossy'). Finally, I argued that participants from Couples 1 and 4 positioned Luke and Johan as being the active romancer in the 'really key' romantic instances in their relationships, by initiating the relationship and proposing marriage.

I suggested these discourses work to maintain positive identity for men. However, when considering the discursive effect this has for the presentation of the women (Schippers, 2007), I argued that this came at the cost of undermining their attempts at actively romancing the men and therefore of resisting/re-imagining the affordances of grand romantic dates. This is because it re-asserts the 'natural order' and the desirability of an active romantic man, and actually reinforces the discursive performative scripts of being-romantic rather than re-imagining or resisting them. In contrast, then, the active woman's romancing becomes glorified emotional housekeeping, as it keeps the relationship functioning once it has been initiated and formalised; that is, only after the 'important work' of genesis is already achieved. And while the active woman may be able to decide the terms of when and how romance is orchestrated this comes at greater cost (in terms of stigma, emotional investment, time, and money) than it does for an active man.

At the start of the chapter, I presented Shakespeare's Helena as a woman actively pursuing her love interest, but suggested that while she was resistant to the constraints of traditional femininity, in the extract cited she still endorses the overall system: that women "should be wooed and were not made to woo". I would argue that, similarly, the way that Sue and Anika's resistance is discursively limited because of the number of justifications and defences constructed to protect their presentation as individuals and as a couple. As discussed above in the Literature Review (Section 7.2), this undercuts their resistance in the ways they can challenge broader power structures (Allen, 2003; Redman, 2001; Quayle et al., 2017; Vincent & Chiwandire, 2013).

Part of the difficulty of resisting romance could be because of how it is structured in society. It is naturalised and positioned as highly desirable, which makes it difficult to resist or re-imagine (Bruce, 2012; Helman & Ratele, 2016; Quayle, et al., 2017;

see Chapter 5). It has been suggested that romance and other such heteronormative institutions such as getting engaged or getting married are challenging to re-imagine, as these may act as a discursive filter against which “all meanings must be filtered” (Bruce 2012, p. 69; Ingraham, 2007 as cited in Bruce, 2012).

However, I would argue that it is more than that as well. I have shown that romance is not a homogenous practice – there are different forms of romance, which can be taken up by participants for strategic purposes. I have also shown that these romantic forms were not constructed equally, but that some were positioned as more valuable than others. Grand dates in particular, were positioned as vital for relationship maintenance after marriage and provided the best access to emotional intimacy. However this form of romance was the most constrictive in terms of the situational affordances it offered and the most fragile to deviations.

Therefore, I argue that part of the reason that romance is so difficult to re-imagine is because it offers enticements to perform romance in particular gendered ways in order to gain the best access to the benefits of romance – constructed as vital to relationship success in our society. It has been suggested that people opportunistically use affordances in particular contexts to gain access to the maximum identity benefits and affective states that appropriate enactment can provide (Jackman, 1994; Quayle et al., 2017). This helps to explain the seductive appeal of exploiting the affordances of a particular context – because by doing it the way we are ‘supposed to’ allows us to experience the maximum benefits in relation to situated identities, narrative trajectories and affective experiences. Thus, individual resistance means not only a lack of (perceived) social support (Huntington, 2010); it also means cutting yourself off from potential rewards and identity resources that come from following traditionally-proscribed situational affordances. Therefore, this may well limit the broader impact that resistance could have as well as undercut our motivation to resist (McQueeney 2003 as cited in Bruce, 2012; see also Moore, 2015; Quayle et al., 2017; Schepers & Zway, 2012; Singh, 2013).

Part of this is trying to ensure that we navigate as best we can the variety of positions, discourses, options and information available, so we can minimise our mistakes.



Jackman (1994, p. 5) states that our best strategy to accomplish this is “to succumb to the pressures that bear down on (us)... to follow the path of least resistance”. So it is likely that we may go along with something that is less than ideal, but better than the alternative; however, as discussed, the path of least resistance is at best a tacit collusion and at worst an overt alliance with patriarchy. If the pleasurable and desirable features of romantic love are to be recovered from patriarchy, a feminist approach to romance will require collective support for a re-imagined romance where an active romantic woman and an emotionally sensitive man are socially acceptable and easily enacted affordances of being-romantic.

# Chapter 8: Synthesis of the findings, limitations and conclusions

In this chapter I will first discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the present study and then suggest some ideas for future research. I will then synthesize the findings from the four substantive empirical analyses and identify the most important conclusions.

## 8.1. Strengths

This study further developed the theoretical approach of focusing on the fluid nature of gender identities (Francis et al, 2016) within a specific context (being-romantic). Doing so identified how this context affords (Reis, 2008) certain gender identities which function in an unequal, complementary, and hierarchical relationship (Schippers, 2007). In the context of heterosexual couples, the study provides important evidence showing how men and women co-produce masculinity and femininity together. If these had been studied in isolation, the significant features of these findings would not have emerged.

It has been demonstrated that while on its own romantic masculinity does not seem so problematic, when we understand and articulate it together with romantic femininity, within the context of romance as one which limits affordances for women to be active romancers yet holds women accountable for relationship maintenance; then we can see how romance perpetuates rather than challenges patriarchy. Therefore, it is vital to analyse how masculinity and femininity together produce the gender order, and what affordances these enable across different contexts. Then, by comparing the different affordances provided within different contexts, we can seek out and build alternative ways of being that can afford more equal ways of relating to each other. Therefore, a strength of this study has been the particular theoretical framework it has adopted and further developed.

Another strength lay in the methodological approach of the study. The in-depth nature of the findings was achieved by taking an ethnographic discursive approach, which resulted in multiple meetings with the participants in different spaces and contexts. This allowed a variety of discourses to emerge, thus increasing the representativeness of the dataset. Additionally, having a husband-and-wife team conducting the interviews also increased the relationship between researchers and participants as it aided in building up rapport across the different interview contexts. This in turn assisted in credibility and rigor of the findings.

## 8.2. Limitations

A few limitations will be discussed below. These limitations have been grouped according to methodological limitations and theoretical limitations.

In terms of methodological limitations, as a qualitative study, the findings are not generalizable because of the sampling methods chosen. However, by making discourse our unit of analysis, we can analyse broader systems of talk and gender within South Africa, bearing in mind that it is likely these findings will be more relevant to those from this particular group (white middle class South Africans) than to others. Nevertheless, globalisation means that discourses are both locally specialised and globally distributed, particularly for a cultural phenomenon like 'romance' that is so central to globalized media.

Although the practices of the participants in the study were relatively consistent; and we can be certain that the discourses available to this limited group of participants would be generally available to others in South African society, it is likely that there are a range of discourses and practices that were not captured by my sampling methods. It is particularly likely that the sampling and full-disclosure methods resulted in the self-selection of couples who are particularly invested in romance. For example, there may be other couples much more laissez-faire about romance who were simply not enticed by the study topic. And romance practices are certainly likely to differ by age and length of relationship; the couples sampled were at a particularly intense stage of romantic involvement. However, this is a feature of the study, not necessarily a flaw, as it allowed the

exploration of 'ordinary' romance analogous to "happily-ever-after" media narratives (e.g. such as those seen in Hollywood romantic-comedies).

Three main theoretical limitations have been identified. Firstly, an argument could be made that the researcher has framed 'being-romantic' in a particular way, while simultaneously defining it as problematic, which could prejudice the end results of the study. However, the definitions of romance explicated here have been drawn from literature from a variety of disciplines, which in turn have analysed commercial representations of what it means to 'be romantic'.

In practice, interview data is always a collaborative production between the interviewer and interviewees; however, the researcher aimed to intentionally refrain from defining romance for her participants. For example, no hints/cues were given to participants about what kinds of romantic activities they should plan, or even what time of day this event should take place. This way of framing it as a 'romantic event' occurred from the first point of contact with the participants (in the form of the advert, see Appendix 2), up until the participants defined how they usually 'be romantic' in the interviews (refer to interview questions 2 and 3, Appendix 7A). In this way, I tried to avoid pre-imposing my own definitions of romance onto the participants, allowing them to generate their own. Participants then spoke in detail in the interviews about how this version of romance conducted for the study fit into their routine constructions of their relationship (as can be seen, for example, in references to 'love languages' as well as narratives of previous romantic events). Finally, in this study, less emphasis was placed on the 'what' (as in, what activities do participants define as romantic?), and more on the 'how' (as in, how do participants position something as romantic), in order to deconstruct how romance, masculinity and femininity were positioned.

Secondly, the design of the study introduced a conundrum: money was offered to compensate participants for their expenses – which presupposed that their 'romantic event' will be consumerist in nature – and therefore it was likely that their romantic events will be consumeristic because they are offered money in compensation. This would introduce bias, if the romantic event itself was to be analysed. However, the

study did not focus on the romantic event itself, but rather, as stated previously, how participants constituted these events as romantic, which minimised the potential error this could introduce. Additionally, it is possible that with or without the financial compensation, the participants may have in any case engaged in some form of consumerism in order to be romantic, in line with Illouz's (1997) argument that romance and consumerism is inexorably linked in Western culture. Therefore, it was likely that events discursively scripted as romantic will be consumeristic; and as we found in the dataset, this was the case, as both the romantic events conducted for the study and the narratives of how they routinely do-romance were oriented to consumption.

Thirdly, I was limited by the research design to studying gender identities within white, South African, middleclass heterosexual relationships. There are a range of gender identities and ways of being romantic that have been excluded by this focus. I am by no means arguing that romance and alternative gender and sexual identities are less relevant or important to study, and these are identified as important future areas of research, in order to better understand alternative ways of being-romantic, the extent of heteronormativity of romance as a practice, and to see how gender may be afforded and performed in other contexts. Additionally, resistance will be better understood by looking at romance and gender in non-normative, non-Westernised, alternative contexts. There are, therefore, a number of areas which could provide fertile ground for future research ideas based on the limitations of this study.

### 8.3 Recommendations and directions for future research

This study has consolidated the argument that romance is an important site for anchoring patriarchal gender definitions; especially so because it offers access to a range of valued inducements difficult to access in other ways. It is recommended that this study be repeated with couples from other configurations of class, race, and sexual identities and orientations. As stated above, it is vital to investigate how romance is constructed, performed and resisted in alternative contexts. This would allow us to understand how the active romantic man/passive romantic woman may translate to/ be reimagined by different

contexts, and investigate what are the important features that shape the contextual affordances in this particular way. For example, was it the particular class context which afforded these particular gendered identities? The race context? Or was it their sexual orientation? Investigating how romance and romantic identities are produced in alternative contexts with people of differing gendered and raced bodies would help us to understand which of the features of the romantic context are the most salient in constraining identity production in the way that has been seen in this study. In this way we could investigate whether the allure of romantic contexts forces an active-passive role of the kind typically associated with heterosexual couples into different relationship contexts.

It would also be important to extend the study to sample for heterosexual couples who identify as feminist, to see how (or whether) these couples do-romance in ways which allow them to eschew the patriarchal, limiting affordances of the grand date and seek out viable alternatives which fit into their feminist ideology. And perhaps most important of all, it would be useful to explore the way that romance is enacted by non-heterosexual couples in LGBTQ+ relationships to explore the ways individuals in these relationship contexts draw from, make sense, revise or resist the affordances of romance.

## 8.4. Synthesis of key findings

### 8.4.1. Chapter 4: Three kinds of romantic contexts

In Chapter 4, I aimed to address my first research question, namely “How is romance constructed by participants as a context for identity production?” This focus aimed to contribute to an emerging argument in the gender studies literature (Francis et al., 2016; Quayle et al., 2017; Talbot & Quayle, 2010), that the context of gender performances plays an important role in shaping access to particular kinds and ways of performing gender.

I found that participants constructed three distinct ways-of-being-romantic, which I named the romantic gesture, the casual date, and the grand date. These three forms of being romantic differed in the benefits that accrue from successful enactment, but also in the resources (time; effort; expense) required to orchestrate or experience them and where

and when they could occur. They were also differentiated according to how narrowly defined their discursive performative scripts were, and how porous the boundaries were between the romantic event and everyday life, which in turn impacted on participants' capacity to successfully re-imagine these forms of romance.

Romantic gestures were the most loosely defined and therefore the most individual and diverse. While there was typically some effort involved in producing them, it was presented as less so than the other forms of romance. They typically took place in informal, everyday spaces and the production of their distinctness from everyday life was achieved by positioning them as a surprise. These gestures were typically made in order to demonstrate to the partner that they were loved and appreciated. Casual dates fell in the middle of the range, involving some effort, and some distinction from everyday life. Grand dates were constructed as being the most different to every day life, as requiring the most effort to reproduce, but as being the most romantically intense.

Furthermore, I demonstrated that these forms of romance were positioned and drawn from in strategic ways and should not be conceptualised as mere variations of particular cognitive/cultural scripts. For example, the casual date was used as a foil against which the grand date was positioned as romantic and preferable to the casual date. However, the grand date was also positioned as impractical and difficult to orchestrate regularly, with the romantic gesture constructed as an alternative means of satisfying the romantic imperative by injecting lower-key yet meaningful instances of romance into daily life.

In this way, participants drew from these three forms of romance in active and strategic ways that would be obscured by understanding romance as a scripted or role-based situation. Rather, I argued that romance provides a set of resources (i.e. affordances) for participants to draw from strategically to create situated instances of being-romantic.

#### 8.4.2. Chapter 5: Emotional intimacy, sex, and romance as a platonic ideal

In Chapter 5, I explored my second research question, namely “What were the constructed outcomes of romance, and how were these constructed?” This assisted me in exploring what enticements there may be to engage in these contexts of romance in the particular ways described in Chapter 4.

I first looked at how romance was distinguished from everyday life. Everyday life was constructed as humdrum routine and as contaminating to the marital relationship. Romance was therefore set up in contrast to everyday life, and offered as a bulwark against the numbing effect that the ‘daily grind’ can have on one’s sense of connectedness to one’s partner. Romance has this protective and restorative effect, participants argued, because when ‘done right’ it produces intimacy, which was constructed as the key outcome of romance and the reason to engage in ‘doing-romance’. Through these discourses of intimacy, romance was positioned as being an important means of doing ‘relationship-maintenance’. This I referred to as the ‘romantic imperative’ – a normative discourse which positions marriage in an ongoing state of decay, unless bolstered by the regular performance of romance. As the most romantically intense, the grand date was positioned as being the most successful form of romance to accomplish this, thereby satisfying the romantic imperative.

There were two kinds of intimacy evident in the data – emotional intimacy and physical intimacy. Emotional intimacy was constructed as a sense of strong connection and closeness to one’s partner. Romance was frequently equated with ‘quality time’ with one’s partner, allowing participants to feel close and connected to each other, and the more that the romantic space felt different or separate to everyday life, the more romantic and intimate it was constructed as being. Therefore, emotional intimacy was positioned by participants as the primary reason for romance.

In contrast, physical intimacy was more subtly referred to and sexual intercourse was hardly spoken about directly at all. Men and women participants oriented to the discourse of ‘romance for sex’, but used it to distance their own romantic practices from it, as a way of signalling that their romance was *different* – more pure and authentic.



Men participants in particular seemed to orient to this discourse and distance themselves from it. Therefore, when physical intimacy was referred to it was usually in the context of actions such as hugging, cuddling or kissing, rather than as a blatant discussion of sexual intercourse.

However, oblique references to sex were present in the data, and due to romance's discursive ties with emotional intimacy, this sexual intercourse was distanced from the 'cheaper' version where romance is performed with the goal of 'getting sex'. Instead, it was positioned as arising as the physical expression of the emotional intimacy occurring as a result of being-romantic.

The positioning of romance as generative of authentic intimacy made it appear democratic and gender-neutral (Giddens, 1992). However, because of (1) the romantic imperative, i.e. the discourse that marriages need 'work' to keep them functioning optimally; (2) the construction of romance (and grand dates in particular) as necessary to do this relationship-work; and (3) the most desired and effective form of romance is the most restrictive in terms of the affordances it provides (as argued in Chapter 4); there is pressure on couples to 'do' romance in a particular way in order to keep their marriages 'alive'. Enacting these forms of romance therefore were positioned as requiring quite specific gendered performances. Participants did offer some alternatives, but these were positioned as less romantic and therefore as having less value as a tool for relationship maintenance.

#### 8.4.3. Chapter 6: The affordances of romantic masculinity and femininity

An additional issue arises when considering what identities one must take on in order to feel like one has successfully performed romance (and thereby gained access to this 'marriage-saving' sense of emotional intimacy). In Chapter 6, I aimed to answer my third research question, namely "What are the (complementary) gender identities that are afforded by the context of being-romantic?"

In addressing this question, I drew from one of the key elements of my theoretical framework, namely Reis's (2008) argument that particular contexts enable identity *affordances*; defined as a particular set of symbolic resources that facilitate the

construction of particular identities (and make others more difficult to enact). I also aimed to address a key gap identified in the literature (See Chapter 1, Section 1.1.2), namely the (artificial) separation of gender studies into masculinity studies and femininity studies. I aimed to accomplish this by studying the affordances of masculinity and femininity as co-produced and complementary identities, within the same contexts (Schippers, 2007).

Thus, I explored how romance (especially the grand date context) affords the gender identities of romantic masculinity and romantic femininity. Romantic masculinity was characterised by personal disinvestment in romance, the active romancing of one's partner to honour *her* investment in romance, and by chivalrous behaviour demonstrating attentiveness. This was positioned as showing consideration and adoration towards the woman.

While on its own this sounds fairly positive (especially considering broader narratives of hostile sexism and gender-based violence, discussed in Chapter 1); utilising Schippers' (2007) concept of complementary but hierarchical gender identities I explored what role romantic femininity needs to occupy in order to give this romantic masculinity currency. I argued that romantic femininity was constructed as being invested in romance, passive and as receiving (and appreciating) romantic gestures, with more emphasis on beautification and hygiene rituals than romantic masculinity.

I also argued that providing an explanation of romantic femininity seemed much harder for participants than explaining romantic masculinity, especially doing so in ways that were active and agentic. It has been suggested elsewhere that femininity is hard to articulate (Connell, 1987; Leahy, 1994). Drawing from Billig (1999)'s concept of repression, I suggested that perhaps, if the role women need to play is kept more nebulous, it is less blatantly problematic. So the repression of femininities (and in this case romantic femininity) allows us to focus on the 'niceness' of romantic masculinity and the wonderful, seemingly 'equitable' outcomes of being-romantic.

I likened this understanding of the function of romance to the Roman concept of a Saturnalian festival (see Charles, 1997; Falassi, 1987; Lévi-Strauss, 1993). Romance was constructed as *appearing* to turn the gender hierarchy on its head via the

construction of romance as something women desire and do as an act of sacrifice for her benefit; and secondly, through the feeling of emotional intimacy that comes at the end of a date (traditionally seen as valued more by women, although presented in this study as equally valued by men), which creates a sense of idealised equality (Chapter 5). However, I suggested that while this appears on the surface to be disruptive and revolutionary as Giddens proposed; romance can be conceptualised as a re-imposition of particularly patriarchal gender identities because of the limits placed on women through the restrictiveness of these romantic situational affordances (which equated to housework and emotional housekeeping glossed as romantic care).

The affordances provided by romantic gestures were also investigated in this Chapter. Of the three forms of romance described by participants, romantic gestures seemed to have the most potential in terms of offering gender-neutral affordances, as they were described as being performed by men *and* by women, and were the most fluid in terms of what it would entail to produce. However, I found that, upon closer investigation, this form of romance was constructed as being subtly different when it was performed by the women versus the men participants. Men's romantic gestures were positioned as 'spoiling' the women participants, as something that should be regarded as "sweet" or "endearing" and possibly even as something that is enviable, as evidenced by the interviewer's responses to these narratives.

Women's romantic gestures, on the other hand, served a different discursive effect. These were often described in connection to descriptions of men's grand romantic dates, and were positioned as the means by which the men participants could know that they were appreciated in return for their grander gestures, *without their partners needing to romance them back*. Additionally, the kinds of gestures made by men and women were found to differ slightly. This suggests that romantic gestures were not as gender-neutral as they initially appeared.

#### 8.4.4. Chapter 7: Resisting the affordances of romance

In Chapter 7, I examined instances where the affordances of the grand date were resisted by participants in order to address the fourth research question, “Were these affordances resisted and what alternatives to these affordances exist?”

Several of the instances (for example, the way the women participants positioned getting ready for a date, or the men were positioned as struggling to be wholly attentive to their partners, and so on) that were presented as resistance in the interviews, were found to be justificatory rhetoric as to why the participants were unable to perform these affordances in the idealised way these discursive performative scripts demanded. As such, they were not really acts that could transform or de-stabilise the idealised affordances of romance over-all.

However, two of the women participants were constructed (by themselves and their partners) as resisting the passivity of romantic femininity and actively romancing their partners. While this active resistance could potentially destabilise the gendered nature of the romantic affordances available, there were a number of issues which limited the broader effect they may have.

Firstly, the romancing of their partners was positioned as requiring a great deal of effort – and in both cases, *more* than the effort required from the men participants generally when they were orchestrating romance.

Secondly, it was also found that a lot of justificatory rhetoric was used when discussing these women’s romancing of their partners. It was therefore suggested that being a ‘romantic woman’ may be a stigmatising position to be in. Participants positioned the romantic woman as being forward or “bossy” – that is, acting in a masculinised way (either being-romantic in order to seduce the man, or else by taking charge of the relationship and “wearing the pants”).

Thirdly, this stigma seemed to be compounded by the particular corresponding, complementary identity position made available to the man as a result. If romantic femininity is characterised by accepting and welcoming romance, then, correspondingly, to be romanticised is to be feminized. Therefore, if the female partner is

actively romancing her male partner, the male partner potentially becomes feminized as a result. I found that the two women participants oriented to this spectre of feminization by trying to protect their partner's masculinity and especially his sense of activeness/agency. The two men participants with romantically agentic partners also defended against this feminization, using different strategies.

This suggests that the narrowly defined affordances of the grand date may be fairly rigid and difficult to disrupt by re-imagining other ways to be romantic. That is, participants were able to strategically draw from, position and create romance, but were restricted by the context's available affordances. Where participants tried to resist these affordances, they were either able to resist at the cost of creating a negative, non-preferred identity (active romantic femininity/passive masculinity), which they then needed to protect themselves and their partner from. Alternatively, they were framed as resistant but when considering how these discourses of resistance were deployed, the discourses did not serve to undermine the status quo but rather worked from within to make the participants' actions justifiable and understandable.

Francis et al. (2016) identified *heteroglossy* in the fluidity and contextuality of gender performances – that is, that the way an individual may perform (and talk about) gender identity may shift within the same context (as discussed in Section 2.3.2). In the present study, there were ways of working the affordances to allow and justify women to romance men despite the overarching imperative for men to romance their women. However, justifying these resistant formulations within the bounds of the accepted cultural framework romance tends to reinforce rather than disrupt it. Francis et al. (2016) suggest you need more radical discourses to do that. Their conclusion (see also McRobbie, 2004a, 2004b, 2007) is that women are pressured to enact hyper-feminisation (especially in terms of groomed appearance and sexualisation) even while maintaining ironic distance from it (e.g. the girly-girl is held up as both the ideal and the butt of the joke) with the effect of reinforcing the gender system and further devaluing femininity. As Francis et al. (2016) argue, “to succeed in subjectification, girls are – at least to some extent – compelled to

invest in a set of desires and productions which are simultaneously reified and despised in wider society” (p. 9).

This is a very important point when applied to the present study as it provides a parallel to my claim that even when women are resistant to the primary affordances of romance and they act as agents in romance, the defences needed to produce authentic romance from these unconventional ingredients ultimately fail to disrupt patriarchy because: (1) the deviations are constructed as exemplary/unique; (2) it is a stigmatised version of romance, demonstrated in how they account for and justify it; (3) under the gender-neutral, egalitarian discourse of ‘soulmates’ the types of romantic affordances most available to women are frequently overtly patriarchal and reminiscent of the 1950s housewife.

Rather than disrupting patriarchy, overall, romance is a Saturnalia that both celebrates patriarchal versions of heteronormative gender and simultaneously validates less overt patriarchy in daily life (e.g. by ‘making up for’ the burden of emotional and practical housekeeping that primarily falls to women).

## 8.5. Overall conclusion

Depending on the relationship context, we may reproduce these romantic gendered identities, resist them, or re-imagine them. However, in terms of the way romantic affordances were constructed in this study, the greatest interpersonal rewards come from reproducing them. This is problematic because romantic masculinity and romantic femininity have been shown to be entrenched in chivalrous and patriarchal ways of relating to each other, and thus these chivalrous and patriarchal relationship contexts become the norm, become idealised and desirable, become *romantic*. Thus, with the idealised emotional intimacy that is constructed as resulting from the grand date, there is normative pressure to go on grand dates and perform these problematic identities in order to ‘do’ relationship maintenance.

The emphasis on emotional intimacy that comes from these dates may discursively repress this effect to some degree (see Billig’s 1999 concept of repression), as it

allowed men to distance themselves from the more predatory aspects of hegemonic masculinity (e.g. using romance merely to get sex) and to rather construct their relationships as loving and respectful. Similarly, it allows the collective repression of what forms of femininity need to be performed in order to give this romantic masculinity currency, which enables couples to focus on the 'niceness' of the man's romantic overtures and the resulting intimacy.

However, it is evident from the form that romantic femininity needs to take (passive and receptive) to support this version of romantic masculinity, as well as the way that active romantic femininity – and its corresponding feminized masculinity – was problematized, that romance as a practice is not disruptive in the way that Giddens (1992) and Illouz (1997) imagine it to be. While the affective affordances of romance (e.g. emotional intimacy) may give access to the sensation of equality and enmeshedness, accessing them involves performing particular gender identities. Even where participants resisted conventions, accessing these required participants to occupy conventional patriarchal subject positions in order to make the romantic endeavour authentic.

I found that romantic gestures provided the most flexible vehicles for being-romantic as they had a wider range of affordances and were presented as more gender-neutral ways of romancing one's partner (particularly in the extent to which feminine agency was acceptable). Therefore, one might suggest that it has more scope as a potential tool for re-envisioning how men and women relate to one another. However, it was also seen that (1) romantic gestures were constructed as having less of an effect on the intimacy and strength of the relationship compared to grand dates; (2) while they were constructed as being easier to produce than grand dates (as requiring less time and effort, itself a benefit), they simultaneously were positioned as having less prestige/status around organising it compared to grander gestures; (3) as seen in Chapter 6, while these were reported as being done by men and women, many romantic gestures were reported as being subtly gendered. For example, women's romantic gestures were often framed within a language of old-fashioned housewife, where labour is transmuted into 'care'. (4) Grand

dates were constructed as having the preferred status in contrast – but they require a man’s planning in order to more easily be constructed as legitimate and authentic.

Thus, I argued that many of the romantic gestures present in the data set *were* gendered in very patriarchal/historically traditional ways of relating to each other. The romantic context offers affordances difficult to refuse because they offer so much in return in terms of intimacy, relationship benefits, etc. This suggests that the temptation of doing romance ‘right’ in order to gain access to its alluring sense of intimacy may make it very difficult to re-imagine romance in non-patriarchal ways.

This finding aligns with the argument made by Allen (2007), Eldén (2011), and Martin and Govender (2013); that just because some form of identity *could* potentially be disruptive does not mean that is how it will be enacted in everyday life. Romance is a fragile accomplishment, easily disrupted, and it would be difficult to perform in ways that are consciously resistant – this would dispel the idealised illusion of the soulmate discourse that couples are trying to create. This image of one’s relationship as special and uniquely intimate is vital to the ongoing belief that one’s relationship is meaningful and *worth* the drudgery and reality of what ‘happily ever after’ *actually* looks like. Thus there are strong inducements for staying within the boundaries of the situational affordances of the romantic context, in order to access the identity benefits and experiences of intimacy that accrue from successfully enacting romance. This inducement is especially powerful because of the centrality of ‘true love’ and intimacy in 21<sup>st</sup> century cultural notions of ‘good’ long-term relationships (Coontz; 2005, Illouz, 1997; Straub, 2006; van Acker, 2003).

Additionally, women face a powerful dilemma: They are constructed as wanting romance, but cannot initiate ‘proper’ romance without disrupting it. This is compounded by the expectation that women should be responsible for the emotional housekeeping of heterosexual relationships (Eldén, 2011; Delassandro & Wilkins, 2016; Giddens, 1992; Schäfer, 2008; Vincent & Chiwandire, 2013; Vincent & McEwan, 2006) and the construction of romance as an essential restorative vital for the continued health of relationships. However, due to the masculinisation of romantic agency, when women try to



actively romance men it takes a great deal of effort to work their agency into the affordances of romance in order to be recognisably romantic.

Hence, I would suggest that society expects women to maintain their romantic relationship, but are positioned as being unable to initiate the means of 'saving their marriage' – it is constructed as needing to come from their partner. Romance is constructed as key to maintaining the psychological health of the relationship; women are positioned as being the ones who want romance; women are pressured to maintain the psychological health of the relationship; and yet simultaneously, women are disempowered from being able to actively engage/produce in romance by the gendered affordances of grand dates (the form of romance most culturally valued for the intimacy it brings). Thus, women are only able to hint at or nag their partners to romance them (as illustrated in Extract 105, p. 265) or to romance them through romantic gestures, which were generally positioned as less effective than grand dates (as well as often shaped by problematic old-fashioned discourses of being a 'good wife').

Romance, in the words of the participants of this study, performed a key role in maintaining and justifying patriarchal gender positions in their relationships. The rules of romance are pervasive, and will remain to be so, so long as we collectively buy into them. Until men can receive romance without feeling "gay" and women can romance their partners without feeling "bossy", romance will continue to do the work of patriarchal ideals.

So what would a feminist revision of romance entail? What is problematic are the normative limits placed on our romantic imaginations, where it seems hard to find alternative, more gender-equitable means to connect with and show love and consideration towards each other. Particularly, situations of intimacy with ungendered power differentials are difficult to describe or experience as 'romantic.' This reflects Jarvis's findings (1999), who found that her participants struggled to avoid drawing from or re-imagining romantic tropes.

However, there might be a glimmer of hope in the findings from a study by Backus and Mahalik (2011). They demonstrated that there was a link between women's identification with feminism and 'buy in' to these traditional and patriarchal definition of

romantic masculinity. They found that the *less* their women sample identified with feminist beliefs, the more strongly they defined a 'romantic man' as one who "[is] emotionally controlled, does not take risks, has power over women, is dominant and self-reliant" (p. 322). Conversely, the more their sample identified as being a feminist, the stronger their preference for non-hegemonic, egalitarian masculinities in romantic relationships. There is evidence, therefore, that where women (and men) buy into feminist ideals, that this shapes the kinds of relationships they enter into. What we do not know from Backus and Mahalik's study (2011), however, is *how* these more egalitarian couples enact romance – how they practically go about resisting and re-imagining the affordances of romance to obtain its benefits without the price of patriarchal interactions. This is an important area for future study.

While it has been argued that positive intergroup contact can engender warm and positive feelings between members from different groups, it has been suggested that these positive feelings may lead members from both groups to underestimate the differences between them and make intergroup boundaries seem less salient (Dixon et al., 2013; Simon & Klandermans, 2001 as cited in Durrheim et al., 2014). This may well result in reduced individual resistance. Loveman (1998) argues that when we identify as individuals (rather than as a group member), we are more likely to assess the costs versus benefits of resistance, and if the costs seem too high, refrain from action.

This effect was evident in my findings: participants (1) presented women as being more invested in romance than men; (2) endorsed being-romantic as an important means of doing relationship maintenance; (3) used discourses of romance to idealise and imbue their relationship as a whole with intimacy and romance in terms of being 'soulmates' (cf. Giddens, 1992). Men's grand dates and women's daily labour-as-love gestures were provided as evidence of point 3. This suggests that romance, as a practice and a discourse, provided couples with a means of constructing a connected and intimate identity as a 'couple', de-emphasising individual, separate identities as a result.

This results in less collective resistance, as "identifying strongly with the ingroup and making intergroup comparisons are often prerequisites for collective action"

(Durrheim et al., 2013, p. 151). As argued in Dixon et al. (2013, p. 9), if “subordinate and dominant group members” are discursively grouped together into a “common category”, not only may the two groups be glossed as a single “extended ingroup”<sup>69</sup>, but “in so doing, it may quietly occlude the hierarchical nature of their relationship” – an effect that has been expressed as “the darker side of we”.

Thus, resistance is a complex issue. For this reason Dixon et al. (2013) have argued for a contextualist approach, examining the intricacies of intergroup relationships, with all of its conflicts, niceties and resistance studied within the context in which emerges (see also Crawford, 2007; Loveman, 1998).

This analysis helps us to see that romance is important in perpetuating a mutually satisfying version of patriarchy. However, romance is not a separate or unique context – it bolsters our experiences across other contexts by enabling us to present our relationships as satisfying and ‘worth it’. Thus, romance may act as a “sweet persuasion” to maintain a certain kind of relationship between men and women (Jackman, 1994, p. 2). It is framed so positively in terms of relationship maintenance, and positioned as ‘what women want’ that it can be understood as being Saturnalian, as a reward for women’s labour-as-love in daily contexts, and is thus not readily recognised as a tool of subordination. However, we have seen how difficult it is to resist and reimagine it and it can therefore be argued to be a powerful and insidious tool of maintaining the status quo.

---

<sup>69</sup> In this case a ‘couple’, rather than representatives of two differently gendered groups

## References

- Ainsworth, C. (2015). Sex Redefined. *Nature*, 518(7529), 288-291. Accessed from [https://www.nature.com/polopoly\\_fs/1.16943.1424349308!/menu/main/topColumns/topLeftColumn/pdf/518288a.pdf?origin=ppub](https://www.nature.com/polopoly_fs/1.16943.1424349308!/menu/main/topColumns/topLeftColumn/pdf/518288a.pdf?origin=ppub) on 13/11/2018.
- Alexander, C.M. (2010). 'Subject to change': The composition course syllabus and intersections of authority, genre and community. Unpublished doctoral thesis. University of Louisville. Accessed from <https://doi.org/10.18297/etd/28> on 30/09/2018.
- Allen, L. (2003). Girls want sex, boys want love: Resisting dominant discourses of (hetero)sexuality. *Sexualities*, 6(2), 215 – 236.
- Allen, L. (2007). "Sensitive and real macho all at the same time": Young heterosexual men and romance. *Men and Masculinities*, 10(2), 137 – 152.
- Allport, G.W. (1954). *The nature of prejudice*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.
- Anderson, P. (November-December, 1976). The antinomies of Antonio Gramsci. *New Left Review*, 1(100), 5-78. Accessed from <https://newleftreview.org/l/100/perry-anderson-the-antinomies-of-antonio-gramsci> on 20/09/2018.
- Antaki, C., Billig, M., Edwards, D., & Potter, J.A. (2003). Discourse analysis means doing analysis: A critique of six analytic shortcomings. *Discourse Analysis Online*, 1, available from <http://www.shu.ac.uk/daol/articles/v1/n1/a1/antaki2002002-paper.html>.
- Bachen, C.M. & Illouz, E. (1996). Imagining romance: Young people's cultural models of romance and love. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 13(4), 279-308. DOI:10.1080/15295039609366983
- Backus, F.R. & Mahalik, J.R. (2011). The masculinity of Mr Right: Feminist identity and heterosexual women's ideal romantic partners. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 35(2), 318-326, DOI 10.1177/0361684310392357.
- Ball, V. (2011). The "feminization" of British television and the re-traditionalization of gender. *Feminist Media Studies*, 12(2), 248 – 264.
- Barker, R. (2012). *Discursive representations of femininity in a contemporary South African women's magazine: A social constructionist approach* (Unpublished Masters dissertation). University of South Africa: Pretoria.
- Barreto, M., & Ellemers, N. (2005). The burden of benevolent sexism: How it contributes to the maintenance of gender inequalities. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 35, 633 – 642.
- Baron, R. A., Branscombe, N. R. & Byrne, D. (2012). *Social psychology* (13th Ed.). Boston, USA: Pearson/Allyn and Bacon.
- Bhana, D. (2005). 'I'm the best in maths. Boys rule, girls drool.' Masculinities, mathematics and primary schooling. *Perspectives in Education*, 23(3), 1-10.
- Bhana, D., & Nkani, N (2014). When African teenagers become fathers: Culture, materiality and masculinity. *Culture, Health and Sexuality*, 16(4), 337-350. DOI:10.1080/13691058.2014.887780
- Billig, M. (1999). *Freudian repression: Conversation creating the unconscious*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Blackbeard, D. R. (2011). *Adolescent boys living with HIV*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. School of Psychology, University of KwaZulu-Natal: Pietermaritzburg.
- Boonzaier, F. (2008). 'If the man says sit, then you must sit': The relational construction of woman abuse: Gender, subjectivity and violence. *Feminism & Psychology*, 18(2), 183-206. DOI: 10.1177/0959353507088266

- Boonzaier, F. & de La Rey, C. (2003). 'He's a man and I'm a woman': Cultural constructions of masculinity and femininity in South African women's narratives of violence. *Violence Against Women*, 9(8), 1003 – 1029.
- Boonzaier, F., & de la Rey, C. (2004). Woman abuse: The construction of gender in women and men's narratives of violence. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 34(3), 443-463.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, 3, 77-101. DOI: 10.1191/1478088706qp0630a.
- Broughton, S., & van Acker, E. (2007). Romantic expectations and harsh realities: Tertiary access to the rescue. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 26(3), 279-293. DOI: 10.1080/02601370701362226.
- Bruce, K. R. E. (2012). *Doing coupledom: Imagining, managing and performing relationality in contemporary wedding and civil partnership rituals*. (Doctoral thesis, University of Southampton, United Kingdom). Retrieved from: <https://eprints.soton.ac.uk/341785/>
- Bryson, V. (2005). Production and reproduction. In G. Blakely, & V. Bryson. (Eds.) *Marx and other four-letter words*. (pp. 127-142). London: Pluto Press. DOI: 10.2307/j.ctt18fsbp5.12
- Carrigan, T., Connell, B. & Lee, J. (1985). Towards a new sociology of masculinity. *Theory and Society*, 14(5), 551-604.
- Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (2016). Gender-based violence in South Africa: A brief review. CSVR: Braamfontein, South Africa. Downloaded from <http://www.csvr.org.za/pdf/Gender%20Based%20Violence%20in%20South%20Africa%20-%20A%20Brief%20Review.pdf> on 10 January, 2018.
- Chapman, G. (1995). *The five love languages: How to express heartfelt appreciation to your mate*. Chicago: Northfield Publishing.
- Charlebois, J.M. (2010). *The discursive construction of hegemonic and pariah femininities in the spoken accounts of a group of Japanese women*. Unpublished doctoral thesis. Lancaster University: Lancaster, UK.
- Charles, C. (1997). Gender trouble in 'Twelfth Night'. *Theatre Journal*, 49(2), 121-141. Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3208678>. Accessed on 6 April 2018.
- Christofides, N., Muirhead, D., Jewkes, R., Penn-Kekana, L. & Conco, N. (2006). Including post-exposure prophylaxis to prevent HIV/AIDS into post-sexual assault health services in South Africa: Costs and cost effectiveness of user preferred approaches to provision. Medical Research Council: Pretoria, South Africa. Downloaded from [https://www.unicef.org/southafrica/SAF\\_resource\\_violencehiv aids.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/southafrica/SAF_resource_violencehiv aids.pdf) on 10 January 2018.
- Connell, R.W. (1987). *Gender and Power: Society, the person, and sexual politics*. Polity Press: Cambridge.
- Connell, R.W. (1995). *Masculinities*. Polity Press: Cambridge.
- Connell, R.W. (2000). *The men and the boys*. Polity Press: Cambridge.
- Connell, R.W. (2002). On hegemonic masculinity and violence: Response to Jefferson and Hall. *Theoretical Criminology*, 6(1), 89 – 99.
- Connell, R.W. (2005). *Masculinities*. (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.). Polity Press: Cambridge.
- Connell, R. W., & Messerschmidt, J. W. (2005). Hegemonic masculinity: Rethinking the concept. *Gender and Society*, 19(6), 829–859.
- Coontz, S. (2005). *Marriage, a history: From obedience to intimacy or how love conquered marriage*. New York: Penguin.
- Crawford, N.C. (2007). Individual and collective moral responsibility for systemic military atrocity. *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, 15(2), 187-212. DOI 10.1111/j.1467-9760.2007.00278.x.
- Danziger, K. (1990). *Constructing the subject: Historical origins of psychological research*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.

- Delassandro, C., & Wilkins, A.C. (2016). Blinded by love: Women, men, and gendered age in relationship stories. *Gender and Society, 31*(1), 96-118. DOI: 10.1177/0891243216679121.
- Demetriou, D.Z. (2001). Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity: A critique. *Theory and Society, 30*(3), 337 – 361.
- Dixon, J., Durrheim, K., & Tredoux, C. (2007). Intergroup contact and attitudes towards the principle and practice of racial equality. *Psychological Science, 18*, 867–872.
- Dixon, J., Durrheim, K., Kerr, P., & Thomae, M. (2013). 'What's so funny 'bout peace, love and understanding?' Further reflections on the limits of prejudice reduction as a model of social change. *Journal of Social and Political Psychology, 1*(1), 239-252. DOI: 10.5964/jspp.v1i1.234.
- Dixon, J.A., & Foster, D.H. (1997). Gender and hedging: From sex differences to situated practice. *Journal of Psycholinguistic research, 26*(1), 89 – 107.
- Dixon, J., Levine, M., Reicher, S., & Durrheim, K. (2012). Beyond prejudice: Are negative evaluations the problem and is getting us to like one another more the solution? *Behavioural and Brain Sciences, 1* – 42.
- Dixon, J., Tropp, L.R., Durrheim, K., & Tredoux, C. (2010). 'Let them eat harmony': Prejudice-reduction strategies and attitudes of historically disadvantaged groups. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 19*(2), 76-80. DOI: 10.1177/0963721410363366.
- Dovidio, J.F., Gaertner, S.L., Kawakami, K. (2003). Intergroup contact: The past, present and the future. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations, 6*(5), 5-21. DOI: 10.1177/1368430203006001009.
- Dovidio, J.F., Gaertner, S.L., & Saguy, T. (2008). Another view of "we": Majority and minority group perspectives on a common ingroup identity. *European review of social psychology, 18*(1), 296-330. DOI: 10.1080/10463280701726132
- Dowd, J.J. & Pallotta, N.R. (2000). The end of romance: The demystification of love in the postmodern age. *Sociological Perspectives, 43*(4), 549 – 580.
- Driesmans, K., Vandenbosch, L., & Eggermont, S. (2016). True love lasts forever: The influence of a popular teenage movie on Belgian girls' romantic beliefs. *Journal of Children and Media, 10*(3), 304-320. DOI: 10.1080/17482798.2016.1157501.
- Durrheim, K. (2006). Research Design. In M. Terre Blanche, K. Durrheim, & D. Painter (Eds.). *Research in Practice* (2nd Ed.). (pp. 33-59). Cape Town: UCT Press.
- Durrheim, K. (2012). Implicit prejudice in mind and interaction. In J. Dixon & M. Levine (Eds.). *Beyond prejudice: Extending the social psychology of conflict, inequality and social change*, (pp. 179-199). Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.
- Durrheim, K., Jacobs, N., & Dixon, J. (2014). Explaining the paradoxical effects of intergroup contact: Paternalistic relations and systems justification in domestic labour in South Africa. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 41*. 150 – 164.
- Durrheim, K., & Painter, D. (2006). Collecting quantitative data: Sampling and measuring. In M. Terre Blanche, K. Durrheim, & D. Painter (Eds.). *Research in Practice* (2nd Ed.). (pp. 131-159). Cape Town: UCT Press.
- Durrheim, K., Quayle, M., Whitehead, K., & Kriel, A. (2005). Denying racism: Discursive strategies used by the South African media. *Critical Arts: A Journal of South-North Cultural and Media Studies, 19*(1\_2), 167-186. Persistent link: <http://hdl.handle.net/10520/EJC29144>.
- du Toit, C., & Coady, K. (2014). *Norms that extinguish and enhance romance: A quantitative study in South Africa on the societal expectations about the way we get ready to go on a date, and how these are gendered*. Unpublished Honours dissertation. School of Psychology, University of KwaZulu-Natal: Pietermaritzburg.

- Eagly, A.H., & Mladinic, A. (1994). Are people prejudiced against women? Some answers from research on attitudes, gender stereotypes, and judgments of competence. *European Review of Social Psychology*, 5(1), 1 – 35.
- Edwards, D. (1997). *Discourse and Cognition*. London: Sage Publications.
- Eldén, S. (2011). The threat or promise of popular therapy? A feminist reading of narratives of ‘the good couple’. *Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research* 19(3), 144-162. DOI: 10.1080/08038740.2011.593552.
- Eldén, S. (2012). Scripts for the ‘good couple’: Individualization and the reproduction of gender inequality. *Acta Sociologica*, 55(1), 3 – 18. DOI: 10.1177/0001699311427745.
- Emmanuel, E.J. (2004). Ending concerns about undue inducement. *Journal of Law, Medicine, and Ethics*, 32, 100 – 105.
- Emmanuel, E.J., Currie, X.E., & Herman, A. (2005). Undue inducement in clinical research in developing countries: Is it a worry? *Lancet*, 366, 336 – 340.
- Eschholz, S., Bufkin, J., & Long, J. (2002). Symbolic reality bites: Women and racial/ethnic minorities in modern film. *Sociological Spectrum*, 22, 299-334. DOI: 10.1080/02732170290062658.
- Falassi, A. (1987). Festival: Definition and morphology. *Time out of Time: Essays on the Festival*, 1-10. Downloaded from [https://brown.edu/Departments/Joukowsky\\_Institute/courses/cityandfestival09/files/9722047.PDF](https://brown.edu/Departments/Joukowsky_Institute/courses/cityandfestival09/files/9722047.PDF) on 6 April 2018.
- Farvid, P. (2011). *The social construction of heterosexual casual sex*. Unpublished doctoral thesis. University of Auckland: Auckland, New Zealand.
- Farvid, P., & Braun, V. (2006). ‘Most of us guys are raring to go anytime, anyplace, anywhere’: Male and female sexuality in *Cleo* and *Cosmo*. *Sex Roles*, 55, 295 – 310.
- Farvid, P., Braun, V., & Roney, C. (2016). “No girl wants to be called a slut!”: Women, heterosexual casual sex and the sexual double standard. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 26(5), 544–560. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09589236.2016.1150818>
- Fillenbaum, S. (1966). Prior deception and subsequent experimental performance: The “faithful” subject. *Journal of Personality and Social psychology*, 4(5), 532 – 537.
- Flood, M. (2013). Male and female sluts: Shifts and stabilities in the regulation of sexual relations among young heterosexual men, *Australian Feminist Studies*, 28(75), 95-107, DOI: [10.1080/08164649.2012.758024](https://doi.org/10.1080/08164649.2012.758024).
- Francis, B. (2008). Engendering debate: How to formulate a political account of the divide between genetic bodies and discursive gender? *Journal of Gender Studies*, 17(3), 211 — 223. DOI: 10.1080/09589230802204241.
- Francis, B. (2010). Re/theorising gender: Female masculinity and male femininity in the classroom? *Gender and Education*, 22(5), 477–490. DOI: 10.1080/09540250903341146.
- Francis, B., Archer, L., Moote, J., de Witt, J., & Yeomans, L. (2016). Femininity, science, and the denigration of the girly girl. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 1-13. DOI: 10.1080/01425692.2016.1253455
- Friedman, H. S., & Schustack, M. W. 2010. *Personality: Classic Theories and Modern Research* (5th Ed). Boston, Massachusetts: Pearson.
- Frith, H., & Kitzinger, C. (2001). Reformulating sexual script theory: Developing a discursive psychology of sexual negotiation. *Theory and Psychology*, 11(2), 202-232.
- Frosh, S., Phoenix, A., and Pattman, R. (2002). *Young masculinities*. New York: Palgrave.
- Galloway, L., Engstrom, E., & Emmers-Sommer, T.M. (2015). Does movie viewing cultivate young people’s unrealistic expectations about love and marriage? *Marriage & Family Review*, 51(8), 687-712. DOI: 10.1080/01494929.2015.1061629.

- Gardner, R. (2010). Question and answer sequences in Garrwa talk. *Australian Journal of Linguistics*, 30(4), 423-445. DOI: 10.1080/07268602.2010.518554.
- Gavey, N. (2005). *Just sex? The cultural scaffolding of rape*. East Sussex, United Kingdom: Routledge.
- Gershuny, J. (1997). Sexual divisions and the distribution of work in the household. In G. Dench (Ed.) *Rewriting the sexual contract*. (pp. 141-152). London: Institute of Community Studies.
- Gibbs, A., & Jobson, G. (2011). Narratives of masculinity in the *Daily Sun*: Implications for HIV risk and prevention. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 41(2), 173-186.
- Giddens, A. (1992). *The transformation of intimacy: Sexuality, love and eroticism in modern societies*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Glick, P., & Fiske, S.T. (1996). The ambivalent sexism inventory: Differentiating hostile and benevolent sexism. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 70(3), 491 – 512.
- Glick, P., & Fiske, S. T. (2001). Ambivalent sexism. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 33, 115–188.
- Glick, P., Fiske, S., Mladinic, A., Saiz, J.L., Abrams, D., Masser, B., ... López, W.L. (2000). Beyond prejudice as simple antipathy: Hostile and benevolent sexism across cultures. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 79(5), p. 763 – 775.
- Graham, L. (2016). 'I am a mother': Young women's negotiation of femininity and risk in the transition to adulthood. *Culture, health & sexuality*, 18(3), 265-279.
- Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the prison notebooks*. London: Lawrence & Wishart.
- Gutmann, M. C. (2006). *The meanings of macho: Being a man in Mexico City*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Halberstam, J. (1998). *Female Masculinity*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Haslam, S.A., & Reicher, S.D. (2007). Beyond the banality of evil: Three dynamics of an interactionist social psychology of tyranny. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 33, 615–622. DOI: 10.1177/0146167206298570
- Haslam, S. A., & Reicher, S. D. (2012). When prisoners take over the prison: A social psychology of resistance. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 16(2), 154-179. Available: [http://www.bbcprisonstudy.org/includes/site/files/files/2012%20PSPR%20Resistance\(1\).pdf](http://www.bbcprisonstudy.org/includes/site/files/files/2012%20PSPR%20Resistance(1).pdf)
- Haslam, S.A., Reicher, S.D., & Reynolds, K.J. (2012). Identity, influence and change: Rediscovering John Turner's vision for social psychology. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 51(), 201-218. DOI: 10.1111/j.2044-8309.2011.02091.x.
- Hayfield, N., & Clarke, V. (2012). "I'd be just as happy with a cup of tea": Women's accounts of sex and affection in long-term hetero-sexual relationships. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 35(2). p. 67-74. DOI: 10.1016/j.wsif.2012.01.003.
- Hearn, J. (2004). From hegemonic masculinity to the hegemony of men. *Feminist Theory*, 5(1), 49-72. DOI: 10.1177/1464700104040813.
- Hearn, J. & Morrell, R. (2012). Reviewing hegemonic masculinities and men in Sweden and South Africa. *Men and Masculinities*, 15(1), 3-10, DOI: 10.1177/1097184X11432111
- Hefner, V., & Wilson, B. J. (2013). From love at first sight to soul mate: The influence of romantic ideals in popular films on young people's beliefs about relationships. *Communication Monographs*, 80(2), 150-175. DOI: 10.1080/03637751.2013.776697.
- Heise, F. (2015). Postfeminism, consumerism, and the reclamation of love. In D.Y. Çamoğlu (Ed.) *Critical Issues: Re/presenting gender and love*. (pp. 171- 181). Oxford, United Kingdom: Inter-disciplinary Press.
- Helman, R., & Ratele, K. (2016). Everyday (in)equality at home: Complex constructions of gender in South African families. *Global health action*, 9(1), 31122-31136. DOI: 10.3402/gha.v9.31122



- Hess, U., Adams, R., Jr, & Kleck, R. (2005). Who may frown and who should smile? Dominance, affiliation, and the display of happiness and anger. *Cognition & Emotion*, 19(4), 515–536. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02699930441000364>.
- Hoey, E. M., & Kendrick, K. H. (2017). Conversation analysis. In A. M. B. de Groot, & P. Hagoort (Eds.), *Research methods in psycholinguistics: A practical guide* (pp. 151-173). Wiley: Blackwell.
- Holford, N. (2012). *Making classed sexualities: Investigating gender, power and violence in middle-class teenagers' relationship cultures*. Unpublished doctoral thesis. Cardiff University: Cardiff, Wales.
- Hollway, W. (1984). Gender difference and the production of subjectivity. In J. Henriques, W. Hollway, C. Urwin, C. Venn, & V. Walkerdine. (Eds.). *Changing the subject: Psychology, social regulation and subjectivity*. London: Methuen.
- Housekeeping Monthly (1955, 13 May). The Good Wife's Guide. Accessed from <http://www.feministezine.com/feminist/historical/Good-Wifes-Guide.html> on 16 May 2018.
- Hunter, M. (2005). Cultural politics and masculinities: Multiple partners in historical perspective in KwaZulu-Natal. *Culture, Health and Sexuality*, 7(3): *African Sexualities*, 209-223. Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4005492>.
- Huntington, E. (2010). Individual versus collective resistance: Portrayal of women in Ousmane Sembene's *La Noire de...* and *Emitai*. *Film Matters* 1(4), 11-14. Accessed from [http://www.academia.edu/8068878/Individual\\_vs.\\_Collective\\_Resistance](http://www.academia.edu/8068878/Individual_vs._Collective_Resistance) on 24 April 2018.
- Illouz, E. (1997). *Consuming the Romantic Utopia: Love and the Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Ishii-Kuntz, M. (2003). Balancing fatherhood and work: Emergence of diverse masculinities in contemporary Japan. In J.E. Roberson & N. Suzuki (Eds.). *Men and masculinities in contemporary Japan* (pp. 216-234). London: Routledge.
- Jackman, M.R. (1994). *The Velvet Glove: Paternalism and Conflict in Gender, Class and Race Relations*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Jackson, S. (1995). Women and heterosexual love: Complicity, resistance and change. In L. Pearce, & J. Stacey (Eds.) *Romance Revisited*. (pp. 49-62). London: Lawrence & Wishart.
- Jackson, S. & Scott, S. (2002). Marriage and intimate relationships. In S. Jackson, & S. Scott (Eds.). *Gender: A sociological reader*. pp. 203-206. Routledge: London.
- Jacobs, N., Manicom, D. & Durrheim, K. (2013). 'Help somebody who help you': The effect of the domestic labour relationship on South African domestic workers' ability to exercise their rights. *Alternation*, 20(1), 273-294.
- Jamieson, L. (2002). Intimacy transformed? In S. Jackson & S. Scott (Eds.). *Gender: A sociological reader* (pp. 259-268). London: Routledge.
- Jarvis, C. (1999). Love changes everything: The transformative potential of popular romantic fiction. *Studies in the education of adults*, 31(2), 109-123. DOI: 10.1080/02660830.1999.11661406.
- Jenkins, R., Nixon, E., & Molesworth, M. (2011). 'Just normal and homely': The presence, absence and othering of consumer culture in everyday imagining. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 11(2), 261-281. DOI: 10.1177/1469540511402446.
- Jewkes, R., & Morrell, R. (2012). Sexuality and the limits of agency among South African teenage women: Theorising femininities and their connections to HIV risk practises. *Social Science & Medicine*, 74(11), 1729-1737.
- Jewkes, R., Morrell, R., Hearn, J., Lundqvist, E., Blackbeard, D., Lindegger, G., Quayle, M., Sikweyiya, Y., & Gottzén, L. (2015). Hegemonic masculinity: Combining theory and practice in gender interventions. *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, 17(2), 112-127, DOI: 10.1080/13691058.2015.1085094

- Johnson, C. (1992). Gender, formal authority and leadership. In C.L. Ridgeway (Ed.) *Gender, interaction and inequality*. (pp. 29-49). New York: Springer Science + Business Media
- Johnson, K. R., & Holmes, B. M. (2009). Contradictory messages: A content analysis of Hollywood-produced romantic comedy feature films. *Communication Quarterly*, 57(3), 352-373. DOI: 10.1080/01463370903113632.
- Jost, J.T. (2017). Working class conservatism: A system justification perspective. *Current Opinion in Psychology* 18, 73-78. DOI 10.1016/j.copsyc.2017.08.020
- Jost, J.T., Becker, J., Osborne, D., & Badaan, V. (2017). Missing in (collective) action: Ideology, system justification, and the motivational antecedents of two types of protest behaviour. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 26(2), 99-108. DOI: 10.1177/0963721417690633.
- Jost, J.T., & Kay, A.C. (2005). Exposure to benevolent sexism and complementary gender stereotypes: Consequences for specific and diffuse forms of system justification. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 88(3), 498 – 509.
- Kadir, S., & Tidy, J. (2013). Gays, Gaze and Aunty Gok: The disciplining of gender and sexuality in *How to Look Good Naked*, *Feminist Media Studies*, 13(2), 177-191. DOI: 10.1080/14680777.2011.604342
- Kandiyoti, D. (1988). Bargaining with patriarchy. *Gender and Society*, 2(3), 274–290.
- Kassin, S., Fein, S. & Markus, H.R. (2017). *Social psychology* (10th Ed.). Boston, Massachusetts: Cengage Learning.
- Kelly, K. (2006a). From encounter to text: Collecting data in qualitative research. In M. Terre Blanche, K. Durrheim, & D. Painter (Eds.). *Research in Practice* (2nd Ed.). (pp. 285 - 319). Cape Town: UCT Press.
- Kelly, K. (2006b). Calling it a day: Reaching conclusions in qualitative research. In M. Terre Blanche, K. Durrheim, & D. Painter. (Eds.). *Research in Practice*. (pp. 370 – 387). Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.).
- Kelly, K. (2006c). Lived experience and interpretation: The balancing act in qualitative analysis. In M. Terre Blanche, K. Durrheim, & D. Painter. (Ed.). *Research in Practice*. (pp. 345-369). Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.).
- Kiguwa, P. (2004). Feminist critical psychology in South Africa. In D. Hook, N. Mkhize, P. Kiguwa, & A. Collins (Eds.), *Critical psychology* (pp. 278-315). Cape Town: UCT Press.
- Klein, O., Spears, R., & Reicher, S. (2007). Social identity performance: Extending the strategic side of SIDE. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 11(1), 28 – 45.
- Koen, J., Slack, C., Barsdorf, N., & Essack, Z. (2008). Payment of trial participants can be ethically sound: Moving past a flat rate. *South African Medical Journal*, 98(12), 926 – 929.
- Korhonen, T. (2014). Language narratives from adult upper secondary education: Interrelating agency, autonomy and identity in foreign language learning. *Apples- Journal of Applied Language Studies*, 8(1), 65-87. Accessed from <https://jyx.jyu.fi/bitstream/handle/123456789/43386/Apples-v8-issue1-Korhonen.pdf?sequence=1> on 28/09/2018.
- Korobov, N. (2009). Expanding hegemonic masculinity: The use of irony in young men’s stories about romantic experiences. *American Journal of Men’s Health*, 3(4), 286-299. DOI 10.1177/1557988308319952.
- Krane, V. (2001). We can be athletic and feminine, but do we want to? Challenging hegemonic femininity in women's sport. *Quest*, 53(1), 115-133.
- Kunin, M.M. (1994). *Living a political life*. New York: Random House.
- Kvale, S. (1996). *Interviews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Lalor, T., & Rendle-Short, J. (2007). 'That's so gay': A contemporary use of *gay* in Australian English. *Australian Journal of Linguistics*, 22(1), 147-173, DOI: 10.1080/07268600701522764.
- Lambert, C., & Parker, A. (2006). Imagination, hope and the positive face of feminism: Pro/feminist pedagogy in 'post' feminist times? *Studies in Higher Education* 31(4), 469 – 482.
- Leahy, T. (1994). Taking up a position: Discourses of femininity and adolescence in the context of man/girl relationships. *Gender and Society*, 8(1), 48 – 72.
- Lee, T.L., Fiske, S.T., Glick, P., & Chen, Z. (2010). Ambivalent sexism in close relationships: (Hostile) power and (benevolent) romance shape relationship ideals. *Sex Roles*, 62, 583 – 601. DOI: 10.1007/s11199-010-9770-x.
- Lent, R.W., Brown, S.D., & Hackett, G. (2000). Contextual supports and barriers to career choice: A social cognitive analysis. *Journal of Counselling Psychology*, 47(1), p. 36-49. DOI: 10.1037//0022-0167.47.1.36.
- Lesch, E., & Bremridge, C. (2006). Safe sex and the constructions of young male sexuality in one semi-rural Western Cape community. *South African Review of Sociology*, 37(2), 128-142.
- Lévi-Strauss, C. (1993). Father Christmas executed. In D. Miller (Ed.). *Unwrapping Christmas*, (pp. 38-51). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lindegger, G. & Quayle, M. (2009). Masculinity and HIV/AIDS. In P. Rohleder, L. Swartz, S. C. Kalichman & L. C. Simbayi (Eds.) *HIV/AIDS in South Africa 25 years on*. (pp. 41-54). New York: Springer. Retrieved from [http://michaelquayle.net/pubs/Lindegger%26Quayle2009 in Rohleder et al ch4.pdf](http://michaelquayle.net/pubs/Lindegger%26Quayle2009%20in%20Rohleder%20et%20al%20ch4.pdf)
- Lindholm, C. (2006). Romantic love and anthropology, *Etnofoor*, 19(1), 5-21. Accessed from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25758107> on 08/02/2013.
- Linell, P. (2015). Mishearings are occasioned by contextual assumptions and situational affordances. *Language and Communication*, 40, 24-37. DOI: 10.1016/j.langcom.2014.10.009.
- Lizardo, O. (2007). Fight Club, or the cultural contradictions of late capitalism. *Journal for Cultural Research*, 11(3), 221-243. DOI: 10.1080/14797580701763830.
- Longhurst, D. (1998). 'They gotta do what they gotta do': Interrogating the contradictions and lasting pleasures of masculine romance. In L. Pearce & G. Wisker (Eds.) *Fatal attractions: Re-scripting romance in contemporary literature and film*. (pp. 205-218). London: Pluto Press.
- Loveman, M. (1998). High-risk collective action: Defending human rights in Chile, Uruguay, and Argentina. *The American Journal of Sociology*, 104(2), 477-525. Downloaded from <http://www.umass.edu/legal/Benavides/Fall2005/397U/Readings%20Legal%20397U/7%20Mara%20Loveman.pdf> on 27/04/2018.
- Lun, C.H. (2004). *Cupid in trouble: Romantic love, social control, and social networking*. Unpublished Masters thesis, Department of Sociology, National University of Singapore: Singapore.
- Lund, A. (2006). The multiple contexts of online language teaching. *Language Teaching Research*, 10(2), 181-204. DOI: 10.1191/1362168806lr191oa.
- Macgilchrist, F., & van Hout, T. (2011). Ethnographic discourse analysis and social science. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung*, 12(1), Article 18. Accessed from <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/1600/3107> on 18 February 2018.
- Mankayi, N. (2008). Masculinity, sexuality and the body of male soldiers. *PINS*, 36, 24-44. Retrieved October 09, 2017, from [http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci\\_arttext&pid=S1015-60462008000100003&lng=en&tlng=en](http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1015-60462008000100003&lng=en&tlng=en).
- Manley, E., Levitt, H., & McCoun, C.M. (2007). Understanding the bear movement in gay male culture. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 53(4), 89-112.
- Martin, J. & Govender, K. (2013). 'Indenturing the body': Traditional masculine role norms, body image discrepancy, and muscularity in a sample of South African Indian boys. *Culture, Society & Masculinities*, 5(1), 21-45. DOI: 10.3149/CSM.0501.21.

- McCormack, M. (2011). Mapping the terrain of homosexually-themed language. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 58(5), 664-679. DOI: 10.1080/00918369.2011.563665
- McRobbie, A. (2004a). Post-feminism and popular culture. *Feminist Media Studies* 4(3), 255-264. DOI: 10.1080/1468077042000309937.
- McRobbie, A. (2004b). Feminism and the socialist tradition... Undone? *Cultural studies*, 18(4), 503-522. DOI: 10.10800950238042000232226.
- McRobbie, A. (2007). Top girls? *Cultural Studies*, 21(4-5), 718-737. DOI: 10.1080/09502380701279044.
- Messerschmidt, J. W. (2012). *Gender, heterosexuality, and youth violence: The struggle for recognition*. Lanham, Maryland, USA: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Messerschmidt, J. W. (2015). *Hegemonic masculinities and camouflaged politics: Unmasking the Bush dynasty and its war against Iraq*. Routledge: New York.
- Mkhize, G., & Njawala, L. (2016). Rethinking hegemonic masculinity and patriarchal privilege within heterosexual interpersonal relationships. *The Oriental Anthropologist*, 16(2), 379.
- Miles, M., & Huberman, A. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Moleko, A.G. (2012). Cultural and cross cultural psychology. In M. Visser & A.G. Moleko (Eds.) *Community Psychology in South Africa* (pp. 163-176). (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.). Pretoria: Van Schaik.
- Mooney, K. (1998). 'Ducktails, flick-knives and pugnacity': Subcultural and hegemonic masculinities in South Africa, 1948-1960. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 24(4), 753-774. Stable URL <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2637473>, accessed on 17/05/2013.
- Moore, E. (2015). Forms of femininity at the end of a customary marriage. *Gender & Society*, 29(6), 817-840.
- Morrell, R. (1998). Of boys and men: Masculinity and gender in Southern African Studies. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 24(4), 605-630. Stable URL <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2637466> accessed on 11/04/2014.
- Morrell, R. (Ed.) (2001a). *Changing men in Southern Africa*. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press.
- Morrell, R. (2001b). *From boys to gentlemen: Settler masculinity in colonial Natal 1880 – 1920*. Pretoria: Unisa Press.
- Morrell, R. (2003). Silence, sexuality and HIV/AIDS in South African schools. *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 30(1), 41-62.
- Morrell, R., Jewkes, R., & Lindegger, G. (2012). Hegemonic masculinity/masculinities in South Africa: Culture, power, and gender politics. *Men and Masculinities*, 15(1), 11-30. DOI: 10.1177/1097184X12438001.
- Morrell, R., Jewkes, R., Lindegger, G., & Hamlall, V. (2013). Hegemonic masculinity: Reviewing the gendered analysis of men's power in South Africa. *South African Review of Sociology*, 44(1), 3-21, DOI: 10.1080/21528586.2013.784445.
- Morrison, C.A. (2010). *'Home is where the heart is': Everyday geographies of young heterosexual couples' love in and of homes*. Unpublished doctoral thesis. University of Waikato: Hamilton, New Zealand.
- Msibi, T. (2012). *Angeke ngibe yisitabane: An exploration of the perceived relationship between dress and sexuality among young African men*. In R. Moletsane, C. Mitchell, & A. Smith (Eds.). *Was it something I wore? Dress identity and materiality* (pp. 242-258). Cape Town: HSRC Press. Stable URL: <http://www.hsrcpress.ac.za/product.php?cat=31&freedownload=1&productid=2294>
- Mthatyana, A., & Vincent, L. (2015). Multiple femininities in a 'single sex' school: Re-orienting Life Orientation to learner lifeworlds. *Perspectives in Education* 33(2), 49-62.

- Mühleisen, W. (2007). Mainstream sexualisation and the potential for Nordic New Feminism. *Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, 15(2-3), 172 – 189.
- Natalier, K. (2004). Avoiding the housework: Domestic labour and gender in group living contexts. *Electronic Journal of Sociology*. ISSN: 1198 3655. Downloaded from <http://www.sociology.org/ejs-archives/2004/tier1/natalier.html> on 28 March 2018.
- Nelson, M.K. (2004). Reciprocity and romance. *Quarterly Sociology*, 27(4), 439 – 459. DOI 10.1023/B:QUAS.0000049242.21417.d8
- Neophytou, V. L. (2012). Representations of Femininities in the South African Soap Opera, Generations. *Loyola Journal of Social Sciences*, 26(1), 153-168.
- Newburn, T. & Stanko, E.A. (1994). *Just boys doing business? Men, masculinities and crime*. London: Routledge.
- Ngabaza, S., Daniels, D., Franck, O., & Maluleke, R. (2013). Contestations of the meanings of love and gender in a university students' discussion. *Agenda*, 27(2), 128-136 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10130950.2013.822684>
- Nicholas, G., & Skinner, A.L. (2012). “That’s so gay!” Priming the general negative usage of the word *gay* increases implicit anti-gay bias. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 152(5), 654-658. DOI: 10.1080/00224545.2012.661803.
- Orne, M.T. (1962). On the social psychology of the psychological experiment: With particular reference to demand characteristics and their implications. *American Psychologist*, 17, 776 – 783.
- Oxford Dictionary (no date) ‘Aw’. Retrieved from <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/aw> on 8 February, 2018.
- Paechter, C. (2012). Bodies, Identities and Performances: reconfiguring the language of gender and schooling. *Gender and Education* 24(2), 229-241
- Pascoe, C. J. (2005). “Dude, you're a fag”: Adolescent masculinity and the fag discourse. *Sexualities*, 8(3), 329–346. DOI: 10.1177/1363460705053337.
- Pettigrew, T. F., & Tropp, L. R. (2006). A meta-analytic test of intergroup contact theory. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 90: 751-783.
- Phoenix, A. (2004). Learning styles and gender. In H. Claire (Ed.). *Gender in education 3-19: A fresh approach*. (pp. 33-41). The Association of Teachers and Lecturers. Retrieved from <http://www.atl.org.uk/Images/Gender%20in%20education%203-19.pdf>.
- Potter, J. (1996). *Representing reality: Discourse, rhetoric and social construction*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Potter, J. (2004). Discourse analysis. In M. Hardy & A. Bryman (Eds.) *Handbook of data analysis* (pp. 607-624). London: Sage. Accessed from [https://s3.amazonaws.com/academia.edu.documents/30395046/potter\\_discourse\\_2004.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAIWOWYYGZ2Y53UL3A&Expires=1538041768&Signature=g4HulfmYSF5JNIf3S8weLE9CZPY%3D&response-content-disposition=inline%3B%20filename%3DDiscourse\\_analysis.pdf](https://s3.amazonaws.com/academia.edu.documents/30395046/potter_discourse_2004.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAIWOWYYGZ2Y53UL3A&Expires=1538041768&Signature=g4HulfmYSF5JNIf3S8weLE9CZPY%3D&response-content-disposition=inline%3B%20filename%3DDiscourse_analysis.pdf) on 28/09/2018.
- Potter, J., & Wetherell, M. (1987). *Discourse and Social Psychology: Beyond Attitudes and Behaviour*. London: Sage Publications.
- Potts, A. (2001). The man with two brains: Hegemonic masculine subjectivity and the discursive construction of the unreasonable penis-self. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 10(2), 145-156. DOI: 10.1080/09589230120053274.
- Price, L. (2015). Caring, healing and befriending: An interdisciplinary critical realist approach to reducing oppression and violence against women in Southern Africa. (Paper presented at the Critical Realist Reading Group, Institute of Education, University College London, 9 February 2015). Accessed from

- [https://s3.amazonaws.com/academia.edu.documents/36681022/Caring\\_healing\\_befriending.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAIWOWYYGZ2Y53UL3A&Expires=1522210188&Signature=Ea4wtMEIk6PrIQ3YKoe%2BYdWMkzM%3D&response-content-disposition=inline%3B%20filename%3DCaring\\_healing\\_and\\_befriending\\_an\\_interd.pdf](https://s3.amazonaws.com/academia.edu.documents/36681022/Caring_healing_befriending.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAIWOWYYGZ2Y53UL3A&Expires=1522210188&Signature=Ea4wtMEIk6PrIQ3YKoe%2BYdWMkzM%3D&response-content-disposition=inline%3B%20filename%3DCaring_healing_and_befriending_an_interd.pdf) on 28 March 2018.
- Quayle, M., Lindegger, G., Brittain, K., Nabee, N., Cole, C. (2017). Women's ideals for masculinity across social contexts: Patriarchal agentic masculinity is valued in work, family and romance but communal masculinity in friendship. *Sex Roles*, 1-15. DOI 10.1007/s11199-017-0772-9.
- Ratele, K. (2006). Ruling masculinity and sexuality. *Feminist Africa*, 6, 48-64.
- Ratele, K., Shefer, T., Strebel, A., & Fouten, E. (2010). 'We do not cook, we only assist them': Constructions of hegemonic masculinity through gendered activity, *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, 20(4), 557-568.
- Reddy, S., & Dunne, M. (2007). Risking it: Young heterosexual femininities in South African context of HIV/AIDS. *Sexualities*, 10(2), 159-172. DOI: 10.1177/1363460707075797
- Reardon, C., & Govender, K. (2011). 'Shaping up': The relationship between traditional masculinity, conflict resolution and body image among adolescent boys in South Africa. *Vulnerable Children and Youth Studies: An International Interdisciplinary Journal for Research, Policy and Care*, 6(1), 78-87. DOI: 10.1080/17450128.2011.554578.
- Redman, P. (2001). The discipline of love: Negotiation and regulation in boys' performance of a romance-based heterosexual masculinity. *Men and Masculinities*, 4(2), 186 – 200.
- Reis, H.T. (2008). Reinvigorating the Concept of Situation in Social Psychology, *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 12(4), 311-329. DOI: 10.1177/1088868308321721.
- Riecken, H.R. (1962). A program for research on experiments in social psychology. In N.F. Washburne (Ed.) *Decision, Values and Groups* (Vol 2). (pp 25 – 41). New York: Pergamon Press.
- Roscigno, V.J., & Hodson, R. (2004). The organizational and social foundations of worker resistance. *American Sociological Review*, 69(1), 14-39. Accessed from [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/V\\_Roscigno/publication/272559943\\_Media\\_and\\_Mobilization\\_The\\_Case\\_of\\_Radio\\_and\\_Southern\\_Textile\\_Worker\\_Insurgency\\_1929\\_to\\_1934/links/581206fa08aeda05f0a56c7a.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/V_Roscigno/publication/272559943_Media_and_Mobilization_The_Case_of_Radio_and_Southern_Textile_Worker_Insurgency_1929_to_1934/links/581206fa08aeda05f0a56c7a.pdf) on 27 April 2018.
- Rose, S. & Frieze, I.H. (1993). Young singles' contemporary dating scripts. *Sex Roles* 28(9/10), 499-509.
- Rosenzweig, S. (1933). The experimental situation as a psychological problem. *Psychological Review*, 40(4), 337.
- Roundy, G.T. (2011). The relationship of adult attachment dimensions and neuroticism to relationship self-regulation. (Unpublished Masters dissertation). Brigham Young University. Downloaded from <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4180&context=etd> on 11/10/2018.
- Rule Groenewald, C. (2013). "Just knowing you found the person that you're ready to spend your life with": Love, romance and intimate relationships. *Agenda: Empowering women for gender equity*, 27(2), 30 – 37.
- Saguy, T., Tausch, N., Dovidio, J., & Pratto, F. (2009). The irony of harmony: Intergroup contact can produce false expectations for equality. *Psychological Science*, 20, 14–121.
- Sanders, T. (2008). Male sexual scripts: Intimacy, sexuality and pleasure in the purchase of commercial sex. *Sociology*, 42(3), 400-417. DOI: 10.1177/0038038508088833.

- Schaeffer-Grabel, F. (2006). Flexible technologies of subjectivity and mobility across the Americas. *American Quarterly*, 58(3), 891-914. Downloaded from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40068397> on 8 February 2013.
- Schäfer, G. (2008). Romantic love in heterosexual relationships: Women's experiences. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 16(3), 187-197.
- Schegloff, E. A. (2007). *Sequence organization in interaction: Volume 1: A primer in conversation analysis* (Vol. 1). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schepers, Y., & Zway, M. (2012). Adolescents' constructions of gender and sexuality. *New Voices in Psychology*, 8(2), 23-38.
- Schippers, M. (2007). Recovering the feminine other: Masculinity, femininity, and gender hegemony. *Theory and Society*, 36, 85 – 102.
- Schwarz, O. (2010). Negotiating romance in front of the lens. *Visual Communication*, 9(2), 151 – 169. DOI 10.1177/1470357210369982.
- Seidman, S. (2002). The sexualisation of love. In S. Jackson & S. Scott (Eds.). *Gender: A sociological reader* (pp. 225-229). London: Routledge.
- Shapiro, J., & Kroeger, L. (1991). Is life just a romantic novel? The relationship between attitudes about intimate relationships and the popular media. *American Journal of Family Therapy*, 19(3), 226-236. DOI: 10.1080/01926189108250854.
- Shefer, T. (2004). Psychology and the regulation of gender. In D. Hook, N. Mkhize, P. Kiguwa, & A. Collins (Eds.), *Critical Psychology*. (pp. 187-209). Cape Town: UCT Press.
- Shefer, T., & Foster, D. (2001). Discourses on women's (hetero)sexuality and desire in a South African local context. *Culture, Health and Sexuality*, 3(4), 375 – 390.
- Shefer, T., Kruger, L., & Schepers, Y. (2015). Masculinity, sexuality and vulnerability in 'working' with young men in South African contexts: 'You feel like a fool and an idiot ... a loser'. *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, 17(2), 96-111. DOI: 10.1080/13691058.2015.1075253
- Shumway, D.R. (2003). *Modern love: Romance, intimacy, and the Marriage Crisis*. New York: New York University.
- Silverman, D. (2005). *Doing Qualitative Research: A Practical Handbook*. (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.) Los Angeles: Sage Publications.
- Silverman, D. (2013). *Doing Qualitative Research: A Practical Handbook*. (4<sup>th</sup> Ed.) Los Angeles: Sage Publications.
- Singh, S. (2013). Women want love, men want wives: The discourse of romantic love in young adults' future marriage goals. *Agenda*, 27(2), 22-29. Link to DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10130950.2013.808798>.
- Singh, S., & Myende, T. (2017). Redefining love: Female university students developing resilience to intimate partner violence. *Agenda*, 31(2), 1-12. Accessed on 13/11/2017 from <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10130950.2017.1362895>.
- Snyder-Hall, C. (2010). Third-wave feminism and the defence of 'choice'. *Perspectives on Politics*, 8(1), 255-261. DOI: 10.1017/S1537592709992842.
- Spears, R., Jetten, J., & Doosje, B. (2001). The (il)legitimacy of ingroup bias: From social reality to social resistance. In J.T. Jost & B. Major (Eds.) *The Psychology of Legitimacy: Emerging Perspectives on Ideology, Justice and Intergroup Relations*. (pp. 332 – 362). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Stacey, J., & Pearce, L. (1995). The heart of the matter: Feminists revisit romance. In L. Pearce & J. Stacey (Eds.). *Romance revisited*. (pp. 11-45). London: Lawrence & Wishart.
- Starks, H., & Brown Trinidad, S. (2007). Choose your method: A comparison of phenomenology, discourse analysis and grounded theory. *Qualitative Health Research*, 17(10), 1372 – 1380.

- Statistics South Africa (2013). Gender Statistics in South Africa, 2011. Statistics South Africa: Pretoria, South Africa. Downloaded from [www.statssa.gov.za](http://www.statssa.gov.za) on 10 January 2018.
- Stevens, R. (1983). *Erik Erikson: An introduction*. New York, NY: St Martin's Press. ISBN 978-0-312-25812-2.
- Stivers, T. (2010). An overview of the question–response system in American English conversation. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 42(10), 2772-2781. DOI: 10.1016/j.pragma.2010.04.011
- Storey, J. & McDonald, K. (2013). Love's best habit: The uses of media in romantic relationships. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 17(2), 113-125. DOI: 10.1177/1367877912467274.
- Straub, B.N. (2006). *Looking through rose colored glasses: The media's influence on perceptions of romance and marriage*. Unpublished Master of Arts thesis. Nicholson School of Communication, University of Central Florida: Orlando, Florida.
- Strebel, A., Crawford, M., Shefer, T., Cloete, A., Dwa-dwa-Henda, N., Kaufman, M., Simbayi, L., Magome, K., & Kalichman, S. (2006). Social constructions of gender roles, gender-based violence and HIV/AIDS in two communities of the Western Cape, South Africa. *SAHARA-J: Journal of Social Aspects of HIV/AIDS: An Open Access Journal*, 3(3), 516-528, DOI: 10.1080/17290376.2006.9724879.
- Sun, H., & Hart-Davidson, W. F. (2014, April). Binding the material and the discursive with a relational approach of affordances. In *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (pp. 3533-3542). ACM
- Talbot, K. & Quayle, M. (2010). The perils of being a nice guy: Contextual variation in five young women's constructions. *Men and Masculinities*, 13(2), 255-278.
- Taylor, S.J., & Bogdan, R. (1984). *Introduction to qualitative research methods: The search for meaning*. (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.). New York: Wiley & Sons.
- Terre Blanche, M., Durrheim, K., & Kelly, K. (2006). First steps in qualitative analysis. In M. Terre Blanche, K. Durrheim, & D. Painter. (Ed.). *Research in Practice*. (pp. 320 – 344). Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.).
- Terry, G., & Braun, V. (2013). To let hair be, or to not let hair be? Gender and body hair removal practices in Aotearoa/New Zealand. *Body Image*, 10(4), 599 – 606.
- Teubert, W. (2010). *Meaning, Discourse and Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Thagaard, T. (1997). Gender, power and love: A study of interaction between spouses. *Acta Sociologica*, 40(4), 357 – 376.
- Theilade, K.D. (2011). *Talking sexualities: New Zealand and Danish students' stories about sexual negotiations*. Unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Canterbury, place.
- Thoma, P. (2009). Buying up baby. *Feminist Media Studies*, 9(4), 409 – 425.
- Toner, S.J. (1988). Television and the American imagination: Notions of romance. *Journal of Popular Culture*, 22(3), 1 – 13.
- Touretzky, D. S., & Tira-Thompson, E. J. (2005, July). Tekkotsu: A framework for AIBO cognitive robotics. In *Proceedings of the National Conference on Artificial Intelligence* (Vol. 20, No. 4, p. 1741). Menlo Park, CA; Cambridge, MA; London; AAAI Press; MIT Press. Downloaded from <http://www.aaai.org/Papers/Workshops/2005/WS-05-11/WS05-11-013.pdf> on 27 September 2018.
- Tukachinsky, R.H. (2008). Feminist and postfeminist readings of romantic narratives. *Feminist Media Studies*, 8(2), 181 – 196. DOI: 10.1080/14680770801980562
- Turner, J.C., & Oakes, P. J. (1986). The significance of the social identity concept for social psychology with reference to individualism, interactionism and social influence. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 25(3), 237-252. DOI: 10.1111/j.2044-8309.1986.tb00732.x
- Valdés, T. & Olavarría, J. (Ed.) (1998). *Masculinidades y Equidad de Género en América Latina*. Santiago: FLACSO/UNFPA.



- Vannini, P. (2004). Will you marry me? Spectacle and consumption in the ritual of marriage proposals. *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 38(1), 169-185. DOI: 10.1111/j.0022-3840.2004.00105.x
- van Acker, E. (2003). Administering romance: Government policies concerning pre-marriage education programs. *Australian Journal of Public Administration* 62(1), 15-23.
- Van Antwerpen, S., & Ferreira, E. (2010). Males in predominantly female-dominated positions: A South African perspective. *Journal of Contemporary Management*, 7(1), 363-379.
- Viki, G.T., Abrams, D., & Hutchison, P. (2003). The 'true' romantic: Benevolent sexism and paternalistic chivalry. *Sex Roles*, 49(9/10), 533 – 537.
- Vincent, L., & Chiwandire, D. (2013). Rehearsing or reversing harmful masculine scripts? South African men's romance narratives. *Agenda: Empowering women for gender equity*, 27(2), 12 – 21.
- Vincent, L. & McEwen, C. (2006). Labouring to love: Romantic love and power in the construction of middle-class femininity. *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, 13(1), 37 – 59.
- Vogels, C. (2017). Is Edward Cullen a "good" boyfriend? Young men talk about Twilight, masculinity and the rules of (hetero)romance. *Journal of Popular Romance Studies*, 6, 1-20. Accessed from <http://jprstudies.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/IECAGB.12.2017.pdf> on 11/03/2019.
- Wassenaar, D. (2006). Ethical issues in social science research. In M. Terre Blanche, K. Durrheim, & D. Painter. (Ed.). *Research in Practice*. (pp. 60 – 79). Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.).
- Wassenaar, D., & Mamotte, N. (2012). Ethical issues and ethics reviews in social science research. In M.M. Leach, M.J. Stevens, G. Lindsay, A. Ferrero & Y. Korkut (Eds.). *The Oxford Handbook of International Psychological Ethics*. (pp. 268 – 282). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Weedon, C. (1987). *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory*. Cambridge: Blackwell.
- West, C. & Zimmerman, D. (1987). Doing gender. *Gender and Society*, 1(2), 125 – 151.
- West, C. & Zimmerman, D. (2009). Accounting for doing gender. *Gender and Society*, 23(1), 112 – 122.
- Wetherell, M. (1995). Romantic discourse and feminist analysis: Interrogating investment, power and desire. In S. Wilkinson & C. Kitzinger (Eds.) *Feminism and Discourse: Psychological Perspectives*. London: Sage Publications.
- Wetherell, M. (1998). Positioning and interpretive repertoires: Conversation analysis and post-structuralism in dialogue. *Discourse and Society*. 9(3), 387-412. DOI: 10.1177/0957926598009003005.
- Wetherell, M. & Edley, N. (1999). Negotiating Hegemonic Masculinity: Imaginary Positions and Psycho-Discursive Practices. *Feminism & Psychology*, 9(3), 335-356.
- Wetherell, M. & Edley, N. (2014). A discursive psychological framework for analyzing men and masculinities. *Psychology of Men and Masculinity*, 15(4), 355-364. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0037148>
- Whorley, M. R. & Addis, M. E. (2006). Ten Years of Psychological Research on Men and Masculinity in the United States: Dominant Methodological Trends. *Sex Roles*, 55(9), 649-658. doi: 10.1007/s11199-006-9120-1.
- Wilding, R. (2003). Romantic love and 'getting married': Narratives of the wedding in and out of cinema texts. *Journal of Sociology*, 39(4), 373-389. DOI: 10.1177/0004869003394004
- Williams, R. (2007). From *Beyond Control* to in control: Investigating Drew Barrymore's feminist agency /authorship. In S. Redmond & S. Holmes (Eds.) *Stardom and celebrity: A reader*. (pp. 111-125). Los Angeles: SAGE Publications.

- Winterman, D. (2008, 18 March). How 'gay' became children's insult of choice. BBC News Magazine. Published online at [news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7289390.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7289390.stm); accessed on 18 August 2018.
- Wo, C. (2011). Sweep me off my feet: Cultural dislocation and self disformation, a postcolonial reading of romantic love. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 1(8), 64-72.
- Wong, Y. J., Steinfeldt, J. A., Speight, Q. L. & Hickman, S. J. (2010). Content analysis of Psychology of men & masculinity (2000-2008). *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, 11(3), 170-181. doi: 10.1037/a0019133
- Wood, W., & Rhodes, N. (1992) Sex differences in interaction style in task groups. In C.L. Ridgeway (Ed.) *Gender, interaction and inequality*. (pp. 97-121). New York: Springer Science + Business Media.
- Woodford, M., Howell, M., Kulick, A., & Silverschanz, P. (2013). "That's so gay": Heterosexual male undergraduates and the perpetuation of sexual orientation microaggressions on campus. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 28(2), 416-435. DOI: 10.1177/0886260512454719.
- Wooffitt, R. (2001). A socially organized basis for displays of cognition: Procedural orientation to evidential turns in psychic-sitter interaction. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 40, 545 – 563.
- Wooffitt, R. (2007). Communication and laboratory performance in parapsychology experiments: Demand characteristics and the social organisation of interaction. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 46, 477 – 498.
- Wright, S.C. (2009). The next generation of collective action research. *Journal of Social Issues*, 65(4), 859-879.
- Wright, S. C. & Lubensky, M. (2009). The struggle for social equality: Collective action versus prejudice reduction. In S. Demoulin, J.P. Leyens, & J. F. Dovidio (Eds.), *Intergroup misunderstandings: Impact of divergent social realities*. New York: Psychology Press.

# Appendices

## Appendix 1A: Ethical clearance information

Ethical clearance protocol number: HSS/0330/013D

### **Ethical clearance committee information:**

Dr Shenuka Singh                      Chair of the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics  
Committee (at the time of application)

Physical address

Govan Mbeki Building

Westville Campus

University of kwaZulu-Natal

Postal address

Private Bag X54001

Durban

4000

Telephone

+27 (0)31 260 3587

+27 (0)31 260 8350

+27 (0)31 260 4557

Email

[ximbap@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:ximbap@ukzn.ac.za)

[snymanm@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:snymanm@ukzn.ac.za)

[mahunp@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:mahunp@ukzn.ac.za)

## Appendix 1B: Ethical clearance certificate



**UNIVERSITY OF  
KWAZULU-NATAL**  
INYUVESI  
YAKWAZULU-NATALI

27 May 2013

**Mrs Nicola Human (née Jacobs) 210535112**  
School of Applied Human Sciences  
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear Mrs Human

**Protocol reference number: HSS/0330/013D**  
**Project title: 'Being romantic', agency and the (re)production and (re)negotiation of traditional gender roles**

**EXPEDITED APPROVAL**

I wish to inform you that your application has been granted Full Approval through an expedited review process.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. Please note: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully



.....  
**Dr Shenuka Singh (Deputy Chair)**  
**Humanities & Social Science Research Ethics Committee**

/pm

cc Supervisor: Dr M Cuayle  
cc Academic Leader: Prof DP McCracken  
cc School Admin.: Mr Sbonelo Duma

**Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee**  
**Professor Urmilla Bob (Chair) and Dr Shenuka Singh (Deputy Chair)**  
**Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building**  
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, 4000, South Africa  
: +27 (0)31 260 3587/8350/4557 Facsimile: +27 (0)31 260 4609 Email: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za / snymnm@ukzn.ac.za / mohunp@ukzn.ac.za  
Website: www.ukzn.ac.za

campuses: ■ Edgewood ■ Howard College ■ Medical School ■ Pietermaritzburg ■ Westville

**INSPIRING GREATNESS**



FIGURE 2: SCREEN SHOT OF ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

## Appendix 1C: Ethical clearance for amendments



UNIVERSITY OF  
KWAZULU-NATAL  
INYUVESI  
YAKWAZULU-NATALI

28 March 2014

Mrs Nicola Human (née Jacobs) 210535112  
School of Applied Human Sciences  
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Protocol reference number: HSS/0330/013D  
Project title: 'Being romantic', agency and the (re)production and (re)negotiation of traditional gender roles

Dear Ms Human,

Approval - Amendment

I wish to confirm that your application dated 05 March 2014 in connection with the above mentioned project has been approved as follows:

- To combine Study 1 and Study 2 (use of same participants)
- Research Methodology
- Informed Consent Form
- Interview Schedule

Please note that all sub-studies must be applied for separately.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach/Methods must be reviewed and approved through an amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

Please note: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocol.

Yours faithfully



Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

/ms

cc Supervisor: Dr M Quayle  
cc Academic leader Research: Professor D McCracken  
cc School Administrator: Mr Sbonelo Duma

---

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee  
Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)  
Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building  
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000  
Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 3587/8350/4557 Facsimile: +27 (0) 31 260 4609 Email: [simbep@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:simbep@ukzn.ac.za) / [scvbaam@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:scvbaam@ukzn.ac.za) / [mohuno@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:mohuno@ukzn.ac.za)  
Website: [www.ukzn.ac.za](http://www.ukzn.ac.za)



1911 - 2010  
100 YEARS OF ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Founding Campuses:  Edgewood  Howard College  Medical School  Pietermaritzburg  Westville

FIGURE 3: SCREEN SHOT OF ETHICAL CLEARANCE OF AMENDMENTS

## Appendix 1D: Detailed discussion of ethical considerations

The eight ethical principles discussed in Wassenaar and Mamotte (2012) will be addressed, and their application to this study will be discussed.

The first principle is that of collaborative partnership. Wassenaar and Mamotte (2012) argued that (1) community participation in the research process should be facilitated; and (2) fieldworkers should be viewed as “key collaborative partners” whose personal development should be considered by the researcher, as they play a vital role in establishing a connection with participants (p. 275). In this study, it could be argued that the first application of this principle is less relevant than in other studies, as there was no identifiable community *per se* being investigated. Additionally, as this study investigated whether traditional gender roles are necessary to (re)create romance, thus potentially investigating the “destructive process” of benevolent sexism and patriarchy, it could be argued that the exception argued for by Wassenaar and Mamotte (2012, p. 275) could be applied in this case. However, the second application of this principle was relevant, as a male research assistant was recruited to collect data from men participants. In addition to payment for his time, the assistant received training to assist him in the facilitation of interviews, which meets the second application of collaborative partnership.

The second principle is that of social value. Wassenaar and Mamotte (2012) argued that social science research should address questions of value, and should specify who will benefit from the findings. Research investigating how masculinity and femininity are co-constructed as complementary gender identities (cf. Schippers, 2007) is sparse, and there is a certain amount of conflict in the literature around whether romance disrupts or shores up patriarchal ideals. Thus, this study aimed to address these gaps, with the aim of contributing research of social value. While participants may benefit in some way from their participation, the author of the proposed study was the key beneficiary.

The third principle is that of scientific validity. Wassenaar and Mamotte (2012) argued that social science research should be “rigorous, justifiable, feasible, and lead to valid answers to the research question” (p. 275). In sections 3.6 and 3.7 these issues are addressed in detail, and it is argued that this study was scientifically valid.

The fourth principle is that of fair selection of participants. The population selected should be one relevant to the research question; participants should not be exploited or recruited merely as convenient; and undue inducements which may “distort perceptions of potential risks” should not be offered (Wassenaar & Mamotte, 2012, p. 276). In this study, the specified population of interest has been argued to be the one to whom romance is very relevant, thus meeting the first application of fair selection. Secondly, the sampling strategies depend on the willingness to participate rather than on their convenient availability to the researcher, and participants were recruited on a first-come basis, thus meeting the second requirement. Finally, the issue around undue inducement could be raised, where up to R500 per person was offered in compensation for costs incurred by participants. Undue inducement is defined as a large enough payment of some kind to cause participants to overlook the risks of participation, or curtail their capacity to exercise their right to consent (Emmanuel, 2004; Emmanuel, Curry, & Herman, 2005). However, as Emmanuel et al. (2005) qualify, an inducement cannot be seen as undue when the risks of participation are low, and if these risks entail actions that the participants would engage in anyway. In the proposed study, this money was intended to compensate participants for the costs of their participation (Koen, Slack, Barsdorf & Essack, 2008). Additionally, participants were sampled from a population which regularly engages in romance. All of the participants were asked whether the budget of R500 seemed a reasonable amount to spend on a date, and all of them confirmed that it was approximately what they spend normally on a romantic date night. Thus, this inducement should not be considered undue.

A favourable risk/benefit ratio is the fifth principle proposed by Wassenaar and Mamotte (2012). This entails ensuring that the risks associated with participation are minimised as much as possible, and the benefits of the study maximised. Potential risk for harm was minimised in the following ways in this study: (1) it was possible that participants may become sensitised to questions of gender inequality as result of participation. To prevent this, care was taken in the design of the interview schedules to not attend to issues of gender inequality directly (see appendix 7). (2) A takeaway consent form was designed which offers contact details for various available counselling options, plus the researcher’s



and supervisor's contact details, to ensure that if participation results in psychological harm, the participants had information on how to manage this (Wassenaar, 2006). (3) Participants' anonymity has been ensured through the use of pseudonyms; by anonymising personal information mentioned in the interview; by storing any personal or identifying information separate to the data; by photo-editing photographs to anonymise participants, second or third parties, and any other identifying features that may appear. In terms of benefits, the most direct benefit was to the researcher, as the data enabled me to complete my dissertation. Participants may benefit from their participation, as it provided them with an opportunity to do something romantic with their partner which could strengthen their relationship. This was hoped to balance out the potential costs of participation, namely the time and effort required from engaging in multiple interviews (Wassenaar, 2006). As there were no drop outs, and all the participants engaged in the process as desired, it would seem that the informed consent process (informing them of what was expected in terms of costs before they agreed to take part) and the financial compensation offered to reimburse participants for their romantic events was sufficient to keep the cost to benefit ratio in balance. Finally, there is an additional indirect benefit through the contribution of novel findings and new knowledge in this field.

The sixth principle is that all proposed research should be subjected to a review by an Independent Ethics Panel prior to the collection of data (Wassenaar & Mamotte, 2012). This study was reviewed by an internal panel in the Discipline of Psychology to assess the soundness of its design, as well as by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, and received ethical clearance (HSS/0330/013D, please see appendices 1B and 1C).

The seventh principle is that participants should be suitably informed about the study before consenting to take part in it (Wassenaar & Mamotte, 2012). The informed consent form (see appendix 4) contained full details of participant responsibilities and rights (including the right to confidentiality and informed consent). A simplified version of this form was sent to potential participants who responded via email to the advertisement/word-of-mouth recommendation. A face-to-face meeting was scheduled once they had

read this information, if they were happy to continue. These forms were explained verbally in this meeting, and the design of the study including the number of interviews and anticipated amount of time required was explained in detail. Participants were able to ask questions and once these were answered to their satisfaction, participants agreed to participate in the proposed study and signed the consent form.

The final ethical consideration discussed by Wassenaar and Mamotte (2012) is the ongoing respect for participants and communities. The authors argue that participants should be “treated with respect during and after a study” (p. 278). In this study, the informed consent form (see appendix 4) emphasised that participants are able to withdraw from the study at any point, and participants’ confidentiality will be respected and maintained in the ways described above during the research process and in all subsequent output that may arise from the study.

## Appendix 2: Advertisement

**TAKE PART IN A RESEARCH STUDY AND ENJOY  
TWO ROMANTIC DATES WITH YOUR PARTNER ON US!**

You and your partner will each get to plan a romantic event for each other. You can do anything that you or your partner find romantic – it's completely up to you. **We'll refund you up to R500 per date for any expenses you incur.**

In return, we'll ask you to take part in **one** pre-event interview, and **two** post-event interviews each (one together and one alone). Altogether, the interviews will not take more than three hours of your time.

We're looking for couples who are:

- Engaged or married
- Between the ages of 20-30
- Young professionals
- And live in KZN

If this describes you, and you're interested in taking part, or want more information, send me an email at [theromancestudy@gmail.com](mailto:theromancestudy@gmail.com)

A black silhouette of a man and a woman standing and facing each other. They are both leaning forward, with their hands raised and touching at the tips to form a heart shape. The man is on the left and the woman is on the right. The background is a solid light green color.

FIGURE 4: RECRUITMENT ADVERTISEMENT

## Appendix 3: Information sheet

### The Romance Study - Information Form

This study is being conducted by Dr Mike Quayle ([quaylem@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:quaylem@ukzn.ac.za)) and Nicola Jacobs Human, from the Psychology department of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg. We're looking for couples to take part in a study about romance. We're interested in looking at how young South Africans experience and tell stories about doing something romantic with their partners.

We would like to invite you and your partner to take part in our study. Participation will involve:

- 1) Planning something romantic for your partner and executing this romantic plan ( $\pm 3 - 5$  hours)
- 2) Taking photographs (during the event) of moments which you/your partner feel are romantic.
- 3) Participating in a 'pre-event' interview: We ask you to allow a researcher (of the same gender) to be present while you get ready for the romantic evening your partner has planned for you. We will ask you to take part in an informal interview with this researcher, while you get ready (30min – 2 hours). The idea is to collect information in a natural setting about the kinds of processes or rituals involved with getting ready for a romantic event. For this reason the researcher will exit the room as often as you request, so that you are as comfortable as possible with his/her presence.
- 4) Participating in a 'post-event' interview with your partner, after both romantic events have taken place ( $\pm 30$  min – 1 hour)
- 5) Participating in a short 'post-event' interview on your own ( $\pm 30$  min)
- 6) We would like to audio-tape these interviews, so we can pay attention to what each person says. We would also like you to give us copies of the photographs from your event, as well as a written description of your plan for your romantic event.

Your partner will also be given the opportunity to plan something romantic for you. No limits are set on the kinds of things you can plan for your partner – we are interested in anything that you find romantic.

In order to reimburse you for any costs you may incur, you and your partner can each claim back up to R500 from us, on presentation of receipts or a reasonable assessment of the costs you incurred.

As a participant, you have certain rights:

- 1) Voluntary – you have the right to choose to take part in this study. As we are interested in couples, both partners must choose to consent in order to take part. This means if either you or your partner does not want to take part, you have the right to choose not to. You can also withdraw at any stage, without fear of penalties or consequences. In the interviews,

you have no obligation to answer all the questions, and can choose to skip a particular question if you would prefer.

- 2) Confidentiality – By participating in this study, you have the right for your identity to be protected. You will be given a pseudonym which will be used whenever you are referred to in the analysis, and any personal information that is revealed during your participation will be concealed or anonymised to protect your identity. Any personal identifying features in the photographs will be blurred using photo-editing software so that you cannot be identified – this could include, for example, you and your partners’ faces, the faces of any third parties, as well as anything else that could reveal your identity. An independent third party will assess any image of you before it is published, to ensure that you remain anonymous. These images will be stored in an encrypted file, and no one besides the researcher will have access to the unedited photographs.

You will be provided with a takeaway consent form for you to keep. This form will have the contact information of the researcher and the supervising project leader, so that if you have any questions after your participation, you may contact us. This form will also contain contact information for post-participation counselling services, which are available to you should you feel you need it.

Your data (interviews and photographs) will be used as part of a research project, and the findings and images may be published in academic journals, books, or other outlets, **but your identity will always be hidden.**

Please feel free to ask me any questions about the information contained in this sheet.

Hope to hear from you soon!

Nicky Jacobs Human

## Appendix 4: Consent form

# **The Romance Study**

## **Informed Consent Form**

This study is being conducted by Dr Mike Quayle ([quaylem@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:quaylem@ukzn.ac.za)) and Nicola Human, from the Psychology department of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg. We're looking for couples to take part in a study about romance. We're interested in looking at how young South Africans experience and tell stories about doing something romantic with their partners.

We would like to invite you and your partner to take part in our study. Participation will involve:

- 1) Planning something romantic for your partner and executing this romantic plan ( $\pm 3 - 5$  hours)
- 2) Taking photographs during the event of moments which you/your partner feel are romantic.
- 3) Participating in a 'pre-event' interview: We ask you to allow a researcher (of the same gender) to be present while you get ready for the romantic evening your partner has planned for you. We will ask you part in an informal interview with this researcher, while you get ready (30min – 2 hours). The idea is to collect information in a natural setting about the kinds of processes or rituals involved with getting ready for a romantic event. For this reason the researcher will exit the room as often as you request, so that you are as comfortable as possible with his/her presence.
- 4) Participating in a 'post-event' interview with your partner, after both romantic events have taken place ( $\pm 30$  min – 1 hour)
- 5) Participating in a short 'post-event' interview on your own ( $\pm 30$  min)
- 6) We would like to audio-tape these interviews, so we can pay attention to what each person says. We would also like you to give us copies of the photographs from your event, as well as a written description of your plan for your romantic event.

Your partner will also be given the opportunity to plan something romantic for you. No limits are set on the kinds of things you can plan for your partner – we are interested in anything that you find romantic.

In order to reimburse you for any costs you may incur, you and your partner can each claim back up to R500 from us, on presentation of receipts or a reasonable assessment of the costs you incurred.

As a participant, you have certain rights:

- 1) Voluntary – you have the right to choose to take part in this study. As we are interested in couples, both partners must choose to consent in order to take part. This means if either you or your partner does not want to take part, you have the right to choose not to. You can also withdraw at any stage, without fear of penalties or consequences. In the interviews, you have no obligation to answer all the questions, and can choose to skip a particular question if you would prefer.
- 2) Confidentiality – By participating in this study, you have the right for your identity to be protected. You will be given a pseudonym which will be used whenever you are referred to in the analysis, and any personal information that is revealed during your participation will

be concealed or anonymised to protect your identity. Any personal identifying features in the photographs will be blurred using photo-editing software so that you cannot be identified – this could include, for example, you and your partners’ faces, the faces of any third parties, as well as anything else that could reveal your identity. An independent third party will assess any image of you before it is published, to ensure that you remain anonymous. These images will be stored in an encrypted file, and no one besides the researcher will have access to the unedited photographs.

You will be provided with a takeaway consent form for you to keep. This form will have the contact information of the researcher and the supervising project leader, so that if you have any questions after your participation, you may contact us. This form will also contain contact information for post-participation counselling services, which are available to you should you feel you need it.

Your data (interviews and photographs) will be used as part of a research project, and the findings and images may be published in academic journals, books, or other outlets, **but your identity will always be hidden.**

If you have any questions, or would like to contact us regarding the study, please feel free to do so. Our contact information is:

**Nicola Human**  
PhD Researcher  
theromancestudy@gmail.com  
0797140867

**Dr Michael Quayle**  
Research Supervisor  
quaylem@ukzn.ac.za  
(033) 260 5016

If, at any time during the study, you feel upset and would like professional counseling, the following options are available:

**Child and Family Centre** (Pietermaritzburg)  
(033) 260 5166

**Open Door Crisis Centre** (Pinetown)  
(031) 709 2679  
084 409 2679 (24/7 Crisis line)  
[www.opendoor.org.za](http://www.opendoor.org.za)

Participant Agreement

I have read and understood the information sheet. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions, and agree to take part in this research project, knowing that my participation is voluntary and I can withdraw at any time.

\_\_\_\_\_  
PARITICPANT 1 SIGNATURE

\_\_\_\_\_  
RESEARCHER SIGNATURE

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

\_\_\_\_\_  
PARITICPANT 2 SIGNATURE

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

Participant Agreement for use of tape recorder

I agree that my interview may be tape recorded, on the understanding that my identity will remain anonymous.

\_\_\_\_\_  
PARTICIPANT 1 SIGNATURE

\_\_\_\_\_  
RESEARCHER SIGNATURE

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

\_\_\_\_\_  
PARTICIPANT 2 SIGNATURE

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE



**CONFIDENTIAL**

**The Romance Study**

**Personal details**

**Couple #:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Participant 1**

Age: \_\_\_\_\_  
Race: \_\_\_\_\_  
Gender: \_\_\_\_\_  
Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

**Participant 2**

Age: \_\_\_\_\_  
Race: \_\_\_\_\_  
Gender: \_\_\_\_\_  
Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

**Relationship Details**

Relationship status: Engaged/ Married  
Met in: \_\_\_\_\_ (Year)  
Length of relationship: \_\_\_\_\_ Months/ Years  
Sharing same residence: Yes/ No

Site of interviews:

Address 1:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Address 2:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 6: Take-away information sheet

# The Romance Study

## Participant Take-away Information Form

Thank you for taking part in our study about romance in South Africa!

We really value your participation. As a reminder of your rights as a participant:

1. Your participation is voluntary. So even though your role is now completed, if you decide at a later stage that you do not wish to be included in the study, it is your right to be able to do withdraw. If you have any concerns around this, please feel free to contact us using the information listed below.
2. Your participation is also confidential. The researcher will only refer to you in all the research output using a pseudonym. Any identifying information you may mention will be anonymised. Any images of you will be blurred, so no one can recognise you, your partner, or any third parties. Anything with your signature on it will be stored separately to your interview data, so they cannot be linked in any way. Once this study is completed, this information will be destroyed. These rules around confidentiality will be applied in whatever type of output results from your participation, so that your identity as a participant will always remain hidden.

If you have any questions, or would like to contact us regarding the study, please feel free to do so. Our contact information is:

**Dr Michael Quayle** (Principal investigator)  
quaylem@ukzn.ac.za  
(033) 260 5016

**Nicola Jacobs Human** (Researcher)  
ng\_jacobs@yahoo.com  
0797140867

If, after the study, you feel upset and would like professional counseling, the following options are available:

**Child and Family Centre** (Pietermaritzburg)  
(033) 260 5166  
084 409 2679 (24/7 Crisis line)

**Open Door Crisis Centre** (Pinetown)  
(031) 709 2679  
[www.opendoor.org.za](http://www.opendoor.org.za)

## Appendix 7: Interview Schedules

### Appendix 7A: Pre-event Individual interview schedule

1. To start with, I'd love to hear about you and your partner met. Can you tell me about that?
  - a. e.g. How, when, where did you meet?
  - b. How did you start dating?
2. Today you're obviously getting ready to do something romantic with your partner.
  - a. Do you have any idea what [he/she] has planned for you?
  - b. Is there anything particular you're hoping you'll be doing?
  - c. Is there anything you're hoping [he/she] hasn't planned?
  - d. How are you feeling about [today/tonight]?
  - e. Did they give you any hints about what you'll be doing, or about what you should wear?
3. What does 'romance' mean to you? What kinds of things would you call romantic?
4. Do you and your partner do romantic things usually?
  - a. What kinds of things do you do?
  - b. How often?
  - c. Who initiates them?
  - d. What kind of impact do they have on your relationship?
5. Explore any distinctions between everyday appearance management and 'preparing for romance'
  - a. Does the way you get ready for a romantic event with your partner differ from your day to day routine?
  - b. In what ways is it different?
  - c. Are there different products you use? (e.g. rarely used perfume/ expensive aftershave etc.)
  - d. Is there any reason for this?
6. Expectations/Anxieties around appearances
  - a. Looking at today specifically: You're not sure exactly what you'll be doing. Does this have any effect on the way you're getting ready?
  - b. If you dress up especially for a date – why is that? (e.g. to mark it as a special occasion, to impress partner, to make it 'more romantic' etc.)
  - c. Is there a certain way you feel you're expected to look?
  - d. If so, where does this expectation come from?
  - e. What would happen if you didn't meet this expectation? How would you feel? Would it impact on your enjoyment of the occasion? Would it affect your partner at all?
  - f. When you're getting ready for a romantic event, what kinds of thoughts or feelings do you have?
7. In comparison to your routine, what does your partner do to get ready for a romantic event? Are there any differences/similarities?
8. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

**CONFIDENTIAL**

**The Romance Study – Men’s Activity Table**

Couple #: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant Gender: Man

Activity	Tick if did this	Tick if part of daily routine	Any additional Information
Showers/bathes			
Washes hair			
Shaves / grooms facial hair			
Other body hair removal			
Uses deodorant/ cologne/ after shave			
Uses facial creams			
Uses body moisturiser			
Use of hair styling tools/products			
Grooms nails			
Uses professional grooming services prior to 'event' (e.g. wax/ facial/ haircut etc.)			
Polishes shoes			
Get outfit cleaned/ ironed/ dry-cleaned			
Wears formal or seductive clothing			
Wears formal shoes			
Wears jewellery or accessories			

Length of time taken to get ready: \_\_\_\_\_

Average/estimated length of time takes to get ready usually for romance: \_\_\_\_\_

Average/estimated length of time takes to get ready for everyday events: \_\_\_\_\_

# CONFIDENTIAL

## The Romance Study – Women’s Activity Table

Couple #: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant Gender: Woman

Activity	Tick if did this	Tick if part of daily routine	Any additional Information
Showers/bathes			
Washes hair			
Uses beauty creams			
Uses body moisturiser			
Uses make-up			
Uses body make-up			
Use of hair styling tools/products			
Shaves			
Other body hair removal			
Uses deodorant/perfume			
Uses nail polish/ nail polish remover			
Professional services prior to ‘event’ (e.g. nails, waxing, facials, tan, hairdresser etc.)			
Wears jewellery			
Wears formal shoes/ high heels			
Wears formal or seductive clothing			

Length of time taken to get ready: \_\_\_\_\_

Average/estimated length of time takes to get ready usually for romance: \_\_\_\_\_

Average/estimated length of time takes to get ready for everyday events: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 7C: Post-event Couple interview schedule

1. To start off, I'd love to hear about how you guys got engaged. Can you tell me about this?
  - a. What words would you use to describe [name of male participant]'s proposal?
  - b. Why? What about it made it [adjectives used to describe proposal]?
2. Tell me about the events you each planned.
  - a. What was it like planning this event?
  - b. Take me through the event step-by-step
  - c. What was it like – what kinds of thoughts/emotions did you have?
3. Were they romantic? What was romantic about them? What made them romantic (e.g. compared to doing a similar activity with a friend)?
4. What were your favourite moments about them? Was there anything you didn't like?
5. Have you learnt anything about yourselves, either as a couple or individually?
6. Do you normally do anything romantic together? What does this normally entail? Who initiates it/ decides what activities you will do?
7. Was participating in this project different to the way you normally 'be romantic'? What made it different?
8. Has it affected the way you'll 'be romantic' in future?
9. You each had to plan a romantic evening. If you had to choose, which one was more romantic? And why so?
10. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

## Appendix 7D: Post-event Individual interview schedule

1. Feedback on own romantic event
  - a. How did your partner react?
  - b. What was it like planning something like this? Did it feel romantic/strange/silly, etc.?
  - c. Is there anything you wished you'd done differently?
2. Feedback on partner's romantic event
  - a. What were your reactions? How did it feel?
  - b. Was it romantic? If so, in what ways?
3. When you share a romantic event normally, what does it normally entail? What role do you and your partner usually play in creating it?
  - a. How romantic would you say you are as a couple, and individually?
  - b. If you do romantic things together, who normally plans/initiates them?
  - c. What was it like taking turns to plan a romantic evening for the other person?
4. As a whole, what was this experience like? Was there anything really good/bad about it?
  - a. Were there any uncomfortable/awkward moments? Describe and say why.
5. If you had to choose, whose event did you find more romantic – yours or your partner's? Which one did you prefer and why?
6. If I had to use the phrase 'the romantic man' - if you think in terms of stereotypes, what would the 'romantic man' look like?
  - a. What would he do?
  - b. What does he look like?
  - c. And now can you describe the 'romantic woman' – e.g. stereotypes about what she look would like or do? Is this different to a 'woman being romanced'?
7. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

**CONFIDENTIAL**

**The Romance Study – Man’s Activity Table**

Couple #: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant Gender: Man

Activity	Tick if doing this will make a romantic date MORE romantic	Tick if NOT doing this would kill the romance	Which ones would you/should men do for an extremely romantic occasion (e.g. getting engaged)
Showers/bathes			
Brush teeth			
Washes hair			
Shaves / grooms facial hair			
Other body hair removal			
Uses deodorant/ cologne/ after shave			
Uses facial creams			
Uses body moisturiser			
Use of hair styling tools/products			
Grooms nails			
Uses professional grooming services prior to ‘event’ (e.g. wax/ facial/ haircut etc.)			
Polishes shoes			
Get outfit cleaned/ ironed/ dry-cleaned			
Wears formal or seductive clothing			
Wears formal shoes			
Wears jewellery or accessories			



**CONFIDENTIAL**

**The Romance Study – Woman’s Activity Table**

Couple #: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant Gender: Woman

Activity	Tick if doing this will make a romantic date MORE romantic	Tick if NOT doing this would kill the romance	Which ones would you/ should women do for an extremely romantic occasion (e.g. getting engaged)
Showers/bathes			
Brush teeth			
Washes hair			
Uses beauty creams			
Uses body moisturiser			
Uses make-up			
Uses body make-up			
Use of hair styling tools/products			
Shaves			
Other body hair removal			
Uses deodorant/perfume			
Uses nail polish/ nail polish remover			
Professional services prior to ‘event’ (e.g. nails, waxing, facials, tan, hairdresser etc.)			
Wears jewellery			
Wears formal shoes/ high heels			
Wears formal or seductive clothing			

**CONFIDENTIAL**

**The Romance Study – Man’s Activity Table**

Couple #: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant Gender: Woman

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Tick if doing this will make a romantic date MORE romantic</b>	<b>Tick if NOT doing this would kill the romance</b>	<b>Which ones would you/should men do for an extremely romantic occasion (e.g. getting engaged)</b>
Showers/bathes			
Brush teeth			
Washes hair			
Shaves / grooms facial hair			
Other body hair removal			
Uses deodorant/ cologne/ after shave			
Uses facial creams			
Uses body moisturiser			
Use of hair styling tools/products			
Grooms nails			
Uses professional grooming services prior to 'event' (e.g. wax/ facial/ haircut etc.)			
Polishes shoes			
Get outfit cleaned/ ironed/ dry-cleaned			
Wears formal or seductive clothing			
Wears formal shoes			
Wears jewellery or accessories			

**CONFIDENTIAL**

**The Romance Study – Woman’s Activity Table**

Couple #: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant Gender: Man

Activity	Tick if doing this will make a romantic date MORE romantic	Tick if NOT doing this would kill the romance	Which ones would you/ should women do for an extremely romantic occasion (e.g. getting engaged)
Showers/bathes			
Brush teeth			
Washes hair			
Uses beauty creams			
Uses body moisturiser			
Uses make-up			
Uses body make-up			
Use of hair styling tools/products			
Shaves			
Other body hair removal			
Uses deodorant/perfume			
Uses nail polish/ nail polish remover			
Professional services prior to ‘event’ (e.g. nails, waxing, facials, tan, hairdresser etc.)			
Wears jewellery			
Wears formal shoes/ high heels			
Wears formal or seductive clothing			

## Appendix 8: Summary Table of couple information

Couple Number and Pseudonyms	Pre-event data				Post-event interviews
	Pre-event Interview 1	Date 1	Pre-event interview 2	Date 2	
Couple 1: Sue and Luke	Interview 1.1 with Sue  <i>Interviewed by Nicky</i>	Planned by Luke  <i>Picnic dinner and a show at the Barnyard</i>	Interview 1.2 with Luke  <i>Interviewed by Strauss</i>	Planned by Sue  <i>Dinner at upmarket restaurant and cocktails at the beach</i>	Interviews 1.3 – 1.5:  Interview 1.3: Couple interview Interview 1.4: Sue Interview 1.5: Luke  <i>Interviewed by Nicky</i>
Couple 2: Robyn and Eddie	Interview 2.1 with Robyn  <i>Interviewed by Nicky</i>	Planned by Eddie  <i>Dinner at upmarket restaurant</i>	Interview 2.2 with Eddie  <i>Interviewed by Strauss</i>	Planned by Robyn  <i>Dinner at upmarket restaurant</i>	Interviews 2.3 – 2.5:  Interview 2.3: Couple interview Interview 2.4: Robyn Interview 2.5: Eddie  <i>Interviewed by Nicky</i>
Couple 3: Louise and Bruce	Interview 3.1 with Louise  <i>Interviewed by Nicky</i>	Planned by Bruce  <i>Dinner at upmarket restaurant</i>	Interview 3.2 with Bruce  <i>Interviewed by Strauss</i>	Planned by Louise  <i>Dinner at upmarket restaurant</i>	Interviews 3.3 – 3.5:  Interview 3.3: Couple interview Interview 3.4: Louise Interview 3.5: Bruce  <i>Interviewed by Nicky</i>
Couple 4: Anika and Johan	Interview 4.1 with Johan  <i>Interviewed by Strauss</i>	Planned by Anika  <i>Morning breakfast date, visit to Mini Town and arcade games</i>	Interview 4.2 with Anika  <i>Interviewed by Nicky</i>	Planned by Johan  <i>Dinner, arcade games</i>	Interviews 4.3 – 4.5:  Interview 4.3: Couple interview Interview 4.4: Johan Interview 4.5: Anika  <i>Interviewed by Nicky</i>
Couple 5: Heidi and Tom	Interview 5.1 with Tom  <i>Interviewed by Strauss</i>	Planned by Heidi  <i>Movie and dinner at a casual Greek restaurant</i>	Interview 5.2 with Heidi  <i>Interviewed by Nicky</i>	Planned by Tom  <i>Cocktail at an upmarket hotel; Dinner at upmarket, expensive restaurant</i>	Interviews 5.3 – 5.5:  Interview 5.3: Couple interview Interview 5.4: Heidi Interview 5.5: Tom  <i>Interviewed by Nicky</i>

## Appendix 9: Transcription Notation

[ ]	Square brackets indicate overlapping speech.
(word)	Round brackets indicate a possible transcription.
( )	Empty round brackets show inability to distinguish the word.
((description))	Double round brackets indicate a description, rather than a transcription.
(.)	Indicates a short pause, or an untimed pause.
=	Indicates there was no time lapse between speakers.
<u>word</u>	Underlined word Indicates that the word or syllable was stressed.
CAPS	Words in capital letters indicate an increase in volume.
:::	Shows that a syllable was elongated. The number of colons indicate how long the sound was held for.
.hhhh	Indicates an audible in-breath.
hhhh	Indicates an audible out-breath or sigh.
.pt	Indicates smacking of the lips.
↑	Indicates a rising intonation, where a question was not asked.
↓	Indicates a lowered intonation.
< >	Indicates speech slowed down.
> <	Indicates speech was speeded up.
w- word	Indicates preceding word or syllable was cut off, and/or that the topic is changed mid speech
°word°	Shows that the word was spoken more quietly than surrounding speech.
(h)	Indicates laughter within speech.
£word£	Indicates word was spoken while smiling
[...]	Indicates a portion of the transcription has been removed.

Source: Edwards (1997); Silverman (2005)

## Appendix 10: Coding Schedule

### 1. Aspects of Romance

#### 1.1. Concretising romance as a bounded experience in which we 'do' gender

#### 1.2. Romance Equals...

Anything that they constitute as romantic – e.g. wearing perfume, buying presents, surprises, candle light, etc. Include the dates, how they met, engagement, general life – anything constructed positively as romantic or special.

#### 1.3. Practicalities and Faultlines of Romance

Practical issues of constituting romance on an everyday basis - e.g. expensive, no time, tired from work, etc. Countermeasure to the node of 'Romance as Idealised' (difference between what we'd like to do or think we should be doing, and what we actually do or are able to achieve). Faultlines aspect: looking at the 'edges' of romance - i.e. how and where romance is violated, what kind of subject does it transform the participant into (e.g. romantic to bossy), is this gendered differently?

#### 1.4. Romance as a preventative measure

Instances where romance is constructed as necessary to keep the relationship going/ alive - particularly after marriage. Ties into the therapeutic discourses (Eldén and Illouz). N2S: on whoever the pressure falls to plan the events, through this discourse becomes responsible for the success or failure of the relationship! I'd expect this to be gendered differently – women: looks & sex to keep the man interested; man: make woman appreciated and loved through romance.

#### 1.5. Romance as bounded

Romance as having boundaries, as separate to everyday life, or as a form of escapism

#### 1.6. Romance as consumeristic

##### 1.6.1. Partner selection as consumeristic

Any reference to the process of selecting a long term/ lifelong partner as a process of 'shopping' or consumerism

##### 1.6.2. Constructing the romantic self using consumption

The kinds of products used on dates, and if they're expensive, and if they save them just for dates, etc.

##### 1.6.3. The date as consumeristic

Any time any form of consumption in the context of romance is referred to (E.g. what types of things are commonly/preferably consumed; what, when consumed, increases ease of constructing an event as romantic)

#### 1.7. Romance as Idealised

Broad dumping ground for anything to do with idealisation, including (1) idealisation of romance; (2) idealisation of the romantic partner (male or female partner); and (3) idealisation of the romantic self (male or female self). Also include any references to what society or the media says about romance/partner/ self.

## **2. Constructions of romance**

Broad overview, including descriptions of the dates, and idealised narratives of romance ('how we met' and engagement stories)

### **2.1. The dates**

#### **2.1.1. 'Bad' Dates (any/all)**

Where the dates contain any negative description, no matter how small. I.e. look at 'failed' attempts at romance and what constituted that - what are the elements of dates (whether the 'planned events' or in general) that REDUCE or impact on romance. Include stuff that went wrong on the dates (e.g. bad vibe of restaurant, had a fight, poor communication, being sick, bad food, etc.). Include constructions of self + partner, and any gendering that comes through

#### **2.1.2. 'Good' Dates (any/all)**

Constructions of a date as positive or romantic. Descriptions of what went 'right' on the date (e.g. good lighting, good vibe, great conversation creating intimacy, etc.). Include how they construct themselves + partner, and any gendering that comes through

#### **2.1.3. Participant responses (post event interviews)**

Look at how participants describe their reactions on the dates that were planned for them. Include description of how they reacted/ felt/ it made them feel; what made it special; what didn't they like; etc. Decision: this is discursively bound up in the 'good date', 'bad date', and 'better date' nodes – doesn't make much sense to code for it specifically, but look out for this during analysis. However, am coding for how participants describe their PARTNER's reactions, as this was a direct question interviews 4/5.

#### **2.1.4. Pre-event guessing (pre event interviews)**

Guessing what's been planned for them in the pre-event interviews – and what it tells us about what they consider 'romantic' (e.g. upper-class/expensive; centred around consumption; newness/adventure; removal from everyday life; etc.)

#### **2.1.5. Resolutions moving forward (post event interviews)**

E.g. the partner who usually plans the date resolving to plan more for their partner. Look to see how this is gendered, how this is explained and justified, what they are resolving to do, etc.

#### **2.1.6. The 'Better' Date (post event interviews)**

Look at which date was constructed as the 'better'/ 'more romantic' one. Include: Why – how justified; and discursive treatment of the other date

##### **2.1.6.1. First vs Second Date**

Seeing whether it's a question of 'who usually plans it' (and then, is it the man or the woman) compared to is it an artefact of the study - the second date being preferred no matter the gender of the person who planned it or who usually plans them. At this point not sure what exactly to code/look for here. Decision: Can't really code for this, will be part of the analysis (starting

with comparison tables). Unless however there is some direct talk about how was more relaxed by second one, etc.

#### **2.1.6.2. The Usual Romancer (any/all)**

Any descriptions of how dates normally go - who normally plans them (with the goal of seeing if it is the person who 'usually' plans the dates who's date is constructed as 'better')

### **2.2. The 'Engagement' Narrative**

The story told in the couple interview by both participants about how they got engaged (as well as any other mention made in any of the interviews). Aim: To look at how romance is constructed and how RM and RF is constructed in these narratives; and also to enable comparisons to their study romantic events, to see (particular where the event is constructed as a bit of a fail) in what way do they align with or deviate from these more idealised 'grand' romantic narratives.

### **2.3. The 'How we met' Narrative**

The story told about how the participants met. Aim: To look at how romance is constructed and how RM and RF is constructed in these narratives; and also to enable comparisons to their study romantic events, to see (particular where the event is constructed as a bit of a fail) in what way do they align with or deviate from these more idealised 'grand' romantic narratives. This node: couple interview (joint narrative).

#### **2.3.1. Female Narrative of 'How We Met'**

The story told in the individual female interviews about how the participants met.

#### **2.3.2. Male Narrative of 'How We Met'**

The story told in the individual male interviews about how the participants met.

## **3. Gender**

### **3.1. Femininity**

#### **3.1.1. Any alternative modes of femininity**

Any presentations/ constructions of femininity that are NOT consistent or alternative to emphasised or romantic femininity.

#### **3.1.2. Emphasised femininity**

Any clear cut instances of emphasised femininity - either as (1) performed by participants; or (2) referred to by participants

#### **3.1.3. Romantic femininity**

##### **3.1.3.1. Agency and Behaviours**

Any references to (1) what a romantic woman should do/does; (2) how the female participant romances partner (made by either the male or female participants); (3) what kinds of behaviours are required from a woman to make a romantic date successful. Also includes any types of behaviour/ forms of agency performed by the woman that would impede or otherwise negatively impact on romance (e.g. farting, not shaving etc.).

##### **3.1.3.2. Consumerism and Appearance**



Consumption as a means of producing the romantic subject (what kinds of products are consumed, society's expectations on how they should look/dress for romance, and how they orientate to these expectations).

N2S: To consider: Is this gendered? What are the expectations for men and women, are they different for men and women, are there differing costs or rewards for meeting these, etc. Also includes any products or aspects of a woman's appearance which impacts on the productions of romance.

Decision: Coded already at node 1.5.2\_Constructing the romantic self using consumption; just not specifically per gender. Use that node to address the issues raised in the definition of this node.

### **3.1.3.3. Idealisation of romantic femininity**

Any signs/ evidence of idealised aspects of romantic femininity- any features drawing on 'script-like' (cf. Edwards) features of femininity (e.g. physically submissive/ seductive/ etc. in order to enhance the romantic aspects of the narrative. N2S from men or women. Decision: Coded already at node 1.6\_Romance as Idealised; just not specifically per gender. Use that node to address the issues raised in the definition of this node.

#### **3.1.3.3.1. Instances of 'failed' RF**

Instances or examples given of where women have failed to live up to idealisations of romantic femininity, looking at how these are constructed, what the implications were, and how this impacted on the romance of the event. Decision: Coded already at node 1.2\_Practicalities and Faultlines of Romance; just not specifically per gender. Use that node to address the issues raised in the definition of this node.

## **3.2. Masculinity**

### **3.2.1. Any alternative modes of masculinity**

Any presentations/ constructions of masculinity that are NOT consistent or alternative to hegemonic or romantic masculinity.

### **3.2.2. Hegemonic masculinity**

Any clear cut instances of hegemonic masculinity - either as (1) performed by participants; or (2) referred to by participants

### **3.2.3. Romantic Masculinity**

#### **3.2.3.1. Agency and Behaviours**

Any references to (1) what a romantic man should do/does; (2) how the male participant romances partner (made by either the male or female participants); (3) what kinds of behaviours are required from a man to make a romantic date successful. Also includes any types of behaviour/ forms of agency performed by the man that would impede or otherwise negatively impact on romance (e.g. farting, not shaving etc.)

#### **3.2.3.1.1. Planning The Date**

Any talk about how a man does or should organise the date for the woman

**3.2.3.2. Consumerism and Appearance**

Consumption as a means of producing the romantic subject (what kinds of products are consumed, society's expectations on how they should look/dress for romance, and how they orientate to these expectations).

N2S: To consider: Is this gendered? What are the expectations for men and women, are they different for men and women, are there differing costs or rewards for meeting these, etc. Also includes any products or aspects of a man's appearance which impacts on the productions of romance. Decision: Coded already at node 1.5.2\_Constructing the romantic self using consumption; just not specifically per gender. Use that node to address the issues raised in the definition of this node.

**3.2.3.3. Idealisation of romantic masculinity**

Any signs/ evidence of idealised aspects of romantic masculinity - any features drawing on 'script-like' (cf. Edwards) features of masculinity (e.g. physically domineering/ hero like/ serenading/ etc. in order to enhance the romantic aspects of the narrative. N2S from men or women. Decision: Coded already at node 1.6\_Romance as Idealised; just not specifically per gender. Use that node to address the issues raised in the definition of this node.

**3.2.3.3.1. Instances of 'failed' RM**

Instances or examples given of where men have failed to live up to idealisations of romantic masculinity, looking at how these are constructed, what the implications were, and how this impacted on the romance of the event. Decision: Coded already at node 1.2\_Practicalities and Faultlines of Romance; just not specifically per gender. Use that node to address the issues raised in the definition of this node.

**4. Interview Dynamics**

**4.1. Interviewer's Reactions**

Looking at how the interviewer's reactions contributed towards the constructions of romance and/or gender in the interviews

**4.1.1. Insincere reactions**

Any reactions which are obviously insincere or overly strong positive reactions in response to perceived need in participants to have their view point validated (N2S: extremely subjective)

**4.1.2. Same sex aligning**

For example, where interviewer is female, parts of the conversation where (1) interviewer gangs up/ sides with the girls or uses femininity to align with/ create

solidarity with female participants; or (2) diminishing/ gently teasing men/ masculinity; and vice versa.

**4.1.3. Opposite sex aligning**

**4.1.4. Over responding**

Instances where the interviewer 'over-agrees' with the participant when it is a point they personally agree with (compared to merely using continuers, etc.)

**4.1.5. Positive reactions**

E.g. gushing, 'aw'ing, etc. in response to something said by participant that is 'sweet' or 'romantic'

**4.2. Participant Reactions**

**4.2.1. Good subject/participant**

**4.2.2. Anxiety about participation**

## Appendix 11: Supporting data for Chapter 6

### Appendix 11A: McNemar Chi Square test for the variable 'Enhance romance if done'

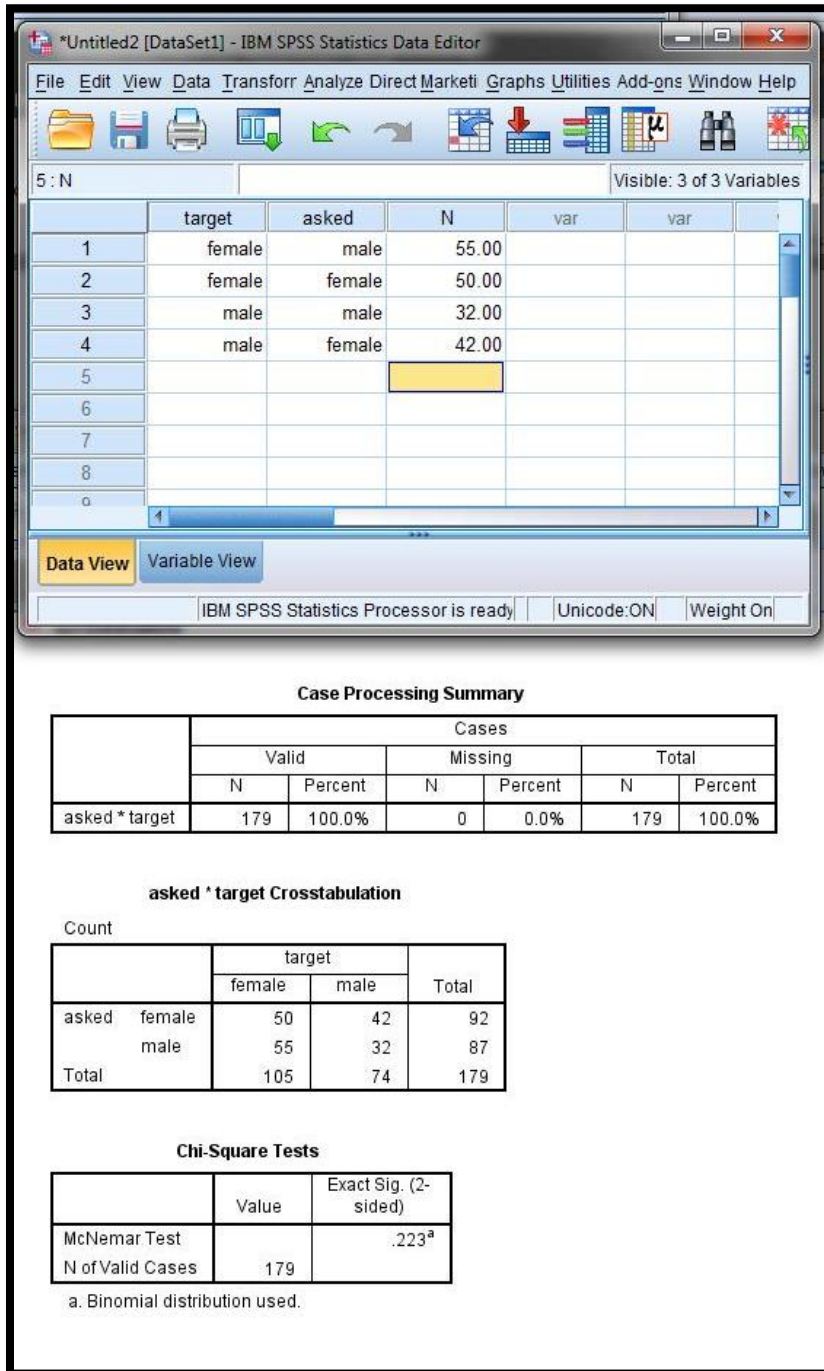
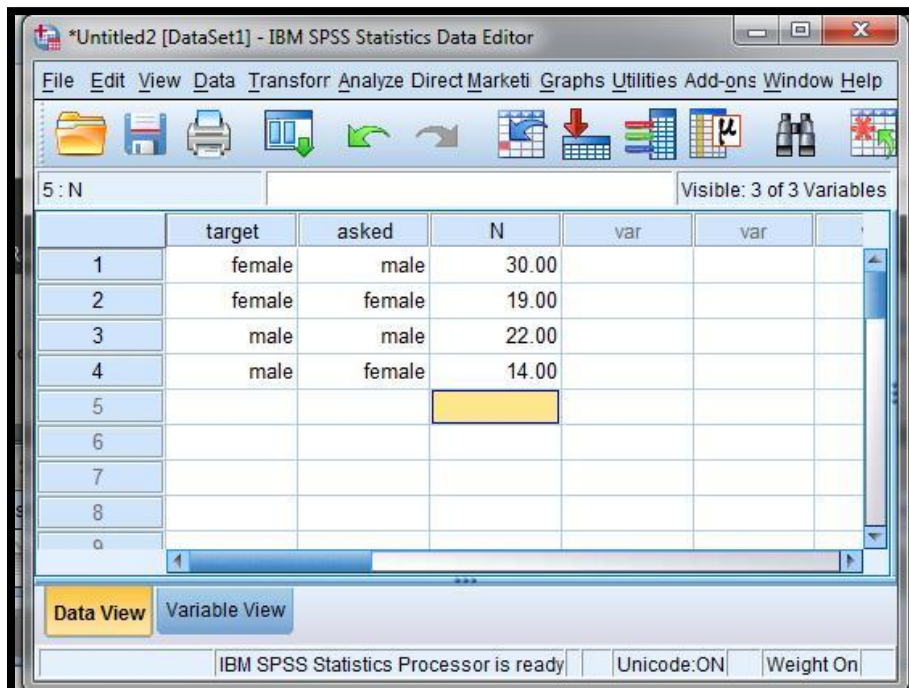


FIGURE 5: SCREEN SHOT OF MCNEMAR CHI SQUARE TEST FOR THE VARIABLE 'ENHANCE ROMANCE IF DONE'

Appendix 11B: McNemar Chi Square test for the variable 'Ruin romance if not done'



➔ **Crosstabs**

**Case Processing Summary**

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
asked * target	85	100.0%	0	0.0%	85	100.0%

**asked \* target Crosstabulation**

Count

		target		Total
		female	male	
asked	female	19	14	33
	male	30	22	52
Total		49	36	85

**Chi-Square Tests**

	Value	Exact Sig. (2-sided)
McNemar Test		.023 <sup>a</sup>
N of Valid Cases	85	

a. Binomial distribution used.

FIGURE 6: SCREEN SHOT OF MCNEMAR CHI SQUARE TEST FOR THE VARIABLE 'RUIN ROMANCE IF NOT DONE'

Appendix 12: Photograph of Sue's handmade gift



IMAGE 1: A PHOTOGRAPH OF THE HANDMADE GIFT SUE MADE FOR LUKE FOR HER DATE (COUPLE 1)