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Professions of love:
The discursive construction
of love and romance in intimate
heterosexual relationships

Thesis submitted for the degree of Ph.D. in
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ABSTRACT Professions of love: The discursive construction of love and romance in intimate heterosexual relationships

For this thesis, my aim was to deconstruct the notion of heterosexual love in order to question if and how current stories of love are involved in producing gender inequality. Using discourse analysis, informed by feminist theory, I analysed, in detail, qualitative interviews with eleven women and eleven men about their most important intimate heterosexual relationships and their experiences of love.

The traditional view of romantic love as a symbol of freedom and redemption has been challenged by feminist arguments that romantic love obscures male privilege in intimate heterosexual relationships. Mainstream social psychological research has tended to measure and categorize 'love' with little regard to wider historical and social contexts which means that the few in-depth explorations of the complex meanings of love are primarily sociological. Where some research has suggested that gender inequality may proceed from women's investment in romance and men's in emotional illiteracy (e.g. Jackson, 1993; Langford, 1999), others conceive that a wider democratization of social life is producing a shift to more rational and equitable intimate relationships (e.g. Giddens, 1992; Illouz, 1997).

My findings demonstrate that talk of love is extremely complex while also clichéd and inchoate. I identified two broad and pervasive discourses, in tension with each other - the discourse of romantic love and the work discourse of love and intimacy. The romantic discourse was inextricably inscribed with discourses of emotion where the work discourse was associated with doing rather than feeling. The work discourse allowed the male interviewees, in particular, to construct relationships as contexts for their own personal growth work and exercise of expertise. The democratization of heterosexual love may not be well underway if a shift to rational intimacy involves a transformation of romantic feeling into a narcissistic discourse of personal success. I also identified how male privilege was instantiated in discourses of infidelity.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove.
O, no! it is an ever-fixed mark,
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;

(from Sonnet 116 by William Shakespeare (c1600))

Help me
I think I'm falling
In love again
When I get that crazy feeling, I know
I'm in trouble again
I'm in trouble
'Cause you're a rambler and a gambler
And a sweet-talking-ladies man
And you love your lovin'
But not like you love your freedom

(from the song *Help Me* by Joni Mitchell (1973))

Girls (to girl): "Tell me more, tell me more. Was it love at first sight?"

Guys (to boy): "Tell me more, tell me more. Did she put up a fight?"

(from the song *Summer Nights* in the Film Musical *Grease* (1978))

1.1. A CONTEXT FOR RESEARCHING 'LOVE'

The fragments of text, above, exemplify the extent to which discourses and narratives of love and romance permeate popular culture. Yet the stories and representations of romantic love, both fictional and 'real-life', which pervade the mass media, rarely involve quotidian experiences of intimate heterosexual relationships. Nor do many include same-sex intimate relationships at all. Fictionalized relationships tend to condense complexity, offering instead the crises and turning points, because in a narrative of life and love, changes are more dramatic than constancies (Gergen, 1988). Romance tales, in particular, tend to employ a device of premature closure of a couple's life, giving us no details of the 'happy ever after' (or otherwise) of their married life or life after affirming their love for each other (Wetherell, 1995). Soap operas do not offer us, in detail and depth, the thoughts and feelings of characters. Often emotions are communicated by lingering camera shots on facial expressions - pained, exhilarated, bored, worried, angry. Romances and soaps are aimed at women, and it is mostly women who admit to watching them. More masculinist genres, such as science fiction and action movies, also draw on relationships and emotion, but they rarely offer examples of day to day living and loving. Feminist

fiction, in contrast, has often offered more detailed studies of ongoing relationships, relationships which are difficult, complicated and far from 'happy ever after' (Belsey, 1994; Duncker, 1992; Pearce and Wisker, 1998).

This study is about researching 'real-life' relationships and experiences of love, in order to attempt to understand the meanings that people give to love and a shared emotional life with someone they love. A particular reason for my wanting to research love comes from having worked with women escaping domestic violence, and talking with them as they tried to make sense of their relationship with an abusive partner. Though abused women often understand the differential access they and their partner have to status and economic resources, a stumbling block to their distancing themselves from their partners also appears to be 'love'. For although heteropatriarchy and a 'well-founded' fear of male violence explain both women's need to be in heterosexual relationships and need to escape from them, notions of heterosexual romantic love, her love for him and his love for her, are often used to put demands on women to stand by their man, and to love him better (Burstow, 1992). A particular difficulty for feminists in writing about love, especially in the context of extremely abusive relationships, is the tendency for women to become constructed as the problem, as loving "too much" (Norwood, 1986). Nevertheless the 'power of love', or the power of the discourse of love has to be worthy of further analysis. Shulamith Firestone questioned in 1971 how we could have a women's movement without addressing notions of love, yet in-depth, empirical studies of the complex meanings of love are few, and tend to come from sociologists rather than psychologists (e.g. Duncombe and Marsden, 1993; 1995; 1998; Hite, 1988; 1991; Langford, 1995; 1999; Sarsby, 1983).

This chapter provides an overview and introduction to a range of theorizing about love in heterosexual relationships, in order to position this study in broad terms and to present a rationale for researching heterosexual love. I will also position myself as a feminist and explain how this will inform my approach to researching 'love'. Chapters 2 and 3 will then critically review relevant research and theory.

Since the late 1960s and the work of 'second wave' feminists, such as Germaine Greer (1970) and Shulamith Firestone (1971), some radical feminists have asserted that an intimate heterosexual relationship is a major site of oppression for women. This position has informed much

feminist theorizing about heterosexual relationships and romance. "STOP HUMAN SACRIFICE. END MARRIAGE NOW" and "IT STARTS WHEN YOU SINK IN HIS ARMS AND ENDS WITH YOUR ARMS IN HIS SINK" announced placards at women's liberation rallies in the early 1970s. Earlier feminists had also viewed marriage as a site of inequality because it was voluntary for a man, but an economic imperative for a woman, equivalent to legalized prostitution. In entitling her book *Marriage as a Trade*, Cicely Hamilton (1909) highlighted a link between marriage and slavery. First wave feminists, in the 19th and early 20th centuries, tended to focus on rights, campaigning for women's right to be treated as full citizens and to have rights to the property they brought into marriage, rather than it becoming, in law, their husband's. They challenged laws which enshrined double standards of morality, such as the Contagious Diseases Acts under which women could be forcibly medically examined for venereal disease if they were suspected of being prostitutes, when the male troops, which such a measure was designed to protect, were held to be above such examination.

While contesting laws which produced differential treatment for men and women, second wave feminists have also focused on the micro-politics of personal relationships. For instance as a member of the women's refuge movement, I support and have supported actions which have focused on material circumstances, for instance bringing about legal change so that women and their children escaping domestic violence gained rights to income support and to housing, which they did not have prior to the mid-1970s. At the same time, as feminists in the refuge movement, we focused on how relationships were managed at a personal level, and how the personal and political realms intersected. By asserting that "The personal is political", feminists have emphasized how our personal and private practices are informed by social and public practice and *vice versa*. For instance, in the Christian marriage service, women were traditionally constrained to "love, honour and obey" though to offer to "obey" is now a choice. Brides are 'given away' by a man (usually their father) to their new husband. Romantic love, in particular, has been problematized as it has been seen to obscure or disguise material inequality and women's oppression in intimate heterosexual relationships. "We are the only oppressed group who are actually required to be in love with our oppressors" states Patricia Duncker (1992, p266). Some feminists have advocated taking up a lesbian lifestyle as a way of both avoiding personal oppression by a man and espousing a political commitment to woman-

centred politics (Jeffreys, 1990). Others have challenged heterosexuality as an institution, without conceiving personal heterosexual practice as inevitably oppressive to women (Hollway, 1995b; Segal, 1994; 1997) by suggesting that though patriarchy may be involved in the symbolic production of power inequality, it is also possible to resist any straightforward or universal mapping between the symbolic realm and power relations.

In attempting to deconstruct the symbolic realm, recent feminist research has started to identify, in detail, how gender difference and heterosexual male privilege are produced and reproduced. Wendy Hollway (1984; 1989), for instance, has taken a feminist post-structuralist (and psychoanalytic) approach to studying heterosexual relationships and has identified and analysed discourses of sexuality, that is, the ways of talking about sexuality which systematically construct the sexuality of which they speak (Foucault, 1979). She was particularly interested in how these discourses offered different subject positions for men and women to take up, with men constructed as wanting sex ('male sex drive discourse'), and women as wanting sex as part of love and relationship ('have/hold discourse'). The differential availability of these discourses to women and men, produces both gender difference and a sexual double standard, with women constructed as 'slags' if they engage in sex without love (Lees, 1998; Holland *et al.*, 1998). Feminist researchers and writers have also pointed out other ways in which heterosexual relationships are involved in the subjugation of women - the expectation and appropriation of their domestic and emotional work, that is domestic servitude rather than domestic bliss (Delphy and Leonard, 1992; Hochschild, 1983), male violence against women (Burstow, 1992; Hearn, 1998; Kirkwood, 1993), keeping women's energies in check i.e. focusing them on men and not on social change (Langford, 1996; Duncker, 1992) and silencing women (DeFrancisco, 1991; Brown and Gilligan, 1993).

The work of Hollway (1984; 1989) and Holland and colleagues (1998), which has focused on sexuality, has shown how constructions of love are intimately bound up with discourses of gender, sex and (hetero)sexuality. Discourses of emotional intimacy and sexual intimacy tend to be interdependent yet gendered in such a way that a heterosexually active woman is constructed as overactive. Active female sexuality is problematized in discourses of proper femininity, that is that 'good girls'

don't have casual sex but are expected to be in love (Hollway's 'have/hold discourse'). However women's heterosexual activity is also problematized in revolutionary feminist discourses which construct heterosex as the male colonization of a woman's body (e.g. Dworkin, 1981) and accuse women of colluding with heteropatriarchy by 'sleeping with the enemy' (Jeffreys, 1990). More recently, the difficulty of being positive about heterosexuality in the context of feminist politics (Wilkinson and Kitzinger, 1993) has led Hollway (1995b) to argue strongly for an emancipatory discourse of female heterosexuality, which would construct the possibility that individual heterosexual practice can be empowering for the woman involved and therefore challenge heterosexuality as inevitable institutional sexism. The debate this raises about whether heterosexual practices can challenge sexism, let alone escape the confines of sexism, is part of the context for my study, though I'm approaching this through talk about love, rather than talk about sexual practice.

As a feminist, I wanted to ask whether people have developed ways of symbolizing heterosexual love in ways which rely on neither symbolic nor material gender inequality. We might hope that they have, because successful as feminist campaigns and research have been in opening heterosexual male privilege up to question, most women have given up neither on love, nor on heterosexual relationships. Nor too have many feminists, despite their feminist credentials being brought into question as suggested above. Stevi Jackson's (1993) paper "Even sociologists fall in love" represented an attempt by her, as a feminist, to question her own experience of having recently fallen in love with a man (Jackson, 1998a). Instead of positioning men as the enemy, she challenges the institution of heteropatriarchy, detailing the discourse of romantic love and the differentiated positions for women and men that it produces. Romantic love is constructed as something that women experience, while men are positioned as emotionally illiterate when it comes to romance, understanding only the outward trappings rather than deeply felt emotion. In particular, Jackson (1998a) talks of the need for stories of love and heterosexual relationship which challenge the gender *status quo* without divorcing them from women's lived experience.

Jackson's (1993; 1995b; 1998a) work is cogent and persuasive, but since it is not based on empirical research, this provides another reason for my empirical investigation of people's experiences of love. Her work is

sociological and offers a more social explanation of love and romance than social psychology usually does. By taking an interdisciplinary perspective, however, I intend to illuminate 'love' in the context of the discipline of psychology.

While writers and philosophers have been writing about love for millenia, mainstream social psychologists have been researching love in intimate personal relationships (which they usually assume to be heterosexual) for only the last thirty years or so. In the main, psychology's contribution to the study of love has been to apply 'scientific' methodology in order to measure and categorize 'love' according to a positivist paradigm and with little regard to the wider historical and social contexts which could help make sense of their categorizations (Cherry, 1995). Psychology has also been criticized for paying insufficient attention to theoretical underpinnings in the process of classifying and labelling psychological phenomena.

Foucauldian analyses ... of the emergence of modern psychology claim at its core the discipline offers no substantive topic or theory, but rather that what the models actually provide is a technological apparatus of classification and testing. That is, as a discipline psychology does precisely that: discipline. (Burman, 1998, p9)

The concepts of discourse and deconstruction have been seen to be extremely effective for considering how gross categorizations become widely accepted as 'real', 'common-sense', atheoretical and ahistorical, and this is the approach this study will take in order to question how 'love' is constructed by participants and by psychologists. In this way, by taking a social constructionist viewpoint, meanings of love will not be assumed to be fixed or unitary, but instead as partial and embedded in wider cultural and social contexts (Cherry, 1995). By taking a feminist perspective, I am concerned with understanding and analysing the meanings which women and men draw on to explain their lives and experiences, without abandoning a focus on the structured inequalities in their social positions and thus the basis from which they are able to construct their social worlds.

Psychology has tended to be concerned with individual functioning and cognitive processes, to be at odds, therefore, with both social

constructionism and feminist theorizing. Corinne Squire (1989) has considered how feminism and psychology might inform each other. She has drawn attention, however, to the difficulty some feminists have had in articulating a feminist psychology that does not draw on "an autonomous, rational, individual subject very like psychology's own ... by default, as feminism's object" (Squire, 1989, p29). For this hypothetical individual, a 'love' which "snatches away one's autonomy" (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995, p65) would seem to be as problematic for psychology as for a feminism which is committed to women's autonomy. Squire articulates the importance of a feminist psychology which addresses subjectivity and gender relations in such a way as to shake psychology's boundaries in order that its conceptualizations engage with their discursive histories. She calls for "undramatic discursive shifts, which do not reduce social relations to side-effects of individual subjectivities" (Squire, 1989, p119). Elsewhere, Squire (1994; 1998) has argued that literary forms can help open up ways of understanding gendered subjectivities, and this suggestion seems especially pertinent to studying love, as there is a wealth of analysis of romantic literature and other cultural forms of romance, which could inform the psychologizing of love. This is an approach I want to incorporate.

Catherine Belsey (1994), in writing about 'desire' and its construction in literature, discusses how the notion of romantic love, in its idealistic, redemptive and sensual version, was brought about by a "transformation of desire" in twelfth century French literary work by poets, Marie de France and Chrétien de Troyes, among others. This form of love was often, though not necessarily, adulterous.

Rewriting the Celtic legends of a magical and heroic Arthurian world, the twelfth-century texts defined a passion which involved a constant commitment and the highest degree of intensity, but which was not yet moralized, domesticated, institutional. (Belsey, 1994, p97)

The western institution of marriage has for several generations been considered the appropriate outcome of, and long-term site for, 'love'. Now marriage is pervasively constructed as under threat (Lawes, 1999). We live at a time when a notion of life-long love as a basis for marriage is being questioned, as the divorce rate hovers around 40% in Britain. One explanation offered for the decline in long-term love, is the too easy

possibility of new love. Historically, passionate romantic love has been imbued with the ability to challenge traditional strictures and taboos, to survive obstacles, even death (e.g. Tristan and Iseult, Romeo and Juliet), to be a symbol of freedom and redemption to the extent that obstacles seem to be a necessary part of a love trajectory (e.g. Gergen, 1988; Radway, 1987). Now, a wider democratization of social life is believed to have done away with many obstacles, and love "increasingly finds no one to shock" (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995, p190). No longer necessarily do love and marriage 'go together like a horse and carriage'.

Marriage may not be the taken-for-granted outcome for many couples, nor is love inevitably given as the sole reason for marriage. In western cultures the practice of arranged marriage, predominant in Asian communities worldwide, tends to be seen as incommensurate with the ideology of independent, autonomous individuals making choices for themselves. However, even the different pattern of relationship development from public commitment to later intimacy is often assumed to lead to eventual love. On 25th January 1999, two young white British individuals, Carla Germaine and Greg Cordell, married each other because they won the Two Strangers and A Wedding Competition organized by a local radio station, BRMB, as an advertising stunt. They did not meet until an hour before the high profile wedding. The couple's 'arranged' marriage of four months, lasted little longer than that of the Australian couple whose marriage was arranged similarly and set the precedent, but the media attention constructs people as interested in the outcome of this 'love' experiment. Ironically, it was media intrusion which the couple cited as causing the problems in their relationship, particularly constant interest in whether they had consummated the marriage and had fallen in love (Granada TV, 1999).

These are confusing times for believers in romantic love as the taken-for-granted way into marriage or life-long commitment. The heterogeneity of stories of love, the way that traditional common sense ideas are being questioned and new ideas are coming into existence, suggests that the discourse of love and desire may be undergoing new transformations. According to one influential sociologist, Anthony Giddens (1992), the 'transformation of intimacy' is leading to more democracy and equality in intimate relationships (both heterosexual and homosexual), with relationships being undertaken for the sake of the relationship and

contingent on it being satisfactory to both partners. Love in this "pure" relationship is seen as confluent, that is rational, full of give and take. However Giddens conceptualization of 'confluent love', based on a notion of a therapeutic relationship, seems to bear little relationship to the messy and unsatisfactory heterosexual relationships identified in contemporaneous research (e.g. Duncombe and Marsden, 1995; Hite, 1991; Langford, 1999). And, as Lynn Jamieson (1999) has pointed out, "extolling the values of mutual self-disclosure and 'the pure relationship' feeds into a therapeutic discourse that has sometimes been the antithesis of empowering women and gays" (Jamieson, 1999, p490).

Specifically, this study is about how it is possible for people, in the 1990s, to talk to another person about their lives and loves. As that other person, and as a feminist researcher, I want to understand how women and men construct heterosexual love and how they resolve dilemmas, experienced or foreseen, in intimate heterosexual relationships. Will they draw on feminist understandings of heterosexuality and romance? Will they identify any transformations of desire and intimacy in their stories of love?

To study stories of love and relationship *in depth* and *in detail*, it is not possible to interview a wide range of people, nor a large number of people. The people who can be interviewed by one person are limited by time and by the willingness of people to talk in depth about their relationships and love. I learned early on in this study that participants only volunteered if they knew me at least a little, or knew someone who knew me. I have therefore not interviewed a representative sample of women and men, though the respondents do represent a wide age range, from the late teens to the late 50s. However, using the methodology I employ, discourse analysis, the issue of representative samples loses saliency. The focus of qualitative discursive research is to identify available linguistic resources with which talk about love and heterosexual relationships is produced by participants, and what, in context, this talk does, especially in terms of how different ways of living together, loving and feeling are produced. In particular I want to question whether in constructing heterosexual love, gender is also produced in ways which disadvantage women rather than men. This is my specifically feminist theoretical rationale, and the next section introduces this in more depth. Later, in Chapter 4, I explain the methodology employed in detail.

1.2. THEORETICAL RATIONALE: DOING LOVE, DOING GENDER?

In this study, my aim as a feminist researcher is to deconstruct the concept of (hetero)sexual love in order to question if and how current significations of love are involved in producing gender inequality. If women are a disempowered class in relation to men, then socially constructed ideas of love, especially romantic love, will partly serve the interests of heterosexual males (or what are constructed to be the interests of heterosexual males by both women and men). This would mean that women, in particular, may have difficulties in performing stereotypical passive 'feminine' roles associated with the western romantic love tradition. By deconstruction, Judith Butler (1990) has suggested, the aim is not to negate or deny a concept, but to open it up to other meanings and significations. The form of my deconstruction involved eliciting women's and men's experiences and stories of love, in depth, and then analysing them according to feminist and social constructionist theory.

For feminist work, such as this project, in acknowledging that the personal is political, the everyday experiences and relationships which constitute the micro-politics of our lives are not seen to exist in isolation from the macro-politics of wider contexts or worlds we inhabit. Feminist theory does not accept that macro-level politics are a permanent or fixed state of affairs. It offers a challenge and critique of a social order which allows some groups more access to power, in particular the power to draw on and reproduce partial and self-serving versions of reality, versions of reality which in turn constrain micro-level activity and talk. From a social constructionist perspective, macro-politics are constituted and evidenced through the practice of micro-politics, over and over, time after time, in different contexts. Thus the personal is part of the political, and continual challenges at the micro-level may effect macro-level transformations. These challenges may take the form of deconstructing dominant narratives of life, showing how they privilege some group's interests rather than others, and also attempting to resist or subvert them. This is the approach I am taking in this research.

Challenges, however, become more difficult when a discourse of individual agency and responsibility is accepted as 'truth', with scientific psychology

implicated in marginalizing different "voices" (Gilligan, 1982). As Connell (1995), for example, has suggested, hegemony partly succeeds by the subjugation and silencing of voices which offer alternative perspectives.

An example of this kind of challenge came from Caroline Dryden (1989; 1999) who used a feminist and social constructionist perspective to show how married couples reproduced gender inequality in talking (together and separately) about their relationships and domestic work. Thus she demonstrated how micro-level talk reproduced macro-level gender politics. Specifically, she found that though both men and women tended to construct their relationships as fair and equitable, the women sometimes used the interviews to quietly question this construction. For instance, several women referred to doubts about the fairness of their relationships as "just little things" that bothered them. However, discursively, the expression "just little things" minimized these issues, and almost certainly meant that they could be discounted by their partners, if they were acknowledged as issues at all. Dryden highlighted this as an example of the problem for women of finding "a legitimate way to put across their grievances" (Dryden, 1989, p200). Moreover, the men seemed to undermine their wives' attempts to construct equity in the relationship, by constructing and reinforcing their wives' relational insecurities and their own independence and relational control. So whether the challenges to equity were from the men or women, it was the men who were being constructed as having more control, and women as needing the relationship more. From a materialist perspective, this was also the case, as most of the women in Dryden's study were partly or totally financially dependent on the men's earnings, having mostly given up their own careers to stay at home with the couple's young children.

Through the discourse of romantic love, two people can become 'we' or 'us'. Their joint identity, their 'coupleness' can obscure their separate identities. Dryden suggests that women are often hurt when their male partners use "I" rather than "we" in conversation; that this is taken to mean that he is asserting his own identity rather than presenting himself as part of a couple. Tannen's (1991) work also suggests this. Dryden (1989) however, also offers an example of a husband's use of "we" which made it difficult for his wife to resist going along with *his* plans presented as joint plans. In this instance, the husband's mother-in-law had been set up in a flat, where her daughter could look after her. This was an arrangement which would

not necessitate her mother's savings being spent to cover care in a nursing home. The husband had asserted their joint concern to maximise his mother-in-law's financial estate (which would eventually come to his wife). Dryden shows how, in the interview, it became clear that his wife had wanted her mother to go into a home, and the flat had been *his* decision. He was able to both make this decision and present it as their decision. Thus a "we" does not invariably produce equality and sharing (like a 'Royal we' - a monarch's use of the plural when speaking of himself or herself). Like Gill's (1993) work on social injustice, this highlights how a widespread acceptance of a particular version of reality (in both cases, women being sidelined) may be untroubled by heterogeneous and contradictory accounts of it. In Dryden's work, both the 'we' and the 'I' can reproduce women's disappointment and disempowerment.

Dryden questioned her own position as interviewer when she sometimes found herself colluding in upholding the gender *status quo* in the relationship rather than risk undermining it. When Dryden (1989; 1999) wrote of being concerned that one of her female participants was worried that her husband didn't love her, Dryden was not questioning what not being loved by her husband meant, but was using this as a way to demonstrate the seriousness of the wife's concerns. Yet when 'love' is viewed as another social construction, the consequences of 'falling in love', for instance, may be interrogated. One of the difficulties of challenging the concept of 'love' comes from the apparent challenge posed to the personal experience and emotions of the individual, which are often presented as unquestionable. From a personal choice perspective on romantic love, a woman is expected to love a man because he's him, not because he is a member of a more powerful and wealthy group who by association gives her more access to power and money. Monica Lewinsky (in various interviews for television and magazines, March, 1999) asked viewers and listeners to accept that she related to Clinton as a man, not as a President, and that his charisma was personal, not a function of his powerful position.

Though stories of love may tend to be told as stories of individuals, and of individual changes of heart, it is possible to question the ways in which love stories are examples of "the repeated invocation of rules that condition and restrict culturally intelligible practices of identity" (Butler, 1990, p145). We may also consider "culturally intelligible practices" of emotion

and emotionality, questioning who has, and in what contexts they have, the right to challenge their own and others' emotions.

In the 1990s, the expectation that women are as legally entitled to paid work as men, coupled with decreasing job security, means that men's right of access to wealth through work is less certain both at a personal and a political level than at other historical points, when employment meant *men's* employment. The power of this change to challenge sexual inequality at work is muted when women's average earnings still fall far short of men's and women are over-represented (76%) in the lowest income groups (The British Council, 1999). Women no longer need a man as a 'meal ticket'. They have earnings and potential state support. This state of affairs is implicated in a so-called 'crisis of masculinity', for, as some anti-feminist commentators have suggested (e.g. Lyndon, 1992) how can men be men if women aren't women who need them, as bread-winners and lovers and fathers for their children. Recent research with unemployed men (Willott and Griffin, 1997) suggests that male bread-winner discourses still prevail, even when drawn on by unemployed men. Again this is an example of how assumptions of a particular version of reality, in this case of male paid employment, is drawn on despite contradictory evidence. Although I am not interviewing unemployed men, I am interested to explore whether participants' stories of love draw on any notions of societal change (such as economic change), whether and how personal stories are made explicitly social and *vice versa*.

In sum, the rationale for my study was to detail discourses of heterosexual love and how women and men are positioned within them or in relation to them. This necessitated some work to locate discourses of love, historically, politically and psychologically, which I do in Chapters 2 and 3. My main focus was to interview women and men, so they could talk in depth about how they negotiate their relationships (not necessarily marriages) especially in regard to being 'in love'. I deconstructed their talk in order to question the micro-level politics of love, how love was implicated in reproducing gender inequality, and how gendered constructions of love might be resisted. As Dorothy Smith has suggested "any story bears the ineluctable traces of the social organizations and relations that are integral to the sequence of action it entails" (Smith, 1990, p217). Can stories of love be told as unproblematic stories of equality where institutionalized and material gender inequality remains?

1.3. MY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Is it possible to talk of heterosexual love in ways which challenge gender inequality, or are love stories inevitably implicated in producing inequitable relationships and shoring up gendered differences?

Is a subversion of emotional life feasible, such that emotional bonds between men and women are not inevitably skewed or distorted by male privilege? Holland *et al.* (1998) coined the phrase *The male in the head* to describe the experience of young men and young women, where a *male in the head* guides their talk and actions but a reciprocal *female in the head* is absent. Dryden (1999) writes of a lack of male consideration for their wives' opinions. Is it impossible to 'do' a masculinity which involves men engaging seriously (and less selfishly) with what a female partner may want, instead of relying on a discourse of femininity which entails her taking him into consideration?

Is the heterosexual couple constructed, by both men and women, more with regard to men's expected desires and wants, rather than women's? And if so, is it possible to construct stories of different relationships which can help to subvert and transform wider gender relations, or are heterosexual relationships presently too inseparably invested in the kind of gender differences which support male hegemony to do this?

1.4. THE STRUCTURE OF THIS THESIS

Many theories and researchers seek to define love outside of any wider historical, political or moral framework, or make assumptions on the basis of perceived common personal experiences. By taking a feminist social constructionist perspective, I can question how the rhetoric and discourses of love are implicated in power relations between men and women in relationship and 'in love'. If, as suggested, we live at a time when concurrent conceptualizations of what love is, and what it should be, and whether it is important as a basis for relationships, interact and compete with each other, then any comprehensive study of love will need to attempt to contextualize love within many different types of theoretical frameworks and academic writings on love, intimate heterosexual

relationships and gender. This will allow me to ground my own study in different cultural forms of gendered love and desire. In brief, the rest of this thesis is divided into the following chapters:-

Chapter 2 critically reviews psychological constructions of love, discussing mainstream psychological theory and research on love, followed briefly by a section on its relationship with self-help literature.

Chapter 3 addresses other, often interdisciplinary, theorizing and research, which challenge mainstream psychology's largely categorical approach to love. It draws on social constructionist and feminist work on emotion, love and romance, and offers a detailed discussion of narrative and discursive work on love and gender. I draw on work from critical social psychology, sociology, women's studies, cultural studies and critical literature theory.

The academic and theoretical areas covered in chapters 2 and 3 are not mutually exclusive and cannot be kept totally separate as recurrent assumptions and theoretical underpinnings will keep emerging. In particular, in questioning how love is constituted as gendered, I will be offering a deconstruction of assumptions of gender and sexuality which underlie both the theories and conceptualizations I review in Chapters 2 and 3.

Chapter 4 details my method of feminist discourse analysis, the interviews and participants, and the stages of analysis and analytical process. It includes a section on reflexivity in order to question my role within the qualitative method I am using.

Chapter 5 offers an analysis of the semi-structured, qualitative interviews with 11 women, aged between the late teens and mid-50s. I discuss how they have drawn on the discourse of romantic love to construct being in love around immanent feelings, often positioning themselves within discourses of emotion. Contradictions and difficulties in both producing accounts of themselves in love rather than infatuation, for instance, are theorized, as well as their difficulty in producing accounts of equitable relationships when men are assumed to be emotionally illiterate. Positioning men as emotionally repressed, however, may not preclude the positioning of a couple as in love; it may even enhance it.

Chapter 6 details my analysis of interviews with 11 men, aged between the late teens and late-50s. In this chapter, I demonstrate how they are able to resist positioning themselves within a discourse of romantic love, by claims of not knowing how to talk about it and by denying 'feelings' as a guide to knowing love. I explain how, instead, many of the men have tended to position themselves as both rational and successful by demonstrating themselves to be working at love and intimate relationships.

Chapter 7 begins by drawing together and comparing the women's and men's accounts from the previous two chapters to highlight the different constructions of love, masculinity, emotion work and heterosexual relationships produced by women and men. It then details an analysis of accounts of infidelity across both sets of interviews. The women's interviews often included gendered stories of infidelity in representations of heterosexual love. Analysing both the women's and the men's talk of infidelity in detail allowed me to investigate a gendered discourse of infidelity, which inscribed expectations of women's fidelity and men's infidelity. I discuss how the production of infidelity as gendered in this way is implicated in discourses which support heterosexual male privilege.

Chapter 8 is the final chapter and offers some conclusions in relation to the broad discourses which pervaded the interviews and their involvement in a 'transformation of intimacy'. I discuss both the implications and limitations of my research, suggesting further avenues for study.

CHAPTER 2. MAINSTREAM SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL CONCEPTIONS OF LOVE

Before the 1970s, 'love' was not considered the province of psychologists, but of writers, poets, philosophers and lovers. Now love has become a topic within mainstream psychology to be scrutinized and disciplined. Before detailing mainstream work on love, I want to discuss briefly its relationship to more extensive work within psychology on intimate relationships.

Much mainstream psychological research into intimate relationships has focused on Anglo-Western (usually Anglo-American) cultures, with partners assumed to be heterosexual and white, and dominant constructions of 'love' and gender largely unquestioned. For instance "Love" was given only two pages of coverage in the book *Friends, For Life* (Duck, 1983). 'Love' has often been treated as a separate individualized emotional state or psychological concept, outside of the context of a relationship (or the meaning of a relationship). Instead, research on relationships, has tended to assume that something we recognise as 'love' is involved, or that emotional bonds exist, and has rather focused on attraction and physical arousal, the development of relationships, relationship conflict and relationship breakdown. For instance, Steve Duck, a prolific writer and editor of books on intimate relationships, has only recently become interested in "metaphors of love" and how relationships are constructed and maintained through language and talk (Duck, 1994). Issues of gender were not considered explicitly in earlier books by Duck (1983, 1992), though, by 1993, they were being addressed substantially in books edited by him (Duck, 1993a; Duck 1993b). Duck's later books (1992, 1994) review different formulations of 'love', as attitude and as relationship process and constraint, and though he considers the importance of context, the situational contexts he considers tend not to question how talk of love may function to support, rather than reflect, wider societal relations.

... love is more than just an attitude or disembodied emotion that we simply feel inside ourselves. It has consequences for our behaviour and for larger aspects of our functioning in social groups. It affects not only our feelings but our actions and the way we communicate. Love can take several forms and exerts an influence on our lives by restructuring our routines. We talk about it in different ways

depending on our audience and the situation. Love also exposes us to the need to adjust our behaviour; for example by restricting our romantic activities exclusively to our lovers. (Duck, 1992, p44)

Psychological research specifically focused on 'love', as in work on intimate relationships, tends to be built on 'common-sense' understandings. Like common aphorisms and much literary and popular writing on love, love is assumed to exist, to be a 'real' and recognizable emotional state, and more than this too, as Duck (1992) suggests in the quote above. For the mainstream psychologist, this means that love is amenable to study, often outside of any historical and cultural context, though this situation is gradually changing. Long-term intimate relationships are expected to involve love, which develops from first meetings, and which may often involve 'love at first sight'. The recognition of having 'fallen in love' is usually assumed or expected at some point in a relationship in which some long-term commitment is made, such as getting married or living together as a couple. Although expected, love may be seen as romantic, mysterious and magical, though this does not presuppose that this is why someone would choose to settle down with someone else, maybe 'forever'. Yet, one of the reasons for public resistance to US psychologists' studying why people fall in love, for example by US Senator William Proxmire (see Miell, Duck and Dallos, 1984), was that we are expected to already 'know' about falling in love. Possible reasons for 'knowing' about love are the pervasively constructed hetero-biological underpinnings of sexual attraction and the common experience of the emotion of love, so the next two sub-sections address these theories.

2.1. SOCIOBIOLOGY AND EVOLUTIONARY THEORY

Biological explanations of love and sexual attraction often form the basis for both lay and mainstream psychological theories of heterosexual intimacy. By grounding love in sexual and reproductive imperatives, 'love' becomes explainable in biological, sociobiological, and more recently evolutionary terms. Such conceptualizations of love are often referred to and indexed in mainstream texts as 'mate selection'. Historically, according to these physiologically-based theories, love is reducible to sexual attraction, which is amenable to observation and measurement of physiological indices such as pupil dilation, for instance. Through circular arguments, sociobiology and evolutionary theory explain current social

arrangements in terms of evolutionary strategies which are hypothesized as successful. For instance, on the basis of survey statistics, men are assumed to be more likely to be unfaithful than women, and so theoretically this is seen as a consequence of both natural selection and 'natural' male behaviour (Fisher, 1992).

Angier (1999) critiques the failure to attend to variation and flexibility amongst evolutionary psychologists, since they explain gender difference in terms of differential reproductive strategies available to women and men. A man can spread his sperm to many women, but unless he stays with the woman, he can't be sure any child she bears is his. A woman is limited in the number of children she can bear because of the length of the gestation period and the need for a human child to be looked after for some time, the child's caretaker usually assumed to be its mother. However, social support for children can vary culturally, and this is not explainable by sociobiology nor evolutionary strategies based solely on a hunter (man)/ gatherer (woman) model. Nor can such theory explain why in previous centuries, marriage was often seen as (and still may be) an economic, rather than an individual choice; nor why traditional marriage laws (excluding those few which allow polygamy, usually polygyny) should need to enshrine the couple in law.

Leonore Tiefer (1995), for example, commenting on fears about the use of "naturalism" language to justify women's oppression, has explained how the "explosive rise of sociobiology in the mid-1970s seemed to be a backlash confirming the feminists' fears. Biological, evolutionary and animal research was recruited to justify the status quo." (Tiefer, 1995, p35).

In a patriarchal culture, it is assumed to be an advantage to a woman that a man will stay around and support her and their young child, at least financially. 'Mate selection' is seen to proceed through women seeking economic providers, and men seeking attractive and healthy (often younger) females who will have healthy babies. However, this theory does not explain why constructions of healthiness and attractiveness vary across cultures and across time.

Evolutionary theories, in explaining why a man will be driven to try to spread his genes, construct the notion of a male sex drive, to the exclusion of a female one. But this does not explain adequately why he will stay to

support a particular child, except to ensure female monogamy. The theory is used by sociobiologists contradictorily, to explain both male infidelity and a man staying with one woman, that is to explain the current circumstances that people may wish to explain away as 'normal' male behaviour, thus justifying men's choice. Angier has also pointed out how notions of women's 'fidelity' can be used to obscure women's lack of economic choice.

... it is adaptive for men to feel insane sexual jealousy and women to dread emotional betrayal. But for the life of me I can't see how a woman can "know", in that Stone Age way that they supposedly know, the difference between a husband's harmless dalliance and a serious threat to her marriage, or how she can trust a man who has cheated on her sexually to be emotionally reliable and to stick around long enough to pay for college tuition. I can imagine how a woman might put up with bad behaviour because she has no choice, because she is too poor to leave a rotten marriage and make it on her own. (Angier, 1999, p348)

Gender differences in relation to monogamy and desire have been evidenced by forcing participants to choose one of two options selected by researchers:-

a) that your partner had sex with someone else but thought about you
or

b) that your partner had sex with you but thought about someone else?

Alternatively participants have asked to decide which would be most upsetting, a scenario representing sexual infidelity or one representing emotional infidelity (Wiederman and Kendall, 1999).

The findings suggest that statistically women are more likely to choose option a) and find emotional infidelity more upsetting where men are more likely to choose b) and sexual infidelity. These results have been taken to mean that women want emotional or psychological intimacy more than sexual intimacy, where men want sexual intimacy more than emotional intimacy. Such different orientations would suggest that heterosexual relationships are fraught with conflict rather than blessed with complementarity.

Yet, as Angier (1999) proposes, theorizing men as wanting sex more than women do, does not explain why women's sexual behaviour has been

constrained by law and by the practice of adjudging women as either madonnas or whores, where the former are esteemed and the latter afforded a 'bad' reputation.

Despite these challenges, sociobiology and evolutionary theory are often unquestioningly used to warrant the construction of a human drive to have children as the primary instinct underlying gender difference as well as heterosexual and couple behaviour. We also now live in a culture in which sexuality is largely separable from reproduction, which in turn could give women, who have often tended to be tied down by children and domestic work, a lot more freedom. Theory which assumes and explains genetically preprogrammed gender differences, functions to reinforce them, with the apparent power of scientific rationality. Research based theoretically on sociobiology and evolutionary theory tends to statistically differentiate men and women, therefore constructing gender difference (Hare-Mustin and Marazek, 1994), often based on arbitrarily conceptualized differences. The sociobiologist or evolutionary theorist is rarely interested in those who do not match statistically the essentialized 'evolved' man or woman, but rather to support their own assumptions of normative gendered human behaviour.

2.2. LOVE AS A FELT EMOTION

Within the discipline of psychology, 'love' is not usually included as a basic emotion, since these are defined as human universal feelings of relatively brief duration, such as happiness, surprise, anger. However psychologists have noted that love seems to be classed as a typical emotion by laypersons. Shaver *et al.* (1996) suggest that romantic love is universal and offer excerpts from a 3000-year-old Egyptian poem to show that experiences of love can traverse time and culture, in order to argue that love should figure more in research on emotion. These emotional experiences of love they group as 1) Physical signs, 2) Soaring feelings, 3) Wanting to be physically close, 4) Being forgetful, distracted etc. and 5) Love-sickness and the distress of separation or rejection. They further suggest that 'falling in love' should be considered a basic emotion, just like sorrow and anger. They call this "surge love", and suggest that it will occur at least once in a person's lifetime, if not more often, like other "basic" emotions. They acknowledge that 'love' differs from sorrow and anger in that the latter

may be said to be experienced without having an object, where we feel love *for* someone.

For Shaver *et al.*, 'love' is attachment, which they explain means that it is complex, and may involve many emotions such as "surges of love, separation anxiety, anger, jealousy, loneliness and grief" (Shaver *et al.*, 1996, p94). This list does not make love sound a very attractive proposition, as with the possible exception of 'surges of love', these emotions tend to be constructed as unpleasant. They could also have included happiness and possibly, security. They write too, that love involves caregiving and sex, as well as attachment, so "I love you" has three meanings, which I paraphrase as 1) I am emotionally dependent on you (attachment), 2) I want to care for you (caregiving) and 3) I want sex with you (sexual attraction). Interestingly, the first two meanings are stated by the authors as forming part of the lover's identity, though not the third, sexual attraction. Thus they separate out sexual desire from constructions of self.

Even though love may not be classed by most mainstream psychologists as an emotion, talk of love has traditionally been understood as talk about feelings for someone else. 'Feelings' are often constructed as mediators of social relationships, though often in the context of constructing normative social relationships such as heterosexual marriages. Keith Oatley's (1992) model of emotions, while largely cognitive (see also Oatley and Johnson-Laird, 1987), constructs emotions as communications to ourselves and others, about our plans and goals.

We can think of functions of emotions, then, in three different ways. basic emotion signals communicate directly to ourselves and tend to constrain our actions, thus managing happy communications of existing plans or dysphoric transitions to new ones. They also communicate to others, tending to induce in them states similar to or complementary to our own, and thus prompting continuations or transitions in those with whom we interact. Finally, we communicate semantically by talking about emotions to ourselves and to others. What we say in such dialogues also has effects, ranging from the building of models of our self to influencing others in the way they think and act. (Oatley, 1992, p68)

For Oatley, 'love' is not a basic emotion, it is a plan, usually a joint plan, in which basic emotions and feelings indicate how well that plan is going. Different constructions of 'feelings of love' would imply attempts to construct different plans of love and different types of relationship.

I will return to the topic of emotion and emotionality, when I discuss interdisciplinary studies of love in the next chapter. In this chapter, I want to identify the approach which mainstream psychologists tend to take, which is to consider love, not as an emotion, but as something else. That something else has often been conceptualized as an attitude, a concept familiar in mainstream psychology, and which allows love to be categorized and measured by psychometric tests.

2.3. MAINSTREAM PSYCHOLOGISTS' MEASURES OF 'LOVE'

Our assigned mission as psychologists is to analyse all facets of human and animal behavior into their component variables. So far as love or affection is concerned, psychologists have failed in their mission. The little we know about love does not transcend simple observation and the little we write about it has been written better by poets and novelists. (Harlow, 1958, p673 cited in Hazan and Shaver, 1994)

Much of the work on love in North America, which has dominated mainstream social psychological research on personal relationships and love, has tended to revolve around attempts to catalogue, classify and compartmentalize love, as Harlow (1958) suggests. His own approach to human attachment was to experiment with new-born baby monkeys' attachment needs! Conceptualizing love in terms of identified attitudes, means it can be quantified and compared through love scales and subscales (e.g. Rubin,1973; Hendrick and Hendrick,1992).

Mappings of love by psychologists have involved paper and pencil tests to test participants' agreement with particular statements, positioning the psychologist as expert. This obviously limits participants' ability to set the agenda and explain what is important to them. Results are dependent upon the extent to which statements make sense to participants, and may tell us more about the researchers' ideas and experiences than about those of participants (e.g. Stainton Rogers *et al.*, 1995).

Hendrick and Hendrick (1986,1992) developed scales to measure love attitudes or love styles, which had been originally proposed by Lee (1973). They suggest that:-

The love styles have much to recommend them - they are interesting, easy to grasp, and aptly characterize the multidimensionality of love experienced by real people. (Hendrick and Hendrick, 1992, p67)

The list below describes these love styles or attitudes, and typical statements that are assumed to be indicative of each of them. The descriptions and statements may be easy to grasp and may characterize some people's experience, but the nomenclature is not immediately understandable, nor are its historical and classical referents.

EROS - romantic, passionate love

"My lover and I were attracted to each other immediately after we first met."

LUDUS - game-playing love

"I try to keep my lover a little uncertain about my commitment to him/her."

STORGE - friendship love

"Our love relationship is the most satisfying because it developed from a good friendship."

PRAGMA - practical love

"I considered what my lover was going to become in life before I committed myself to him/her."

MANIA - obsessive love

"When my partner doesn't pay attention to me, I feel sick all over."

AGAPE - selfless love

"I would rather suffer myself than let my partner suffer."

According to these divisions, romance is about passion, attraction and immediacy ('love at first sight'). When these categories were used to investigate how women's and men's attitudes to love compared, Hendrick and Hendrick (1986) found that women were more pragmatic (practical), storgic (based on friendship) and manic (obsessive), where men were more erotic (romantic and passionate) and ludic (game-playing). Their finding that men expressed more romantic attitudes than women surprised some, as it contradicted a popular stereotype of 'men who can't commit' (Tysoe, 1992), though the higher game-playing scores supported the masculine stereotype. Researchers have speculated that the higher romantic score can be explained by a heterosexual man's dependence on a woman for intimacy, because he is not so intimate with his male friends (Tysoe, 1992), though this draws on yet another stereotype of masculinity. However, after further studies, Hendrick and Hendrick (1986) failed to replicate a significant difference between men and women on their erotic (romantic and passionate) scale and discounted this gender difference, suggesting that men and women were equally passionate. Women's more pragmatic attitude to love, as measured on Hendrick and Hendrick's love style scales, was explained by their need to be more pragmatic, because historically women needed an economic provider as well as a love partner. However, though Hendrick and Hendrick argued that women's 'pragmatism' can be seen as culturally mediated, they prefer to theorize the measured gender differences in love through sociobiology as well as through gender socialization. Thus women are positioned as more serious about relationships, and more obsessive in them, while men are positioned as less serious. Hendrick and Hendrick (1992) point up the consistency of women's 'pragmatism' with sociobiological theorizing and the contradiction between this 'sensible' approach and their finding that women are more 'manic' and 'obsessive'.

Are women really more possessive and dependent than are men? According to many relationship partners we have talked to, "it depends." The old stereotype of the clingy, hysterical woman has faded somewhat; however women are more willing than men to report having physical and psychological symptoms ... and Mania has a lot of symptom-type items. Maybe women are just more willing to report to Mania than are men. (Hendrick and Hendrick, 1992, p70)

This quote suggests an interest in what it is possible to say rather than using talk as a consistent guide to 'personality' or identity. However, rhetorically it functions to sideline the findings which don't fit so well within Hendrick and Hendrick's chosen theoretical framework. Rather than questioning the meanings attached to an 'obsessive' love style or a 'pragmatic' love style, they accept the statistical differences between men and women on the latter, but not on the former. From a feminist perspective, one would not want them reinforcing the stereotype of the 'clingy, hysterical woman', yet they have no consistent theoretical explanation for accepting some significant gender differences and not others. They also questioned whether women's 'manic' behaviour is associated with early stages of uncertainty in a relationships, and have also found that 'erotic' scores are enhanced if the scorer is currently 'in love'. All of these possibilities, and many others, cast doubt on the "easy to grasp" love styles as an explanation of gendered love. Also the gender differences they report have been supported only with North American participants, and not when participants were Russian and Japanese, which disputes the universality of gender differences in love (Sprecher *et al.*, 1994), and which therefore undermines a universalist sociobiological framework.

2.3.1. Research on women's and men's attitudes to love and sex

In a more recent paper, Hendrick and Hendrick (1995) have looked for gender differences in relation to attitudes towards sex and love. Again their chosen theoretical approaches were sociobiology and social learning theories, the latter in relation to gendered sexual scripts which "foster active, wide-ranging sexuality for men and passive, monogamous sexuality for women". They continue:-

Thus, men are expected to be sexually active and exploratory, as part of a traditional men's role (e.g., sexually permissive, game-playing in love), whilst women (guardians of their own sexuality, as well as restraining forces for men's sexuality [Cate & Lloyd, 1992]) should be more oriented to the emotional aspects of sex, to the stable and practical aspects of love, and potentially also to relationship investment and commitment. (Hendrick and Hendrick, 1995, p57)

Within positivist psychological frameworks, the common expectation is that men's desire is inherently sexual while women's desire is inherently

emotional. However, because, as Hendrick and Hendrick (1995) state, other researchers had found that women and men differed little on the average number of sexual partners, they focused on looking for other ways of finding both expected 'double standards' and differences between women and men. They predicted that women would link 'love' with other aspects of relationships such as 'investment' and 'satisfaction', where men would link 'love' to 'sexuality' (or 'sex' as the British equivalent). Their quantitative analyses employed different scales to measure sexual attitudes and love attitudes, and also a relationship assessment scale and some additional items from a commitment scale. They asked participants to quantify their relationship histories, asking about the number of times in love, whether they were in love now etc. From these, they reported significant statistical differences between women and men. In comparison with the men, women reported that love was more important to them, that they were more deeply in love and that they were more likely to be in love. Men reported having been in love more times, and as having had both more sexual partners and more romantic partners than women.

However, Hendrick and Hendrick (1995) did not find the gender differences they had predicted in orientations to love and sex. They therefore conducted an additional exploration which involved asking psychology students to write accounts of a romantic relationship including its sexual aspects in response to the statement "We want to know how you and your relationship partner met, how the relationship developed, how love was experienced, and how you experienced the physical/sexual aspects of the relationship". These stories were rated by Hendrick and Hendrick (1995) separately on the basis of whether they indicated one of three orientations:-

Relationship orientation (sex deepens a relationship)

Procreational Orientation (sex is to produce children)

Recreational Orientation (sex is for fun)

Rating the student's accounts in this way, men's and women's accounts emerged as "relatively similar", with sex being rated as predominantly relationally oriented, as part of the development of a relationship.

Since these findings do not fit with Hendrick and Hendrick's theoretical stance (sociobiology and social learning theory) on gender difference, they are explained away in relation to the instructions Hendrick and

Hendrick gave the students. Though Hendrick and Hendrick (1995) focus on, and thus construct, gender differences, they plead that "trivial" differences should not be promoted at the expense of more important similarities. Yet it is not clear who is deciding what is important and what is trivial. What is clear is that there is a confusion between what the researchers expected to find, and what they did find. Proclaiming that men and women are more similar than different, does not fit well with research that is framed by a search for statistical difference with gender as independent variable.

Though mainstream researchers have suggested that love and sex go together in heterosexual relationships, this is usually without considering the meanings which individuals give to each separately and/or together. Sprecher and McKinney (1993) reviewed largely positivist psychological research on attitudes towards sex, concluding that the traditionally gendered double standard (that it is acceptable for men to engage in both pre-marital and extramarital sex, but not for women) has diminished, leading to a new double standard in which women may engage in pre-marital sex if they are 'in love'. Sprecher and McKinney (1993) suggest that findings from attitude scales and questionnaires had not been consistent, though when gendered differences did materialize, participants tended to be more accepting of men having casual sex than women (*cf.* Sheeran *et al.*, 1996).

2.4. PSYCHOLOGISTS' CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE LANGUAGE OF LOVE

Lay-persons' talk of love is generally acknowledged as much richer than that of psychologists, and problematically (for psychologists), this richness may often seem arbitrary and ambiguous. For instance, sociologists Duncombe and Marsden (1995) use an example of a woman saying "I don't love him "love" him, if you know what I mean. But I do *love* him" (Duncombe and Marsden, 1995, p240; their emphasis) to explain that multiple meanings come from our knowledge of romantic conventions. Clichés and common expressions may be seen by psychologists as ideal examples of 'natural' categories. Problems arise however if psychologists do not question how, *in context*, the clichés may have different functions. "I don't love him "love" him ...", makes sense only by understanding different ways of talking about love.

Berscheid and Meyers (1996) encapsulate a mainstream psychological perspective on love by writing that the complexity of love might be more "amenable to solution if love were first dissected into smaller and more manageable pieces through the identification and systematic cataloguing of different kinds of love" (Berscheid and Meyers, 1996, p19). This is therefore similar to Hendrick and Hendrick's approach (section 2.3). However, the scientific understanding gained by breaking up areas of study into identifiably named pieces tends to decontextualize, and I want to argue that love has to be understood in context, not separated and isolated from aspects of our lives and culture which involve the experiences we call love.

An obvious epistemological problem has been that different psychologists' systems identify and name different numbers of types of love, and it has not been clear that the 'expert' or psychologist was necessarily adding anything to further a common sense understanding that 'love' may have different, and not necessarily consistent, meanings and functions.

Berscheid and Meyers (1996) bemoan the lack of progress in coming to a common conceptual language among researchers on love and suggest we look to the "love vocabularies of laypersons", though they state that lay vocabulary is "generally agreed to be loose and ambiguous" (Berscheid and Meyers, 1996, p21). This of course is problematic, but not necessarily as worrying as if researchers dissected and defined the area in such a rigid way that complexity was lost, and the psychological discourses of love became commonplace in all their limitations. It is not surprising that there was resistance to research on love as psychological theorizing tends to be either dry and dehumanizing, its written form often lacking beauty and passion, reducing its participants to numbers, or types, and also pathologizing them if they love too little or too much, or unwisely. Where poems, songs, drama and novels describe love at length and with subtlety and understatement, drawing on both metaphor and cliché, the psychologist is expected to be precise, concise, unambiguous. Psychologists may consider the common language of love as impoverished, but it tends to be more evocative than scientific writing with its tendency to label with Latin, Greek or invented names such as "ludus" and "storge".

2.4.1. Romantic/passionate versus companionate love: 'immature' versus 'mature' love

Berscheid and Meyers (1996) criticize researchers for conflating the 'real', but different, states of 'loving' and being 'in love' with someone. They use an example from Hendrick and Hendrick's (1986) work to demonstrate how they use "love" and "in love" interchangeably, and thus implicitly criticize the Hendricks' love scales approach. They are most concerned to demonstrate the cognitively different states of being 'in love' with someone and 'loving' someone, the difference between what had been formulated earlier by Berscheid, then with Walster, a.k.a. Hatfield, (Berscheid and Walster, 1978) as "passionate" and "companionate" love. Passionate love was conceptualized as the 'hot love' often associated with early romantic relationships, where companionate love was associated with later stages of long-term relationships, where commitment and caring have largely replaced passion. This division can be seen as a two-stage developmental model of romantic attachment, which constructs long-term love as starting passionately, with this early passion giving way to a more adult love, which involves caring but is largely devoid of passion and excitement. "Passionate love involves ecstasy/misery. Companionate love flourishes in a mixture of pleasure sprinkled occasionally with real-life frustrations" (Hatfield, 1988), p207).

This common two-part categorization of love draws on and reconstitutes differences between new (or newer) relationships and established relationships, and its pervasiveness would seem to explain the commonality of extra-marital (or extra-relationship) relationships, with falling 'in love' providing a justification for behaviours such as infidelity (Berscheid, 1983), both in terms of the more exciting and passionate aspects, and the uncontrollability of romantic love (Noller, 1996). Noller (1996) is very clear that she considers the version of love as "blind, external, and uncontrollable" (Noller, 1996, p108) as immature, where 'mature love' is involved in commitment, staying together and "working on the relationship through dealing with conflicts and finding mutually acceptable solutions to the problems that will inevitably arise" (Noller, 1996, p108). For Noller, mature love is responsible love, which can sustain marriage and family, so this is the love which fits in with cultures which espouse a lifelong commitment to marriage.

Fehr (1994) has suggested that the focus on the romantic/passionate and companionate forms of love has distracted attention from friendship and familial love, which she suggests are more central to people's views of love. In developing her 'prototypes' of love, participants are asked to respond to her categories and her labelling system which leads to the derogatorily named "puppy love" and "infatuation" coming well down a list of importance to her participants. From Fehr's cognitivist perspective, "laypeople's hierarchies are ill-defined and fuzzy, rather than neat taxonomies with clear, discrete levels." (Fehr, 1994, p329). She concludes, that "love" is an abstract category which subsumes more specific types such as "infatuation", "romantic love" or "companionate love". Fehr (1994), suggests that too much research taps into specific types of love, drawing attention away from the loves she sees as more common and more central to people's lives, which are friendship and familial love, which seem more central to her construction of social order.

By asking participants to name the people they loved and the people they were in love with, Berscheid and Meyers (1996) produced a cognitive hierarchy of these love categories, and found that the people with whom participants were 'in love' formed a subset of the people they loved. The authors suggest, therefore, that rather than seeing passionate love ('in love', romantic) and companionate love (loving) as mutually exclusive categories, the categories should be "romantic-companionate" love versus "companionate" love, where the latter refers to family, friends etc. This again seems to point up a problem with language, as it would seem that the division they are describing might more clearly be termed "romantic companionate love" versus "non-romantic companionate love". This new division, Berscheid and Meyers (1996) are producing would seem to point to long-term intimate relationships as involving both caring and romantic feelings, and that this is what distinguishes intimate sexual relationships from other caring relationships. However this method, of categorizing the people one loves or are in love with, does not interrogate the meanings of 'in love' and 'loving' for those laying claim to these cognitive states in relation to others, though it does suggest that, for the participants in Berscheid and Meyers' study, to state that one is 'in love' with someone but does not 'love' them is unusual.

The passionate/ companionate division has become a mainstream staple in writing about love, though its inclusion in mainstream texts is usually

offered as an atheoretical observation of the development of intimate relationships. Berscheid and Meyers (1996) conclude that "Naive common-sense theories are to a great extent a product of the individual's ecological niche in the social world, a niche particularly defined by the culture within which the individual is embedded, including its customs and conventions and its social demands and goals." (Berscheid and Meyer, 1996, p39). Thus they concede that we cannot make sense of love, without understanding the social and historical context in which particular social arrangements make sense, and that the social order may change. Yet, despite this, Berscheid and Meyers are interested in producing a taxonomy of different types of relationships. They point to useful ways of contextualizing love, so as not to be too reductive, yet ultimately their aim is to confine conceptualizations of 'love' or 'loves' and reduce complexity. In relation to the love styles of Hendrick and Hendrick (in section 2.3), the constructs of passionate love and companionate love would seem to map onto Eros and Storge, respectively, with passionate love also including some Mania (Hendrick and Hendrick, 1992). The way in which research has developed around both conceptual models of love, like most mainstream theorizing, has relied on participants responding to standardized scales, such as the passionate love scale (Hatfield and Sprecher, 1986) or being able to assign people with whom they have relationships to conceptual boxes. The research on passionate and companionate love has not identified gender differences, which means that in terms of 'immature' or 'mature' love, gender stereotypes have not been examined. However, to omit the work on passionate and companionate love would have been to miss out one of the most pervasive dichotomous constructions of love referred to in the mainstream literature, a dichotomy which Berscheid and Meyer (1996) are now attempting to dispel. Similarly the next sub-section looks at another commonly referenced model of love.

2.4.2. A Triangular theory of love: intimacy, passion and commitment

Sternberg's triangular theory of love (e.g. 1986) attempts to explain friendship and familial love relationships as well as love in intimate sexual relationships. His is a three component view of love, the different components being:- intimacy (emotional investment), passion (psychological and physical arousal and motivation) and commitment

(decision making) which lead to eight possible combinations, or typologies of love:-

- 1 Nonlove - no components
- 2 Liking - just intimacy
- 3 Infatuated love - just passion
- 4 Empty love - just commitment
- 5 Romantic love - intimacy and passion
- 6 Companionate love - intimacy and commitment
- 7 Fatuous love - passion and commitment
- 8 Consummate love - intimacy, passion and commitment

This is an inventive descriptive theory which seems to encompass a number of common-sense notions of love, and common words of love and relationship. What seems inherent in these divisions, is a moral order of love, with consummate love at the pinnacle as the desired and moral option for intimate love relationships. For Sternberg, "intimacy" is different from "passion", and romantic love is not considered to provide a sufficient foundation for long-term relationships. Again, like other psychometric approaches to love, the amounts of each love component can be measured by paper and pencil tests.

Similar to Sternberg's notion of "infatuated love", and Hendrick and Hendrick's "Mania", Tennov (1979) used the term "limerance" to describe 'falling in love' and fantasizing about another person. Limerance is characterized as involving physiological arousal, idealization of the person loved, irrational thinking, mood swings and insecurity. Limerance is very much about emotional feelings, which Tennov (1979) constructs as pathological if they persist unrealistically. Of course what is 'unrealistic' would have to be seen as a social construction, but what I want to highlight here is the way in which taxonomies of love are often embedded within societal notions of appropriate feeling. Some forms of loving are constructed as proper and good for relationships, where others are destructive or pathological, such as de Clerembault's syndrome, a diagnostic label given to those who exhibit extremely 'unrealistic' unrequited love. Thus far, the mainstream psychological theories I have discussed have given labels to the love an individual identifies (their attitude to love) with little consideration of the context provided by the intimate relationships involved. Where the empirical study of love grew out of the study of

interpersonal attraction in personal relationships, it has often become divorced from the interpersonal context, except implicitly. Hazan and Shaver (1987) have added another rather different taxonomy of love to mainstream psychology, by adding attachment styles of love. Though this is still a theory about individuals' beliefs, it has a more interactional flavour, especially as attachment styles are assumed to be formed through early parent/child interaction.

2.4.3. Love, Gender and Attachment styles

By adapting parent-child attachment theory (originating from Bowlby (1951)), Hazan and Shaver (1987; 1994) have reconstituted adult relationship as a process of replaying early patterns of emotional attachment. The three attachment styles offered are "Secure", associated with lasting and loving relationships, "Avoidant", associated with disbelieving that 'true' love exists and "Anxious/Ambivalent" which conjoins a facility to often 'fall in love' with a belief that 'true love' exists but is rare. Hazan and Shaver (1994) have now added another pattern "disorganized/disoriented", which is a mix of avoidant and ambivalent behaviour. Like parent-child attachment theory, secure attachment is constructed as the ideal, with the other styles seen as maladaptive. Similarly these love styles (adult attachment styles) are located within the individual, so lack of secure attachment, though formed interactively in early childhood, will be seen as a sign of an insecure person in adulthood, rather than a dynamic of the relationship.

Hazan and Shaver (1994) suggest that gender differences might be expected in attachment styles in intimate relationships. "The anxious-ambivalent pattern sounds very much like the clingy, dependent aspects of the female stereotype, and the avoidant pattern strongly resembles the stereotypical intimacy-evading male" (Hazan and Shaver, 1994, p17). Yet their analyses suggest that women and men do not fall into these categories in a way that would give support for these stereotypical constructions of gender. They maintain that gender differences relate to "care-giving" and "sexuality", where the need for "felt security" and attachment is presumed to be biologically determined and precedes gender differentiation which they state is due to "sex-role specialization pressures". In this way, Hazan and

Shaver construct and reproduce stereotypical gender differences, but dissociate them from their specific theory.

Thus the need for relationship is constructed as normative, and individual differences are associated with early parenting style and parent-child attachment. Hazan and Shaver (1994) suggest that they have grappled with "love and affection" and "are analyzing these important facets of human behavior in their component variables" (Hazan and Shaver, 1994, p18), as a response to Harry Harlow's (1958) call to do this. But how does 'attachment' relate to 'love and affection'? Hazan and Shaver do not make this clear, but assume that 'love' is understood to flow from "felt security", which is, in turn, assumed to come from one attentive and supportive attachment figure, usually the mother. This construction of love, applied to adulthood, can be recognised in the psychological work of mainstream 'love' researchers, starting with Zick Rubin (1973), who developed questionnaires which showed a significant statistical difference between 'loving' and 'liking' and constructed 'loving' as attachment, caring and intimacy. Hazan and Shaver downplay the links between attachment theory and psychodynamic theory by focusing on the biologically deterministic aspects of attachment and notions of the quality of the mother-child attachment and some correct balance of support and letting go that results in well adjusted individual orientations to intimacy. However as in psychodynamic theory, early childhood experiences set the scene for later relational possibilities and difficulties.

2.5. THE USE OF PSYCHODYNAMIC AND PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORIES

Psychodynamic theory is often conceived of as antagonistic to mainstream approaches because of its hermeneutic, rather than positivist, underpinnings. However, psychodynamic assumptions of the importance of early childhood experiences to individual subjectivity often underlie mainstream theorizing. I use the terms "psychodynamic" and "psychoanalytic" interchangeably to refer to a considerable and varied range of theories, originating with Freud, and developed in diverse ways by him and by post-Freudian psychoanalysts. Psychodynamic approaches tend to assume that the roots of unconscious motivation and intra-psychic conflict reside in early childhood (Thomas, 1996). Some theorists use the term "psychoanalytic" to relate specifically to the practice of

psychoanalysis, within which an individual's defense mechanisms (ways of dealing with unacceptable impulses) are uncovered using a variety of psychotherapeutic techniques such as word association or dream analysis. Others use "psychoanalytic" to refer to both theory and practice, as I do here.

With its emphasis on male development and boy's fear of castration, and its assumption that girls will experience 'penis envy', Freudian theory is phallogocentric. For this reason, it and its variant forms have been strongly criticized by feminist researchers for devaluing women and misrepresenting female development (e.g. Gilligan, 1982). However, psychodynamic theory has also been appropriated by feminist researchers in order to challenge gender inequality. I will address this research and feminist critiques of psychodynamic theory later in Chapter 3, section 3.2.2. Here I want to briefly address its relationship with mainstream psychological theorizing and love. Psychodynamic theory can be seen to inform an understanding of falling in love, by suggesting that love may be a form of transference rather than transcendence. Transference is the hypothesized process of projecting our emotional needs onto someone else, trying to reproduce our earliest child-(m)other closeness and replay repressed feelings from childhood (Thomas, 1996). Because that is impossible, there is no way this desire can be completely fulfilled. As in mainstream taxonomies of love there is a notion that erotic or passionate love may be immature. "In Freud's theory, erotic transference is not 'grown up' loving but the resurrection of a childhood erotic impulse or attraction to father, mother or some other figure" (Thomas, 1996, p169). Understanding the notion of the unconscious may, however, help explain why love is mysterious.

One of the reasons for mistrusting psychodynamic explanations of psychological phenomena is the impossibility of rejecting them, within the terms of a psychodynamic approach. In practice, both a strong acceptance and a vehement rejection of a psychodynamic explanation are taken as evidence of its 'truth' and applicability. Since the unconscious is not directly knowable, there can be no direct challenge to explanations of its operation. Psychodynamic theory is unfalsifiable, and thus is at odds with mainstream psychology's appropriation of hypothetico-deductive methods. However, psychodynamic or psychoanalytic theory has offered possibilities of theorizing emotions, emotionality and intrapsychic conflict which

mainstream psychology has tended to avoid in its expectation of and search for individual consistency and its reliance on empirical, measurable evidence. Despite mainstream psychology's orientation to theories which do not draw on notions of an unknowable unconscious, mainstream psychologists have, at times, drawn on aspects of psychodynamic theory, like Hazan and Shaver (1987; 1994) above. Both mainstream psychology and psychoanalytic theory take heterosexuality as the norm.

Some mainstream psychological work (e.g. Dion and Dion, 1993, which I cover in section 2.8) has drawn on Carol Gilligan's (1982) seminal explanation of gender difference which was based on Erik Erikson's (1968) psychodynamic stage theory. Erikson theorized an eight stage, cradle to grave, psychological development, rather than focusing only on early childhood. He highlighted an adolescent dilemma around identity which he proposed preceded a dilemma around intimacy and independence. Gilligan (1982) conceptualized young women's development as different from boys, with a dilemma around intimacy preceding that around identity, suggesting Erikson's theory was androcentric by representing independence as adult when women's identity was more relational and interdependent.

Psychodynamic theory has been used extensively in many academic arenas to explain male emotional repression and women's dissatisfaction with men because of this. I will return to this topic in Chapter 3, when looking at feminist reworkings of psychodynamic theories. Wendy Hollway (whose work I'll discuss in detail in later sections), and many other feminist academics - psychologists, sociologists and those in media/culture/literary studies - have often drawn on psychodynamic theory, partly in order to challenge its phallocentrism, but also to find a way of theorizing desire, in particular heterosexual desire.

In contrast to psychodynamic theories which emphasize the role of the unconscious and apparent irrationality, mainstream psychological theory is often underpinned by a rational model of human behaviour. Hazan and Shaver (1994), for instance, limit the range of unconscious child-(m)other styles of attachment to explain all that is needed to understand intimate relationships, and choose two other theories to complement it. The first of these is theory of intimate relationships which focuses on rational decision making and is a social exchange theory of relationships called interdependence theory.

2.6. SOCIAL EXCHANGE THEORIES OF RELATIONSHIPS

Interdependence theory (Thibaut and Kelley, 1959) is a social exchange theory of relationships, which suggests that people weigh up the pros and cons of a relationship and will stay in it if the rewards outweigh the costs. Interdependence theory's particular enhancements to a social exchange model (Homans, 1961), are the conceptions of "comparison level" and "comparison level for alternatives". Comparison level refers to a person's subjective sense of what they deserve from a relationship, where comparison level for alternatives, relates to perceptions of more attractive alternatives. Equity theory suggests that we compare our partner's costs and rewards with our own, calculating whether the exchange is equitable. Measuring levels of equity suggest that relationship satisfaction is correlated with equity, where dissatisfaction with the relationship occurs if a partner is either under-benefited (leading to anger and disgruntlement) or over-benefited (leading to guilt). Duck (1994) suggests that if equity and fairness is low, that is when people may look for alternative partners. If there are no potential alternatives you may stay in a relationship you find inequitable. This theory, therefore, constructs the reason for leaving a relationship as having another to go into and does not offer the choice of being without a relationship. Thus it constructs being in a relationship with one person as the normative choice. It also explains infidelity in terms of a problem in the ongoing relationship, a very common construction in self-help books on relationships, for example *The Relate Guide to Better Relationships* (Litvinoff, 1994).

Miell and Croghan (1996) report that comparing American and Indian participants in a study based on equity principles in a work situation suggests that equity theory tells us more about the cultural context and theorists' orientations, than about relationships. The equity principle seems a more appropriate metaphor for highly individualistic, capitalistic cultures with market economies than about couple relationships and 'love'. The theory attempts to explain the growing number of divorces, and, of course, a couple's economic arrangements become more pertinent and pressing at separation and divorce. In this theoretical context, we might understand the emergence of pre-nuptial agreements which specify who gets what if the relationship ends. What equity theorists fail to do is to locate the theory culturally and historically. It would have made little sense

to talk about women choosing to leave a marriage because they were under-benefited, when they had no property of their own nor rights within marriage, and when leaving could have meant living (or dying) in penury.

Critics of social exchange and equity theory also point out that the subjective measurement of equity may enshrine assumptions of gender difference without taking account of power in a relationship (Howard and Hollander, 1998). Thus measurements of equity may tell us more about gendered cultural expectations than about fairness, for if expectations are fulfilled, then people may be happy in relationships, whether fair or not. By focusing on measured fairness, the theory draws attention away from gendered expectations and assumed gender differences which pervade the use of social exchange theory, and yet which are not critically addressed. As feminists have argued, heterosexual relationships are based on profound inequalities between men and women, and these inequalities are perpetuated through unquestioned assumptions of normative gendered behaviour, expectations and experience. Tysoe (1992) assumes this approach when she suggests that the rise in divorce rates and the extent to which women are now leaving heterosexual relationships means that "love isn't quite enough".

A longitudinal study by Van Yperen and Buunk (1990) suggested that equity theory seems to apply better to women than men. This seems an interesting finding, and might be seen as a consequence of second-wave feminism encouraging women to re-evaluate their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with heterosexual relationships. The aspects making the most important contributions to equity were found, by Van Yperen and Buunk, to be relative commitment to the relationship, sociability, inattentiveness and unfaithfulness. Despite Van Yperen and Buunk's prediction that equity in marriages would increase over time, this was not found and twice as many women as men said they felt under-benefited, with more men than women indicating they were over-benefited. However, if more women are saying they are dissatisfied and under-benefited in their heterosexual relationships, and the theory works better for predicting women's satisfaction, how can it explain these women not leaving? An explanation of power difference and women's lack of viable alternatives seems to be necessary.

2.7. NARRATIVE AND TALK

The other theoretical approach which Hazan and Shaver (1994) favoured as complementary to attachment theory (section 2.4.3) was the mutual construction of relationship narratives, for which they cite Duck (1994), though considering Duck's delayed interest in narrative and talk, this may seem surprising. However it does evidence a reluctance of mainstream theorists to focus on participants' narratives and talk, until those better known for positivist and categorical approaches to relationships adopt them. Sternberg (previously referred to in relation to his triangular theory of love in section 2.4.2) has also taken a narrative approach more recently.

2.7.1. Love as a story

Sternberg (1996) outlined different possible plots of love stories, supplying the type of relationship produced in this story, the complementary roles of story characters and the likelihood of success of the relationship as defined by whether the relationship lasts or not. Long duration and continuation are often taken to be the sign of success of a relationship (e.g. Noller, 1996), but this assumption tells us more about current social arrangements than about love and how it is experienced.

Sternberg (1996) claims that love succeeds according to whether a couple is able to live out their chosen love story, and that conceiving love as a story gives us a metaphor with which to understand love. One love story he identified, for instance, is "gardening", in which a relationship, or partner, has to be continually tended and watered. This approach is largely descriptive, though Sternberg claims that a quantitative pilot study suggested that the stories were distinct, as measured by questionnaire items designed to evince a particular story. But do questionnaire items allow participants to offer *their own* stories?

He suggests that "through the stories we bring into the world about love and other things, we partially create the world to which we then react, often as though things just "happened" to us" (Sternberg, 1996, p71) But, unlike a discursive approach, he is not interested in the details of other people's talk, only his own interpretation of it. He writes of 'ideal stories',

which come from internalizing desires from the past, and that positive emotion comes from a match between our actual or potential story and the ideal, with negative emotions coming when we recognise a potential match that turns out not to be. These love stories offer examples of how we expect or want our relationships to be, and the success of love depends on the ability or desire of the two protagonists to take up complementary storyline positions. However, unlike Averill's (1985) social constructionist approach to love which sought a more general cultural exemplar of love (and which I will discuss later in Chapter 3, section 3.7), Sternberg considers many different love stories with a view to their potential for sustaining intimate relationships. His interest in love stories seems to indicate a perceptible shift towards narratives of love and a more recent book by him (1998) includes co-authored chapters on the social construction of love and on literary love stories, which though still rather categorical about what love is and what it 'really' feels like, does identify 'culture' as crucial to understanding how love may be storied.

2.7.2. Telling stories of unrequited love

Baumeister and Wotman (1992) asked participants to tell two different stories of unrequited love, one when they rejected someone and one when they were rejected. Their important conclusions included the following, that people write in clichés when they write about love and that they find it difficult to say 'no' to intimacy with someone who cares for them, suggesting that they expect mutuality of feeling and fear hurting someone whose feelings they cannot reciprocate. Baumeister and Wotman's work, unlike that in much of mainstream psychology, highlights people's own explanations in an area where there is little research and suggests that in contrast to there being a script for loving, albeit clichéd, there is no reciprocal script for refusing love.

Both Sternberg (1996) and Baumeister and Wotman (1992) take people's narratives to reveal their 'real' stories and experiences, where a discursive approach would see the stories as constrained by the available cultural stories that are possible to be told, with contradictions and variability that are not commensurate with mainstream psychology's premise of a 'rational unitary self'. A narrative and critical discursive approach takes issue with mainstream psychology for centring on an assumed autonomous, independent and (mostly) consistent self, which can be investigated and

measured in experimental settings or using paper and pencil exercises, using hypothetico-deductive reasoning to get at the 'truth' of 'real life'. In looking at social constructionist, narrative and discursive work later, I'll be addressing how some psychologists have been attempting to decentre psychology's subject (e.g. Henriques *et al.*, 1984) as well as challenging mainstream psychology's truth claims.

2.8. A CROSS-CULTURAL APPROACH TO LOVE

Cross-cultural approaches within psychology represent attempts to challenge a monocultural emphasis on North Americans, or Anglo-western cultures. However, cross-cultural approaches to love, from within mainstream psychology, tend to be based on notions of individual internalization of cultural ideals of love, or cultural attitudes. Dion and Dion (1993; 1996) reviewed literature on love and built on largely quantitative research by using attitude scales, thus making the usual assumption of consistency in individual's orientation to love and intimate relationships. Their concern with cultural differences was to explain how cultural expectations of love are resolved by the individual. The societies they took to be individualistic were the US and Canada, with China, India and Japan taken as collectivist.

In their 1993 paper, Dion and Dion's work investigated and supported three hypotheses which stated briefly are that:-

- 1) People from individualistic societies are more likely to marry for love than people from societies where collectivism is a dominant cultural value.
- 2) Psychological intimacy will be more important to couples from individualistic societies than from collectivist societies.
- 3) Though romantic love flourishes in individualist cultures, aspects of psychological individualism may hinder psychological intimacy.

This third proposition draws on a common expectation that romantic love can only flourish in individualist cultures where it is constructed as a personal choice (e.g. Stone, 1979), but it also highlights expectations that personal freedom and love may be seen as inimical to each other.

More recently, Dion and Dion (1996) have extended this study. Relying on love scales to address individual psychological orientations to love, their work questioned again whether psychological individualism is inimical to love and caring for someone else. They found a negative correlation between measures of psychological individualism and measures of love for their partner. They use the term "self-actualized", a term which originates from the work of Maslow (1968), who as a humanist psychologist challenged the 'rational unitary subject' of experimental and quantitative social psychology, replacing it with a more agentic rational unitary subject. Rogers (1989), developed the notion that through person-centred therapy and personal growth work, this more agentic self may effect personal change in order to self-actualize, that is become something nearer to one's ideal self. In Dion and Dion's work, this notion has been transformed into another concept which can be measured by psychometric test.

... self-actualized individuals reported *less* love for their partner; in particular, they scored *lower* on the caring and need subscales of the Rubin Love Scale identified by Steck, Levitan, McLane and Kelley (1982). In other words 'self-actualized' people seemed to enjoy the experience of being in love more than did their less self-actualized peers, but the latter seemed to care more for their partner. (Dion and Dion, 1996, pp13-14)

The authors suggest that self-actualization or psychological individualism tends to lead to viewing love as a game, a ludic style of love (as described by Hendrick and Hendrick (1986; 1992) and discussed in section 2.3). Romantic love which comprises caring for a partner however is negatively correlated with psychological individualism. In other words, need and romantic love for someone else are not compatible with self-actualization, which is constructed as independence and autonomy.

In their 1996 work, Dion and Dion related psychological individualism to culture where in 1993, it had been related to culture AND GENDER, suggesting a response to feminist critiques of research which overlooked the experiences of women in intimate relationships. Dion and Dion (1993) found their women participants (college-age women from the US or Canada) reported more pragmatism and more caution in 'falling in love'

than their male peers. This fits with Hendrick and Hendrick's (1986; 1992) results. However, they found that, once in a relationship, women reported their experience as more emotionally positive and involving than did men (Dion and Dion, 1993), which accords with Hendrick and Hendrick (1995). They explain this:-

We have suggested that these gender differences might reflect greater responsiveness and adeptness on the part of women in relationships involving psychological intimacy, described by Shaver and Buhrmester (1983) as involving reciprocal self-disclosure, emotional supportiveness, and a low level of defensiveness. All of these qualities are those that one would expect to be associated with a relational sense of self. (Dion and Dion, 1993, p65)

To explain gender differences, they draw on a notion of women's relational sense of self, usually associated with Carol Gilligan's reworking of Erikson's (1968) psychodynamic theory (section 2.5). Gilligan's (1982) thesis that women are more relational than men, means that, according to Dion and Dion, women want to engage with mutual self-disclosure more than men, are more open than men and more supportive. In line with this construction of gender difference in emotional intimacy, the emotional satisfaction women reported after entering heterosexual relationships, turned to reports of dissatisfaction, after marriage, this dissatisfaction centring around their male partner's reluctance to be psychologically intimate.

2.9. SUMMARY: MAINSTREAM SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL CONCEPTIONS OF LOVE

Mainstream psychologists have tended to focus on quantified individual experiences which are usually decontextualized from wider social relations except for those assumed to be natural or biological. Even when they have concerned themselves with wider social relations, for instance as Dion and Dion (1993; 1996) have concerned themselves with 'cultures' (see section 2.8), these wider social relations are often taken as consistent in their effect on individuals, so that members of the same culture, for instance, are assumed as an homogenous group. In turn the effect is measured through a psychometric test. Psychology's emphasis on experimentation and standardized questionnaires, has been critiqued extensively for not

concerning itself with power, and its own role in producing knowledge, as well as its androcentrism (e.g. Burman, 1998; Squire, 1989). Mainstream psychological work rarely questions its role in constituting measurable love in its various guises, and by drawing on scientific discourse and presenting its truths as objective it undermines more qualitative work which tends to focus on participants' own explanations. Moreover mainstream psychological work shows little concern for the way in which empirical findings give support to heterogeneous and incommensurate taxonomies of love, which undermines its factual claims.

I have given a lot of space to mainstream psychological theory and research, partly to explain how its reductive theorizing and quantitative methodology produces partial, simplified and decontextualized explanations of 'love', which are focused on the individual rather than social relations. One of the reasons for doing this is to argue that psychology as a discipline needs to encompass other ways of understanding love, using methodologies which have developed outside of psychology and which have begun to develop within psychology. Another reason for focussing on mainstream psychological research and theory is because psychological knowledge of love is widely disseminated in the mass media, and these mainstream views may therefore be expected to have influenced common understandings of love. It is important to question how psychological truth claims enter popular domains.

2.10. ADVICE ON LOVE AND HETEROSEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS

Eva Illouz (1997), in her sociological work on love, analysed women's magazine articles on love and argues that the self-help material on relationships in women's magazines offer a dilute form of social scientific theories, particularly psychological, which she suggests offers women readers ways to solve their romantic problems by recourse to "a pseudo-scientific attitude toward the self and self-knowledge" (Illouz, 1997, p203). Illouz (1997) writes that this therapeutic discourse of relationships offered in women's magazines casts doubt on the pervasive notion that women's magazines produce love as irrational, magical and emotional. Instead Illouz argues, "women's magazines treat the heart as a text that women have to decipher and interpret correctly if they are to be happy" (Illouz, 1997, p202) and that relationships and love can be worked at. Jenny Kitzinger (1993) also identifies this problem-solving approach in self-help literature

and criticizes the ways in which it can result in crucial questions being sidestepped. She concludes that therapeutic/ self-help literature promotes techniques of self-improvement which identify problems within oneself, rather than within society, and, in this way, draws attention away from collective political action.

The self-help focus on successful heterosexual relationships, characterize relationship success (usually its continuation) often in terms of successful communication rather than successful love, though Patricia Noller (1993) (mentioned earlier in relation to her construction of 'immature' love and 'mature' love) has done both. *You Just Don't Understand* by Deborah Tannen (1990), *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus* by John Gray (1992) and *Why Marriages Succeed or Fail - And How You Can Make Yours Last* by John Gottman (1997), (by a social linguist and two psychologists respectively) are examples of books on gendered communication styles aimed ostensibly at improving intimate heterosexual relationships. These examples seem most concerned to rehabilitate intimate heterosexual relationships in the form of complementary female emotionality/male rationality, or female relationality/ male independence. Lesbian and gay relationships are rendered invisible as the heterosexual norm is held in place by the construction of essential gender differences. These books explain how women and men are different in their needs and approaches - so different they may be conceived as different species even (Gray, 1992) - with both male and female partner equally responsible for relationship conflict, or miscommunication. These books construct women's natures as relational where men's are independent (*cf.* Gilligan, 1982), and for heterosexual relationships to work, each partner must understand the other's nature and take account of this. In this way the books function to maintain a gender *status quo*, and don't, like much of mainstream psychology, acknowledge a contribution from feminism at all. They explain that women's dissatisfaction with some men's avoidance of emotional intimacy is misplaced because men can't help this, especially if they are criticized. Such examples of self-help literature encourage women to have better relationships with men, by realising they haven't really understood men properly before, and *vice versa*, promoting a rational and cognitivist view of relationships.

Even when, as they often are, the theories of gender difference propounded in many self-help books are explicitly underpinned by

psychodynamic theory, having been written by a psychotherapist (e.g. Leader, 1996) (or implicitly underpinned in that they draw on past distress in childhood in dysfunctional families), the solutions offered may require a rational and individualistic approach to emotional distress based on understanding the 'obvious truths' of gender difference rather than questioning how power is implicated in these 'truths'.

Mary Crawford (1998) has questioned why women would engage with what she terms "the Mars/Venus phenomenon", which in the US, includes the extremely successful marketing of several books and a board game, as well as the Prime Time TV broadcasting of marital workshops run by Gray. *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus* has also been in the best-seller lists in the UK, with several other *Mars/Venus* books now in the shops. The marketing of self-help books, in general, is enjoying enormous success worldwide. Crawford suggests that the Mars/Venus ideology "gives women permission to articulate their needs" and that they can "take the discourse of difference and subvert it into issues of power and equality in relationships" (Crawford, 1998, p17). This may be a rather optimistic conjecture, as the possibility of women being able to 'articulate their needs' may be difficult to achieve as the rational view of intimate relationships is often built on the 'knowledge' that men find it difficult to be criticized. In this way, these books seem to advocate manipulateness by women, a concept which feminists have usually associated with powerlessness and women's collusion in their oppression (Coward, 1992). For instance, another book *The Rules* (Fein and Schneider, 1995) offers "Time tested secrets for capturing the heart of Mr Right" which include 'letting him take the lead'.

The mainstream psychological approach to love underpins 'popular' self-help literature in its rational perspective and often sociobiological or (implicitly) psychodynamic explanation of 'inevitable' gender difference. This approach has been the focus of many methodological and theoretical challenges, from both within and without psychology. The next chapter will look at the contribution from feminist theories (some reworking psychodynamic theory), social constructionism, critical literature theory, narrative, discursive and postmodern/post-structuralist approaches to love and gender, in various theoretical combinations. This will move the focus from the rational unitary subject of mainstream psychology and self-help literature to looking more directly at how 'love' is implicated in gender inequality.

CHAPTER 3. CHALLENGES TO MAINSTREAM PSYCHOLOGY'S REGIMES OF TRUTH ABOUT LOVE

First I want to introduce some feminist critiques of love and romance, in order to start to look at how feminist research and theory has introduced a very different understanding of romantic love, from that of mainstream psychology, by conceptualizing it as a vehicle for women's oppression.

3.1. FEMINIST CRITIQUES OF LOVE AND ROMANCE

The growth of interest in the psychological measurement and categorization of love in the early 1970s, was preceded both by the 'sexual revolution' of the 1960s and by feminist critiques of love and marriage. Germaine Greer (1970), in the UK, and Shulamith Firestone (1971), in the US, both denounced romantic love as problematic for women in that it led them into, and kept them in, inequitable heterosexual relationships. Feminist analyses, unlike mainstream psychological ones tend to be grounded in specific social and historical contexts.

Taking up the work of Simone de Beauvoir (1953) in *The Second Sex*, second wave feminists drew on her treatise on women's social position and the bourgeois nature of love, explaining how woman is constructed as 'other' to man, with her life only seemingly meaningful and significant through her devotion to a man. For de Beauvoir, one was not born a woman, one became a woman, and in becoming a woman, her freedom was to passively enslave herself to a man, a man who would have freedom automatically as he was the 'One' (rather than 'Other'). Because women do not have 'real' freedom, but only freedom through submission to men, romantic love acts as a form of self-deception, which disempowers women all the more. For this reason, heterosexual monogamy was suspect, implicated in women's oppression.

The late 1960s, in the West, was a time of great social and political upheaval, when an upsurge of political activity by younger people, including feminists such as Greer, led to a concerted challenge to previous sexual mores. The sexual revolution could, therefore, be seen as freeing women from the sexual double standards, which expected them to be virgins at marriage, and men to be sexually experienced. It also freed men from having to settle down and play a part in raising children. However,

according to many feminist theorists, the sexual revolution and 'free love' (unformalized sex) did not bring about freedom for women. Barbara Ehrenreich (1983) suggests that while men were able to engage in "irresponsibility, self-indulgence and an isolationist detachment from the claims of others" (Ehrenreich, 1983, p169), women were left to provide for their children, often in poverty.

The teasing, instrumental sexuality prescribed for single women before the sexual revolution had a purpose, after all: to "land" a man, and to claim him as one's breadwinner for life. If sex is "free" then so, potentially, are men; and women are left to fend for themselves in an economy that still drastically undervalues women's labor. (Ehrenreich *et al.*, 1987, p199).

Kappeler (1995) suggests that the 1960's sexual revolution has done little to emancipate women's sexuality either. She explains how the sexual revolution which started the freeing of sexuality from the constraints of marriage, monogamy, love, state intervention and sexual reputation was largely a freeing of *male* sexuality (Kappeler, 1995).

Feminists have extensively analysed the impact which this unleashing of male sexuality has had and continues to have on women: that the growing 'liberty' of the male sexual subject necessitates the growing 'availability' of women. It is the very reason why sexual politics has been at the centre of feminist politics: since the sexual constitutes the domain of the specific oppression of women as women, this so 'personal' and 'private' matter is political. Hence the political liberation of women from oppression necessarily also requires their personal liberation from the intimate oppression in sexual relationship: emancipation from their status as 'other', 'otherness' and the 'other sex' to personhood.' (Kappeler, 1995, pp171-172)

Kappeler (1995) has drawn on de Beauvoir's notion of 'other' to spell out the intimate oppression in heterosexual relationships to which women are still subject. Despite the expectation that women should be available sexually to heterosexual men, other feminist research (e.g. Lees, 1997; Holland *et al.*, 1998) has shown how that availability still carries with it a double standard and that women are expected to be in love before they have sex, and risk

the label of 'slut', 'slag' or 'slapper' if they engage in (or are assumed to engage in) casual sex. The young women, in Lees (1997) study on the policing of girl's sexuality, said they had been in love many times but didn't really know what it meant. Lees suggests that 'love' seemed to provide a *post hoc* justification for having sex, which was needed to avoid getting a 'reputation'. Lees (1997) suggests that it is treating women as sex objects rather than non-gendered human beings which is the main stumbling block to women's equality.

Theoretically, feminist critiques of heterosexual relationships are not homogeneous, nor do they always advocate similar feminist praxis. Before detailing research related to 'love', I'll discuss different feminist approaches in the next section, which I've divided broadly into radical approaches, a more reformist approach which includes work on gender differences and feminist reworkings of psychodynamic theory and an approach which moves towards incorporating postmodern and discursive deconstruction to question heterosexuality.

3.2. THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS OF FEMINIST RESEARCH

3.2.1. Radical feminist analyses

Radical feminist approaches take their starting point from a recognition of patriarchy, and its role in the oppression of women. Within this approach, heterosexuality is viewed not as 'natural' but as a social system which disadvantages women and shores up male dominance (e.g. Millett, 1971). Women's desire to be in heterosexual relationships, and women's love for men has been seen to constitute *false consciousness*, a failure to recognise their oppression in a patriarchal society (Langford, 1996). In encouraging women's resistance to their oppression in intimate heterosexual relationships, women's collusion with male privilege has been critiqued (Coward, 1992) and women have been blamed for caring for men with problems when this is inimical to women's self-worth (e.g. Norwood, 1986). Radical feminists aimed to raise awareness of women's oppression in heterosexual relationships and to encourage women to campaign against their legally-sanctioned economic dependence upon men.

Revolutionary or separatist feminists, however, offered a variant form of radical feminism which sought to encourage women to do more than

change their relationships with men, but to challenge male hegemony by no longer having intimate relationships nor sex with men, that is not "sleeping with the enemy" (Leeds Revolutionary Feminist Group, 1981). The revolutionary thesis is that heterosexual relationships are politically unsound and heterosexual desire is no more than eroticized power difference (Jeffreys, 1990). This argument constructs men's power as absolute, heterosex as irredeemable, and heterosexuality as the primary system of women's oppression. The suggestion that followed from this contention is that 'political lesbianism' offered the only platform from which to challenge women's oppression, and this view became extremely contentious and divisive within feminism (Jeffreys, 1990). Heterosexual sex was seen as the male colonization of the female body (Dworkin, 1988; Ehrenreich *et al.*, 1987). The problem with this thesis is that it dismisses the possibility of women who love men having any means by which to resist male oppression from within the institution of heterosexuality.

Hollway (1995b), as a feminist critiquing this approach, points to the need for an emancipatory discourse of women's sexual desire which could lead to sexual equality and the understanding that both men and women want and can enjoy sex together and which could be seen as compatible with feminism. Lynne Segal (e.g. 1997), similarly, has also argued that the possibility of having good, non-oppressive relationships with men, should not just be summarily dismissed by separatist/revolutionary feminists. Much feminist writing (e.g. Vance, 1989) has demonstrated the difficulties and dangers for women in sexual relationships with men, where the difficulties are posed by men and heterosexuality. Hollway, Segal and other contributors to *Feminism & Psychology's* Special Feature on Heterosexuality (Wilkinson and Kitzinger, 1993) crystallize the difficulties of constructing a version of equitable heterosex when a 'heterosexual feminist' is presented as a contradiction in terms or a failed feminist.

A structuralist or materialist feminist perspective views heterosexual marriage arrangements as fundamentally economic, in that it allows men cheap access to women's domestic labour and sexual services, while women "land" a breadwinner (Ehrenreich *et al.*, 1987, p199). According to Delphy and Leonard (1992), capitalistic paternalism positions men as the dominant class and women the class to service them, producing women as other and inferior. The classes exist only in relation to power difference and the maintenance of male privilege. Within this system, women's status comes

from their relationship and association with a man. According to this approach, love is unsound, an ideological concept which disguises such power relationships, and constructs the woman as grateful to be in a relationship (*cf.* de Beauvoir, 1953).

The marital relationship is perceived as being an organic, natural partnership, a co-operative enterprise between two people who are emotionally attached to each other and who complete each other sexually. ... Romance disguises the power imbalance - even though the sexual act is interpreted as the man entering and possessing the woman, and even though the protection he offers against other men and the vagaries of the labour market are such as to maintain her dependence and continue her exploitation. A wife defers not to some abstract ethic of traditionalism or masculinity, but to the embodiment of that ethic in a particular person, whom she loves.

Marriage is a particularly stable hierarchy because it provides a total environment. It encompasses the whole of the subordinate's life and may cut her off from most contacts with the outside world. It also involves lots of personal, face-to-face contact with the individual who is the superior, and often his interpretation of situations is the only one available to her. (Delphy and Leonard, 1992, p140)

The marriage of Prince Charles and Princess Diana seems a useful illustration of love disguising power. In this case, expectations of romantic love of an extremely inexperienced young woman propelled her into a marriage which turned out not to be a love match. Media speculation surrounding their engagement and marriage focused on the love aspects of the relationship. This obscured the arranged nature of the marriage, in which Diana gained position and title but not emotional intimacy with her husband, who loved someone else whom he could not marry as she was considered unsuitable (Campbell, 1998). A problem with Delphy and Leonard's explanation seems to be that, unlike Princess Diana, most women nowadays do not have lives in which they are cut off from the rest of the world, living hermetically sealed with their male partner. While acknowledging the exploitation of women under patriarchal capitalism (their unequal access to work and wages and economic independence) and the mass media dissemination of romantic and relationship expectations

aimed at women (e.g. Carpenter, 1998), the description of women as cut off from the world fits most aptly with the experience of women who have lived with extremely controlling and abusive men, where keeping her isolated and away from family and friends can be part of systematic domestic violence (Kirkwood, 1993).

Most importantly, though, a materialist analysis explains that it is not sufficient that individual men change and stop oppressing their partners, but that the conditions which produce the hierarchical relationship which in turn produces the social categories of 'men' and 'women' must be challenged. This would involve an economic revolution. I strongly support this position. In this research, however, my way of encouraging structural change is to identify how dominant discourses underpin and normalize material inequality, as I explained in my theoretical rationale, Chapter 1, section 1.2.

3.2.2. Gender differences and feminist reworkings of psychodynamic theory

Feminist research focused on gender differences has diverse aims such as to highlight women's experiences, to argue that some differences are the result of women's powerlessness, to reduce gender differences or to valorize women's abilities. For example, the extensive work of sociologist, Shere Hite (e.g. Hite, 1991), has identified women as relationship specialists, and male emotional illiteracy, that is men's failure to reciprocate emotionally, as a crucial stumbling block to satisfactory heterosexual relationships for women. More recent work from sociologists Duncombe and Marsden (1995) has supported this finding.

Within academic psychology, feminist research was interested not only in including women's experience (especially when the rational unitary subject of psychology was usually male) but also to question the process for understanding women's experience, rather than using psychology's positivist methods (Wilkinson, 1986). As already mentioned, the work of Carol Gilligan in the US has been very influential in arguing that women were more relational, where men were more focused upon independence (Gilligan, 1982) and other feminists have also reworked Freudian and psychodynamic theory.

Freudian theory suggested that women tend to be envious of men, because men are superior for having a penis, i.e. sexism proceeds from phallocentrism and women's perceived lack of the penis/phallus. Lacan's contribution has been to suggest that men want to wield the phallus, and women want to be the phallus, to which a feminist understanding adds that the penis is not the same as the phallus (Ussher, 1997), so men don't automatically have power, they have to achieve it. But the focus still rests on anatomy as the prime signifier of heterosexual relationship.

Other feminist psychodynamic approaches attempt to offer more emancipatory visions. Chodorow (1978), for instance, suggested that it is because the mother is the usual primary care-giver to a child, that gender difference ensues. The resolution of the oedipal conflict for boys requires them to identify with their father, for fear that the father will castrate his son if he doesn't stop desiring his mother. Because boys have had to split themselves from their mother, this results in their having to protect themselves from further emotional hurt, which in part they do by splitting women into good and bad, madonna and whore, the former for love and the latter for sex. Girls, on the other hand, do not have to separate emotionally from their mothers, though in recognising they have no penis, they must wait until some future date to try to fill that void with a man and a male child. Thus gender difference follows from the recognition of anatomical difference and specialized child-rearing by the mother, but may be reduced by both parents being closely involved in bringing up children.

Psychodynamic explanations of gender differences have been used to explain male violence against women, as an extreme form of male repression and mother hate, for having to split from her. Jukes (1993), for instance has explained generalized misogyny and male violence in this way. In this context, women's love for men may be seen as problematic, even masochistic (Benjamin, 1988; Marcus, 1984).

The difficulty with much psychodynamic work is that it focuses, like mainstream psychology, on the individual and their intrapsychic conflicts, in resolving early childhood experiences and repeating them later, while also explaining generalized gender differences which ensue from cultural constraints which are seen as monolithic in their effect. Some feminist psychotherapists have been trying to take a more relational approach.

Jessica Benjamin (1988), for instance, offers a more interactional and cultural approach to explain how intersubjective, rather than intrapsychic, conflicts are implicated in gender relations. For Benjamin, love involves mutual recognition, but in a patriarchal culture, the heterosexual love relationship can turn into a man as master/woman as slave relationship. Where Benjamin (1988) is optimistic that the "bonds of love" can be disentangled so that mutual recognition rather than domination is produced, Langford (1999), coming from a similar psychoanalytic perspective, sees in her interviews with women no signs of love's potential to bring about a revolution in gender relations, only further evidence of the delusions and destructive nature of love.

Gilligan's (1982) influential work focused on adolescence, and has continued to do so. Drawing on group interview material, Brown and Gilligan (1993), showed how girls in their early teens seem to give up on relationality with others in order to prepare for intimate relationships with boys. Janet Sayers (1998), drawing on a wide range of Freudian and post-Freudian theories, has more recently been researching adolescence by using boys' and girls' stories and dreams to question why adolescent girls are "boy crazy".

It [feminism] seeks to bring about a world in which both sexes might more readily act on and realise what is best in their dreams without being beguiled by false promises. This includes exposing, challenging, and overturning the male dominance of our society which often drives men in early childhood, and women in adolescence, to divide themselves from their mothers, and to escape these divisions through falsely aggrandising and romantically idealising men as gods, heroes, and saviours. (Sayers, 1998, p157)

The inheritance from Freudian theory, and psychodynamic theory more generally, has produced powerful narratives which form part of the situational context for understanding modern romantic love. Freud's writing style, and his incorporation of myths, suggests he understood the power of story telling. The strength of psychodynamic theory is that it has opened up possibilities of talking about the signification and importance of emotional life, which we might explore. However the disadvantage is that it has led to gender differences being continuously reconstituted. (Hetero)sexual desire tends to be constructed as the primary driving force

behind human interaction, and though cultural diversity is understood to distort actual practice, underlying universal desires are assumed.

The problem with using Freudian or psychodynamic theories for explaining love, is that the understandings are either consigned to the unconscious of individuals, where they are available for interpretation via psychodynamic therapy, or to women's universal idealization of men. Other theorists have suggested that psychodynamic theory, like any other theory, is but one way of talking about or constructing heterosexual relationships and heterosexual desire (e.g. Duncombe and Marsden, 1998; Weedon, 1987), though the power of the explanation may be seen in its pervasiveness. This is the view I support and I take psychanalytic constructions as the products of discourse, rather than privileging them as 'real'. Feminism has not had an easy relationship with psychodynamic theory, but feminist psychologists such as Chodorow (1978), Gilligan (1982), Hollway (1984; 1989), Walkerdine (1984; 1990), Sayers (1986; 1998) and Ussher (1997) have drawn on psychodynamic theories in different ways. Some researchers and writers have drawn on psychodynamic theories in order to take discursive approaches (e.g. Hollway 1984: 1989; Walkerdine, 1984; 1990) and I address this in the next section. Lacanian theory, for instance, privileges language, conceiving the unconscious as laid out like language, with no fixed meaning for all time and all contexts, leaving open the prospect of emancipatory discourses.

The next section addresses a third feminist approach which draws on discourse analysis and postmodern/ post-structuralist theory, in order to look at how experience is socially constructed.

3.2.3. A turn to language and postmodernism.

Postmodern and strong social constructionist approaches conceive of human experience as organized around culturally available texts and stories, and so elide divisions between the real and the socially constructed. The postmodern self, or subject (Henriques et al., 1984) is conceived as non-unitary, multiple, fragmented and contradictory as it is the multiple and contingent product of the discourses within which it is positioned or of the narrative forms available (McAdams, 1995). Some feminist academics have been attempting to incorporate postmodern with feminist approaches. From such a perspective, the feminist approaches in the 1970s and early 1980s

can be seen as essentializing gender difference, though as Stevi Jackson (1998b) explains, materialist feminists always understood the categories 'men' and 'women' to be social constructions, but were reluctant to embrace theoretical approaches, such as postmodern analyses, which they see as drawing attention away from the 'real' economic and institutional practices which construct women as the inferior class to men and thus keep them in poverty and subjection.

Feminist deconstructionist work theorizes gender difference as continually reconstituted through language, institutions, rituals. The symbolic realm of language is constructive rather than simply descriptive, inextricably involved in meaning-making and making sense of ourselves and others. Such theorizations problematize essentialist readings of observable (or measurable) gender differences, that is readings which construct men and women as essentially different (usually biologically and anatomically) as well as any work (which might be feminist and emancipatory) which by seeking difference also constructs it (Hare-Mustin and Marazek, 1994). Crawford (1995) has critiqued some early feminist approaches for tending to explain women's lack of power (in access to paid work, for example) as due to some deficiency in women. For instance, the 'assertiveness training bandwagon', according to Crawford (1995) was premised on women's understandable deficiency (because of their oppression), yet this constructed the female as an abnormal human being, who hadn't had the opportunity to become fully individualized and self-sufficient, that is the normative subject of psychology. Becoming more aware of the consequences of theory and practice, and who is being blamed for women's social position, has resulted in a shift to questioning the consequences of what we say, that is, who is positioned as what within which discourses.

Feminist theory has also accommodated to earlier critiques which suggested it represented only a subset of women, who were largely white and middle-class. Postmodern and feminist standpoints may be seen as antagonistic, when feminism is defined tightly as serving women, when, as postmodern philosopher and queer theorist, Judith Butler (1990), points out, that 'women' are not only a heterogeneous group, but are also a socially constructed, not a real, group.

Feminists, from a postmodern perspective take a more deconstructive approach to love and heterosexuality, and do not necessarily disagree that

an overhaul of heterosexuality is necessary, but offer deconstructions to challenge the institution of heteropatriarchy. Feminist theory attempts to question power and the exercise and continuance of male power, partly by pointing up how the male has been and still is this normalized individual subject of psychology. Within psychology, Henriques *et al.* (1984) drew on postmodern theory and Michel Foucault's (e.g. 1972, 1979) notion of discourse to propose a social psychology which was *more* social by taking discourse as central to understanding human relationships rather than individual psyches. According to Foucault, discourses are organized practices which systematically produce objects. Power is not owned by individuals nor classes of people nor institutions, but is produced through discourse, and therefore is fragile, fragmented and open to subversion. Resisting and subverting discourses can change power dynamics. And, as Foucault (1979) argues, the regulation of sexuality is central to understanding the wider regulation of social life. From a postmodern perspective, mainstream psychology is firmly located in modernity, a mode of thought which encapsulates the notion that progress comes from rational scientific identification of what is going on, and which Illouz (1997) has suggested produces a therapeutic, problem-solving approach to heterosexual relationships, as I outlined in Chapter 2, section 2.10.

Within postmodernity, the grand theories of psychology, such as psychodynamic theory, become narratives or metaphors which help to explain what *appears* to be the case. Gender becomes a performance rather than an authentic way of being (Butler, 1990, Ussher, 1997). The advantage of taking a postmodern approach is that it allows us to question or deconstruct any concept or theory or constructed relation of power and therefore challenge any assumption presented as real and unchangeable. It can question the reductionism of scientific method, and explain how regimes of truth and archeologies of psychological knowledge have been produced (Foucault, 1972). However many theorists and researchers have also pointed out the dangers inherent in a system which can deconstruct the basis from which one may want to make a claim, such as a feminist claim. For instance for whom does a feminist analysis speak, if there is no such real category as 'woman'. Margaret Wetherell (1995) suggests that rather than assume some common, authentic female experience, which turns out not to be the case for all women, we can effect political change by exposing the real effects and consequences of being positioned in discourses. A feminist postmodern approach seeks to analyse how women's

subjectivities, desires and experiences are produced and reproduced in discourses, while locating those discourses in their social and historical context, and this is the approach I am taking. The next section looks at attempts to question how women's and men's subjectivities are constituted in gendered discourses of sexuality.

3.3. DISCURSIVE WORK ON SEXUALITY AND LOVE

Within psychology, empirical feminist discourse work relevant to understanding discourses of love tends to come from research deconstructing sex or sexuality. In part this is because of the pervasive sexual victimization of women and the need to change discourses around heterosex in order for women to have some choice and control in sexual relationships or to avoid them altogether. The advent of AIDS means that there are lives at risk when consensual sex is not protected, so 'understandings' that men will not want to use condoms have been deconstructed by Holland *et al.* (1998) and the 'problems' involved in women asking a non-casual partner to wear a condom have been analysed by Willig (1999). Gavey *et al.* (1999) have shown how women's sexuality tends to be constructed as complementary to men's, that is as passive and responsive, with vaginal intercourse constructed as 'proper' sex. Annie Potts (1998) has written about the way in which "great sex" is constructed as the route to better and more satisfactory heterosexual relationships, where Lees (1997) and Holland *et al.* (1998) have demonstrated that women's reputations rely on their not being too indiscriminately responsive or sexually active. Fine (1988) uses the term "surveillance" (from Foucault's writings) to also show how young women's (hetero)sexuality and 'proper feminine behaviour' is policed, through a missing discourse of female sexual desire. This work links love and heterosex for women, particularly young women, and is therefore relevant to understanding the discourses available to construct love.

Wendy Hollway's (1984; 1989) work similarly had heterosexuality as its focus. She identified different discourses available to talk about heterosexual sex and relationships, which have been very influential in other feminist discourse work in psychology. Drawing on Foucault's work, she explained the value of discourse analysis for studying relationships. "Discourses make available positions for subjects to take up. These positions are in relation to other people." (Hollway, 1998, p236). Hollway identifies

the 'have/hold' discourse, which constructs sex and attraction as a prelude to, and part of, ongoing relationships, and for women to 'keep a man' (man as object). Within another dominant discourse, the 'male sex drive' discourse, men are positioned as wanting and needing sex. For a woman to have a relationship with a man, she must give him sex and be the object of his desire. Sex, however, does not constitute a relationship for the man, as it does for her, for she is positioned within the have/hold discourse which fuses love and sex for her. Hollway's analysis of the coexistence of these discourses of heterosexual relationship, explains how they produce gender difference. This is an academic discursive reworking of 'women want love, men want sex', or 'women give sex to get love, men give love to get sex'. The possibility of sexual equality (as in equality in sexual activity) was constituted in a permissive discourse, which divorced sex from intimacy and relationships for both men and women.

Hollway seems to avoid writing about 'love', preferring to use the terms "closeness" and "security". She suggests that gender differentiated practices come about from the differential availability of discourses and subjectivities to be taken up, and that the denial of a decentred, multiple, non-rational and relational subjectivity is part of the maintenance of gender difference. The heterosexual couple relationship is where gender difference is reproduced, though her explanation is partly psychodynamic, as "desire for the Other" (Hollway, 1984, p252). To explain men's and women's differential access to the have/hold discourse and the male sex drive discourse, she draws on psychodynamic notions of splitting and projection, and how men's emotional needs are projected onto women so they do not have to acknowledge their needs and vulnerability. Thus women are expected to be emotional but not men.

Hollway (1995a) has suggested that her earlier work overemphasized the discursive, and that only psychodynamic theory can explain if and how particular subject positions are taken up, and why women and men "evade and transform dominant discourses and power relations" by dealing with "emotional life, with anxiety and the unconscious" (Hollway, 1995a, p128). Thus intrapsychic conflict and uptake of discourses becomes extra-discursive. In this way, she avoids deconstructing a discourse of emotionality and rationality, which constructs feelings as feminine, where men's desire for intimacy is explained practically and instrumentally. By using the unconscious as extra-discursive, in order to theorize desire and

fear of vulnerability, emphasis is drawn away from the consequences for women of the performance of men's independence as part of a wider performance of male hegemony in intimate heterosexual relationships. Hollway's theorizing also reinforces the view that desire, need and vulnerability are necessarily disempowering. Hollway's (1995a) claiming of psychodynamic theory to explain why we draw on some discourses and not others, has the reactionary effect of recentring the individual subject which Hollway had been involved in moving from the centre.

According to Hollway, a key obstacle to emancipatory heterosexual love is repeatedly offered as men's repression of their emotions and their projection of them onto women. This may be conceived more discursively and the next section looks at work questioning the social construction of emotionality and rationality.

3.4. THEORIZING LOVE AND AN EMOTIONALITY/RATIONALITY SPLIT

Discursive and strong postmodern approaches, instead of accepting a male fear of intimacy or female emotionality as genetically or psychologically 'real', theorize it as discursively embedded and reproduced in culturally available discourses of gender which draw on and reconstruct differences and dichotomies; femaleness /maleness, femininity /masculinity, dependence /independence, emotionality /rationality (e.g. Duncombe and Marsden, 1998; Lupton, 1998; Lutz, 1997; Weedon, 1987). These recurrent reproductions of gender difference function to explain and support male reluctance to engage reciprocally in mutually loving heterosexual relationships, because this would suggest a faulty performance of masculinity, that is the cool, emotionally repressed male of psychodynamic discourse. As Giddens (1992) suggests:-

Love ... develops to the degree to which intimacy does, to the degree to which each partner is prepared to reveal concerns and needs to the other and to be vulnerable to the other. The masked emotional dependence of men has inhibited their willingness, and their capacity, to be made thus vulnerable. The ethos of romantic love has in some part sustained this orientation, in the sense in which the desirable man has often been represented as cold and unapproachable. Yet since such love dissolves these characteristics,

which are revealed as a front, recognition of male emotional vulnerability is evidently present. (Giddens, 1992, p62)

Francesca Cancian (1987), writing about 'love' in America (though her thesis can be applied to other individualistic and capitalistic cultures), has explained that the separate spheres inhabited by men and women, those of public work and private home, have resulted in the "feminization" of love, with men concerned with personal growth and women concerned with relationships and intimacy. Her solution to problematic heterosexual relationships is a more androgynous love (based on notions of androgyny from the psychologist Sandra Bem (1983)) with partners valuing both personal development and emotional intimacy and interdependence. Seidler (1989) has also suggested that men are so used to deriving their identity from their own individual achievements and their investment in a Protestant work ethic, that they become out of touch with their needs and the needs of others.

Changes in work patterns, with more women doing paid work, might render inappropriate the separate spheres model of gender relations and support the democratization of intimate heterosexual relationships. However, researchers into discourses of masculinity such as Connell (1995) and Edley and Wetherell (1995) argue that though there are many different forms of masculinity, the predominance of the macho, emotionally illiterate version of masculinity implicates it in what feminists and profeminists have termed "hegemonic masculinity", the form of masculinity associated with the power to silence alternative forms. Seidler (1989), similarly, portrays male power as bound up with men's investment in rationality and apparent lack of feelings.

Our freedom comes from the use of our rational faculties. This also defines our liberal morality and is the core of our humanity. It also becomes the basis of our experience of masculine superiority over women who are identified with emotions, feelings and desires. Within this framework, falling in love is a sign of our lack of freedom. It reflects an understandable weakness. (Seidler, 1989, p24)

Like Cancian, Seidler suggests the Enlightenment mapped an emotionality/rationality split onto a women/ man split.

Ever since the Enlightenment, men have sought to silence the voices of others in the name of reason. Men have taken control of the public world and sought to define the very meaning of humanity in terms of the possession of reason. The experiences of women, children and animals have been closely identified as lacking reason, and being closer to nature. Women were forced to subordinate themselves to men to anchor themselves in the new world of reason and science. The 'Age of Reason' in the seventeenth century brought about a fundamental reorganization of sexual relations of power, as witch trials in Europe and North America were used to institutionalize a relationship between reason, science, progress and masculinity. (Seidler, 1989, p14)

The term "emotion work" originates from Arlie Hochschild (1983), who, working from a feminist perspective, looked at how women's facility with emotions followed cultural and gendered "emotion rules", and was work that women did which was unacknowledged and taken-for-granted both in their relationships and in their paid employment. Hochschild tends to assume that we have access to emotions, but that we manage them according to cultural expectations, and that how we 'manage' them is part of their conceptualization (Hochschild, 1998). Debates, especially within critical social psychology and sociology, abound about how encompassing a social constructionist argument should be. There is agreement that emotions are socially mediated, but some see mediation or "feeling rules" (Hochschild, 1983; 1998) as making it hard to access our 'authentic' selves and 'true' emotions. Others make a stronger social constructionist argument, suggesting 'authenticity' is yet another social construct (e.g. Wetherell, 1995; Duncombe and Marsden, 1998). Duncombe and Marsden (1998) also suggest that men also talk about doing 'emotion work', but that this work is about hiding their emotions in order to not subject their partner or family to them; that is, they are trying to be unemotional, and succeeding .

Lutz (1997) has suggested that the dominant construction of emotions as 'natural' impulses serves to validate them, and leads to their being unquestioned. Lutz (1997), an anthropologist, points out how, despite the common articulation of emotions as 'natural', a 'biomedical model' of emotionality constructs some emotions as 'healthy' and some as 'unhealthy', which means that we must draw on the existence of social knowledge of which emotions are socially acceptable. Hollway (1989) also explained how

a construction of emotionality as inferior to rationality, serves, when associated with constructions that women are more emotional than men, to position women as inferior to men. Lutz (1997) found that in interviews with men and women that, contrary to popular stereotypes, there was no discernible difference in the extent to which men and women personalized their emotions. However, she found what she termed a "rhetoric of control of emotion" and her analyses of talk suggest that women talk twice as much as men about controlling emotion.

... a rhetoric of control requires a psychological essence that is manipulated or wrestled with and directs attention away from the socially constructed nature of the idea of emotion. (Lutz, 1997, p154)

Lutz (1997) theorizes that women's talk of failing to control their emotions, tends to be heard as their acknowledging a deficit and confirms the notion of women's irrationality. She criticizes Hochschild (1983) for constructing women's emotionality as "a psychophysical fact, socially manipulated, rather than a discursive practice that constructs women as more emotional than men." (Lutz, 1997, p162). Lutz concludes that "at least in the west, emotion discourses may be one of the most likely and powerful devices by which domination proceeds" (Lutz, 1997, p158), and this construction is reinforced when women's emotions are understood only as reactions to that domination.

Both Lutz (1997) and Hollway (1989) have shown how emotion is constructed as indicative of both weakness and power and that women are constructed similarly. When emotions are constructed as natural, dangerous, irrational and physical, then women are constructed as dangerously emotional (Lutz, 1997). In addition to some specific emotions being perceived as unhealthy, so too may too much emotion and too little. Lupton (1998) has pointed out, for instance, how TB was linked to emotional turmoil. Similarly Malson (1998) has shown, in her social constructionist work on anorexia, how femininity is entangled with sickness in discourses of anorexia, suggesting that the anorexic woman shares "similarities with the fragile and delicate 'woman' of romantic discourse" (Malson, 1998 p111). Malson suggests that romantic love (like food) is both necessary and threatening for women and also excessive.

Hepworth and Griffin (1995) have argued that the discovery and medicalization of anorexia nervosa, for instance, were constructed around the supposed irrationality and instability of women, especially young women. Similarly, Leftkowitz (1982), explained how in translating classical texts into English, translators have often reconstituted heroines as hysterics, suggesting women's emotionality may be seen as textual rather than an authentic essence.

Therefore, social constructionist work on an emotionality/ rationality split, from a feminist perspective, suggests that the the performance of masculinity as rationality and femininity as uncontrolled emotion reproduces male hegemony. An alternative formulation is that, according to a romantic model, normative heterosexual masculinity is cool and repressed and femininity is warm and emotional, though, as suggested by Giddens above, the experience of romantic love can melt away a man's repression.

Before detailing more social constructionist and deconstructive theorizing and research on the experience of love from both within and beyond psychology, I want first to look at research on romantic fiction. If postmodern sensibilities and subjectivities are understood and produced in relation to the cultural texts we have available (e.g. McAdams, 1995), then romance reading, or more general knowledge of romantic texts, may be a powerful force in shaping heterosexual relationships, sex, love and gendered desire. For as Stevi Jackson (1995b) suggests, love is a powerful emotion because there is such a potent discourse, the discourse of romantic love, to tell of it.

3.5. THE DISCOURSES OF ROMANTIC LOVE IN ROMANTIC FICTION

There has been extensive feminist research on love, which rather than focusing on people's own stories of love, has instead focused on romantic literature, film and fairy tales. Some of these take a psychodynamic perspective, as well as a feminist one, but all are questioning the cultural exemplars offered in romantic works of fiction, in order to interrogate in the main how gendered subjectivities are produced in the fiction, and also sometimes how readers negotiate their subjectivities in relation to the works of fiction. In this way, deconstructing romantic fiction has been a way of investigating the social construction of love and gender. Where

much of the quantitative work done by social psychologists assumes knowledge of how we talk about love, critical literary theory sees texts, not as offering straightforward realist stories, but as drawing on available cultural discourses. In this way it offers valuable insights into the cultural constraints on love, by looking at what is included and what is excluded, which stories end in happiness, which in misery, which in both.

Briefly, heterosexual romance has historically involved a young woman and a slightly older man who eventually rescues her, in some way. She tends to be represented as passive, he active. Her problems, whatever they are, tend to be solved by their union and her projection in a future happy-ever-after. The classic trajectory of the story is typified by obstacles to the romantic resolution (Stacey and Pearce, 1995). More recent heroines may be represented as less passive and more sexually experienced, but the romance still holds out the promise of a Mr. Right (Jackson, 1995b). Even novelists associated with a much more cynical view of love such as Anita Brookner still reproduce the underlying importance of heterosexual love (Jouannou, 1998).

There tend to be two approaches to romance narratives, the approach which deconstructs the genre, often from a critical literature perspective (e.g. Auerbach, 1986; Belsey, 1994; Duncker, 1992; Howells, 1995; Modleski, 1982; Warner, 1995) and the approach which also attempts to question what readers get from reading romances (e.g. Christian-Smith, 1988; Fowler, 1991; McRobbie, 1991; Pearce, 1997; Radway, 1987; Roman and Christian-Smith, 1988; Snitow, 1983; Walkerdine, 1990). The researchers mentioned here are using romantic genres to make feminist critiques of the stereotypical roles afforded to heterosexual romantic protagonists, as outlined above, and often the subtle or unsubtle forcefulness, or outright violence, of the hero. For instance, writing of the Gothic novel, *Melmoth the Wanderer*, by Charles Maturin, Howells (1995) states how:-

... the Satanic aspect of Melmoth undoubtedly merged with the appeal of glamourised violence that distinguished the behaviour of the Byronic hero, for Melmoth has the dark lowering expression, the piercing eyes, the withering sneer and the contemptuously curled lip ... (Howells, 1995, p142)

Howells (1995) entitles her book on Gothic fiction, *Love, Mystery and Misery: Feeling in Gothic Fiction*. She explains how English Gothic writing, between 1790 and 1820, constructed excitement via the overwhelming emotions and repressed sexuality of women at the hands of male tormentors. Like the earlier *Clarissa* by Richardson (published in 1747-48), Gothic fiction linked sex with violence against women, rape featuring in the books written by men, though not women. Like *Clarissa*, the Gothic heroine must be miserable or die or both. By 1847 and the publication of *Jane Eyre*, the eponymous heroine manages to embrace passion and sexuality without having to endure death, imprisonment and lasting misery, suggesting that discourses of female sexuality were becoming more progressive. The central relationship of *Jane Eyre*, as Belsey (1994) notes, has preceded more recent romances from the publishers Harlequin and Mills and Boon, which chart the progress of young women who fall in love with "dark, Byronic, brooding employers" (Belsey, 1994, p12).

Heterosexual romance and union, or desire for that, is also the focus of many fairy stories. Patricia Duncker (1992) writes that fairy tale romances tend to offer limited and dangerous scripts for women, in relation to desire. "It is the woman's assent to the unacceptable hideousness of male desire which turns monsters into men. But women's desire is seen only as a response and as passive acquiescence to male sexual demand." (Duncker, 1992, p153). Male sexuality "is socially constructed as insatiable, unstoppable, unknowable, predatory, sinister and dangerous" (Duncker, 1992, p156).

Feminists have attempted to rewrite fairy stories and myths and to challenge narrow gender stereotypes. For instance, Angela Carter's reworkings of fairy-tales such as Red Riding Hood and Bluebeard (in *The Bloody Chamber*, 1979) present women embracing active sexual desire and curiosity about it, on the assumption that alternative stories will change women's preparation for love and relationship; different stories would open up other possibilities for living.

One of the common arguments made from feminist deconstructive work on romantic texts is that romantic fiction offers a way for women (especially young women) to resolve common problems around their sexuality and provides a route to heterosexual femininity.

3.5.1. "Becoming a woman through romance"

Critical literary theorists do not suggest that romantic fiction offers a straightforward model for girls and women to unproblematically follow. Rather they offer meanings which readers can take up or resist.

The argument that popular cultural forms can be read as texts which produce 'warring forces of signification' makes a significant advance over previous modes of cultural analysis. It neither assumes that popular cultural forms (whether they are commodified representations or lived social relations) work in a non-contradictory manner, nor that they produce unitary reading subjects. (Roman and Christian-Smith, 1988, p22)

Christian-Smith (1988) deconstructs "the code of *romance*" in her analysis of 34 novels from 1942 to 1982. Though there were differences across this time span, she concludes that adolescent femininity is construed similarly across the forty year time period and can be explained in terms of dominant elements of the code of romance. Emotion and power relations between women and men are constituted in line with these elements, the first of which is that romance is a market relationship, and though the terms of economic exchange may vary, they must be seen as fair in the cultural context. This fairness, therefore, often draws on sexual stereotypes, with girls (good girls, that is) offering fidelity and devotion in return for support and prestige from association with a desirable boy. So the fairness and equality of marketable romance is often built on assumptions of complementary femininity and masculinity, rather like sociobiology and social exchange theory, as discussed in Chapter 2. Christian-Smith also identified how romance, as heterosexual practice, manages girls' sexuality and gives girls' lives meaning and importance. Through reading romance, girls learn that romantic love is experienced as personal, rather than cultural or institutionalized. Most crucially, Christian-Smith suggests that romance is about power and about romantic love making her his (his possession of her). Girls' seeming helplessness appeared to be an essential part of the code of romance, as girls' fictional attempts to control their romances resulted in romantic failure.

Christian-Smith (1988) suggests that it is through identifying with young fictional heroines, that adolescent female readers are injected into the discourse of romance, and that this is how they negotiate their identities as young women, in particular as heterosexual young women; how they "become a woman through romance".

The novels offer female readers positions within heterosexuality through an implied community of interest existing between the heroine and the reader. Heroines ... directly address the adolescent female reader and offer her a position of identifications in fantasy as a girlfriend, as one who is romanced and shares the experience of being in love, of belonging to the boy. The reader is offered romance as a way of protecting feminine interests and managing male assertiveness. ... However romance turns upon itself by tethering a girl's developing sexuality to romance, which establishes love and commitment to a single boy as a prerequisite to any expression of sexuality on her part. The latter points to the contradictory and fragmenting dimensions of the subject positions the novels hold out to girls. (Christian-Smith, 1988, p95-6)

Christian-Smith (1988) emphasizes the contradictory and partial nature of discourses in engaging readers' involvement and desire. Such feminist analyses see investment in love and romance as inculcation into submission to oppressive male sexuality and patriarchy, which explains feminist disillusion and mistrust of romantic love. Angela MacRobbie (1991) similarly looked at the code of romance aimed at adolescent women reading *Jackie* (a magazine aimed at teenage girls), pointing to recurrent encoded messages. These were:-

1. the girl has to fight to *get* and *keep* her man;
2. she can *never* trust another woman unless she is old and 'hideous' in which case she does not appear in these stories anyway;
3. despite this, romance, and being a girl, are fun.

(McRobbie, 1991, p101, italics in the original).

Like Christian-Smith (1988), McRobbie constructs romance as offering a way in which girls can deal with male sexuality, making it seem less "dirty, sordid and unattractive" (McRobbie, 1991, p102). Boys and men are constructed as romantic objects, and girl's sexuality is experienced not in

terms of physical or sexual desire but as romantic attachment. Though men and women are constructed as different, they can come together through romance.

Radway (1987) has suggested that modern romances construct gendered desire in ways which may encourage women readers of romance to understand that their dissatisfaction with men's emotional illiteracy is misplaced. However, despite this, she claims that there are some possibilities for women to use romance not only passively as "emotional gratification" but also subversively as a protest against "male values of competition and public achievement" and patriarchy (Radway, 1987, p212). This is also something which an unlikely proselytizer for romance, Bea Campbell (1998), has done. In positing Princess Diana's right to a proper prince/princess romance, she has challenged the oppressive nature of royal relationships in which wives were expected to be public consorts but not necessarily emotional intimates of their husband. Diana's refusal to keep quiet about not having the love and respect she expected, has "rocked the monarchy" (Campbell, 1998). Charles turned out to be yet another emotional illiterate rather than the handsome prince she could live with *happily ever after*. For Radway's (1987) readers of romance, the happy ending was the *sine qua non*. Unlike Charles and Diana's marriage, in romantic fiction we tend not to know what happens after the couple's recognition and pledging of undying love. The happy-ever-after romance tells us nothing about their lives together, gives no further cultural exemplars of how to do ongoing heterosexual relationships, with their quotidian concerns. We are given a false closure (Wetherell, 1995).

Fowler (1991) disputes Radway's (1987) thesis to some extent, being much more pessimistic about the extent to which readers can use romance subversively to challenge patriarchal relations. For her, the romance, like religion, distorts reality by "mystifying the real relations between humans" and "thus enhances their powerlessness or alienation" (Fowler, 1991, p174). Feminist psychologist, Valerie Walkerdine (1990), suggests that romance may enable young women to resolve dilemmas they are experiencing around desire, dilemmas associated with being an adolescent girl in a patriarchal culture. Girls are not only passive recipients of advice or expected roles, but can actively engage with the discourses of romance. The difficulty for them, however, in resisting romance, is that romantic engagement may well 'feel' like a personal choice, rather than initiation

and acculturation into 'proper' femininity. A rejection of romance may be experienced as a rejection of 'natural' femininity.

In the next section I'll look at 'real-life' research studies, which though not focused directly on love, have also considered the relationship of romance narratives to the reproduction of gendered heterosexual subjectivities.

3.6. EMPIRICAL WORK LINKING GENDER AND ROMANCE NARRATIVES

The first example here comes from Peter Redman (1998), who suggests that some young men may also have "investments in romance" (Redman, 1998, p1). His young "romantic heroes" construct having a girlfriend as a good influence, and their romantic positionings offered a way of doing heterosexual masculinity commensurate with success at school, thus resisting the 'tough boy' image of not doing work which is more prevalent in other work on developing masculinity (e.g. Pattman *et al.*, 1998). Redman explored his own narrativized adolescent history as well as qualitative interviews with a group of young men. He drew on both cultural theory and psychoanalytic theory in analysing his participants' struggles with identity and investments in romance. In terms of the literature around gender and romance, Redman's work seems an unusual narrativization of young men's lives, telling a story of becoming a heterosexual man through romance. Though these young men are the active romantic heroes, the less than obvious delight of their chosen heroines sometimes points up the ambivalent position that romance may occupy in peoples' narrativized lives.

Redman's (1998) research is very different from other work which suggests that men use sexual narratives to talk about heterosexual relationships, as they are more familiar with pornography than romantic narratives (e.g. Jackson, 1993; Snitow, 1983). Social psychological work, which supports this latter claim, comes from Celia Kitzinger and Deborah Powell (1995) in their research on how students narrativize 'infidelity'. Belsey (1994), for instance, has explained how romantic love was first implicated in written romances about adulterous relationships such as Lancelot and Guinevere, so researching discourses of infidelity may be a very productive arena for studying discourses of love and gender. Kitzinger and Powell (1995) asked their student participants to complete a

story about either "Claire" or "John" realising that their heterosexual partner was "seeing someone else" and they then coded their participants' stories, looking for similarities and differences. They found that women offered "elaborate and detailed explanations" for Claire's infidelity, which drew on a lack of emotional closeness and intimacy in her current relationship. Men accounted for Claire's infidelity in terms of some sexual inadequacy on the part of her current partner. John's infidelity was accounted for by women in terms of emotional aspects of the current relationship, but resulting, this time, from too much intimacy, her not giving him enough emotional space. Men however offered very little explanation for John's infidelity. So Kitzinger and Powell's findings confirmed other research that men sexualize where women romanticize intimate heterosexual relationships by drawing on the different types of narrative available to them.

Paul Stenner's work on "discoursing jealousy" (Stenner, 1993) also showed how a couple about to be married, Jim and May, talked about Jim's potential infidelity in rather different ways. Jim's construction of May's jealousy functioned to allow Jim to talk about potential infidelities with "extremely attractive" women, without having to do anything about it, while May's talk drew on a male sex drive discourse, constructing her understanding of his possible "burning need" to have at least as many sexual partners as she'd had before they married. This is similar but different from Kitzinger's and Powell's results, because both Jim and May tended to draw on sexual discourse to talk of Jim's possible future infidelity, where Jim drew on romantic discourse to explain May's jealousy if he had a sexual relationship with another woman.

These studies use a very different approach to desire and infidelity from a sociobiological one (Chapter 2, section 2.1). The narrative approach suggests that rather than desire being gendered, the narratives available to women and men to explain themselves inscribe their desire in gendered ways. Rather than desire being a psycho-physical or biological fact, it becomes a way of performing and achieving gender. By analysing discourses and narratives of desire, the researcher can uncover what aspects of gender are being performed.

The differential performance of gendered identities has been theorized as getting in the way of mutual understanding and shared intimacy (e.g.

Duncombe and Marsden, 1995; Ickes, 1993). Rather like Hochschild's (1983) notion that women's emotion work allows men to be more authentic by not doing it, some more recent feminist research has argued that heterosexual intimacy proceeds on the understanding that young women seem to understand masculinity and what men want. Holland *et al.*'s (1998) research suggests that a *male in the head* explains how power relations result from women and men continually taking the assumed sexual needs of men and male psychology into account. The absence of a *female in the head* means heterosexuality is equivalent to masculinity, not masculinity AND femininity. This understanding also seems to underlie research which suggests that disappointment accompanies women's first sexual experiences (Nicolson, 1996; Robinson *et al.*, 1997), for though disappointed the women participants are not questioning heterosexuality, but are leaving open the possibility of a future Mr Right.

3.7. NARRATIVE APPROACHES TO LOVE

Within psychology, an early attempt to understand the social construction of love came from James Averill (1985). As well as cultural exemplars such as the story of Romeo and Juliet, he also used the 'true' story of a couple who met on a train, as reported in a local US newspaper in 1953.

On Monday, Cpl. Floyd Johnson, 23, and the then Ellen Skinner, 19, total strangers, boarded a train at San Francisco and sat down across the aisle from each other. Johnson didn't cross the aisle until Wednesday, but his bride said, "I'd already made up my mind to say yes if he asked me to marry him." "We did most of the talking with our eyes", Johnson explained. Thursday the couple got off the train in Omaha with plans to be married. Because they would need to have the consent of the bride's parents if they were married in Nebraska, they crossed the river to Council Bluffs, Iowa, where they were married Friday.

What Averill found, when he conducted this part of his study, was that forty percent of participants rated the newspaper love story as very much like their own experience of love, and a further forty percent rated it as not at all like their experience. Of those who rated their love along the lines of the romantic ideal, only a quarter of them seemed to be able to offer incidents in their lives which approximated the story given them. Averill suggests that this means that our experience tends to be understood

through the cultural exemplars available to us and which "provide the individual with a model and rationale for behavior, and by conforming to the paradigm, the individual serves to confirm the broader cultural network, of which the paradigm is an aspect." (Averill, 1985, p93). These exemplars are not rigid prescriptions, but, as cultural ideals, they may lead to understanding our experience as being interpreted relative to these ideals, as conforming to or resisting them. This particular love story was also used by Illouz (1997) in questioning the relationship between consumerist approaches to romantic love and class. She resisted writing about love and gender, as did Averill, except implicitly. In this romantic story it is the man who has to do the asking, so the scenario is gendered.

Averill's paper on the social construction of love, likened love to an emotional syndrome involving four common components of love - idealization of the loved one, suddenness of onset of feelings of love, physiological arousal, commitment to the loved one and the relationship. Averill explains how these components do not have 'real' meaning out of context, but only become coherent and meaningful within culturally available exemplars, or love stories.

Averill's psychological work, at that time, was unusual in being interested in the social construction of the self and emotion. It avoided a totally positivist paradigm, by not positing rigid rules and definitive categories and by exploring love as a narrative form in a wider cultural context.

More recently, other psychologists have become interested in narratives of the self, in the sense that storytelling "may be *the* way through which human beings make sense of their own lives and the lives of others" (McAdams, 1995). Mary Gergen (1988), writing about narrative structures in everyday explanation, explains that life stories may be produced by drawing on combinations of three simple narratives of life events over time, which are that things are improving (progressive narrative), getting worse (regressive narrative), or staying much the same (stable narrative). Romantic narrative, according to this scheme, involves a "series of regressive and progressive story lines", as obstacles to love arise and are overcome. Gergen (1988) explains that our life stories, whatever the life events involved, may be made exciting and interesting by narrativizing them in dramatic form, and it is the gradients of progression or regression which make it exciting, where the stability narrative (no gradient) would

be "the least dramatic and perhaps most boring of narrative forms. The tragedy is highly compelling because of the radical shift as regressive narrative unfolds." (Gergen, 1988, p101).

Multiple narrative forms characterize an individual's story telling repertoire. We might conjecture, for example, that a narrative that is shaped as a romance, with the narrator overcoming obstacles to achieve a goal, is an attempt to present the narrator as a hero who lives in a world of treachery and danger. The listeners are expected to be enthralled and admiring of such a protagonist. The tragedy may be designed to elicit sympathy, and the comedy a companionate spirit of solidarity and harmony. (Gergen, 1988, p107).

The advantage of her social constructionist approach is that self-narratives are not seen as fixed stories of some pre-existing reality, but as "temporary constructions that are shaped by such important factors as literary conventions, social norms, the context of the narration and self-determined social goals" (Gergen,1988, p110).

The Gergens' (1995) paper on romanticist, modern and postmodern narratives of love, asks "What is this thing called love?" (their title). (That the same title was also used by Noller (1996), points to the power of song titles as cultural forms for textualizing love.) Gergen and Gergen (1995) explain that the drive to be reflexive in a postmodern world challenges unreflexive declarations of love.

In effect, to the vocabulary of the postmodern relationship is added a strong sense of the ironic. When there is no universal standard of the good and true, one inhabits the irony of reality-making without a Real, the evanescence of the taken for granted, and the hopelessness of ever getting it right. (Gergen and Gergen, 1995, p235).

Gergen and Gergen explain that the narrative practices of love in a postmodern age are up for grabs and they posit the possibility of optimism for postmodern love-making, in contrast to other frameworks, romanticism (unreflexive, spiritual and relying on gender difference) and modernity (pragmatic, rational, androgynous). The possibility of heterosexual lovers performing the love which suits them, with an equality which suits too,

may seem very attractive to some, but it seems unlikely in the wider social context of so much obvious gender inequality and abuse of women. Such optimism seems to require postmodern lovers to find the right mix of stories, that will isolate them from the cultural brew of stories deeply implicated with assumptions of gender difference, not to mention other inequalities. Being able to do this would also seem to require them to be able to step outside of the current world of competing stories and social categories, which Butler (1990) has already suggested is impossible. The Gergens' (1995) approach is interesting and points to the possibility of equitable frameworks for people to discourse love, but without telling us about how people can use the emotional narratives they outline to help promote sexual equality.

Perhaps many researchers would baulk at conceiving that romantic love can be revisioned by recourse to reflexivity and postmodern irony. Wendy Langford's work offers literary and lay examples of postmodern "alter-worlds" when "Snuglet Puglet Loves to Snuggle with Snuglet Piglet" (Langford, 1995) or "Piglet" and "Pooh" love each other (Langford, 1995; 1998/1999). For Langford, alter-egos exemplify the narrativization of relational identities, but serve to hide the extent to which "at the level of the couple, male power is maintained and reproduced through the practices of emotional distancing and sexual objectification" (Langford, 1995, p263). This is part of our deluding ourselves about our relationships, by turning them into something "safer and kinder" (Langford, 1998/1999, p67), and, like other feminists, (e.g. Coward, 1992) before her, she constructs women's heterosexual desire as treachery to other women and feminism.

Langford (1996) suggested that "even if feminists succeed in 'writing out' all the inequalities and omissions in romance, we should finally consider whether investing our energies in the promise of salvation through an exclusive encounter with one other human being is the best way to realise our hopes for a better world" (Langford, 1996, p32). Langford's (1999) detailed analysis of extended interviews with 15 women, has taken a psychodynamic approach inspired by Jessica Benjamin's (1988) work. She concludes that romantic love can offer no revolutionary promise in heterosexual relationships, only delusions based on men's domination and women's submission (Langford, 1999). Langford (1999) also dismisses the ideal of 'democratic love' as it allows "us to invest our efforts in 'making it

work', while hiding from ourselves the inhumanity we inflict upon ourselves and each other" (Langford, 1999, p152).

Other research, however, suggests that romantic love and heterosexual relationships may already have been transformed along democratic lines. The sociological work of Eva Illouz (1997) in the US, in contrast to Langford's thesis, writes of how romantic love has been democratized through the therapeutic ethos mentioned earlier (Chapter 2, section 2.10). Within this therapeutic ethos, one becomes responsible for a rational approach to intimate relationships and one's success and happiness in them. Like Giddens (1992) (and also Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995), Illouz presents the case that increasing democratization in western societies has already led to democratization of romantic love. Her analysis of romantic love views it as a class relation, rather than a gender relation. Her argument is that, as postmodernity has democratized us as consumers in general, romantic love has been transformed into a consumer product. She asked her participants to respond to true stories of intimate heterosexual relationships, one of which a 'romantic' love story. The romantic story she used was the story used by Averill (1985) (see it earlier in this section) with some elisions, such as the protagonists' ages. The use of the same story may point to a difficulty in finding more modern 'true' romantic stories. She found that her participants' relationships were constructed along modernist, rational lines, which meant that relationships were constituted as something which could be worked at. Although hers was an analysis of class rather than gender, Illouz suggested that though the rationalization of love could be seen as emancipatory, if relationships are viewed as a project to be worked at, this could be to women's disadvantage if they are expected to put in the major share of the work. She found partial confirmation of this in her interviews in that "women are more likely to use metaphors of "work" when describing their relationships than men, who tend to view relationships in terms of "play" and "relaxation"" (Illouz, 1997, p206).

Furthermore, the rationalized vocabulary of rights and obligations and needs may actually undermine the emotional bond it is meant to strengthen. This discourse is separated only by a fine line from a utilitarian ethos that makes of others only a means to reach one's own satisfaction or "self-realization". (Illouz, 1997, p207)

Illouz (1997) suggests that the love affair has become the postmodern context within which to experience intensity of romantic love. In terms of their romantic investment, Illouz writes that her participants found excitement but neither revelation nor tragedy in these relationships. She concludes that suspicion of love comes from a confusing conjunction of explanations which promote a rational love (the therapeutic ethos) and the irrational (mass media depictions - to be bought like romantic films and fiction, and to advertise products). For the affluent, this confusion can be reduced as they can afford the leisure and travel that is so often constructed as part of the romantic dream, where limitations on income will hamper this.

3.8. LAYING OUT A METHOD TO INVESTIGATE LOVE

Discourse analysis (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Burman and Parker, 1993) and "thematic decomposition" (Curt, 1994; Stenner, 1993) provide the means to identify the ways in which people draw on cultural stories and turn them into their own personal stories, as well as questioning how these cultural appropriations function to achieve something.

Dorothy Smith (1988), in writing about femininity as discourse, suggested that identifying subject positions offered in discourses relies not on magical transformation and desire to change but on knowledge of what is needed to do in order to achieve the transformation (Smith, 1988). In this way she contests psychodynamic explanations of subject positioning. Smith (1988) uses an analysis of the before and after pictures, prevalent in women's magazines. Smith argues that a woman's transformation, from 'drab' to 'beautiful', does not have to involve magic, because we can analyse the text indexically, that is in the context of the knowledge we already have about female transformations and social relations. A text can convey more than it explicitly includes, and so an analysis has to consider other knowledge which a text draws on, in order to make sense of it. For instance, for Cinderella to become a princess, she knows that she needs to be beautifully dressed, to look beautiful, in order to effect a conscious masquerade of suitable feminine availability so the prince fall in love with her.

Image and text are articulated to the *skilled practices and routines* accomplishing femininity in local historical settings. (Smith, 1988, p45).

Analysis of the extended social relations of complex processes requires that our concepts embrace properties and processes which cannot be attributed to or reduced to individual practices or intentions. (Smith, 1988, p39).

This also explains an example given by Davies and Harré (1990) about the reaction of young children to an alternative fairy story in which a princess was attacked by a dragon, leaving her dirty and naked. She went to rescue the prince only to find that he didn't want to be rescued by a princess wearing only a paper bag. Many children apparently see this princess as having been magically turned into a bad princess, because the story doesn't follow the convention they expect and so they draw on other discourses in order to understand it. This is a very worrying finding for writers of alternative romances and fairy stories, as it seems the girl/woman/princess must stay clean and dressed if she is to be seen as good by children.

Margaret Wetherell (1995), in analysing three excerpts from literature, explains how discourse analysis can question the ways of talking about love and the consequences of talking in those ways. By identifying the linguistic resources available to people when they talk about love and intimate relationships, it is possible to offer explanations of the achievements of talk *in context*. As she writes:-

... the discourse analyst says that it is not the case that every woman and man in love magically find themselves uttering, creating and discovering afresh, for the first time, these words as the mirror or reflection of their experience, although they may well feel they are doing just that. The words instead are second-hand, already in circulation, already familiar, already there, waiting for the moment of appropriation. The woman and the man, the heterosexual couple, recognise their experience and determine its quality through the words that are available. (Wetherell, 1995, p134)

Solomon (1994), while philosophizing about the possibility of reinventing love, explains that despite the clichés about romantic love, for lovers they do not "feel" like they are living a clichéd existence.

One of the virtues of playing the lover is that we recognize the fact that we are falling into a prescribed and common role but still feel that our expressions are very much our own. Thousands of flower shops stay in business supplying hundreds of thousands of grateful or generous lovers with the mandatory dozen long-stem roses, but every dozen has its own significance, just as every one of the millions of "I love you's" that gets uttered every day has its own meaning and its own essential place in a single relationship. Romantic roles are publicly defined but privately enacted - even when (through necessity, ignorance, vulgarity or vanity) they are performed in public. ... The romantic suicide threat, the after-midnight phone calls, the proclamations ("I could never love anyone else") are predictable and even clichéd - not original at all.... Romance creates its own private world and its own, primordial self. (Solomon, 1994, p224)

For the discourse analyst, Solomon's "I love you's" are here part of what Smith (1988) termed a "skilled practice" or "routine", a discursive acknowledgement of a particular social relation between the speaker and the spoken to, not simply a part of a role, though it is often conceptualized in that way. Saying 'I love you' does something, as well as being part of a known script, and this is where a discourse analysis can go beyond a content analysis which documents what is there, but not what it may be achieving.

Common as 'I love you' may be seen to be in the language of love, discourse analysts such as Wetherell (1995) recognise that there is always a choice of ways to talk about and story love. A discourse of romantic love is but one way, albeit a very common one, and one which is hard to resist. Discourse analysis is concerned with the function of talk in context which means also that variability in talk, what is chosen to be said and when, is analysed rather than discounted. Quantitative studies often discount behaviours, as falling into a group not doing the specified action/behaviour to be measured and compared means being not of interest. A discourse is partial: the discourse of romantic love does not prescribe which one in a couple

should clean the toilet (or organize for someone else to clean it) though it may point the way.

Some experiences may need little explanation, as they have a taken-for-granted quality where other less 'normal' experiences and situations may need complicated and elaborate accounting (Hollway, 1989). Having analysed interviews or texts and identified recurrent themes, it is then possible to consider the wider social consequences of commonly constructed talk and explanations, and to question the social, historical and cultural context in which such talk and explanations are seen to be appropriate and acceptable. For example, in the novel *Nice Work*, David Lodge (1989) contrasts Vic's taken-for-granted understanding of romantic love, with Robyn's discursive explanation of it as "rhetorical device" and "bourgeois fallacy" which takes language and biology and constructs from it a "for ever and ever" romantic love. The author also points up the difficulty of denying that love exists, as the speaker of the non-existence of love, can be positioned as never having been in love yet.

Discursive research on love focuses attention on the ways in which it is possible for us to talk about love and our experience of love, rather than to ask participants to agree or disagree that they conceptualize it in a particular way (as mainstream psychological research and other uncritical work tends to do). Rather than assume the 'power of love', what can be questioned is the discourse of love, and its power to offer difficult to resist subject positions, which is something that Stevi Jackson (1993) has questioned.

The capacity to experience this emotion [love] must, like all human experience, be mediated by language and culture. It is also clearly deeply embedded in our subjectivities and must in some way be formed in and through the processes by which our subjectivities are socially constituted. It is an emotion to which both sceptics and romantics can succumb, which is felt by lesbians and gay men as well as by heterosexuals. It is much easier to refuse to participate in romantic rituals, to resist pressures towards conventional marriage, to be cynical about 'happy ever after' endings than it is to avoid falling in love. (Jackson, 1993, p209)

Jackson's (1993) feminist analysis of love interrogates the 'falling in love' to which even feminists may "succumb", in order to interrogate the emotion of 'love' and its centrality in the social order, marriage and family. She questions how focusing on love and our personal relationships may draw our attention away from "the structures which may constrain and limit them" (Jackson, 1993, p202). It is often claimed that romantic love is only possible between equals (*cf.* Solomon, 1994) and Jackson wants to challenge this, because this construction of equality 'in love' has to be a device by which the obfuscation of power relations is achieved. Moving beyond earlier challenges to heterosexual love which positioned 'love' as a sort of false consciousness to tie women to marriage and men, which presupposed some "notion of a pure love uncontaminated by cultural and social structures" (Jackson, 1993, p206), she attempts to question the power of and explanation for the emotion of love. As a sociologist, she is not so hampered by definitional obstructions to claiming love as an emotion, because to understand the power of experiencing love, rather than its definition, is what she is seeking.

Jackson's (1993) analysis deconstructs the usual taken-for-granted assumptions about 'falling in love' - the 'naturalness' of it, the overwhelming and uncontrollable 'nature' of it, unlike love in long-term relationships. So again we find a distinction between 'falling in love' and 'loving'. Like Berscheid (1983) (see Chapter 2, section 2.4.1), she charts 'falling in love' as contradictorily leading us both to and from monogamy or to the next partner in a serially monogamous love history. Jackson focuses on the different meanings of love for women and men, where for many women love justifies lust, and women's sexual arousal may be understood by many women as love. For women, Jackson suggests that being 'in love' may obscure the passive role which they are expected to take in heterosexual relationships.

Falling in love, despite its clichéd pervasiveness, seems to take lovers out of the "mundane, everyday world" (Jackson, 1993, p211). The experience of falling in love is not quotidian, but exciting, otherworldly, different. But the "ecstasy and self-absorption" centred on one other person leaves the lover very vulnerable, possibly jealous and insecure. As Jackson (1993) says "If being in love is ... fuelled by a desire that cannot be satisfied, then insecurity may be fundamental to it" and "fundamental to its continuance" (Jackson, 1993, p211). Jackson cites Brunt (1988) to suggest that for women,

falling in love feels like "getting to star in your own movie" (Brunt, 1988, p19; Jackson, 1993, p212) and contrasts this with women's perception of male emotional illiteracy, or male distancing from emotion, theorized as men's failure to "manipulate romance genres" (Jackson, 1993, p216) except at a superficial level. The cold and distant hero of romance, not only has to be transformed, but his cold behaviour can be explained by romance, and thus becomes a part of it, to the extent that rape and cruelty can be explained away by his being unable to control his passion for her.

Jackson (1993) wants the questions she raises about the gendered discourse of romantic love, and why we fall for it, to be pursued, and though she doesn't discount the possible importance of psychodynamic theories on early experience, she wants such accounts of early emotional fixedness to be questioned too. And this is therefore what my study will be about, that is how women and men are able to talk about love, and what the place of love, falling in love, falling out of love, not believing in love, have in their accounts of being in heterosexual relationships and of being gendered beings.

Although interested in a discursive approach, Jackson's feminist approach is materialist, that is it conceives of patriarchal domination and hierarchy as producing a relationship between men as a class and women as a class, with neither 'men' nor 'women' as naturally given categories. She is interested in how the discourse of romantic love is implicated in the real structural impediments to heterosexual equality, and sees the discourse of romantic love as evidence of inequality. By taking a stronger social constructionist perspective, it should be possible to question the discursive construction of inequality, viewing that inequality and the gender structure which supports it as 'real' consequences of discourses. In this theorization, changing discourses can bring about change as well as changing structures, because we need to talk about structures in order to change them.

3.9. CONCLUSION TO LITERATURE REVIEW

I have shown that mainstream psychological studies/analyses tend to be too uncritical and too embedded in common sense assumptions, despite the scientific validity afforded by quantifying and categorizing concepts. However it may be very important to question how psychological discourses

of love, especially in their self-help form, seem to inform lay talk of love. Such concordance, from a discursive perspective would not suggest that psychology and self-help literature influence lay talk in any straightforward cause and effect way but that discourses of love and emotion tell us something about the historical context in which lay and scientific discourse inhere.

I have also shown how there has been extensive critical theorizing, especially drawing on fiction and women's magazines as the material for analysis. There has been much less empirical research aimed explicitly on people's own understanding and explanations of love, though research on (hetero)sex has indicated how discourses of love are implicated, in particular, in discourses of women's sexual behaviour and absence of sexual desire. Langford (1999) and Illouz (1997) produce very different findings from their empirical work on heterosexual love. For Langford, a woman "writing herself into love" (Langford, 1999, p29) is writing herself into delusion and oppression. Illouz sees her participants negotiating their postmodern selves in love and in intimate heterosexual relationships at a time of:-

... emotional pluralism, consumerist rituals of romance, and the critical self-consciousness cultivated by the therapeutic ethos [which] generates a crisis characterized by a deep-seated suspicion of love, confusion between its rational and irrational expressions, and difficulty interpreting one's feelings. (Illouz, 1997, pp293-294)

For her middle class and upper-middle class participants, unlike her working class participants, economic resources "help their relationships live up to the romantic standards promoted by the media" (Illouz, 1997, p294).

My project is to approach heterosexual love by investigating how 'real' people make sense of it, and to give them the opportunity to tell their stories of love. This will allow me to go beyond the study of romantic literature and romance readers, and will ground my thesis on love in everyday accounts. Illouz and Langford's work (neither of them psychologists) produced very different findings, which may be because their participant groups were very different, or because their approaches

were rather different, one looking at consuming romantic love across class and the other looking at how women are consumed by romantic love.

By doing individual qualitative interviews it will also be possible to question how people in relationships, and maybe 'in love', construct themselves, their partner(s) and love. This will allow a consideration of variability and resistance to the discourse of romantic love and other discourses of love questioning how and when they are used, how they are resisted, whether they can be reinvented or revolutionized and how this might occur. At a time when love is being theorized and challenged in many different ways, how will participants make sense of it in their relationships? Which discourses of love will they draw on in order to narrativize 'real life' 'stories of love'?

The next chapter explains my methodology in detail.

CHAPTER 4. METHODOLOGY

4.1. DESIGN: FEMINIST DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEWS

In order to investigate the ways in which it is possible for people to construct 'love' and to tell stories of themselves 'in love' and 'loving' in intimate heterosexual relationships, this research uses discourse analysis as method and qualitative interviews as materials for analysis.

4.1.1. Discourse analysis as theory and method

The term "discourse analysis" is used to describe techniques which focus on talk and text, looking for the taken-for-granted assumptions underlying accounts and questioning the consequences of these assumptions. Discourse analysis, in psychology, encompasses a wide range of theoretical frameworks and analytical techniques, from conversation analysis (e.g. Edwards, 1997) to post-structuralist critical discourse analysis (e.g. Burman and Parker, 1993). I draw more heavily on the latter in my analysis. In terms of psychological phenomena, discourse analysis tries to understand how they are constructed through talk and text.

Foucault (1972, 1979) used the expression "discourse" to refer to broad, historically developed linguistic practices which constructed, in a systematic fashion, the concepts of which they spoke or wrote. In contrast to approaches which take language and talk as evidence of aspects of the speaker's or writer's individual psychological being (e.g. 'personality'), discourse theory is more social. Discourses are ways of organizing and constraining what may be spoken and how it may be said, in producing versions of reality. They also offer subject positions "through which and in relation to which an identity ... is made possible" (Walkerdine, 1984, p191). Potter and Wetherell (1987), for instance, explain "discourse analysis" as the analysis of "social texts" in order to "gain a better understanding of social life and social interaction from this study" (Potter and Wetherell, 1987, p7), where "social texts" include all kinds of spoken and written material, both formal and informal. Discourse theory suggests that the constraints and prescriptions constructed through discourses tell us about the social order of the world inhabited by the discourse user, and of their position in it.

A particular strength of the discourse analytic method is that it insists that contradictions and ambivalences in social texts be addressed, rather than discounted as quantitatively unimportant. In accounting for oneself, many different discourses and subject positions may be used, some of which may do specific accounting tasks, some more general. Different discourses may be drawn on in simple or complicated ways and may compete in producing different versions of the world. Discursive absences may be questioned too, in terms of the consequences of what is unspoken or unwritten. For example, Light (1984) explains how women writers of the 1940s and 1950s made "visible the tensions within the social construction of femininity whose definitions are never sufficient and are always reminders of what is missing, what could be." (Light, 1984, p340 in Lovell, 1990). Similarly, Hollway (1995b) has written of the lack of an emancipatory discourse of women's sexual desire.

Post-structuralist approaches to discourse analysis tend to be concerned with a broad, global analysis, identifying discourses in a top-down fashion, and questioning how objects of discourse are produced (e.g. Foucault, 1979). These forms of analysis tend to focus on issues of power and social relations (e.g. Hollway, 1984; 1989; Wetherell and Potter, 1992) to highlight how identities and relationships are achieved or constructed in discourses. Power and power relationships are not conceived in any monolithic straightforward way, but are understood to be produced and reproduced, moment to moment, across all relations, though continual discursive reproduction may seem to present them as stable and permanent (Foucault, 1979). "Discourses make available positions for subjects to take up. These positions are in relation to other people" (Hollway, 1984, p236). In other words, a top-down analysis can question the pervasive constructions of relational concepts which have meaning in terms of the oppositions they set up, for example 'female' in relation to its other, 'male', and vice versa. It can also question the historical situatedness of particular discursive practices and meanings, for discourses do not exist independently of the versions of reality they produce and people they position (Foucault, 1979). People construct themselves and others through discourse and are also constructed/positioned by discourse. Bottom-up approaches such as conversation analysis, in contrast to top-down approaches, take a more fine-grained approach, focusing on the fine details of talk and text such as

turn-taking and explicit reference to membership categories (e.g. Edwards, 1997; Schegloff, 1997). I detail my approach in the next section.

4.1.2. A feminist discursive approach

The discursive approach I take in order to analyse interviews is broadly that of Wetherell (1998) which reconciles both top-down and bottom-up approaches, by identifying and interrogating the available and historically given set of discourses and subject positions within discourses (top-down approach), while detailing their instantiations in the specific context they offer (bottom-up approach) though in my bottom-up approach, my emphasis is on sense-making rather than turn-taking. Both Dorothy Smith (1988) and Wetherell (1998) suggest texts may draw on taken for granted or 'common sense' knowledge without explicitly articulating this, and this social knowledge may be analysed in terms of its necessary existence to make sense of the text. I want to be able to identify when taken for granted social knowledge, or aspects of an assumed social order, underlies participants' accounts and sense making. For instance, Wetherell (1998) uses discourses ("repertoires" in her terminology) of "male sexuality as performance and achievement", "alcohol and disinhibition" and "an ethics of sexuality as legitimated by relationships and reciprocity" in order to make sense in context (Wetherell, 1998, p401).

...they are the common sense which organizes accountability and serves as a back-cloth for the realization of locally managed positions in actual interaction ... (Wetherell, 1998, pp401-402)

Such an approach is at odds with the criteria constructed for an exclusively bottom-up analytic method, in which interactional turns in interviews must evidence participants' concerns explicitly (e.g. Edwards, 1997; Schegloff, 1997). However I do also ground my analyses in my participants' concerns as they offer them. Where I point to implicit social knowledge as part of the analysis, this is not on the basis of privileging some knowledge as extra-discursive. Rather, it is a case of questioning how participants, as "competent members of cultural communities" (Edley and Wetherell, 1997, p204), use social knowledge in accomplishing their identities and their relationships; that is to consider how they make their accounts intelligible (Wetherell, 1998). Edley and Wetherell (1997), Wetherell and Edley (1998) and Wetherell (1998) draw on group interviews in which Nigel Edley was

interviewer, so they are able to look at jointly managed accounts, subject positions and disagreements between participants. I am not able to do this, except when participants position me as knower or disputer of their stories.

Thus, my analysis is focused on the accounts of love given by participants (top-down approach) and the contexts they offer for these accounts (top-down and bottom-up approach). In making a reading of the interviews, I am concerned, though not centrally so, with the bottom-up management of interactional concerns (Edwards, 1997), to the extent that they give information about participants' orientations to particular ways of telling love stories. Attention to these may illuminate aspects of the relationship between the reconstructions and explanations produced for a specific interview context and participants' positioning in love and intimate relationships. My main focus, however, is on what stories can be told, and in what ways, and what is the context of the stories, rather than focusing systematically on how fluently the stories are told.

In using discourse analysis to analyse interviews, there is no assumption that there are knowable truths about love and heterosexual relationships, which can be laid bare. Discourse analysis is deconstructive, but the underlying constructions are not assumed to represent foundational reality. What can be questioned is how some constructions are presented as true and unchallengeable (bottom-up approach), in order to question the consequences of experiencing them as overarching and general truths (top-down discourses). At the same time I am employing discourse analysis to do feminist research, which means that I am concerned to deconstruct how power relations are reproduced (top-down approach), especially those involving gender and sexuality. Specific procedural details follow later in Section 4.4.

A specific intention is to further debate about the potential of an egalitarian heterosexual love, in which 'masculinity', in particular, is open to question.

One of the most important achievements of feminist research and politics has been to *problematize* men's privileged position as knowers and social actors... Indeed, feminism succeeds to the extent that men become questionable and gendered, no longer normal and unremarkable or 'foundational'. In a profound sense, the aim of

feminism has been to *relativize* masculinity and men's claims to authority in all domains. (Wetherell and Edley, 1998, p156 - emphasis in the original)

Rosalind Gill's (1993) feminist analysis of interviews with male radio station professionals, in which they accounted for the dearth of women DJs on the radio, effectively pointed up how heterogeneous and contradictory accounts produced gender inequality, and this is also something I will be attentive to. From a social constructionist perspective, when men and women are constructed differently in talk and texts, this is not read as signifying essential gender difference. Instead one can question the ideological practices which produce reifications of gender difference (and love), for, while such reifications remain both accepted and mysterious facts and substitutes for reality, they are not opened up to interrogation. I want to question how gender is performed (Butler, 1990), as well as the consequences of gendered constructions, for men and women 'in love' and in relationships. Though my main focus is to question the discursive production and consequences of engendering love, other differences may also be constructed in relation to love and relationships, such as race, age, sexuality, class, having children, health and I would want to attend to these too.

4.1.3. Qualitative interviews

I chose to use a semi-structured interview format with participants in order to take an in-depth approach to their narrativizations of experiences of love and intimate relationships. I might have attempted to record naturally-occurring spontaneous talk about love (i.e. not prompted by me), while being non-spontaneously ready to record it. *Post-hoc*, I would then have needed to gain permission and approval to use such accounts, which raises ethical concerns, and would position me as participant observer, having to be reflexive about the context of the talk without necessarily being able to question participants about it. I could have chosen to analyse naturally occurring texts such as literary works or love letters, but then it would have been impossible to inquire further, or to situate the author interactionally. Many researchers have analysed literary texts, from many different disciplines already (see Chapter 3, section 3.5). I took a case study approach, to allow an in-depth investigation of how some people are able to talk about their loves and lives. I wanted participants to be informed about

the research topic, and to have an opportunity to reflect on it. Though not co-researchers in the same sense that memory work (see Crawford *et al.*, 1992), for instance, might have allowed, my participants were offered the opportunity to explore specific topics with me. Details of the interviews are given in section 4.3.

4.2. PARTICIPANTS

Because of the personal nature of the research topic I expected that, in the main, my participants would either know me or would be introduced to me by someone I knew and this is what happened. Early on in my study, I put up a notice at the unisex salon where I had my hair cut. It was headed "Love & Relationships", and said that I was a researcher who wanted to contact women to talk with me, in confidence, about their experiences of love and intimate relationships, and gave my home phone number if anyone wanted to know more about this. My hairdresser said women expressed interest in the notice, and she vouched for me, but no-one phoned me, so I gave up advertising for participants, and adopted an exclusively word of mouth and snowballing approach as detailed below.

4.2.1. Study 1: Women participants

There were eleven women participants, aged between late teens and mid 50s. All were white and British, and the intimate relationships they talked about were exclusively heterosexual, though I didn't specify that I was interested only in heterosexual relationships, or heterosexual participants. Most were well-educated, either to A-level, degree level or post-graduate level. They were either in full-time work or full-time education and included students, social work professionals, teachers and writers. The first four women participants were asked by me if they would be willing to be interviewed about love and relationships. The other women participants volunteered in different ways. The first way involved snowballing, that is their name being given to me by someone who had already been interviewed by me. The second was by my letting people know what I was doing and asking people to spread the word. A third way came about through incidental meetings with women I know, though not necessarily well. I've lived in the same town for some time and so have a wide circle of acquaintances. This means that I often meet people in town and we talk about what we are doing now. Several women, encountered by me in this

way, asked how I found interviewees and then volunteered to be a participant.

Of the eleven women I knew two well as friends (by which I mean that we talk together and go out together without having to have a specific reason), three quite well through shared activities, four I knew as friends of friends or relatives of friends and two I had not met before the interview. All participants names are pseudonyms and I've grouped the participants by age, not because of any intention to compare them in these groups, but to avoid giving their exact ages as part of protecting their anonymity.

Late teens to mid 20s - Gina, Melissa, Zoe

Mid 20s to late 30s - Chris, Dee, Holly, Wendy

Late 30s - mid 50s - Barbara, Ellen, Ruth, Susan

Talked about a current relationship - Barbara, Dee, Ellen, Gina, Holly, Melissa, Susan, Wendy, Zoe

Talked about previous relationship(s) - Barbara, Chris, Dee, Ellen, Holly, Ruth, Susan, Zoe

4.2.2. Study 2: Men participants

They were eleven male participants, aged between late teens and late 50s. All were white and British, and the intimate relationships they talked about were exclusively heterosexual, though, as with the women participants, I didn't specify that I was interested only in heterosexual relationships, or heterosexual participants. Most were well-educated, either to A-level, degree level or post-graduate level. They were either in full-time work or full-time education and included students, social work professionals, teachers and academics. Four men, whom I knew and who knew of my research, volunteered to take part directly, one as a result of meeting in town. Five men, one of whom I knew already, were encouraged to participate by women friends of mine. I asked two other men and they agreed. The snowballing method did not occur with the male participants, as no male participants told me of another man who would be interested in being interviewed. Though one man suggested he could possibly introduce me to a young man, this did not happen.

Of the eleven men I knew two as friends or close acquaintances (that is we have shared time together and personal histories), three quite well through shared activities, two as friends of friends and four I had not met before the interview. Again, all participants names are pseudonyms and I've grouped the participants by age, not because of any intention to compare them in these groups, but to avoid giving their exact ages as part of protecting their anonymity.

Late teens to mid 20s - Adam, Daniel, Tim

Mid 20s to late 30s - Nick, Robin, Simon, Will

Late 30s - mid 50s - Ian, Jon, Michael, Paul

Talked about a current relationship - Nick, Paul, Robin, Simon, Tim, Will

Talked about previous relationship(s) - Adam, Daniel, Simon, Ian, Jon, Michael

4.3. INTERVIEWS

Before each interview took place, participants were given more information (see Appendix 1) and I took care to establish that they were happy to proceed. Each participant was interviewed separately and the interviews lasted between 40 and 90 minutes, on average 70 minutes.

The interviews were semi-structured and the interview schedule can be read in Appendix 2. The questions intended to be as open as possible, so that the participants could tell me in their own way what was important to them, rather than agree or disagree with my ideas or opinions. The explicit intention was to encourage them to offer their accounts of love and heterosexual relationships, to position them as experts on their lives. I asked for details about what they considered to be their most important intimate relationship - how and when they met, when it became "serious", whether they were in love, whether it was important to be in love, whether they told each other "I love you", whether they had arguments. I asked them also to consider other people's relationships, whether they 'worked' or not. I encouraged them to add whatever they wanted about other relationships they'd had and their more general ideas about love, including an exercise intended to get them to talk about the 'should's of loving and being loved.

I drew on Hollway's (1989) discussion of the importance of using one's subjectivity in interacting with participants, which means that I did not ask questions word for word, but asked the questions in ways which seemed appropriate to each participant, and to our relationship, in terms of how well we knew each other. Similarly, I took opportunities to ask for more information in a conversational way, when I didn't understand something that was said, or when I thought I did but wanted confirmation (or not) for my assumptions. In this way I could ask the participant to explain some tacit understandings, and we could explore together some ideas. However, unlike Hollway's (1989) methodology, which drew on consciousness raising group interactions (and could have happened without the research context), my interviews were not naturally occurring and the topics we covered were inevitably shaped by my questions and the contexts the questions offered (see also section 4.5. on "Reflexivity"). Although I engaged in debates if participants raised them, if I was asked explicitly for my own opinions on a particular topic, I said I would answer any questions after we had completed the interview.

At times, I asked a question by preceding it with "You may already have answered this, but I wanted to ask you ..." in order to let participants answer each question, even if they had already touched on that area. At the end of the interview I asked participants to add anything that they wished, to return to any topic or add topics I had not introduced. Sometimes this led to talk of other relationships, sometimes to more general ideas they had.

The interviews took place where was most convenient for the participants:- With the women, four were at my home, six at their home and one in a university room.

With the men, one was at my home, three in their home, four in a room at their place of work and three in a university room.

The interviews were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim by me, including, for completeness, all "um"s and "er"s and using transcription conventions given in Appendix 3. However in the extracts included in my analyses I've usually omitted my "MmHm"s and "Yea"s from the extracts I use, for readability. This is in accordance with the post-structuralist discourse analysis I employ, concerned more with meanings than turn-taking. The transcription resulted in 169 pages of women's interviews and 177 pages of men's. I changed all names and omitted (or generalized) any

talk which might identify my participants, so that they were guaranteed anonymity. When the interview was finished, I arranged to send each participant a transcript, so that we could talk again briefly about the interview and whether they were happy with the transcript or if they wished me to change or omit any part. One woman and one man decided that they did not want to see a copy of the transcript. The remaining twenty interviewees were happy with the transcripts and, except for the addition of one comma, no changes were required. Most said that they found the interviews interesting. I either met each participant again or we talked about the interview on the phone. I did not record these follow up sessions, but made notes of any comments they wanted to make, and answered any questions. With two women participants, the follow up meeting was long, as the participant seemed to want to talk about relationship problems. I did not incorporate the material from these subsequent meetings into my analyses but I felt it was important to give participants my time.

4.4. PROCEDURE FOR ANALYSIS

Three analyses were performed. The first is of the women's interviews, the second the men's. A third analysis in relation to talk of infidelity (a theme identified in the analysis of the women's interviews as redolent with gendered constructions) was conducted across both sets of interviews.

4.4.1. Study 1: Analysing the women's interviews

By reading and rereading the interviews, I identified different recurrent themes which represented the participants' concerns as they intersected with my research questions. When these themes had been identified, the interviews were coded by theme, and extracts were filed according to the theme. If extracts referred to more than one theme, they were re-printed and filed under all relevant themes. This over-inclusiveness ensures that in reading and rereading all material related to themes, no relevant talk is omitted. No parts of the interviews were left uncoded.

The themes identified at this stage and in no particularly significant order were:-

- 1) How relationships progress, including talk about what happens in relationships, how different from each other relationships are, whether relationships are 'going anywhere'
- 2) Expectations of relationships / how a good or 'proper' relationship is constructed / importance of friendship, trust, humour, respecting your feelings
- 3) Understanding desperation and wanting to be in a relationship, the dangers inherent in doing this - fooling oneself - "you can make it into something that it's not going to be"/ being used
- 4) Signs of love and commitment
- 5) Theories about love ('in love', infatuation etc.) Suddenness of onset, attachment, commitment, happiness, uncertainty of whether in love
- 6) Experiences and feelings about love ('in love', infatuation, 'out of control' intensity and powerfulness of feelings, etc.)
- 7) Men's emotional difficulties (women feeling sorry for, excusing and protecting men)
- 8) Issues of power and control in relationships
- 9) Self-control / madness (links to 'love')
- 10) Insecurity
- 11) Infidelity (accounting for and coping with it)
- 12) Jealousy
- 13) Violence
- 14) Sex
- 15) Being oneself
- 16) Intuition

4.4.1.1. Identifying discourses and discursive themes

Once the interview transcripts were divided up into thematic material, it was possible to see that there was no interview material which had been overlooked. This was important to ensure that there were no participant concerns, not encompassed by my evolving research foci.

I then read and reread the interview material relating to each theme. In this way it was possible to focus on the similarities, variability and contradictions in the accounts of love and relationship. As already explained in section 4.1.2, the aim of my analysis was to identify dominant pervasive discourses and subject positions which helped to make sense of what participants were able to say. Part of this making sense is "to render

strange usual or habitual ways of making sense" (Wetherell, 1998, p394), so specific discursive formulations and positionings can be contextualized within broad historical and cultural concerns as well as in contexts offered by the participants. These contexts may overlap. By conceiving discourses as constructive practices (rather than as simply descriptive), they were identified by questioning what and how constructions were being made, as well as what subject positions were being made available or taken up. I focused on discursive constructions which seemed to me most relevant, in relation to my research questions about love and gender, as well as constructions highlighted by my participants either because participants questioned the construction or because constructions were implicated in contradictions. Mostly I attended to the interview texts in detail, continually asking how emerging concepts could be understood differently if others were not taken for granted as permanent or fixed, or if different positionings were attempted.

My first detailed analysis from the women's interviews came from a close reading of material related to the infidelity theme. I identified how women talked about their own infidelities rather differently from a male partner's infidelities (or expected infidelities), drawing on a gendered discourse of infidelity. This led to my subsequent decision to interview a group of men for Study 2 in order to investigate whether men talked of infidelity in similarly gendered ways.

My analyses of the women's interviews can be found in Chapter 5. They encompass the experience of love and being in intimate heterosexual relationships, and the implications for them and for men and other women. The analyses draw on the important concerns which women talked about, including the emotional aspects of love, the possibilities for having satisfactory love relationships and the possibility of mutual and reciprocal relationships with men. How they managed their sexual identities in relation to love emerged as a common concern.

Where I detail a discursive theme, I use extracts to demonstrate how participants have positioned themselves and others in relation to that discursive theme, whether as accepting or resistant or both. Identifying variability in the subject positions taken up by participants draws attention to the importance of making contextualized analyses. This also helps to contest any attribution of ideas to speakers as if they are representatives of

those ideas. Though I want to explicate *common* discursive strategies and dominant discourses, this is neither to categorize nor generalize my women participants, nor women in general. In using discourse analysis, it is possible to question what speakers are achieving by using particular discourses in particular ways. Though a speaker's identity may be performed through discourse, identity is not fixed and cannot be collapsed into a category of this or that sort of speaker, because discourses are being used to do specific work in specific contexts, and different work may be done very differently.

4.4.2. Study 2: Analysing the men's interviews

The procedure for analysis of the men's interviews was the same as for the interviews with the women participants (See section 4.4.1). The printed interviews were read and reread to identify themes.

The themes identified, at this stage and in no particularly significant order, were:-

- 1) Work analogies of relationships, work experience (sometimes social work/ counselling) informing relationships, relationships as practice / training, communication, relative importance of work and relationships, relationships having to fit in with life style, where you are in your life/career structure, avoiding the domestic.
- 2) Commitment
- 3) Control / negotiation, including arguments as positive or negative and identified difficulties / problems (hers?)
- 4) Development of relationships, starts, progress / development, endings, expectations
- 5) Role playing/pretence/being fooled
- 6) Independence / interdependence
- 7) Love being difficult to talk about / confusion / "don't know". Not having thought about aspects of love before
- 8) Theories and expectations of love, being most truly yourself, attachment theory, psychodynamics/ projection / pathology
- 9) Romance/ avoidance of romance, 'in love' or 'love', experience / feelings
- 10) Intensity of emotions (often negatively viewed as stifling, unsustainable), "a natural sort of happiness", electricity, excitement, magic
- 11) Self-control

- 12) Inside/outside perspective on emotions
- 13) Responding to being loved (including 'mishearing' "If you love me then I should" etc.)
- 14) Jealousy / positive and negative, ideologically informed anti-jealousy, jealousy as 'natural' and 'normal'
- 15) Infidelity, accounts of (different gender positions, as already part explored), women constructed as leaving man for someone else only in negotiated open relationship, not "betrayal" when woman slept with someone else, link to ideologically informed anti-jealousy
- 16) Insecurity (often women's)
- 17) Violence

The discourse analysis that followed from reading and rereading the thematic material, was conducted in the same way as for the women's interviews (see section 4.4.1.1.), and this is written up in Chapter 6.

4.4.3. Study 3: Analysing the women's and men's accounts of infidelity

The third analysis, written up in Chapter 7, draws on both the women's and men's interviews and focuses on constructions of monogamy and infidelity. A discourse of infidelity emerged in the women's interviews as an important discourse in relation to talking about love, gender and sexuality. The chapter starts with an analysis of the women's talk of infidelity and then proceeds with an analysis of the men's, in order in order to question whether the women's and men's accounts of infidelity draw on similar discourses. The analytic method follows that already discussed in section 4.4.1.1.

4.5. REFLEXIVITY

Reflexivity, or questioning the role of the researcher in producing their findings, has been identified as a crucial aspect in doing qualitative research as "all knowledge is partial, socially situated and contingent" (Henwood *et al.*, 1998, p39). The researcher is responsible for deciding how the research will be undertaken, what materials will be analysed, what readings will be offered and how they will be presented. The qualitative researcher acknowledges their subjectivity in order to make readings of talk and textual material, but any basis on which the readings are made

must be foregrounded and the readings themselves must be laid open to others. But even so, they remain interpretations, open to debate.

I offer some background for my position as researcher, not to suggest that this is all I am, or that anyone else sharing my background and (shifting) standpoint would produce similar analyses, but that my experiences, and understanding of them, are partly grounded in my having occupied particular social positions. I was a white female adolescent in the middle 1960s. I come from a lower-middle class family, went to a co-educational grammar school and, unusually for a woman then and now, went to university to study mathematics. As a student in the late sixties, I was politically active, for instance, in campaigns to stop the US war in Vietnam. I was a hippy but not a feminist. Feminism reached me later, in my early thirties, when (then working as a computer analyst/programmer) I became an active campaigner, especially against male violence against women and children. I eventually decided to leave computing and study for a psychology degree, hoping to work in an area where I might contribute something more positive towards ending women's oppression. Since the late 1960s, my own personal experience of love (romantic and sexual) is as a white woman in a long term monogamous relationship with a white man, a relationship which has endured many changes, including my becoming an active feminist. My feminism is inevitably partly informed by the strength and support of this relationship as well as the contradictions it has sometimes thrown up. My sexuality, in practice, has been exclusively heterosexual. I identify myself (if asked to do so) as 'heterosexual, so far', my long-term sexual practice having been chosen in relation to my current relationship and monogamy.

As friend, refuge worker and counsellor, I have also been privileged to hear many other women's, and some men's, experiences of love, life and relationships, not exclusively heterosexual. When I started this research I had thought to research only women's experiences, and not to include only heterosexual experience. My first study included women who talked only of heterosexual relationships, and so my focus has fallen on heterosexuality, to the exclusion of other sexualities. Also, following a part analysis of these interviews which illuminated the gendering of infidelity, I decided to interview a group of men. I recognise that as a woman I may make different sense of the men's interviews from a male interviewer, but then a different researcher will always bring a different viewpoint and therefore

may make different sense of others' talk. My viewpoint is as a woman and as a feminist. I offer my reading of the interviews, and also acknowledge that male interviewees may have talked differently with a male interviewer. They may also have talked differently to another woman, a younger woman for instance. Williams and Heikes (1993) explain a preference for women to interview men in in-depth interviews, as there is a "general view that men are more comfortable talking about intimate topics with women than with other men" (Williams and Heikes, 1993, p281). This view is obviously based on gender stereotypes, and depends on the men involved. As far as I could tell the men (with one possible exception) were 'comfortable' speaking with me, but may well have been 'performing' masculinity differently in the context of an interview with a woman rather than a man. If men tend to 'protect their vulnerable selves' (See Chapter 3, section 3.4) to 'do' masculinity, then an interview with a woman other than their partner would be less threatening to masculine identity than an interview with a man.

As part of being reflexive about this research, I also started a memory-work group (see Crawford *et al.*, 1992) with some women friends, so that we could write memories of aspects of love and relationships, and then discuss them. We researched many different topics, such as "feeling jealous", "feeling excited", "feeling angry", "feeling pressured", "getting married", "first boyfriend", "an adolescent crush". I also used this method with a group of students, several of whom gave me their written memories (on "starting a relationship", "ending a relationship" and "an adolescent crush"), to help me in my research. The intention of this memory work was to enable me, with others, to discuss in some depth, but informally, some of the ways in which we wrote and talked about matters of love, as well as any shared understandings. Memories shared were confidential and did not constitute collected data for my thesis.

I also became much more critically analytic of cultural forms of romance, analysing film, literature and magazine articles in becoming more aware of variability in discoursing love and intimacy.

4.5.1. Reflecting on the experience of conducting the interviews, transcriptions and analyses

I had assumed in the earlier stages of interviewing men, that it might be more difficult to find men to be interviewed. This seemed to be borne out by two incidents which I offer as anecdotes. When I phoned one woman to say I'd been told she was interested in being interviewed, she responded, "Interested! I'd love to!". In contrast phoning one of the men in the same way, he responded, "Not interested, but willing"! My other anecdote comes from meeting a man who had been a work colleague. I've already explained how some of my women participants volunteered as participants after accidental meetings, such as this one. In this particular meeting however, after I'd told him about my research and that I was interviewing men, he responded with something like "You must find it difficult to get them to talk to you" and did not volunteer. I did need more help from friends in finding young men to interview, but I did have several male volunteers overall. I'm left with an impression that if I had wanted to interview more participants, it would have been easier to find many more women than men.

I found conducting the interviews very interesting and enjoyable. The interviewees seemed to approach the interviews in different ways, which seemed largely unrelated to how well I knew them, and this led to my role being more or less involved, depending on whether the participants were keen to talk or not. I identified the different contexts that were produced as:-

- 1) a confessional or counselling session, in which to check out their ideas or feelings - 4 women, 2 men
- 2) an opportunity to talk - 5 women, 5 men
- 3) a keenness to help either me personally or a researcher - 8 women, 8 men
- 4) a willingness to be of help to me personally or a researcher - 1 woman, 3 men.

Contexts 1, 2 and 3 were not mutually exclusive, but context 4 seemed distinct. Contexts 1 and 2 led to the most interesting interviews for me, because these interviews needed my involvement more as listener and responder, rather than as interviewer, and because participants seemed to

get more out of these interviews. For instance, Holly, whose interview I see as mostly confessional and an opportunity for her to talk through some things which were bothering her, said that the transcript helped her to see that she hadn't "gone round in circles" in the interview.

However, when it came to transcription, I sometimes found that I became a little bored with the interviews of participants which produced context 2 without context 1. In the main, I think this was because they sometimes became rather repetitive. This was something which I did not usually notice during the interview, so transcription is a different process of meaning making from interviews. Also, during transcription, I could allow myself to express my emotions in relation to the interview material that I had not felt was appropriate during the interview. Feeling somewhat bored was a much milder reaction than my shouted aloud opinion of the male partners of two of my women participants, when I felt the women were extremely understanding of their partners in circumstances where I would not be (or am fairly sure I wouldn't be).

When it came to the analysis, I found it hard to shift from focusing on individual transcripts and individual participants, to focusing on discourses. I could identify the discourses that an individual was drawing on or resisting, but when it came to writing about the discourses, each extract would seem to draw me back to a picture I had of the individual's whole interview, and the person themselves, especially if they were people I knew well. I think this helped me not to lose sight of contradiction and complexity in the interviews, but eventually I moved into a mode in which discourses became my focus and the interviewees became almost anonymous speakers to me. This happened to the extent that, in the later stages of my analysis, I could find myself able to talk about my work to someone who had been a participant, without thinking about their role in it. With two fairly close friends who were participants, they have been very interested in my findings and they too don't mention their role in my work. I find this both reassuring and disturbing, and hope to talk with them about this at some later date.

As a reflexive point, there have been one or two worries for me in relation to protecting participants' anonymity. This is a downside of the snowballing and introduction method, where I've felt that occasionally someone has been eager to find out what someone they've introduced to me

has said. If I'm asked if I've interviewed a specific person, I reply that I can't say who I've interviewed. I have taken particular care to ensure that if anyone reads this thesis, they cannot identify a particular respondent. This means however that I have been unable to include details like occupation, marital status or number of children, and I have put people into age groups, rather than giving their exact ages.

The next three chapters present the findings from the the discourse analytic methodology I have laid out here. I focus on participants' constructions of love and intimacy, and question the consequences of these constructions. In doing so, I develop broad discourses of love and relationships and detail the discursive themes from which these broad discourses are built, or woven.

In chapters Chapters 5 and 6 I offer an in-depth reading of the women's and men's interviews, respectively, focusing on discourses of love and associated subject positions. Chapter 7 starts with a comparison of the analyses in Chapters 5 and 6 and then carries through some of the arguments made those chapters, in order to discuss how discourses of infidelity drawn on in both sets of interviews are imbricated with discursive constructions of gender, love and sex.

CHAPTER 5. STUDY 1. WOMEN IN LOVE

To be loved is a mysterious thing, even under the best of circumstances. And it does not help much to try and inquire about love; if anything, asking about it muddles the situation further. ... Love is a paradox that has puzzled minds greater than yours and mine. (Watzlawick, 1983, p96)

In their interviews, the women in my study described themselves in love and sometimes loved in return, in a variety of intimate heterosexual relationships, past and present. Though some were now talking of attempts to have serious and committed relationships without 'being in love', all of the women told of times when they had experienced very powerful feelings which they called 'love'. Their language of love was a language of affect, of feeling. They often endorsed both the mystery and muddle proposed in the above quote from Watzlawick (1983), but they were all interested to explore the 'paradox' of love with me. In this chapter I want to deconstruct the women's love stories in order to both question the dominant and recurrent discourses drawn on and also consider the contexts for love produced by these discourses.

5.1. THE DISCOURSE OF ROMANTIC LOVE

This first part (sections 5.1 to 5.1.7) looks at how women participants positioned themselves within a discourse of romantic love, a discourse built around powerful feelings, romantic epiphanies and Mr Right. This discourse constructs women as wanting (or needing) to be in intimate heterosexual relationships and is implicated in justifying women's (hetero)sexual activity.

5.1.1. Powerful feelings: weird yet recognizable feelings

In talking of themselves as 'in love' or 'falling in love', the women participants often explicitly juxtaposed their feelings and behaviours with those of unknown or unnamed others. In this way, their experiences of love, described as "weird" and "odd", are offered intelligibility by comparison with a common shared peculiar experience, that of falling in love. In positioning themselves within a discourse of romantic love, they demonstrated their facility for manipulating romantic genres and telling

love stories (Jackson, 1993). As Barbara says about the relationship she refers to as "my ill-fated love affair":-

BARBARA. ... it seems to me such an extraordinary (laughs) experience that it sort of intrigues me even now 'cos it-it sort of fitted the criteria of falling in love. Ss, I mean I didn't believe it until it happened to me, the songs and the poems and all that, I mean it was just like that and um.

This event is constructed as no quotidian experience and its proffered extraordinariness ensures that it is recognized as the romantic love articulated by common 'love stories'.

RUTH. ... there was this long lingering look between us and er he just sort of put his arms round me and kissed me and that was it, you know. It's where you sink into somebody's arms and stars come out and music's playing. (laughs)

BARBARA. ...You know all the things they say I couldn't eat. I couldn't sleep. I couldn't concentrate on anything and this sort of insatiable desire to know about the object of one's desire. You know, everything is fascinating even the most ridiculous things like whether he took sugar in his coffee was a source of, source of fascination to me. The smell of his house, which wasn't a very nice smell (laughs) even, would send me into transports of delight.

Expressions from the above extract from Ruth's interview would seem to have been directly culled from a Barbara Cartland story or a Mills and Boon romance. Barbara's evocative and amusing style seems less conventionally romantic, because of the irony she employs in describing the "ridiculous things" which could send her into "transports of delight".

In indicated in Chapter 4, that, for readability, I've omitted my "MmHm"s and "Yea"s from the extracts. In the following one, however, I've left them to illustrate how, in interaction with Holly, I too have suggested that I understand what it is like to position myself within the discourse of romantic love.

HOLLY. You know when you first meet somebody (ANGIE. Yea) and it's all wonderful and er you know you actually - the phone rings and your heart thumps and all that kind of stuff and or if you're single and you you're going out, you know, with the hope of meeting somebody that night. (ANGIE. Yea) All those kind of feelings, the hope really. (ANGIE. Yea)

Going out with the hope of "meeting somebody" seems to be something she expected me to understand because I, as a woman, would know about the potential of romantic meetings and the desire to find someone who may turn the phone ringing into a heart thumping experience (because it might be him!).

The experience of falling in love is constructed as something which may recur. Though the weird experience may be unwanted, it may be difficult to resist.

BARBARA. ... but I think it ["what I would call falling in love"] , it still intrigues me because it was such an odd experience (laughs) - but p'raps people do this lots of times but it's only ever happened to me once and I wouldn't want to ever go through it again.

Emphasizing the oddity and the isolated incidence of Barbara's experience of falling in love functions to ensure that she is not positioned as an emotional woman who is continually subject to unusual passions and feelings, though others may be. As a consequence, the experience is constructed as extremely powerful and overwhelming as this did not usually happen to her. This is a tale of the unexpected for Barbara, and so it requires lengthy explanation.

Even a story which explicitly resists the discourse of romantic love, uses an illustration of romantic behaviour to explain what was omitted from a participant's marriage. In describing herself and her husband as "anti-romantic", Susan portrayed romance as comprising superficial gestures, while their love, she said, was still "basically" the same as that of others. Romance would have been only icing on the cake, nice but not necessary. In this way she was able to construct herself as 'in love' without having to be too romantic.

ANGIE. And do you think your ideas about love and being in love are similar to other peoples'? Erm Can you say?

SUSAN. Um I don't know. Erm. Yes I suppose they are fairly similar but I think both of us are a bit sort of anti, anti-romantic. Er neither of us go in for the grand gestures. Neither of us are into kind of sending, you know, leaving scented notes to each other or flowers or, you know, all the kind of romantic gestures that are feted in peoples' stories of their affairs with all - I suppose we've rejected all that stuff as being as being superficial and meaningless. Erm which which would, which is a shame in some ways because we might have enjoyed some of them. But um. Um so I suppose we've we've been more, it's been more hard edged our approach to it. But I think basically, yea, it is the same. Yes.

Susan's explanation seems very much in accord with Stevi Jackson's (1993) suggestion that "It is much easier to refuse to participate in romantic rituals, to resist pressures towards conventional marriage, to be cynical about 'happy ever after' endings than it is to avoid falling in love" (Jackson, 1993, p209). The meaningfulness of other people's romantic stories has been rejected, while Susan also acknowledges that romance might have been a potential source of enjoyment. Susan seems to resist positioning herself within the discourse of romantic love, not only in stating she and her husband were anti-romantic, but also by the somewhat depersonalized way in which she talks about love as "it", rather than talking about her experiencing love. In this way, she is drawing on a more modernist, rational discourse rather than an romanticist one according to Gergen and Gergen's (1995) distinction.

I'm attempting to delineate the apparently known state of being in love which is both utilized and created by the women participants, as they both construct and are constructed by a discourse of romantic love. The very unusualness, powerfulness and strangeness accorded to these feelings and experiences, seem to characterize them as romantic love. The constructed weirdness and at times, ridiculousness, might seem to signal a limit to logical theorizing and explain a need to draw on literary exemplars. Yet their feelings and experiences of love, by also being constructed as recognizable and able to be read from the offered cultural narratives such as unspecified 'songs and poems', are given a commonplace unusualness. The experience is odd, but to own it is not. The lack of specificity of the

songs and poems implies universal knowledge of them, and the pervasiveness of a dominant discourse of romantic love is both constructed and implicated in understanding these emotional states. Women can explain themselves in love because we 'know' about love from literature, film, song and other 'real' lives. They position themselves as knowing about love not only by experiencing it personally, but also vicariously. Gina, for instance, could draw on an unnamed film to articulate her unusual and unwelcome feelings for a man she was unlikely to have a relationship with as he was going out with a close friend of hers.

GINA. ... It's like um, um quoting from this film um about this unlikely couple and this woman says to this man - no this man says to this woman, he says 'All I know is that when I'm not with you I'm a total wreck'. And she says 'And when you are with me?', He says 'I'm a different kind of total wreck'. And that's how I feel really. That's, that's exactly, that sums it up totally.

Investing in romance, constructing their experience as love and as what others would accept as love, serves to structure the experience as essentially and necessarily an emotional one, within which the feelings are both special and weird, yet also understandable and shared.

5.1.2. Romantic epiphanies: "suddenly", not 'love at first sight'

I've shown how the women participants drew on cultural understandings of romantic feelings to explain and understand themselves as 'in love'. A common cultural form of romantic love story includes the notion of 'love at first sight', which Averill (1985) suggested was part of a romantic syndrome, where Illouz (1997) concluded this was uncommon, though idealized, by her participants. 'Love at first sight' did not form part of my participants' stories. An initial physical attraction was sometimes described, but this was not constructed as falling in love.

CHRIS. You, you can have an attraction to somebody. You can look across a room and think 'Mm yea' and you can see they're looking and that eye contact - they have an attraction - But I think love at first sight is is, is for Mills and Boon and it really doesn't work like that.

BARBARA. ... and as soon as I saw him I mean there was an immediate physical attraction that, sort of real kind of thump sort of feeling (laugh) and, um, I found him incredibly attractive.

In Chris's construction of physical attraction, rather than "love at first sight", she suggests that it is only in the fiction of Mills and Boon, rather than reality, that this happens. However, the women's interviews suggested that 'falling in love' happens, if not at first sight, then "suddenly". Even when they had known the person for some time, the experience of falling in love with them seems to happen instantaneously.

BARBARA. ... so I'd known him four years before it changed, very suddenly, into a sexual relationship and at that, that was the point I suppose when I felt that overnight I, I can tell you the date (laughs) It was the [exact date] (both laugh) that I sort of catapulted, it felt like that, into a state of, (short pause) I suppose it was total infatuation.

BARBARA. ... and he suddenly held my hand and (laugh) I remember, I can still remember looking at it, sort of feeling this mixture of being AGHAST and sort of THRILLED and that was it and um I just, (pause) I sort of felt as though I sort of plummeted into this state of being infatuated at that moment.

RUTH. ... maybe there'd always been a, an underlying perhaps a sort of sexual chemistry, I don't know. But neither of us had ever done anything about it to that point. And then it just suddenly changed, very suddenly one day, and it just became this really passionate affair which was really nice. (laughs)

This suddenness can be seen to function as a narrative device to heighten the excitement and wonder of the love story. It offers an epiphanic moment of recognition and possible transcendence, and a story with a steep trajectory (Gergen 1988), both up and down ("catapulted", "plummeted"). Positioning oneself within a discourse of romantic epiphanies emphasizes the out of control nature of the feelings and experiences of love. This may also serve specifically to justify having an extra-marital affair, as Barbara and Ruth were both talking about relationships they termed "affairs".

As already explicated, the recognition of themselves experiencing weird and overwhelming feelings, seems to signal to the women that they are 'in love'. The discursive construction of weird and peculiar feelings as 'suddenly' happening, constructs the women as having no choice or agency, but they have to experience these feelings when they strike. The women, subject to 'love', construct themselves as unable to avoid the emotions involved. That is part of being in love, of taking part in a romantic love story. But the discursive contradictions involved as the women position themselves 'in love' vary enormously. Holly, in section 5.1.1, offered what seemed a straightforward positioning in a discourse of romantic love by talking about possibilities of romantic meetings. In other parts of her interview, however, she also talked about not being so sure about the importance of being in love, which I look at in the next section.

5.1.3. Discoursing the importance of being in a relationship and whether women have to be 'in love'

I WILL NOT

Sulk about having no boyfriend, but develop inner poise and authority and sense of self as woman of substance, complete without boyfriend, as best way to obtain boyfriend.

(A New Year's resolution from *Bridget Jones's Diary* by Helen Fielding (1996, p2))

In questioning whether it is necessary to be in love, the expectation of being in an intimate heterosexual relationship, rather than not, was often constructed as part of women's expectations.

ANGIE. ... So so do you don't think it's important to be in love? Or do you?

HOLLY. I'm not cert- I would have said 'Yes' a couple of years ago but I'm not so sure now. But um I've got cold feet this time last year and um I thought I'm, you know, on a bit of a conveyor belt and I'm going to be stuck here for ever with the same relationship and nothing's happening. So I, you know, went out and sought some excitement but it wasn't what I expected so I went back into the the (Angie laughs) cosy relationship (laughing) really, which is more important to me now, you know...

Here, Holly has suggested that being 'in love' is exciting, in contrast to a more "cosy" relationship that you're "stuck" in. She's now settling for "cosy", an unusual choice of descriptor for a relationship in which, she later explained, her partner had previously been physically violent towards her. The recurrent distinction between 'in love' relationships as new and exciting in contrast to longer term relationships when words such as "secure", "cosy" and sometimes "boring" are applied, seems to draw on the notion of a passionate/companionate love divide (as discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.4.1). I will address this issue a little later in this chapter. Here I want to draw attention to Holly's construction of the desire for the excitement of being in love as usual and expected, that there is a need for an escape from humdrum, everyday existence in which "nothing's happening". But that excitement of being in love may not constitute having a relationship, and Holly also explained that "some kind of relationship" was necessary to her.

HOLLY. I sort of got lonely and got hassled by my current partner and um er went back. I mean, I'm quite comfortable with that. I seem to have the need to have some kind of relationship.

The justificatory "I'm quite comfortable with that" may be to deflect criticism of her return to a previously violent relationship or for her "need" for some kind of relationship. Positioning herself as subject to personal feelings, she resists both the dominant western discourse of self-sufficiency and independence and the discourse of romantic love. She talks of feeling sad for her single friends as they haven't met "somebody" and they'd like to, and that this is a way of living that she would want to avoid for fear of feeling "ready to meet somebody and it kind of doesn't happen". Though I can't be certain, I think these friends are women.

HOLLY. I suppose there's this other dilemma of whether it's better to be in a bad relationship than not be in any relationship. You know it's a choice between the two.

ANGIE. Have you decided? Is it possible to decide it?

HOLLY. I can't decide, sometimes (inaud). And I think I'm a relationship person. But um it's er, you know. I've got lots of friends - funnily enough my friends are all single and um I feel, you know, quite sad for them because they're ready to meet somebody and it

kind of doesn't happen. Mm. It's the fear, you know, of feeling that that.

Ruth also explicitly suggested that she was "fortunate" to have been continuously in relationships and that a woman might get desperate for "a relationship", where "a relationship" is understood as shorthand for an intimate heterosexual relationship.

RUTH. I don't know, I don't know what I'd do if I was sort of desperate for a relationship. I'm I'm fortunate and maybe quite unusual in as much as in all the years since I've been in male/female relationships, I've never actually been without a relationship because they've all sort of dovetailed in into one another.

I didn't ask why my participants would want to be in an intimate relationship, and no specific reasons were given, except to not be "lonely", as Holly has suggested above and Barbara, below. Again this draws on a discursive construction of feelings.

BARBARA. ... my ill-fated love affair had just come to - had really come to a final end and I felt very flat and very lonely and, I mean, I was relieved in a way that it was over but I just like felt very empty.

The necessity of being in an intimate relationship was also constructed in answering my question about what they would tell a friend who was "desperate" to be in a relationship. They did not resist the notion of desperation, though they did problematize acting upon it. "Get a dog" was suggested twice before offering other advice. The way to getting a male partner or a relationship was to look neither for him nor it, as suggested in the extract above from Bridget Jones's Diary, the 1998 best-selling novel about a woman in her 20s, and her concerns about her life, her weight, her friends, her smoking and drinking and her "singleton" status.

CHRIS. ... If you go out and look for somebody you're never gonna find anybody. Because you're going to have this um this idea in your mind of this person you want to find and they're not gonna look like that and they're, they're not, you know, going to be what you want because you're looking.

MEL. Don't look for it. Don't look for it. There's no way you can go out. I mean if you go out and you're on the pull it's it's blatantly obvious anyway and people are just going to use you for it. Um and it's not going to get you a relationship. It'll just sort of, you know, maybe get you a casual one night, week, two weeks whatever. And um so there's no point in doing it blatantly obviously. And if you don't look for things they tend to just come along anyway.

ZOE. ... And I've waited for months and thought God it's been months and also months and months have passed and it's not happened. But as soon as I actually get like, like get used to it and think like I don't mind, I'm enjoying myself, it always happens then. I think just don't look for it and it will happen really.

A discourse analysis, rather than being interested in the 'reality' of love or of the 'in love' self, is more interested in asking what the discourse of romantic love is allowing those who draw on it to achieve. In the women's interviews, there was an assumption that their being 'in love' was expected in a 'serious' intimate relationship or love affair. Also acknowledged was that 'being in love' in an intimate relationship is the expected cultural form in the western world. So recognizing she's 'in love' functions to explain why a woman would want to be in a particular intimate relationship. In chapter 7, I'll look in more detail at how women's 'being in love' is implicated in discoursing sexual monogamy and infidelity. Here I am addressing how expectations of 'falling in love' or 'being in love', as well as feelings of loneliness, were implicated in constructing the importance and seriousness of an intimate heterosexual relationship for a woman. In the following exchange with Dee, it is possible to read how she presents being in love as a usual requirement in a serious relationship, but that she is currently attempting to challenge this in her own personal life. She indicates this is no easy or straightforward decision as it had been something she'd been thinking about "for weeks".

ANGIE. Right. Is it important, do you think, to be in love?

DEE. If you'd asked me that two years ago I'd have said 'YES IT IS'. (quick laugh and Angie joins in) (pause) Not for me now. Not for me now. (inaudible) going through this cross-roads - it's weird that you should come to ask these questions cos that's what I've been thinking

myself for weeks and - going round and round in my head because - oh well, carry on.

ANGIE. All right, yea. Well it does lead on in a way. Do you think your ideas about love or being in love are are different from other peoples'? You seem to be sort of saying ...

DEE. Yes. Yes. Not everyone I know - I've got the odd friend that would think the same as me now but they've changed as well whether it's came from being older or getting hurt, I don't know. I mean people can say to me 'You've got a barrier up. You're frightened of falling in love ' and I don't think I have. I just (pause) - it's not really a priority to me in life anymore to be in love with him - you know - to have a man there.

Holly, earlier, had talked about giving up on looking for the excitement and hope of being in love or infatuated to go back to a "cosy" relationship rather than be in no relationship. Dee provides two reasons for why she and the "odd" (her word) friend would not want to be 'in love'. One is a 'being older' explanation, drawing on a notion of maturity which constructs being 'in love' as something that one may be able to leave behind as one matures or becomes more adult. Being in love is thus constructed as something for younger people. (Dee was in her mid 30s at the time of interview.) (I'll return to the notion of maturity in section 5.1.7) The second reason Dee provides is the one which Holly also utilized, which was about avoiding hurt or pain, positioning themselves as having been subject to powerful negative emotions. I'll discuss discourses of emotion later in section 5.2. Here I want to show how a stated decision to avoid 'being in love' has been doubly justified, which implies this is a decision that needs warranting because it is unusual (Hollway, 1989).

There is some ambiguity in the last two lines of the extract. It could be that Dee is equating 'to be in love' with "to have a man there", or that she could "have a man there", while not needing to be in love with him. The latter meaning flags a transgression of the the expectation that women need to love their male partners. The former meaning suggests, contradictorily, that giving up love means giving up men. Using the term "people" to externalize criticisms such as, "You've got a barrier up. You're frightened of falling in love", suggests that Dee feels pressure to allow herself to fall in love, and to not prevent any authentic feelings of love. In this way, the decision to eschew men and love is presented as problematic and unusual,

requiring weeks of thought as Dee negotiates her location in relation to expectations of heterosexual femininity. She is resisting a dominant discursive construction of women as wanting and needing to be in love as this defines their existence. As Byron wrote in Don Juan,

Man's love is of man's life a thing apart.
'Tis woman's whole existence.

The focus on feelings as the switch into or away from love emphasizes the pervasive assumption of women's emotional orientation to relationships, as well as positioning women as emotional specialists. What has not been talked about is power and sexual double standards. However, women's orientation to love and men's to sex, as exemplified discursively by Wendy Hollway's (1984;1989) explanation of gendered subject positions in the 'have/hold' and 'male sex drive' discourses, would explain why Dee would have a difficult job talking about having a man there and not being in love with him. I take this up further in the next section.

5.1.4. A gendered discourse of romantic love: women want love, men want sex

The explicitly gendered construction of women as wanting love recurs in the interviews with women, especially when talking about love in conjunction with sex. Ruth draws on it in order to explain how she does not now go along with this notion, a notion of romantic love she ascribes to homogenous messages from "magazines" and "TV". Yet the power of the notion is underlined in the way she suggests that women wanting sex without love had been shocking to her and is potentially shocking to me.

RUTH. I used to think it was essential for women to be in love to have any sort of relationship at all. I think I went through a phase when I was very naive. Um up until probably I was about 30, you know. And I had stars in my eyes and I thought everything was like it was in magazines and on the TV. (laughing) And it wasn't until um my marriage started to fall apart and I I was befriended by a woman who had been divorced and who had remarried. And um I remember sort of talking to her one day and I said, well I said, you know, I think it's very important for women to feel that they're in love. Cos I, I don't think women can have a sort of sexual relationships without being

in love. And she said 'Oh that's rubbish', you know. (Angie - short laugh) And I thought Gosh Shock Horror. (laughs and Angie does too) And then when I thought about it, well I thought, she's actually quite right. I mean sex is not, sex is nothing to do with love. Sex is just sort of fancying somebody and enjoying yourself and er, you know, with with obviously certain constraints - am I shocking you?

ANGIE. Do I look shocked?

RUTH. NO not really. (Both laugh) So I started to treat it more like, I suppose I always tended to think it was more of a male sort of idea of a relationship that you know, that that sort of progression of events that you just see somebody you fancy and you just say 'how about it' and 'okay fine'.

I'm not convinced that my response "Do I look shocked?" was adequate in contesting any notion that I might be. I wish I'd said "No not at all". Ruth doesn't sound convinced that I'm not shocked either. Her construction of the idea of sex without love as "more of a male sort of idea of a relationship" reconstitutes a double standard which suggests women have to love someone prior to having sex with them, but men can have sex without the complication or necessity of love, as "sex is nothing to do with love". This is commensurate with the gendered positions offered in Hollway's (1984; 1989) 'male sex drive' and 'have/hold' discourses. However, explaining a woman's having sex without love as a "male sort of idea", repositions women within a have/hold discourse, and reproduces a male sex drive discourse rather than a more equitable permissive one (Hollway, 1984; 1989).

Again, as in the previous extract above from Dee's interview, 'maturity' is used to resist the discourse of romantic love. Ruth, in constructing herself as older and more mature, can resist having to be 'in love' to have sex or a relationship, and thus can be more like a man! In this way, having to be 'in love' is associated with adolescence, immaturity, naiveté and (heterosexual) femininity (though Ruth contradictorily still drew on a discourse of romantic love to describe her most important relationship, as can be seen in the extract in section 5.1.1, and she talked of being "in love" as well as "in lust"). Research suggests that it is for young women, in particular, that the dilemma of having heterosexual sex and preserving reputation is most pressing, and can be resolved through a code of romance (e.g. Christian-Smith, 1988; Lees, 1997). Zoe, a young woman, certainly seems to be protecting her reputation, as she problematizes promiscuity for women.

ZOE. Um um. It's [Angie's research] about women and love and relationships isn't it? Well this is very general but um I think, someone, I heard someone said once 'women use sex to get love and men use love to get sex ' and I think that usually kind of covers the frame.

ANGIE. Very depressing way to look at {things isn't it?

ZOE. {I know, I think generally women are much more interested in the love aspect and I think um - well I I can't speak for men but I get the impression that sex for men is sex and for most women it's a sign of affection and appreciation of being wanted. And I think that's why a lot of women are promiscuous, to feel wanted and cos um - I mean a couple of years ago I went through a stage of being fairly promiscuous and at the time I thought it was great and I thought Oh everyone really likes me, you know. But it, you know, if you look back with hindsight, it's from a - people just thinking, men thinking they can get their end away really. For me it was a sign of trying to feel wanted by people. Like to any of my friends who've been through similar phases, they all say the same. So. I think, I think that's the difference is that women are more interested in the love side of it and affection and I think that's why, I think that's why sex is usually special to women in that way as opposed to.

Zoe constructs herself and some of her (presumably female) friends as having gone through a phase of being promiscuous. This is now written off, partly by putting it in the past, but also by making it about wanting love and to "feel wanted", rather than wanting sex. Sex is presented for women as signifying "affection and appreciation". In this way, Zoe can position herself as not promiscuous at all. Again heterosexual femininity is contrasted as different from heterosexual masculinity, not by virtue of having sex but in relation to the meanings behind this. So a young woman's explanation for sex is to be seeking love, but not sexual experience. The sex comes as an accompaniment or a means to an end, and the end is to feel loved. This reproduces the expectation that women, especially young women, have no sexual desire *per se* (*cf.* Fine, 1988), as Zoe positions herself as heterosexually feminine within a have/hold discourse, rather than a permissive discourse, with heterosexual masculinity positioned within the male sex drive discourse (Hollway, 1984; 1989).

This recurrent construction suggests that women, particularly young women, who are (or want to be) sexually active may often construct themselves as in love. But the discourse of romantic love, as identified particularly by cultural analysts and literary theorists is usually predicated on a premise that there is one true love, not a series of soul mates with whom one has sex. The next two sections look at how the women in my study have tended to reinterpret their feelings of love for previous male sexual partners, leaving open the way to one true love.

5.1.5. Shifting and fragmented meanings of love: constructing a moral hierarchy of emotion

Whether he seeks to prove his love, or to discover if the other loves him, the amorous subject has no sure signs at his disposal. (Barthes, 1978, p214)

ZOE. I don't think - it's not as exciting as it has been with other people but it's better [her emphasis] if you know what I mean. I mean I get a lot more from it than I did with anyone else but um it, but it's not, I'm more relaxed with him as well. There's not the kind of shivers down the spine as with someone else, you know. But I sometimes miss that but I think, thinking about it I wouldn't (laughing) swap it really.

Raising issues about sex and love involved participants in questioning how 'love' is differentiated from 'lust', for instance. In romances, as Belsey (1994) says "But there seems to be no clear empirical (which is to say, textual) distinction between the physical intensities of desire-as-true-love and its simulacrum, lust, which lacks the moral dimension." (Belsey, 1994, p26). This was supported in the women's interviews, as they demonstrated discursive problems for women when they construct love's immanent powerful and overwhelming feelings, because 'lust' and 'infatuation' are similarly constructed by them. In naming the emotional experience as love, the powerfulness is not contested but its means of identification is. Where the partial discursive constructions of love, lust and infatuation are interleaved, it is possible to read that love is 'good' in contrast to lust or infatuation unaccompanied by love. This reading is evidenced by women's attempts to justify that their 'love' is neither simply infatuation nor simply lust. This again reconstitutes the dominant construction of women as

wanting love rather than sex. Wendy explained how she must have been experiencing 'love', not 'lust', because the sex was neither frequent nor good!

WENDY. So what I felt at that time was something I described as love which was just a powerful feeling. And okay people might say (laughing tone) 'it's lust Wendy. Get real' you know (ANGIE chuckles) but in actual fact we hardly had any sexual relationship at that time and it wasn't a very open sexual relationship. ... because sex wasn't all that - well it wasn't good at all. So it wasn't like 'yea lust. It was the most brilliant sex that I'd ever had. Great' so I confused it with love. It wasn't that at all. It was just a powerful feeling.

Zoe also explains how she knows that she is 'in love' not 'in lust'. Similarly she constructs 'lust' as overwhelming, where love, though also overwhelming, is slightly less so and is tempered with friendship, laughter and warmth. This functions to explain the expression "I really thought I really am in love" before with a previous boyfriend.

ZOE. Well before I used to think I was kind of, I really thought I really am in love cos it's just so overwhelming but now it's not unbearably at the moment although it's really strong, it's just there's so much kind of warmth with it and love rather than lust if you know what I mean. And we really make each other laugh and can like act the fool and that and not be all stupid. (laughs and Angie joins in) And then he's like probably one of my best friends as well.

However, Zoe also suggested she could be wrong. Her construction of "it feels more like love ... than anything else" points up the difficulty of definition, as does her suggestion that she's "too young" to be able to "say anything". The clincher seems to be that "everything feels so secure. I just feel this is it", which seems to furnish the relationship with a romantic future and some form of stability.

ZOE. I just feel really relaxed with him and it feels more like love with him than anything else. And I know I'm too young really to say anything but everything just feels so secure, I just feel like this is it.

Discursive constructions of 'lust' and 'infatuation' tend to be used similarly to write off an erroneous recognition of love, a misrecognition which becomes available when the relationship is over, or when the lover has let you down. In this way, a previous experience of 'falling in love' can now become reconstructed as 'infatuation'.

BARBARA. I don't know what 'in love' means more than infatuation, something more noble. I don't think it was at all noble. I think it was insanity really.

CHRIS. But um looking back now, at the time I didn't think it was, but looking back now it was like, it was an infatuation.

The reconstruction of their past feelings as infatuation allows for the possibility of two sorts of future love stories, one which may not include love (as touched on in section 5.1.4) or the other, a true love story.

5.1.6. True Love (with Mr Right) lasts without promising a 'happy-ever-after'

The reconstruction above, of powerful feelings as 'infatuation', and also 'insanity', serves to refute them as authentic or evidence of true love, in hindsight, and writes this off as an experience of love. This recurrent redefinition of 'falling in love' or 'being in love' allows that true love will last. Positioning herself as having been wrong about being in love before not only suggests how difficult 'love' may be to identify, but also allows for there to be one true love, with a 'Mr Right', as her other love objects were mistakes or misidentifications. Unsatisfactory heterosexual relationships do not seem to lead to any questioning of heterosexuality itself, as other research has suggested (e.g. Robinson et al., 1997, Thompson, 1989). As one of my interviewees, Chris, said, despite her husband leaving her for their next-door neighbour, another partner's violence and other unpleasant heterosexual liaisons, "I might walk out of here tomorrow and meet the man of my dreams", followed however by " God I hope not"!

So there are problematic dilemmas when women try to explain and fix the meaning of heterosexual love. 'Love' and 'being in love' are offered as the preferred states over 'lust' or 'infatuation', because the latter states are proposed as misrecognitions. A 'true love' discourse incorporates notions of

feeling that this relationship is right, of security and of feelings that may not be as strong as those of infatuation or obsession but are still strong and will last. They are part of the 'happy-ever-after' of true romance and fairy tale. But though there are cultural exemplars of how it feels to fall in love, there are no literary codes of happy-ever-afterness (Wetherell, 1995). For example, as can be read in the next extract, Gina doesn't sound at all sure about her feelings. The experience is "weird" and she voices doubts about its fluctuating and whether this is "normal". Yet, because the feeling is "still there", this must be love.

ANGIE. Erm. Do you think it's important to be in love?

GINA. Um Yes. Yes sometimes that feeling, you know, it's weird. I suppose this happens when you've been together a long time but it's sort of - um sometimes I don't feel as much so as others if you know what I mean. I spose that's normal. I mean I don't know. But I don't know. I don't know. Sometimes it comes and goes. But it's still there. But it's sometimes stronger than others you know.

Yet, though 'love' is constructed as lasting, the discourse of romantic love, as drawn on in the women's interviews, involved no guarantee of love or an intimate relationship lasting 'forever'. That would be unrealistic, as there are no guarantees that circumstances will not change.

WENDY. But we're both old enough to know, and we've been through past relationships, that there are no guarantees and that even standing up in front of a priest doesn't guarantee anything for people.

SUSAN. You know, it's good while it's good but it might not always be good.

The construction of Mr Right and one true love may seem idealistic, but the women in my study rejected any notion of a 'perfect' relationship in response to my question "Do you think it's possible to have a perfect relationship?". They suggested that perfect relationships were unrealistic and impossible as people change and have bad times.

SUSAN. ... It's it's just impossible to have a perfect continuum which doesn't change where you, where you relate faultlessly. It's just not a kind of realistic scenario.

Ruth suggested that a relationship which looked perfect must involve pretence.

ANGIE. Do you think it's possible to have a perfect relationship?

RUTH. NO. (laughs and Angie joins in) What's one of those? (laugh)

ANGIE. So so what is it that would stop it from being perfect?

RUTH. Well I, maybe people do. If if somebody claims to be having the perfect relationship, I'd be very suspicious. And funnily enough, on a serious note, the relationships which I've seen as being perfect um, in the past, have been the ones that have suddenly fallen totally apart.

ANGIE. So you'd be very suspicious of a relationship that looked {

RUTH. {Yea

cos let's be honest, we're all human. We all have our little foibles. We all have off-days and and, you know, if you're living, if you're living in close proximity with somebody, they're going to get a kicking now and then aren't they, metaphorically speaking, (laughs) cos, you know, if you've had a bad day or you're having a bad week or whatever. It depends on how you define a perfect relationship. Whether you define a perfect relationship as being one like you get on the telly where everybody's smiling at one another all the time and being wonderfully behaved and cooking the meals, and, you know, doing everything for one another. I don't think life's like that. No.

It seems that drawing on a discourse of true and lasting love with Mr Right can only be used while the relationship is still continuing, but talking of the future as a certain happy ever after would be too unrealistic, too idealistic. There seems to be no romantic story to tell about certain happy futures. This may be one way of being reflexive about the power of romantic love. Another is to reposition oneself as a more mature heterosexual woman, as already touched on in section 5.1.3 and 5.1.4.

5.1.7. Resisting the discourse of romantic love: being in love is immature, loving is adult

A less romantic, but more lasting and true love was implicated in the construction of more adult, more stable relationships, and this love was sometimes constructed as experientially differentiable from 'falling in love' or 'being in love'.

HOLLY. ... to love someone, to be in love with them are two different things.

Romantic love was sometimes said to turn into a different sort of love, a more caring and lasting love, possibly rather similar to the love which has been identified by psychologists as 'companionate' love, a more mature love (Chapter 2, section 2.4.1). Susan compared her feelings when she was first going out with Phil, with her feelings now, some twenty odd years later.

SUSAN. Yes I mean I think it [how it feels to be in love] is something that possibly, you know, possibly changes. I mean then um it was, it was sort of feeling some kind of physical buzz when you spoke to somebody, or saw somebody, a feeling of um feeling completely high on being with them. Um and really, I really suppose it was like a kind of obsession, not thinking about much else. But er now obviously it's matured, it's not like that. But I suppose it's, now, more a feeling of being so closely linked to somebody, knowing somebody and them knowing you so well and so intimately. And still loving their traits that constitutes being in love.

So positioning in a discourse of romantic love may be replaced by positioning within a discourse of caring, sharing love, a positioning which is still predicated on personal feelings, feelings of "knowing them so well" This produces a much more secure love, in contrast to an out of control love, though Susan, above, has suggested that this still "constitutes being in love". The discursive distinctions between 'being in love' and 'loving' appear fluid and shifting, sometimes elided, sometimes enhanced, seeming to dispute the cognitive certainties of the passionate/companionate divide of mainstream psychological theorizing. Whichever love is produced, the

love feelings can still be there, though less overwhelming, showing it to be true love that lasts.

Barbara compared relationships with and without being 'in love'.

BARBARA. ... I think, I think it's [falling in love] probably very commonplace when you're sort of 16, 17, 18 . I think it is. But I didn't experience it then. It didn't happen to me then. So I think I was, you know, 15 years late and I think in a way that made it worse because I think I felt humiliated and aware of the kind of ridiculousness of it, whereas I think if you're 16, 17 you're so sort of self-absorbed that you probably don't try to evaluate it.

BARBARA. I think you can manage without it [being in love]. And I think a relationship without it is probably more stable, more comfortable and more enduring.

Barbara, in contrast to Susan, constructs two different sorts of relationships, one where you're in love which is ridiculous and another which is more stable and more comfortable, a mature relationship without being 'in love'. She suggests that she was too old in her 30s to experience the ridiculous state of falling in love and the powerful feelings involved. Yet again we read that falling or being 'in love' is associated with being young or adolescent, in particular being a young heterosexual woman, when one is expected to be "Boy Crazy" (Sayers, 1998), perhaps when the magazines you read are likely to make your feelings appear common and 'normal', unless you are not experiencing romantic epiphanies.

Barbara had explained how the time that she spent in the company of the man with whom she was to have an "affair" was the highlight of what she described as her "pretty dull" life. Her excitement at being in love could be seen as giving her an emotional escape from this 'dull' life, or giving her an emotional life. Yet she suggests that for mature long-term relationships you may be better off without such escapism. The state of 'being in love', in this way, was constructed as too destabilizing for enduring relationships and, most likely, an experience associated with late adolescence. Like Holly and Dee earlier suggested (in section 5.1.3), not being in love might offer an alternative type of relationship, possibly something more like the

transformed, modern, rational intimacy as offered by Giddens (1992) and demonstrated by the participants in Illouz (1997).

But the harder my women participants tried to explain why they might want to not be in love, the more they reproduced the power of love, and their own powerlessness against experiencing the feelings associated with love. Offering an intimacy, less imbued with feelings, as an alternative to or as a transformation from romantic love, illustrates the normalcy of positioning herself within a discourse of romantic love. In this way, romantic love is reconstituted as the expected, and preferred, entry into a potentially committed and lasting intimate relationship. This suggests that most relationships are expected to start in late adolescence, certainly before the age of 30. A recent mass-media example came in an episode of *Ally McBeal* (1998) when the eponymous heroine (in her 20s) talked of how we all grow up with the promise to ourselves that we will only marry someone who makes "our heart bounce". "Settling" for someone is often used as a derogatory term for committing to a relationship without this 'bounce' of the heart. 'I love you but I'm not in love with you' is understood as a rejection.

So, to conclude this section, there are many discursive contradictions involved in talking about 'loving', 'being in love', 'lust' and 'infatuation', where 'being in love' is discoursed as the normative state for recognizing an important relationship, by somehow correctly identifying weird and powerful feelings. The hierarchical arrangement of these feelings as 'love' or another emotion, produces a moral order of emotion from which emotions can be appropriated to explain the relationship, current or not, affair or not. Regardless of the problems of misappropriation, not being subject to powerful feelings would seem to negate the desirability of the object of your love, and might construct the lover as neither 'in love' nor 'loving' enough. Women talk with puzzlement and animation about having these weird emotions. This discourse of romantic love, with its powerful feelings and romantic epiphanies, offers a series of excessively emotional subject positions, especially for women, on which I will elaborate in the next section.

5.2. DISCOURSES OF EMOTION

Their time together had lasted less than a year and comprised two months of mutual, passionate bliss, one month of uncertainty and six of misery. They both knew it had been a terrible mistake - but Peter realised it first.

In retrospect what hurt her more than anything was the ordinariness of her story (along with the unworthiness of its object). She could not understand how she had let her life be destroyed by such a mundane tragedy.

(from *Dance with Me* a novel by Louise Doughty (1996, pp101-102))

Plaisir d'amour, ne dure qu'un moment

Chagrin d'amour dure toute la vie.

(The joys of love are but a moment long

The pain of love endures the whole life long)

(from *Celestine* by Jean-Pierre Claris de Florian (1784))

The women's talk of romantic love drew on "extreme emotions" (from Ellen's interview), emotions which were powerful, uncontrollable and overwhelming. In manipulating romantic genres to tell their love stories, the women participants cast themselves as heroine, often a troubled heroine, wracked with emotion, who can't avoid or control their feelings or leave the relationship because their feelings take them over. As Lutz (1997) has suggested, when women draw on this rhetoric of emotional control, they may be seen to be, and may see themselves as, overly and unreasonably emotional.

GINA. It's [Gina's feeling for a particular man who is not in a relationship with her but is a friend's partner] sort of taking up my life a bit really. I think about it a lot. I mean I dream about it a lot and at work the other day I nearly threw (something in the wrong place) and took someone a black coffee instead of a white coffee. (Angie laughs) You know what I mean, just little things I wouldn't normally do. I'm so like when I'm at work, I'm so sort of in control and I just don't feel that at the moment. It's quite horrible really. I want it to go away but, you know, you can't help how you feel.

However Gina has suggested this feeling is "taking up my life a bit really" (my emphasis). Of this feeling, Gina says it is "More powerful than I'd like it

to be because I don't feel in control, really." She is, however, able to control her feelings at times. Though she emphasized the difficulty of controlling herself, drawing on a rhetoric of control of emotion, we can read here that she is mostly in control of herself, but fallible. Her feelings are emphasized, but the consequences of forgetting milk in a coffee are not great. However as symptoms of distraction they are part of a common love story (e.g. Averill, 1985), whether mutual or currently unrequited as in this example. In the next extract, we hear that Gina was also controlling herself in the presence of the man she is talking about. I was left to imagine what might happen if she lost her self-control and I didn't prompt her on this.

GINA. ... sometimes like if I'm walking past him in the corridor, you know, corridors aren't that wide, I keep thinking am I going to be able to control myself.

The emotions constructed as signalling 'being in love' continually imply not having control over themselves and how they feel. In this section, I want to explore the subject positions taken up in the women's interviews, looking at how positioning oneself as emotional and out of control instantiates love and desire as well as the desirability of the male object of their passion.

5.2.1. Excitement

I have already shown how entangled were constructions of 'being in love' and 'loving' and how 'powerful' and 'weird' feelings were used to distinguish being 'in love'. The up-side of these feelings tended to be excitement.

BARBARA. I mean before he c-called round I'd be in a state of high excitement, you know, in case it might suddenly sort of take off again.

ELLEN. Well I can remember when I used to drive over to er X [where her lover lived] that it was very exciting. It was also um, it was also quite quite frightening ...

Above, Barbara emphasises the highs of love. She talked about the lows too. Ellen also talks of excitement, but "it was also quite frightening". The two

extremes, the highs and the lows, seem together to attest to 'love', and for most of the women being in love was a case of these extreme emotions, which they would swing between, like someone enduring and enjoying a fairground ride, a roller coaster. "Get swept off your feet" read a poster for the film of *The English Patient*, along with a romantic image of the hero carrying the heroine through the desert. Illouz (1997) has suggested that 'love' has become more concerned with excitement than with revelation, and 'excitement' also seemed to be a common construction in my interviews with women. Illouz (1997) said that her participants constructed love as light and untragic. Though constructing love as only part of their lives, the women participants in my study drew on tragedy as well as excitement.

5.2.2. A Roller Coaster of emotions

BARBARA. Well it was wonderful, at first. The next day I remember I took the kids to the park, it was a hot summer day and I remember sitting by the paddling pool, the sun was shining, just feeling as though I'd been lifted onto a different plane of being. It felt, um I s'pose it was like feeling incredibly high. It was wonderful. But it didn't stay like that (Barbara laughs, ANGIE joins in and says Oh (a shortened Oh No)). The highs were matched by the lows and as time went on the lows became more and more frequent, the highs rarer and um it turned from being a wonderful thing to a terrible thing.

The shared laughter suggests we both understand the ups and downs of love; the transcendence to a higher plane and the plummeting back down to earth. Barbara described herself as swept along and unable to control the feelings which affected her so powerfully. Other subject positions taken up by the women in love came from talking of irrationality, madness, misery and illness.

5.2.3. Irrationality and madness

ZOE. I just keep thinking I don't know what I'm gonna do if we split up cos I couldn't imagine being without him. Not, nothing specific but I've just got this great fear of him dying, you know. And he says he has a bit with me but it doesn't seem to bother him that much like as me. I feel stupid saying it cos it's a bit irrational heh. (laughs)

Positioning herself as "irrational" and her partner as not irrational or much less so, Zoe draws on a rational/emotional dichotomy, which is so often mapped directly onto a male/female polarity (e.g. Lupton, 1998, Lutz, 1997). In romantic narratives, the heroine tends to be unable to direct the relationship, being passive and waiting for the hero to act so she can respond and tell of her love for him. This is the how she learns a 'good' woman's role (Christian-Smith, 1988, Walkerdine, 1990). But more than this, like a gothic romance, the emotions of the heroine drive the story, indicating her goals and desires (Howells, 1995). And by being irrational and emotional, you can show how much you care, to yourself and anyone you tell. But Zoe was also reflexive, unlike a gothic heroine, by talking of feeling "stupid" saying this. Other ways in which women problematized love feelings was to explain them as obsession, or themselves as besotted.

MELISSA. And before that it was just like I was seeing someone who was the greatest love of my life. It was just like an obsession.

RUTH. ...I was absolutely besotted in the first place and and er I would have er done anything, gone anywhere.

Drawing on a notion of mental instability, positioned their behaviour as pathological and emphasized their having no choice or agency in how they felt. They owned and internalized these feelings. Their paradoxical resistance to this positioning comes from pointing up the stupidity and ridiculousness of it all.

5.2.4. Sickness: love as disease

Romantic discourse offers an embodied view of emotion. The women participants constructed themselves as experiencing extreme emotions, which they represented as physical. This was an holistic experience. They were swept up and down. There are highs and lows. Barbara took up the subject position of 'sick' heroine. As the song 'This can't be love because I feel so well' proposes, feeling unwell is a way of embodying love.

BARBARA. ... and it began to feel in the end like a sort of illness and I just wanted to get better - I just didn't want to feel like it any more. But, um. AND I didn't really get over it until I met PETER and he, again it sort of felt so important about this victim stuff (laughs). It

was almost as if he kind of cured me of it very quickly when I met him.

ANGIE. Cured you of ..?

BARBARA. Well this sort of pining, kind of hankering - yearning- after something I couldn't have, I suppose. And, but I still sort of miss him in a way.

The illness, here, is no straightforward response to being in love with her lover; it is offered as a response to losing him, and to the relationship not going well. Her construction of being in love seems very much to rely on her bad feelings as much as (if not more than) the good feelings. They function to show how much she felt in response to the uncertainty in their affair, constructing him as even more desirable in his absence. Also in this extract, we can read that the cure for the illness of love comes from meeting another man, which provides an allusion of the importance of an intimate heterosexual relationship for women's salvation.

5.2.5. Misery and pain

Pain and misery are often associated with well-known romantic stories. In contrast to the happy-ever-after of fairy tales, (melo)dramatic romances such as *Romeo and Juliet*, *Swan Lake*, *La Boheme* and *Madame Butterfly* tell of thwarted or unrequited love where one or both of the lovers suffers and dies. Titles sometimes evince misery such as *The Ballad of the Sad Cafe* and *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* by Carson McCullers. The women's interviews often drew on notions of misery and pain to construct their experience of falling in love.

BARBARA. I wouldn't want to quantify it, but there was far more misery - incredibly painful - I mean painful in a way that I'd never experienced that feeling at any other time - this sort of terrible wretched sort of yearning , you know ...

DEE. I don't want to stop seeing him because I haven't any pain. You know if I had pain I think I'd just back off. I'm quite strong at backing off from situations. If I started to get hurt about it, you know, upset, I think I'd say 'now now this is too messy. I can't, you know, um do this '.

HOLLY. Yea I thought it was a very boring lifestyle sort of, you know, I wanted something else, some excitement that I thought I was missing. But it's too painful that kind of excitement.

ELLEN. ... Hopeless. AGONY really.

These examples attest to the expectation that pain will be part of feeling deeply for someone else, when the relationship is not going well, or not happening as the woman would like it. This is not offered as evidencing women's masochism in heterosexual relationships, as some other researchers have suggested (Benjamin, 1990; Langford, 1999), because constructions of misery and pain are used to explain what women don't want. There was no sense that misery and pain functioned to sustain the relationship, or the love, though they did offer the opportunity to tell a more intense story of love.

5.2.6. Disembedded and embedded emotion: recontextualizing the 'emotional woman'

Focusing on the emotions which the women participants associated with being in love allows us to read how powerfully love is constructed as embodied and internal to the women. Collectively these may be seen to draw on a discursive construction of 'emotional woman'. This functions to emphasize how special and important he is, as the object of such powerful emotions. But looking at emotional discourses as offering discrete, independent subject positions disentangles and disconnects them from the relationships between the man, the woman, their feelings and desires. Disembedding the emotion means the woman in love comes to appear as an excessively emotional woman, whose emotionality can be pathologized by others. She even pathologizes herself. In the interviews, the women, in analysing dispassionately and being reflexive about their behaviour in love, took the rational, independent unitary subject position, to construct their behaviour and feelings as "ridiculous", "silly", "stupid", "irrational". Thus they reconstituted the rational/emotional dichotomy, positioning themselves as rational only to problematize their emotionality and to hive off emotions from rational behaviour. Perhaps this was their expectation of how to present themselves in an interview. As already shown, some of them talked of attempting to do this in their intimate relationships with men by giving up on love.

Yet the women's stories of romantic love also offer subject positions tightly embedded in the constructed interconnectness and interaction of the man and woman in love. They tell of wonder, magic and mystery, concepts beyond the scope of a limited 'rationality' which must explain all that is worth explaining and where limits to logical theorizing become foolish rather than exciting and interesting. The women's stories of love and emotion also tell of attempts to create mutuality, human connectedness and equality. They suggest they understand power in relationships, but in complicated and complex ways which I will address. The 'emotional woman' subject position may best be understood, not as a stand-alone resource, but as intimately entangled with and constrained by discourses of gender which historically construct masculinity and femininity as different and complementary. By focusing on the emotion as relationship, the women's emotionality may be read as emotion work (Duncombe and Marsden, 1993; 1998; Hochschild, 1983) in the relationship, for, by owning and embodying emotions, they laud their partner. Their stories of emotionality also tell of their efforts to explore mutual emotional expression in heterosexual relationships, and as such may construct both men's reluctance to reciprocate and complaints about this. To exemplify this, I'll offer another reading of an 'emotional' subject position for women, that of 'insecure woman'.

5.2.7. Women's insecurity: a metaphor for interactional power

The discursive construction of women's insecurity and the discourse of romantic love were often closely imbricated in women's 'in love' stories, as identified elsewhere (Jackson, 1993; Langford, 1998). Feeling insecure was often constructed as a sign of being in love or feeling very strongly for someone.

ELLEN. I think many people have those feelings of jealousy and insecurity when they meet somebody that they really like but er I don't think it's er essential for everybody.

There appeared to be a paradox about feeling secure in love, because this might seem to suggest insufficient emotion or passion, a discursive difference between passionate relationships ('in love') and more settled relationships ('loving'). However, as already discussed in section 5.1.5 and

5.1.7, the discursive distinctions between 'in love' and 'loving' were fluid, fragmented and shifting and this produced different conceptions of their relationships, within which being in love and loving sometimes constituted a dichotomy, a continuum, a simultaneity. I want to take Zoe as a case study to look at how 'insecurity' slips in and out of discursive constructions of love and mutuality. Zoe presented her current relationship as good and secure, feeling "more like love .. than anything else".

She talked more however about feeling insecure and how this relationship was punctuated by explosive moments started by her which allow them to make up

ZOE. ...I think it cos it's just so good that every so often I try to make something go wrong because making up's so good.

However, the desire to keep replaying a romantic epiphany or romantic resolution, which Zoe suggests here, is constructed as less welcome to her boyfriend Richard.

ZOE. ... we both kind of, every few days, one of us goes all quiet and withdrawn so the other one'll, you know, get all worried and then we'll get back again.

ANGIE. So you're both doing that?

ZOE. Yea but I'm doing it a lot more and I don't know I feel like he's going to get sick of it soon cos I just can't stop it. I'm always crying and he says he doesn't mind but I don't know I{|

ANGIE. {But you obviously mind {

ZOE. {I'm not like I'm sad. I just really enjoy crying. Every now and then I just really like it getting it out of my system. But I think he thinks of it as me being all sad and everything. I mean he says he's not, I mean he's really good. He says he doesn't get sick of it at all but.

This is a very complicated and confusing story. It starts as a mutual story, where either of them may withdraw, leaving the other worried or insecure, so they can make up and achieve balance and romantic resolution again. It reads as if she's withdrawing and going quiet more often, which should make him insecure, but then that doesn't fit with her "always crying". Her stated fear is that he's going to get fed up with her crying and, though she

enjoys it, he may not understand that. This seems to rely on a premise of her expressed emotions being oppressive to him. He is constructed as "really good" because he says he doesn't get sick of it, though this is qualified with a "but" and "I don't know". Zoe provided a model of mutual insecurity to construct how she "wished" her relationship to be.

ZOE. I really wish he would tell me when he gets insecure because I can't keep it in and like, er like before when we were just on and off friends and I'd say we're just good friends, he used to say Yea Yea that's fine with me and everything. And then afterwards, when we were going out he was saying that it was half killing him, you know, and he really wanted to be as as a couple and all this. But he'd just go Oh Yes because he didn't want to frighten me off. And then afterwards he'll say if I say I was jealous of you and Charlotte, he'll say Well I've been jealous when you've been with so-and-so. And he won't tell me at the time so. I just often guess but he'll just deny it until I say something. And I wish he would tell me because it would make me feel more more secure. And he says he prefers it when he's insecure and I'm kind of have control which is how it usually was, and I prefer it like that too. He's got to just keep reassuring me, I tell him, and every time he does, it works.

Zoe's complaint at Richard's failure to consistently build a reciprocally emotional relationship is predicated on the premise that one person being insecure functions to put the other in control. Her failure to keep in her insecurity and her crying functions to let him know he has control, but this wouldn't be a problem if he only reciprocated more often. If he did this more for her, she would be more secure and this would give her some control. She produces a discrepancy between his agreeing that to let her know when he's insecure, so she can "kind of have control" and his continuing to deny how he feels at the time. She constructs a reciprocity of feeling but not of expression, when she has asked for the expression. Denying how he feels, until she says something because she has worked out how he feels, is denying her to "kind of have control" and this results in her having to do emotion work, that is work out how he feels because he's not offering this. So she has explained that she has told him that he just needs to keep reassuring her (he needs to do some emotion work) and that "it works" when he does.

Against this backdrop of her repeated feelings of insecurity, Zoe kept insisting how secure the relationship felt. In order to construct their relationship as mutual and equal, it seems she has to explain why he does not reciprocate equally in this relationship game of being insecure and making up, the replaying of a romantic resolution. Rather than blame her male partner very forcefully for his lack of reciprocation of insecure feelings and his refusal to play the romantic hero, she pathologized herself, explaining her own inability to control her emotions and long-term insecurity.

ZOE. I say it's really secure but it is, I think it's just that I'm an insecure person. I really couldn't ask for anything more, more reassurance or anything, but.

The "but" sounds like a very subtle complaint. In this extract, taking up a rational, analytic, independent position means that Zoe is taking on responsibility for the relationship, blaming herself rather than him or the relationship, in order to produce a balanced relationship. This is one way of doing emotion work and of drawing on a notion of male emotional illiteracy.

5.2.8. Women's emotion work: the difficulty of constructing mutual and equitable relationships in a gendered world

We can read the discourses of emotionality of women 'in love' as indicating how much they care for, and want to be in relationship with, this particular man. This is a way of constructing their partner or potential partner as special and desirable. When we contextualize this emotion with the wider social relationships and social order, we can see very contradictory discursive constructions. Even the women themselves do not have a generally positive way of talking about their emotion work, as they continually laugh at themselves and say how inexplicable it is. They seem not to have available ways which consistently resist an assumption that emotionality is bad, when rationality is good. Continually constructing their failure to control their emotions, leads to 'extreme' emotionality being constructed as bad and oppressive and their fault. Yet, in the example offered by Zoe, the problems of 'women's emotionality' may be better understood in relation to a construction of men's denial of shared emotions and reciprocation. Some may read Zoe's attempts to persuade her boyfriend

to emote reciprocally as manipulative, as she manipulates an emotional scenario to get a romantic high, and tries to get him to do this too. By blaming herself for this she protects him from having to get involved at all.

When women position themselves within discourses of emotion, they seem to do so while positioning men as unable to deal with emotion and women, which for Zoe resulted in a difficulty for her in constructing mutuality and reciprocity in her intimate relationship. This might be seen as putting pressure on men and this emerges as a common taboo, one which, for instance, emerged in the stories by Kitzinger and Powell's (1995) women participants and was used to account for men's infidelity. This explains that while women own to being emotional, they may also try to protect men from these emotions.

The women's interviews tell stories in which, in attempting to be emotional martyrs or emotional saints, women become emotional devils. Within romantic discourse, the man is constructed as the one who makes the moves (Chapter 3, section 3.5.1) and the woman must avoid being too fast or too pressurizing. Throwing yourself at him, being too openly emotional could lead to him taking advantage of you or his leaving; this is not part of the woman's 'passive' role in romantic discourse. This produces a very complicated entanglement of different positions for women in love - having to be emotional/out of control, having to pretend that you aren't, having to not make demands, having to wait, which are related to gendered subject positions in the discourse of romantic love. And the more she has to wait, the more emotional and desperate she may get. Looking at it this way, a discursive construction of extreme emotionality becomes a discursive construction of disempowerment (*cf.* Lutz, 1997). However by being reflexive about this, as my women participants are, they problematize their emotions while they also problematize, and circumvent, men's lack of emotional expression. Their construction of masculine emotional inexpressivity means they take on the emotion work required to "do the romance" in the relationship (Wetherell, 1995). Their reflexivity allows them to question the role of emotionality in heterosexual relationships, but seems not to extend to a sustained critique of their current male partner's behaviour nor of heterosexuality as a gendered institution.

5.3. UNDERSTANDING THE 'RULES' OF HETEROSEXUAL ROMANCE

What I want to do now is look further at how men are constructed as having difficulty with romance and emotional expression in the women's interviews, in order to further look at how women construct themselves as able to live with emotional turmoil, wracked with emotion, by constructing men as unable or incapable of doing so. Although my participants did not talk explicitly of rules, I discuss these issues by framing them as 'rules' of romance, drawing on a form of contemporary advice to women as in *The Rules* (Fein and Schneider, 1995).

5.3.1 'Rule' 1: Romance may proceed because of, rather than despite, male emotional and romantic inexpressivity

ZOE. ... I've been off all morning cos he's going to stay at his friend's for two weeks and I really wanted him to be devastated about it. And he's just like 'Oh I'll come back every day ' and that but I don't know what is wrong with me, I'm just unreasonable, I know I am. But I really wanted him to be upset.

Zoe has constructed her boyfriend's lack of emotion at the prospect of their separation, as a problem for her. When being upset and being emotional is constructed, in this way, as a gauge of love, his being reasonable, when she isn't, is represented as not romantic. This section looks further at the ways in which stories of heterosexual love and intimate relationships are built on a discourse of unemotional, that is unromantic, masculinity, and the consequences or rules of heterosexual relationship that result.

GINA. Some men aren't, you know. It doesn't mean that he's a bad person. Some men aren't romantic and impulsive and he isn't really.

Janice Radway's (1987) research into romantic genres, suggested that a common element of the romance is that the romantic hero's behaviour is ambiguous, and it requires the heroine to be able to decode his emotional investment because of, rather than despite, his apparently anomalous actions. One of the discursive constructions which women participants reproduce is that of male emotional inexpressivity, which I have already discussed. Contradictorily, a discourse of romantic love is drawn on both in

the context of male emotional reciprocity and male inexpressivity. In the latter context, women must deduce men's emotions and understand their difficulties.

When Wendy offers a story of her partner's failure to recognize love, she still positions him within a discourse of romantic love. However their successful love story is built on his failure to put aside his powerful feelings for her.

WENDY. ... he didn't know it was love then. He thinks that it was the sort of seeds of love but that he was so knocked out by it he didn't know what had hit him. And he did what some people do which is to shut down and - I find this quite unusual because I don't shut down. I don't turn my back on it. I just go straight into it head first. (Both laugh) But he's not like that because when we met, when he met me again even in the pub, he he knew immediately, he knew when he picked up the phone, when we met that evening. But he went home and he tried not to phone me - he was really unhappy. And he tried to just shut me out of his mind. And er and then he realised, I mean he's written all this down, it's really interesting actually to read. And he said then that he realised that he was fighting a completely losing battle. He couldn't actually survive by doing that.

In Wendy's story, his repression of strong emotions become part of the romance story and this emphasizes his emotional connection with her. But for the romance to proceed, he must take part. In order to construct her mutual love story Wendy told how her current male partner had changed. He was now emotionally expressive through his letters.

WENDY. He writes these amazing letters and tries to des [start of "describe"] to talk about the past and what he felt and describe it and everything.

Similarly, Barbara drew on a notion of her lover's hidden feelings, which she suggests fuelled his attractiveness.

BARBARA. I think because of his power and his mystery and his enigma, that I really didn't know what was going on in his head. I really didn't know and I think that fuelled his attractiveness to me

and kept that sort of feeling going. Whereas I think that if he had kind of revealed himself and been very open that wouldn't have been there...

Barbara's love story offered no happy ending. She explained how his emotional repression, which was attractive to her, led to a destructive interactional cycle which eventually led to the relationship ending.

BARBARA. Because I think there's something about somebody who is unobtainable - that they retain their allure, their attractiveness. Uh you know, it's it's - I suppose it's a bit like the sort of hero worship that people have for pop singers or film actors or whatever, you know they're unobtainable, there's a mystery about them You don't really know them. And so they have this kind of - you impose on them imaginary characteristics - you make them into somebody perfect who they aren't.

BARBARA. He was like, but perhaps, perhaps I can't generalize about men. I mean emotionally he was very closed off and I think he began to get very alarmed about what he was getting into and he felt incredibly guilty I think about having an affair with a married woman with children so he would - every time we seemed to get very close it would be followed by immediate withdrawal where he would go very distant and was unreachable ... He had a, he had a horror of sort of scenes or people displaying excesses of feeling so that made him even more inclined to pull out.

Barbara, despite questioning whether she can "generalize about men", does offer a general theory about men and women and power. In brief:-

BARBARA. ... And it seems to be - for a lot of women it seems to be like that. It's as though once - if I start to become dependent they start to pull back- and as though - as if there's any pressure coming from me they want to run away but as though dependency and need coming from men put onto women - they can cope with.

In the women's interviews, Barbara's love story was unusual in its explicitness about power and attraction. It relies on men remaining distant and unobtainable so that the woman can construct them as even more

desirable by "imposing on them imaginary characteristics", a sort of psychodynamic projection of imagined idealized men (Sayers, 1998). In this way, Barbara problematized being 'in love' because it came about from the man having more power than the woman who loved him. This made this love paradoxical, because as she explained, unless he "needed" her more than she needed him, the power imbalance would destroy the relationship.

Her story of love is predicated on her understanding of why the man she had fallen in love with was unable to commit and why the relationship didn't last. They might have been a modern Tristan and Iseult, but he couldn't cope with it. This is one of many examples of a woman positioning herself as understanding that her male partner has problems with emotion, and allowing assumed emotions to explain his behaviour. Although his behaviour is constructed as making her miserable, this is not represented as intentional on his part. Despite Barbara being reflexive about masculinity, heterosexuality and power, a construction of male emotional inadequacy explains away why she couldn't challenge his behaviour, because that would have driven him away.

Gina positioned herself as very understanding of her current partner's unpleasant behaviour, explaining how it had been up to her to prove that she wasn't going to hurt him. "He was trying to stay a bit detached so he wouldn't get hurt again". She produces a different sort of romantic narrative, one in which she is like a labouring Psyche trying to regain the love of Cupid, rather than being courted by a questing hero. Yet both stories depend on the man's decision to love.

GINA. When I was first going out with him, you see, he he'd er had this ex-girlfriend. He'd only been out with her about 3 months but he was very keen on her and to cut a long story short, she ran off with his best friend which sort of like cut him up a lot. And er that was his first sort of serious relationship and so he was pretty screwed up and he thought I was going to do the same thing, you know. So he sort of um after about um, after about a month of going out with him, he started to be a bit unreliable and a bit, you know, argumentative and whatever, you know. Several occasions we could have split up but I suppose I proved to him I'm not going to do that, you know.

In interpreting his behaviour, Gina has been able to help him, while protecting him from having to change his behaviour. Men's undesirable behaviour, such as violence and excessive alcohol consumption, can be explained away by experiences in the past, which he may not want to talk about.

HOLLY. And er he spent a lot of time with an uncle who's a chronic alcoholic and he used to, he witnessed his uncle doing lots of awful things to his grandmother, I mean. That's had an effect on him and it's taken a long time to draw this out of him.

Women may also construct themselves as helping men to avoid hurt, because they will not be able to cope with it. For instance, Holly, constructed an ex-partner as too vulnerable for her to leave.

HOLLY. ... my first serious relationship and I found it so impossible to get out of that, actually thinking back, what I actually did to end it was to make him hate me, so that he would leave me or so it wouldn't be so bad if I did leave him. I mean you don't realise you're doing it at the time. You know you behave so awfully that you just end up, you know, making them hate you. Just not very assertive really.

Susan talked about her partner having been unfaithful to her and who had subsequently talked of their relationship ending. She positioned him as having problems, and herself as understanding his behaviour as stemming from them. In the following extract, we can read how Susan's construction of his unpredictability functions to gloss over his apparent insistence that he makes the decisions, not her.

SUSAN. He'd been to Relate. He'd had a, he'd had a counselling session with Relate because he'd put his name down and they'd phoned him up out of the blue and said 'we've had a cancellation. Do you want to come along?' So so he'd gone along and apparently his file is now marked 'urgent'. (laughs and Angie joins in) 'See this bloke immediately'. (Angie laughs) Oh and er. (pause) He was just very loving and he was really pleased I went, and he was saying things like 'don't give up hope'. And I've been - the other thing that's come up, is is because of (particular financial arrangements). So I've been saying 'well maybe we should get the separation formalized because

they may need to see papers or something'. And um he's been saying 'No hold on, hold on, hold on.' 'No Don't want to do this. Don't want to rush it. I don't want to rush it. CAN YOU PLEASE STOP TRYING TO RUSH AND FORCE THE ISSUE ALONG'. And I'm saying 'Well hold on here matey. You're the one who who (laughing tone) told me you didn't love me the other week'. And he's saying 'No No Just slow down'. So he's completely unpredictable.

A feminist reading of this extract might suggest that his behaviour, as described, is all too predictable. Susan's positioning him as unpredictable justifies his wresting back control of the timing of any separation and decision to separate, while allowing her a romantic reading of the relationship being still important to him because he's not yet ended it. His continued presence alone functions as justification for her to have hope of some mutual future.

In these ways, women in my study did not explicitly flag such examples as indicative of the operation of male power in their current intimate heterosexual relationships. Instead they offered other justifications, consigning the problem of male privilege to their past relationships, like Barbara. For my participants, it seemed unsayable to explicitly talk about power operating in their ongoing relationships, though it could be in relation to others' relationships. For instance, Melissa criticized girl friends for acting differently in front of boys.

MELISSA. You know I've had friends who won't eat in front of a boy, somebody they're going out with and will only say certain things or act a certain way. It seems to me like a waste of time really.

It seemed that when a relationship was over or not theirs, power relations could become explicitly open to question. However, male inexpressivity, emotional withdrawal and unpredictability can all be read in these extracts as conferring on him some power and control. What I've shown is that there are ways in which negotiations of power can be read in current, as well as in past, heterosexual relationships. Positioning the man as a 'male emotional illiterate' may constitute a complaint about his behaviour, but understanding this and showing how a woman helps him to continue to avoid expressing his feelings, may be a powerful way of reinforcing male

heterosexual privilege. Conceiving of men as unable to reciprocate emotionally, rather than unwilling, protects them from having to do so.

So while the women participants constructed themselves as emotional, sometimes excessively emotional, through love, though attempting to hide their 'extreme emotions', the subject positions they offered for men in love were often contradictory, both congruent and dichotomous to women's. The congruence comes from positioning both women and men as having feelings; the dichotomy from men being represented as unable to express feelings, unlike women. Women produce a romantic story with reciprocal feelings, and this leads to a post-Freudian romance of women's unrepressed feelings waiting to be expressed in reciprocation of men's repressed feelings. The latter are understood through women's superior psychological skills and understanding of heterosexual relationships. Her emotion work becomes helping him to continue to repress his feelings, while his feelings are simultaneously known to her. Thus he becomes her imagined lover. This code of romance draws on a dominant construction of men's emotional illiteracy (Duncombe and Marsden, 1995; Jackson, 1993), which excuses (even encourages) men from being emotionally expressive, and also means that many aspects of men's behaviour may be read as signs of love. So while he may be performing the hegemonic male, she may be performing the romance for both of them. Emotions, such as jealousy and depression, and emotional withdrawal emerge in the interviews as evidence of love. A woman can express her need and love for a man, to the extent that it makes him look and feel good, but not too much, as that would involve too much pressure on him (*cf.* Kitzinger and Powell, 1995) and he has to be seen to be in control of both the relationship and his emotions. She understands him to be scared of emotions, his and hers, and because he cannot admit this without losing face, she can help him to maintain the illusion of control and protect him from the knowledge of her help.

The next 'rule' elaborates power relations further, by looking at a more prosaic recurrent metaphor for explaining the view that men set the pace in an intimate heterosexual relationship.

5.3.2.'Rule' 2: The man sets the pace: waiting for him to phone

Rule 1 suggested that men are understood by women to be creatures who need to feel in control of themselves and be strong and unemotional, very different from women. In order for women to have ongoing heterosexual relationships they recognise that they have to both feel very strongly about their male partner, they have to be in love, yet at the same time they have to both hide this and interact in such a way as not to be too strong or too fast for the man, not to put pressure on the man (as Barbara suggests above in section 5.3.1). Wendy, despite her talk of "knowing" that she will have something ongoing with Matt, told me she lied to him about how she got his phone number. Would seeking out his number herself have been just too forward, too fast?

WENDY. ...And I phoned him up on the phone, lying that somebody had given me the number.

The telephone sometimes figured in the women's stories of their intimate relationships, often demonstrating the strength of their emotions and their expectation that they would wait for him to phone them.

ELLEN. Um oh and those awful things, of waiting for a phone call and Pretending to be very casual um and oh all those silly things.

I attempted to probe Ellen more on this and told her that I was surprised that she had done this.

ANGIE. Did you, so you still think you'd be like that, I mean I'm not, even if - suppose you'd not met Jim and you'd met somebody through (dating agency) who was fully free and whatever (ELLEN. Yea) you think you would still have been like that, you'd have waited (ELLEN. For the phone, oh yes) for the man to set the pace or whatever?

ELLEN. Oh yes, oh yea absolutely.

I was surprised at her failure to reflect on this. Positioning herself in romance seems to draw on the understanding which Christian-Smith (1988)

noted, that romance is likely to fail when women attempt to take control of it. Is this part of a commonly articulated 'rule' of playing hard to get?

Chris talked about a relationship in which her partner was violent, explaining how she had thought his phoning her excessively was a sign of caring.

CHRIS. ...He'd ring me two or three times a day and - which was something I'd never been used to and actually went on all the time we were together, we were together and I realised that he wasn't ringing me up cos he cared. He was ringing up to make sure I was where I was supposed to be. Which um sort of clicked a lot later on.

"The pain of thinking that he's not going to phone" was how Barbara constructed her experience of waiting for him to phone.

BARBARA. I'd end up sitting on the stairs staring at the phone as if it was a malevolent living thing willing it to ring'.

In conversation with Ruth too, the issue of who phoned whom arose. I realised that I had assumed that if someone was having an affair that they would make the phone calls, rather than having their lover phone when their partner or children might answer. I was therefore surprised that Barbara was waiting for the phone, as Ruth had done when she first started seeing Alan. Yet as Ruth told the story of their relationship, through time, she explains how it became "sort of um mutual basis" which meant that they both phoned each other. She was no longer the one waiting for him to phone to invite her somewhere, and she said that felt good. Despite her minimizing the extent to which her having to wait for the phone "dominated" her life (an interesting choice of verb!) she cannot but associate her 'waiting for the phone' with non-mutuality in the relationship.

RUTH. I I think, I think there was a sort of tacit understanding that er, you know, he was the one who used to ring up ... Er I was the one who waited. He was the one who picked the phone up and said 'here I am. come and get me' sort of thing. Um and I never actually made any more demands than that, in the early days. And, when, I mean that went on for a number of years. Um and in a way I was quite

happy to do that because there was, at that point, there were a lot of other things in my life. And so it didn't sort of dominate. ... But I think in the, in that last, that last period of a few months um there was, I felt at that stage, that things had shifted because um I felt for instance that I could phone him. I knew where he was and - which I'd known before. I mean I'd got his office phone number and everything. I knew where where I could phone him but I never used to like phoning him unless it was a real emergency. I never felt it was part of my place. But then I did, I used to phone him during those last few months. And if he hadn't phoned me, I'd phone him. And I didn't feel bad about doing that. And it felt as if at long last the relationship was on a sort of um a mutual basis where one, either of us could ring up and say 'well do you want to come out for a drink tonight or do you want to do this or whatever?'. And so that felt quite good that I wasn't just sitting and waiting round for him to phone me any more. (laughs)

Again, a notion of the importance of women not making demands is constructed. In showing themselves as understanding the interactional dynamics of who phones whom, the women demonstrate some of the rules of romantic and passionate heterosexual relationships, and play along with them. They draw on a discursive theme of 'different but equal' gender to explain the times they are conferring control to the man, but also construct a relationship of equal feeling and emotion as their ultimate desire. In view of the pervasiveness of the notion of male emotional inadequacy and its involvement in the production of hegemonic masculinity, the ideal of mutual emotional expressivity would seem to hold out the hope of equality, though the interviews offered few examples of this. However the mutuality of professing love for each other seems to offer the means to tell a story of an equitable male/female intimate relationship.

5.4. MUTUALITY OF LOVE: SAYING 'I LOVE YOU'

People may not mean what they're expected to mean when they say 'I love you'. When women re-evaluated, with hindsight, whether they had been 'in love', they suggested they meant 'I love you' at the time. Zoe and Melissa, both young women, suggested in their interviews that men may lie when they say it. 'The questionnaire', a regular feature in The Guardian Weekend, sometimes contains a question which reads "Have you ever said 'I love you'

and not meant it?" In the edition dated May 30th 1998, Paul Gross (Mountie Benton Fraser in *Due South*) reportedly responded "Sure - this is an essential skill for every male adolescent".

Despite this apparent potential for dissembling, especially in adolescence, saying 'I love you' to each other was constructed as common and expected in a serious and important relationship.

ANGIE. Do you and Matt tell each other that you love each other?

WENDY. Yes

ANGIE. All the time?

WENDY. ALL THE TIME . (Both laugh) But I have to say, he was with his the girlfriend that he went back to, and he married her and he was with her for 13 years between the time that I last saw him and the time I saw him er now, him now and he's never told her that he loved her. No. It's very sad for her isn't it? The only time that he's said anything about love is when she's pestered the living daylights out of him saying 'do you love me. For god's sake you never tell me you love me. You married me but you never said that you loved me. Do you?' And he says you shouldn't have to ask that, you know. And he's he's been pushed into a corner to say the words but he has never spontaneously said that he loves her. And he is not a person who has used those words frequently. And in fact he said he didn't believe that you could love anyway. He thought it was a bit of a con . And he looked around him and thought 'well what I've got is just the same as everybody else, but everybody else calls it love. Like I would have rather had more than this. But actually I don't think it's out there.'. And he said that he didn't think that he could feel er the way that he feels about another human being that he feels about me. So I reckon I'm lucky.

The anticipation of the commonplace exchange of 'I love you's is particularly highlighted in accounts which explained deviations from this practice, such as between Matt and his wife. This particular rhetorical device can be seen to emphasize Wendy's and Matt's love. He now knew love was not a "con". They'd achieved the shared emotion at the top of the moral hierarchy of emotion. The account of the lack of exchange of 'I love you's

in his marriage is offered as "very sad", pointing up the undesirability of such a situation for his wife.

Barbara explained how her affair significantly and disappointingly failed to deliver the anticipated sharing of 'I love you's and "created" "a great deal of insecurity" for her, a construction which I have previously suggested can be read as part of a story of power imbalance (see section 5.2.6).

BARBARA. He never said 'I love you'. Never! ... and it became a sort of real thing with me, you know - if he would ever say it and he didn't and I suppose the more he didn't, the more I couldn't and I used to sort of silently will him to say it and I remember once, one awful evening when he said 'I'm very fond of you ' huh (both laugh) and I sort of got home and walked round thinking 'FOND? FOND? ' you know, it seemed like the biggest insult that he could have uh thrown at me - it would have been better if he'd said he hated me, than fond of me, like a cat or a dog. Erm so there were no declarations. I spose that was one of the problems with it - we neither of us ever really, apart from that first euphoric occasion, made any kind of statements of intent and it was always unspoken and that created for me an awful - a great deal of insecurity - I mean I had no idea how long it would last, what would happen ...

She suggests that his saying 'I love you' could indicate that the relationship might last and would give her some security. This would be a form of compact or promise. One difficulty is that he must say it first and because he doesn't, she cannot. However alongside a complaint that he was not offering any commitment, her loudest complaint seems to be of a lack of passion in expressing his feelings for her, demonstrating not only an example of male emotional inexpressivity but also possibly an absence of even the outward trappings of romantic love (Jackson, 1993).

The talk of transgressing a code of mutual 'I love you's emphasizes an expectation that these words will be exchanged in a serious relationship. That this is an cliché, does not detract from its constituting the emotional investment between the two people saying it to each other (Wetherell, 1995). The sharing of 'I love you's instantiates the reciprocity expected in intimate relationships (Baumeister and Wotman, 1992). Sometimes the women in my study talked about attempts to subvert this cliché (*cf.* Gergen

and Gergen, 1995). Zoe told of a variation which she said brought about an imbalance of power in her relationship with her boyfriend. A return to "I love you" and "I love you too" redressed this, she suggested.

ZOE. We used to have this thing when one of us would say 'I love you ' and whoever had, whoever said it second would always say 'I love you more ' so it would kind of make it better because someone had made the effort of saying it and the other had kind of beaten it. And then. But after a while he always said 'I love you ' first and I got sick of always having to say I loved him more. (laugh) Because I kind of felt like it was a power thing and so in the end I just said I don't think it makes any difference if you love me more, it wouldn't stop me loving you as much as this and it wouldn't make any difference to the relationship from my point of view. And he said the same thing so we've agreed that we won't say 'I love you more ' any more (laughs and Angie joins in) just 'I love you too '.

Melissa also talked about how she and her boyfriend attempted and failed to rationalize and regulate their saying 'I love you' to each other.

MEL. Yea. It did get a bit stupid at one point, (in laughing tone) we were at my sister's and we said look this is stupid and if we do say it we've got to give a reason for it afterwards cos it's sort of like. I don't think it meant any less.

ANGIE. Why did you think you had to give a reason?

MEL. Because it was just getting, it was slightly bland. Um I don't think either of us didn't mean it anymore. It was just like all the time. And um that didn't, that didn't last for very long either. (laughs and Angie joins in) But it's a way, it's a way of saying something you don't know how to say. (Pause) Um not because you can't say it maybe but you don't know how to put it in in words.

Melissa's articulated problem with 'I love you' becoming slightly bland was followed immediately by a denial that they would say it and not mean it. Her explanation of 'I love you' as "something you don't know how to say" points up the difficulty of saying anything else, as did Barbara's annoyance and disappointment that her lover did not say it.

It seems, from these extracts, that mutual 'I love you's can function as a metaphor for mutuality and reciprocity in an intimate heterosexual relationship, for the woman, and an inability to draw on this metaphor may be problematic for her. This means that a women trying to negotiate a serious relationship, may feel constrained to use, and hear in return, these words because other forms of words may be seen as avoiding commitment and emotional investment in the relationship.

5.5. SUMMARY OF THE ANALYSIS OF THE WOMEN'S INTERVIEWS

The women's stories were complex, and any summary will introduce simplifications which belie the discourse analytic method. However I want to offer a reflexive summary which covers very briefly what I see to be the broad discursive similarities across the women's interviews.

The women in my study constructed and were constructed within discourses of emotion which allowed them to tell different stories of heterosexual relationships - romantic love relationships, lasting and settled love relationships and intimate relationships without love. The normalcy of being in an intimate heterosexual relationships was reconstituted as the way of being heterosexually feminine, and a discourse of romantic love seemed to often function to justify being a sexually active woman, 'in love' rather than sexually desiring. This acknowledges and reproduces the sexual double standard in which women are expected to engage in sex for love, where men are expected to engage in sex for sex. I will return to this issue in Chapter 7 when I offer an analysis of talk about infidelity.

Positioning within a discourse of romantic love and discourses of emotion was difficult for women to resist and attempts to do this often reinforced the power and inevitability of women's romantic feelings. Being an older woman, usually over 30, allowed women to draw on their experience to resist an 'adolescent' association of romantic love, and to draw on more rational feelings as a better way to approach intimate relationships. The focus however was still on feelings, though ones which were less overwhelming and extreme. The difficulty of telling a love story based on more moderate feelings was in evidence. Though constructions of 'maturity' did not help women to avoid telling stories of love, they did enable women to tell stories of sex without love, rather 'like a man', as Ruth

did (Section 5.1.4). In reproducing the male sex drive in this way, men are also reproduced as mature, in contrast to young women.

In constructing their romantic relationships, the women participants often constituted their male partners with the feelings needed to build them into 'true romantic heroes', while also suggesting that most 'real' men cannot be expected to be too emotionally expressive. Psychodynamic understandings and John Gray's "Martian" man suggest that man can't deal with being the object of his partner's criticism and women participants seemed to incorporate such an understanding into their love stories. The women's interviews were redolent with male partners positioned as understandably cool and emotionally repressed men, who loved and couldn't always show it adequately. This allows the telling of a love story as a romance because his feelings can be assumed even when he doesn't always show them. Without an expectation of male emotional repression and his difficulty with emotions, perhaps it would be difficult, if not impossible, to tell a story of heterosexual relationship as a romance at all. However this raises questions about whether my women participants' understanding of men as unable to do romance is letting men off the hook, when instead they might conceive men as refusing to do the romance. The women's constructions, despite drawing on notions of 'male emotional illiteracy', suggest that they are not challenging men about this in their current relationships. This would seem to function to allow men to ignore or reject any suggestions of their not behaving mutually, in the absence of specific complaints from their women partners, who, in turn, may be protecting men from such unvoiced complaints. However, considering the specific complaints in these interviews, men would seem to have to actively ignore or be uninterested in women's feelings, and this would raise questions of power in relationships rather than gendered abilities to do and read emotion.

I'll now turn, in Chapter 6, to an analysis of the interviews I conducted with 'real life' men. The men often produced themselves as unromantic, but instead of this being explained as problematic in an intimate relationship, they presented it as the appropriate way to be, thus producing substantially different relationships and love from my women participants. I'll highlight these differences in Chapter 7, after I've detailed the discourses and discursive constructions drawn on in the men's interviews.

CHAPTER 6. STUDY 2. MEN TALKING ABOUT LOVE AND WORK

I was detached, having learned to be cold; intact, no-one could touch me, particularly the women I let fall in love with me. I wanted them; I got them; I lost interest. I never rang back, or explained. Whenever I was with a woman, I considered leaving her. I didn't want what I wanted. I found their passion repellent, or it amused me. How foolish they were to let themselves feel so much!

(from *Intimacy* a novel by Hanif Kureishi (1998, p62))

In talking about love, the men in my study offered a variety of accounts of love in intimate heterosexual relationships, some of which prized romantic love but most of which problematized it or represented love as a rational endeavour. In doing so however, they articulated some difficulties in talking about love.

6.1. UNCERTAINTY AROUND TALKING ABOUT LOVE

Some men positioned themselves as being unfamiliar with talking about love or not competent in using romance narratives, as has been suggested in academic literature on gender and romance (e.g. Jackson, 1993). In response to my question "Do you think your ideas about love, being in love are similar to other people's?", Tim questioned whether his not knowing might be gendered, because women rather than men get to talk about love.

TIM. I don't know. I really don't know because, to be honest with you I don't think I've ever spoken to many other people about love, to be honest. It's something you almost take for granted. It's something that you almost have to know intuitively. (pause) Whether it's different for a man and a woman, I don't know. Because I think that women probably find it easier or are encouraged to talk about love, more than men are.

Where an understanding came from Foucault (1979) that it has become obligatory to be able to speak in a personal and confessional mode about sex, what may be at work here is the assumption that one should also be able to speak about love and intimacy. However, in practice, it is women who are being assumed to be able to do it.

Jon also constructed himself as being "honest" in positioning himself as not knowing what being 'in love' is.

JON. ... And I'm not really sure what being in love is, to be honest.

He talked about his confusion about love, and of whether he had been 'in love' in a particular relationship.

JON. So then I thought of a relationship recently, which was a significant relationship er but I still have questions about whether I was actually in love in this relationship. I don't know.

Like Tim, he couldn't say anything about other people's ideas of love.

ANGIE. I was going to say 'do you think your ideas about love or being in love are different from other peoples?'

JON. Errm. Don't know. No idea. (Angie laughs) No idea on that one.

Michael answered the same question, "Do you think your ideas about love or being in love are similar to other people's?", in a similar fashion, saying that he didn't "know", though he counted his partner ("that's one") as sharing his ideas, constructing mutuality in their joint understanding. He qualified the view that he didn't know about other people's ideas about love by explaining that you 'know' about love by experiencing it.

MICHAEL. Don't know really. I think they were similar to hers. (laughs) So that's one. (Both laugh) ...No I mean I don't really have an opinion whether -I mean don't, cos I don't think, I think your ideas about what love is come from the experience of having it. And I think you can have ideas and expectations. I'm not saying, you know, you come to this sort of totally innocent. I think you do have expectations, theories about what love is and that does influence how you behave together. But I do think also, just the sort of intermeshing of these two people produces what love is. And I think that's maybe one of its defining features. As it is one of the relationships when being in love is something's come out of it which you hadn't expected.

Will, in his interview, talked about not having thought about what he might say about his ideas of love prior to the interview. He also constructed himself as not "eloquent" on love, as well as telling me that he had consulted his partner about what he might say to finish the sentence "If I love you then I should ...".

WILL. So. What was I going to say. I hope some of the people you interview are more eloquent than myself. (both laugh)

ANGIE. You're fine. I mean it's, you know, as long as you're happy to sort of think think about it, and um that's fine.

WILL. I'm not brimming with ideas. (Angie laughs)

ANGIE. Do you want to go back to the er [If I love you then I should]?

WILL. No.

ANGIE. No. (Both laugh) I knew you were going to say that. That's fine. (laughs and Will does too) Right.

WILL. No when I just went to make a cup of tea [during the interview], (Baby's name) had actually gone to bed luckily. Penny was in the kitchen and I said "Oh God. What would you say to that?"

ANGIE. You didn't?

WILL. I did. (Both laugh)

Uncertainty of how to talk about 'love' seems to be implicated in the ways in which the men I interviewed talked often about what love wasn't and what it didn't comprise, rather than what it was.

In Chapter 3, I discussed academic research which has positioned men as emotional inadequates, especially in relation to heterosexual relationships. This pervasive construction of masculinity presents resistance to romantic love and intimacy as inherently masculine and macho, and this poses a particular dilemma for those men who engage in intimate relationships and want to be positioned neither as oppressive male chauvinists and inadequates in 'love' nor as girly romantics (that is insufficiently masculine and thus possibly gay). The group of men I interviewed included some men who indicated they were aware of feminist critiques of men and heterosexual romantic relations, and for whom such a dilemma may be most salient. The next section, 6.2, will look at how a discourse of romance is drawn on in the men's interviews, often in order to reject it, followed by section 6.3, which looks at a more pragmatic work discourse of relationships. These two broad discourses tend to be employed together

antithetically, with the discourse of romantic love often drawn on to be resisted in favour of a discourse which privileged choice and rationality over romance and which offered the speaker the possibility of constructing themselves as working at relationships and at their own self project.

6.2. THE DISCOURSE OF ROMANTIC LOVE

Adam, a young man in his late teens, described himself as "I'm a romantic, I like to think". He drew on a discourse of romantic love within which love and relationships have to happen "naturally" as "a sort of natural happiness" and good feelings. He invokes warm sunny days in long grassy meadows under blue skies.

ADAM. Well just that I treasure love as the best feeling I've ever had. Along with happiness and er just having a good time. And passion comes into this as well. Happiness and having a good time. And I think it's important to be with someone cos they're great and because it just happens you're having such a good time. ... I think it's because love should be, for me, love should be equal, natural and Ooohhhh, sort of thing (Angie laughs) Sort of like a warm sunny day, walking home to the, like walking through like long grassy meadows. Blue skies. Just scatters of cloud. Shorts and t-shirt. A sort of natural happiness. Sort of exciting. That's what love is. Something that knocks me off my feet.

ADAM. It's, if you, if you wanted to be a couple, it would have to work naturally, not be forced.

Adam constructs romantic love as bringing happiness for him, and if this happiness is not there, all the time, then the relationship will not work. Here he is replying to a question from me about the difference between a relationship that works and one that doesn't.

ADAM. The one that works, they're both pleased to see each other all the time. There's never a dull moment. They have little arguments but it always works out. They're always happy, peaceful. A relationship that isn't working is when, (pause) it just isn't working probably. Like if you sit down for a meal with each other, there's no

conversation. It's just quiet. You don't really have much to talk about with each other and sometimes you get bored. Well quite a lot of times you get bored. (pause) I think a relationship should be fun. It should be something really where you wake up in the morning and should be sort of like 'Oh Yea Yea . Let me get up'. (Angie laughs) I don't have to do anything back. But if you wake up in the morning and you think 'oh' knowing you're going to see them again today, 'great' (in bored tone), lie back. It just doesn't work.

Adam has constructed a relationship that works as one that requires no work or effort. He articulates an extremely idealistic position. Within the 'natural' romantic love discourse, if the fun goes, you can't do anything to get it back. However this unquestioned romantic positioning was unusual in the men's interviews, as most of the men resisted a 'natural' love discourse in different ways.

6.2.1. Resisting romantic feelings (1): men's love is not about 'funny feelings'

Paul positioned himself as unable to say much about how his most important and significant relationship started or developed as it was too long (about 30 years) ago. When I asked him "can you explain what what it means to you to to be in love? What it feels like or what?", the following exchange took place.

PAUL. Well it's very difficult. Men men don't have these funny feelings.

ANGIE. What? (Paul laughs) I mean what funny feelings are those?

After a few more exchanges he let me know that he had been joking about these "funny feelings".

PAUL. ... I'll not mention any names ... but she had funny feelings and funny things. That's why she set me up with this interview. (laughs) I'm sorry I shouldn't have done that should I? (Angie laughs) No {I

ANGIE. {I don't know. Are you pulling my leg here?

PAUL. I was on that one, yea. Sorry.

ANGIE. But I'm still interested by what you mean by funny feelings.

PAUL. No no. What I I er. I think love is different. It's not it's not just an affection. It's doing and not doing things and not being in love with people, where they are doing things right. You know it's not a feeling. It's more than a feeling.

Paul's explanation of love is about 'doing', not 'feeling', or not mere feeling. In the interview he was not interested to talk about his emotions at all.

Ian and Robin explicitly talked of mistrusting romance.

IAN. ... And since I'm rather distrustful of the classic romantic view of relationships, I mean. My my basis now tends to be more on focusing on getting the nitty gritty right. You know, the basis of respect and integrity and er honouring the other person and making sure there's a good basis there. And almost letting the more romantic elements emerge from that. I think there's a danger in having a romantic explosion early on, which ignores a lot of deep underlying- it just doesn't address deep underlying issues. And um, so, in some way, I'm almost deliberately unromantic, in the beginning phases. I'm rather suspicious of that romance. It's something that for me emerges later, perhaps.

Ian takes a pragmatic view, a getting "the nitty gritty right", something to 'do' rather than 'feel'. He explains how an early "romantic explosion" is dangerous, a very "unromantic" view. He is not denying the possibility of a romantic explosion, but he claims to want to avoid it and that he can deliberately avoid the explosive chaos of romance. This is a head over heart account, a rational approach.

ROBIN. ...I had always a sneaking suspicion that love was not the Hollywood ideal which I think everybody's spoonfed, you know. If your heart isn't pounding and your your - also because I'm I'm I've always been a a male who is - and this is where you you compare to other males and I've had very close male friends where um with - maybe birds of a feather stick together but I've never been overtly impressed by er the need for sex or whatever. I've always been very low, I must er, what is it, a low sexual drive, you know to me that was the function of, rather than the prerequisite of. Um and I always found that compatibility was what love was really about.

Like Ian, Robin seems to be eschewing romantic love, his notion of which is based on a high male sexual drive as part of the "Hollywood ideal" that "everybody's spoonfed". This leaves him with a difficult task of locating himself as male, but not a particular sort of male. In order to resist a dominant 'male sex drive' discourse (Hollway, 1989), he positions himself as having a low sex drive, a position he constructs as unusual. He and a few of his close friends (that is he is not alone) represent a different kind of man from the majority of men who fall in love with a woman because they want sex with her. For him the more pragmatic notion of "compatibility" is what he explicitly claims love is "really about". However, in the next extract, he also draws on a romantic discourse which positions him as 'falling in love', though "by mistake" and as something that couldn't be avoided. This is contextualized within the orderliness and practicality of this relationship, which demonstrates the pervasiveness of talking about 'falling in love' even as it is resisted and reinvented.

ROBIN. Yea erm, in fact most probably the reason that it [his current relationship] is going on is that I um, the first time I was practical about the relationship rather than emotional I think. I I approached it instead of falling head over heels first um, because she was engaged, um I had to know her as a friend and fell in love by mistake. So (laughing tone) I suppose, you know it was something I didn't intend to do so I think it was a, it had a far more practical approach of of friendship and I think compatibility.

Men rarely talked of being infatuated. Two men mentioned infatuation using it synonymously with being 'in love'. Simon said "...And in fact the woman, the woman who I was probably most madly in love with, Beth, who I'm still good friends with, er I was absolutely infatuated with..." and Nick, in reply to a question about what 'in love' meant or felt like, responded "Well at the time, I mean I suppose it's this infatuation ...". However he also talked about having to know "whether it's infatuation or whether it's it's a match". A "match" in this way becomes a rather unromantic concept.

Ian drew on a discourse of romantic love in order to position his female partner as more subject to feeling than he was himself.

IAN. I mean, the other person was keener on it than me and I basically went along with it.Er at the time of course I just, it felt like right to go along with it. And I did feel a deep sense of caring and also some sexual excitement. And so that combination of caring and sexual excitement it felt quite, and the other person felt a lot for me, so I thought why not go ahead.

It seems that many of the men are explicitly not using talk about feelings of love to account for being in an intimate relationship or as an indicator or guide to having a relationship. What underlies many of the men's accounts of heterosexual relationships and their involvement in them is a rational discourse rather than a romantic one, though their women partners may still tend to be positioned within a romantic discourse. This very much fits with the research which suggests that men avoid positioning themselves in romantic narratives, because this would position them, like women, within discourses of emotions and feelings, discourses which might signify weakness (e.g. Hollway, 1984; 1989; Lutz, 1997; Seidler, 1989). This is also in accord with a psychodynamic discourse which constructs a male fear of vulnerability to explain why men would avoid being emotional or effecting emotional intimacy in heterosexual relationships (Chodorow, 1978; Sayers, 1986; 1998; Hollway, 1984; 1989; Jukes, 1993) by projecting their feelings onto women. This, again, can be explained as a way of doing heterosexual masculinity, in contrast to emotionality and femininity, which in turn accounts for a man's resistance to positioning himself within a discourse of romantic love, when that is pervasively articulated as a discourse of powerful emotions. However, intense feelings were talked about in the men's interviews, though by constructing them as a problematic external entity, the men could still resist positioning themselves as being emotional.

6.2.2. Resisting romantic feelings (2): problematizing emotional intensity

The powerfulness and intensity of feelings involved with being in an intimate relationship was a common construction, whether the interviewee was constructing themselves as 'in love' or not. Adam, ("I'm a romantic, I like to think"), problematized intensity, constructing it as something which may be destructive to a relationship and indicative of a relationship which could not be sustained.

ADAM. ... She was very (pause) intense. It was like - perhaps that was because we didn't see a lot of each other. Not seeing a lot of each other, every time we saw each other it was intense. I don't know how else to describe it. (inaud) like just to be, the time we'd be together (inaud). But I think perhaps we were both like that anyway. So if we were closer, the closer we'd been, we might have got tired of each other. Being around a person too long, like if you're stuck in a cell with them for over a year, and so on, you get to know everything about them. It might start to wane. Quarrels and stuff. But I really don't know. It would have been nice to have (inaud).

The representation of intensity as problematic, as "it", as symbolising the probability of the demise of a relationship because of tiring of each other, was commonly voiced in the interviews. It is not always clear whether the men are talking about emotional intensity, or about living very closely together. Michael talked about why a past relationship finished, a relationship in which he positioned himself within a discourse of romantic love, as "head over heels" in love. Unlike Adam, the intensity came from spending a lot of time together rather than too little.

MICHAEL. We'd spent, we'd been together about 3 years, and we'd spent that pretty intensely, particularly the last ser, period of time, extremely intensively. I mean we slept in the same sleeping bag and we were with each other, we'd been living with each other in X (out of UK), with not knowing anyone else around us, permanently for nine months and were sick of the sight of each other. (laughs)

In telling a story of the importance and significance of love to him, and of the ending of this relationship, in the next extract he suggests that "this intensity of feeling", which is involved in being in love, "is by definition something transient", and that one reason to have a relationship without being in love is to avoid the concomitant disappointment of losing it in "the day to day level of existence". However this contradicts his explanation of the importance and significance of love to him.

MICHAEL. ..It's important for me to be in love. I, you know, as far as I'm concerned, it's the most significant event in your life. ... One of the other things about her and our relationship was a sense that something like that is by definition something transient. And that

once - you see you have this intensity of feeling for someone and the feeling that maybe the day to day level of existence is just not going, is going to mean losing it, okay. And so it might be better sometimes to have a relationship where that isn't there, with someone you're not in love with because then you're not so disappointed that it's so (laughing and Angie laughs too) it's so um daily, you know, stuff. Having said that I would still have liked to have tried.

In this way, the intensity associated with passion and excitement was represented as something enjoyable, but which cannot be sustained because it becomes unpleasant (like being stuck in a "cell" or becoming "sick of the sight of each other"). This construction of problematic intensity makes it possible for men to resist long-term romance, because romance involves passion and intensity and this will lead to becoming tired and bored with someone, and the romance and passion will go. So within Adam's and Michael's romantic accounts the gauge of a relationship working is for there to be intensity, but not too often nor too much. This could be read as suggesting a more companionate relationship, one which, as Michael says, doesn't have that intensity of feeling. However, contradictorily, both Michael and Adam chose the intense relationships, described here, as their most important and significant relationships, despite their not lasting. They may be drawing on a notion of too much intensity to justify that the relationships weren't their failures as they couldn't have been sustained permanently, yet they do voice regrets. Adam's "It would have been nice to have (inaud)" and Michael's "Having said that I would still have liked to have tried" construct the relationships as still valuable to them.

The men's talk of intensity seemed mostly to construct extreme and powerful feelings as external to them, as something which will threaten to overwhelm and engulf them, from outside. They are often depersonalized, an 'it' such as in Michael's "I think it was something (which) had become very intense" and "this intensity of feeling", rather than personalized feelings which are embodied and internalized.

The woman is also often implicated and held responsible for engendering these feelings. In Adam's account (section 5.2) we hear that she is very intense. Ian offers an anti-romantic account, in which emotional intensity is problematized, and to some extent attributed to her as he talked at length

about her "insecurity". Michael's partner "sparked very strong responses in other people".

MICHAEL. She was very attractive, very - quite confrontational person, but quite vivacious, so she did spark very strong responses in other people. People would fall in love with her very easily and get very intensely involved with her.

Research into the social construction of emotionality has suggested that women's feelings are construed as engulfing men by drawing on a discourse of emotion which constructs emotional expression as indicative of a lack of self-containment, and this stigmatizes women (Lupton, 1998). Such engulfment would threaten men's independence and separate identity upon which their masculinity is built. This would be antithetical to the construction of men as having control in relationships and may account for men representing intensity as problematic in a relationship. For instance, Ian uses the expression "blurring of individuality", to explain the problem of why romantic love and the intensity involved with it erodes the self. Ian defines his own view of intensity, one which will allow him to not be subject to a partner's "powerful stuff", (the leaking of her emotions?). He suggests that an intensity can exist which enhances solid demarcations of the self.

IAN. I suppose my ideal relationship is one with this incredible intensity and intimacy, but equally a very strong sense of separate identity. And I don't see this as a paradox. I think in fact in a way, the common idea of a marriage as a kind of blurring of individuality, I don't like at all. I like a sense where you both have, if anything that the relationship is very intense and strong but you almost, it enhances your own and develops your own individuality as well at the same time.

Though many of the accounts construct too much intensity as leading to the end of a relationship, Will uses two types of love to resolve a dilemma about intensity and love. Will, talked about the problem of deciding whether diminishing intensity ("you don't exist on that same sort of dizzy sort of plain") meant that you were no longer 'in love'. Having intense feelings is equated with a discourse of romantic love, which is seen as incommensurate with a day to day existence. To partly position himself

within the discourse of romantic love, and an every day relationship, Will constructs the intensity involved as concerned with the initial insecurity and anxiety of being in love in the beginning of a relationship, producing a passionate/companionate love dichotomy.

WILL. ... One of the things I was thinking about yesterday was the difference between love and being in love, which I consider to be vastly different things. Erm, I'm not quite sure how I'd describe it but the difference is, (cough) being in love is, to me it gives you the extra feelings like er, well in the early stages obviously nervousness (laugh), and er, you know, the anticipation and er. Because I was thinking about what's the difference between - obviously the way you are when you first meet somebody and how you are when you've been married for 8 years, you you can't go around living like that. I mean it's not possible to - although you'd still be in in love, you don't exist on that same sort of dizzy sort of plane. I was trying to, how, well, it's something like 'are you not in love with the person because you don't day to day think the same sort of things?'

When I asked what he had decided, he responded:-

WILL. I decided that er - again it's one of the things that you've got to, have to work at to er make sure that you have those feelings. Because it's er, all the things you have to do in everyday life like the cooking and cleaning and mopping baby sick up and the humdrum, you can easily forget to, you know, have the more sort of er crazy (laugh) moments together.

So, for Will, the solution is to move from intensity of feeling as a response to "nervousness" and "anticipation" to his "working at" having those feelings. This allows him to present his relationship as an ongoing project, partly as a consequence of this work. I'll return to this when I talk about the work discourse of relationships later in this chapter.

So Will has resolved the problem of integrating intensity and being in love into a day to day existence by drawing on a more pragmatic discourse which allows him to be instrumental in making time in a humdrum existence to "work at" some intense feelings. For some of the other men there remains a paradox around love when intensity is constructed as

problematic and unsustainable. If they position themselves as romantics, they are no longer in love if and when intensity goes. But according to the construction of humdrum, day to day existence, intensity and passion will die, and the romantic love relationship must therefore end. Where Will has offered a resolution, Jon's confusion about love is framed in terms of his being unable to have both a relationship in which he both feels a "connection" and has a "sensible day-to-day working relationship". This seems like a reworking of the postulated psychodynamic masculine splitting of women into madonnas and whores (chapter 3, section 3.2.2), though here Jon creates women you can live with, but don't love or women you love but can't live with.

JON. Yea I think it is. I mean I've had a relationship since and it only lasted about 2 months. And I felt that I was in love and I felt that I had this connection, er but there was all kinds of other problems (laughing tone) associated with this. So. Erm erm so. I think it is important to be in love. I don't seem to be able erm have the two together, you know, a nice relationship and be in love.

In the relationship in which he had his most important "connection" he said "I hadn't got any sensible day-to-day working relationship, at all".

JON. We we were together for 5 years and it was an extremely painful and traumatic five years. And there was something that bound us together, and at the time I thought this was love and I'm really not sure what the hell it was that that kept us going, kept kept winding each other up.

Overall there was no consensus in the men's talk about whether it is more important to be in love or to have relationships without intensity, perhaps with a different sort of love. Those men who talked of wanting to be in love, also tended, like Jon above, to describe relationships which didn't last because of tension, arguments, differences and they questioned whether relationships without the intensity of being in love might be more sustainable. Simon who prioritizes what he calls "psychological fit" over romantic feelings suggested:-

SIMON. I think, I think the romantic passionate feelings would have not been sustainable in a long term relationship anyway. And I

think, it was very - they were sustainable for as long as they were because, precisely because we lived in different cities, towns, and precisely because it was all, seeing her was always like being on holiday.

So romance, for Simon, is constructed as only sustainable when it does not have to coexist with everyday life, like being on holiday. This represents love as a leisure pursuit, rather than a way of being, exemplifying again how romantic love is resisted by constructing it as overfamiliarity or overintensity which cannot be sustained, nor readily transformed into a more comfortable form of emotional life as it has bred apathy.

6.2.3. Resisting romantic feelings (3): professing 'I love you'

If romantic love feelings are resisted, by prioritizing less emotional factors, this raises questions about whether there are contradictions involved in men saying 'I love you', which within a discourse of romantic love would be read as meaning 'I have feelings of love for you'. Robin, previously (in section 6.2.1), also rejected the idea that his saying 'I love you' meant 'I want sex with you', but he acknowledges the contradictions in resisting a romantic love discourse and saying 'I love you'. He explicitly resisted 'love at first sight', while also pointing up the difficulty, even daftness, of not believing in 'love'.

ROBIN. I don't believe in love. That sounds a daft statement but um I believe in lust and (pause) um a fondness and I don't believe that you can fall in love within in twenty minutes.

Then, in response to my question "So do you tell each other 'I love you'?" he responded:-

ROBIN. Yes. Um seems quite odd in the past statement but that to me is a way of saying I won't walk out on you. I am here for you. Love to me is a whole mixture of meaning erm and it has no - it is liking the person for their own person, regardless of any, I don't know, other motive. I think maybe it's selfishness. You know where you, yes when I say that it means I won't walk out, I am here for you. I don't care whether you get up in the morning really bad-tempered. That

that to me is what that means and that you know er, I won't betray you.

Robin's talk exemplifies how 'I love you' may have different meanings, depending on the discourse within which it is located. Here, it was related to actions rather than feelings. Robin flags the oddness of talking about not believing in love while still saying 'I love you', constructing this phrase as being understood within the discourse of romantic love, which he is rejecting. Robin offers a raft of other meanings, highlighting "I won't walk out on you" and "I won't betray you", which are about actions he could take but is saying that he won't. This draws on assumptions that men are the leavers and betrayers in intimate heterosexual relationships, a topic to which I'll return in the next chapter.

Simon spoke of saying 'I love you' as part of manufacturing emotion rather than responding to feeling. Instead of constructing emotion as information to the self that something or someone is important or needs recognising (Oatley, 1992), it is constructed as something amenable to control. He suggests you can create intimacy and closeness and that saying 'I love you' is part of that. This offers a very instrumental view of emotions and which, from a romantic perspective might be seen as faking it, as not having 'real' feeling.

SIMON. I mean I I think er, I could stop doing the clucking and the 'I love you', the unnecessary 'I love you's, but er I have an increasing sense that it's important to actually to to work at intimacy and closeness. And er it doesn't just happen. That I have to er, I have to make space for it and I have to, I have to be tolerant. To to have the kind of intimacy and closeness with Jan I have to be er accepting of ways in which she's different and tolerant of her different needs and and all those kinds of things. So saying 'I love you' is part of like me making, working at the relationship, making it, making closeness, rather than it just being there.

Discoursing 'I love you', in this way, becomes a way of discoursing the maintenance of relationships, and might possibly be seen as a postmodern performance of intimacy (Gergen and Gergen, 1995).

6.2.4. Romantic illusion: pathology and projection

A particularly pathological construction of love came from drawing on psychodynamic concepts to explain how you might mistake love for someone by having projected your ideal lover onto that person. For Ian, an academic familiar with psychology, doing this allowed him to offer a rejection of the discourse of romantic love.

IAN. I think a lot of this, the way this culture views it, as reflected in say pop songs and things, is actually pathology. What it involves, I mean I'm very much drawing on say psycho psychodynamic ideas here. People get together, they've got unresolved stuff to do with early parenthood, they project it onto the opposite partner. And I think it might have been Jung who said often you haven't got just two people in the relationship, you've got four people. You've got the the man and the woman, the man's projection on the woman and the woman's projection on the man. And actually it's the two projections relating to each other, not the two people. And I think this is the sort of the way many relationships are frequently, they've got pathologies in them because er these - you've got all this projection going. So there not, in the beginning, this 'in love', you're not actually seeing the real person. What you're loving is basically your own projection. And that, and of course you're unconscious of this. And that's where the problems come in. Because after a while this tends to wear off to some extent. Or the problems to do with that projection come up. And then you start to actually see the real man or the real woman. ... And and so, 'in love' in that sense I regard as a pathology.

Ian has constructed love by drawing on a notion of pathology and disease, in relation to which an investor in romance is constructed as diseased. As an explanation, it sets him apart from others in our psychoanalytic culture (Parker, 1997) because he is not going to be fooled by these projections. According to this version of love, romantic love is assumed to offer inauthenticity, because the 'real' man or woman cannot be seen behind their projections. Relationships become a theoretical project to work on in order to avoid such inauthenticity.

IAN. ... But also in relationships, particularly with women, I'm dealing with the romantic and projections and all that kind of stuff that came up so I had done an awful lot of work on it and had thought an awful lot about it.

Ian positioned himself as an expert on avoiding the danger of projection and by implication anyone who hasn't done this is likely to fall in love 'pathologically'. For Michael, who also acknowledges the possibility of getting it wrong, 'true love' comes from getting it right, from the person you love being the projection you want. That match means you can 'be yourself', can 'feel most yourself'. It is possible to be authentic. The relationship he talked about fulfilled that, but didn't last. For Michael true 'authentic' love is not about working at avoiding getting it wrong, but about the happy coincidence of meeting the person who matches your projection, your ideal. So Ian and Michael while drawing on the same discourse of projection, use it to construct romantic love in very different ways.

MICHAEL. And one thing does seem to me, how you're creating the other person. In a, they're almost used like a sort of, a material object for you to project ideas you have. So, you know, I was talking about openness, trust and that. And I think those are things, beliefs and certain things which you have which, when you're in love, those become projected onto the other person. Um. And I don't know if that's anything to do- I can't remember what was it, what was it Dante and Beatrice used to do? He would stand looking at a woman as though he could see Beatrice. I I remember there was something, I can't remember what that was about. But it was about how you were taking the person there and seeing something behind them, which was what you really wanted. Erm, and so that sense of when you're in love with someone, then there's who they actually are and who they need to be in order for you to love them. Um and I think there's often a gap between those two and I think the reason you need to be in love is really for yourself. Because, in my case, you know, it's when I feel most myself. I think you're seeing the world as it is. So that what you're having to do is take (laughing) the person who's actually there and use them as a way of conjuring up this creature behind them which enables you to be yourself. Now if you're lucky, you're right. And those both match. Okay? And I tend to believe that's what happened with Maggie. But I do think there's always that slight gap

between the two, the real person and what, what you're projecting them to be in order for you to be what you need to be.

For Michael, his understanding of problematic projection offers a way of constructing 'true love' as rare, but possible. When this happens, true love becomes the channel through which you can most know yourself, as your partner provides the screen which reflects you at your most authentic. Adam puts this rather more simply and briefly in finishing the sentence "If you love me then you should":-

ADAM. If you love me then you should love me for what I am and not what you want me to be.

The discursive theme of projection suggests that human beings have notions of ideal partners or ideal selves, or how else could they be projected onto someone else. The next section discusses a rather less idealist notion than that of finding one's ideal reflection. This does not rely on there being one ideal love, and therefore constructs a choice about whether you love someone.

6.2.5. A choice: Not Ms Right - plenty more fish in the sea?

The person you fall in love with was not constructed as the *only* one, it would be "ridiculous" to think this.

WILL. I I again I said I think a little more realistically about things than, and that's why I think my views on falling in love are different from when I was about 18. I think more realistically about it. Um um. I think that um. Well I know there's millions and millions of people in the world and, you know - there can't be just one person that's right. So you you could decide not to fall in love with another person and meet somebody else. It would be ridiculous to think that you couldn't be just as happy with somebody else. Somebody else would be just right as well.

Will's "So you you could decide not to fall in love with another person" suggests that 'falling in love' is something which you can decide about, not something you can't avoid. He suggests that maturity rather than adolescence is the time to discover this. Robin suggests something similar

in the next extract. Both Will and Robin talked of committed love relationships which they were currently in, so this is not only a theoretical explanation but also a potentially defensive rhetorical device should their relationships finish at some later date.

ROBIN. Um I I don't see love as a there's only one. It's a hit and miss affair. When you're ready, you happen to meet someone else who has a similar outlook and I think that's vital. It's it's almost, because you're constantly evolving, changing opinions, politically, culturally. You need to find someone at that moment in time that is moving in the same direction so that when you lock in you both move in a similar direction. Um and I I do believe that there is choice, yea yea. Because at the end of the day, the mind can overrule the heart. Oh Okay it might be painful for that period of time but hey listen 2 years later (Angie laughs) you know, you've forgotten about it, which Thank god people do. Because I mean it also makes the the possibility of loss more bearable and hence doesn't make me so tight to hold on, which can be stifling in itself.

This is a head over heart explanation, as Robin explicitly said "the mind can overrule the heart". In resisting romantic discourse, often my men participants drew on a rational or work discourse, within which the man is positioned as subject, and as working at intimate relationships. I'll now address this latter discourse in detail, showing how many of the men drew on it, and how it constructed intimate heterosexual relationships as important, without their drawing on a romantic account, sometimes explicitly resisting it. This discourse privileges head over heart, rationality over emotionality. It is a discourse of successful business and work, rational, logical, economical, hard-headed. Perhaps this discourse offers a 'third way' and a way of resolving the dilemma of engaging in intimacy while being neither oppressive nor emotional.

6.3. A BUSINESS OR WORK DISCOURSE OF RELATIONSHIPS

The business or work discourse of relationships allows the speaker to construct themselves as expert and as successful at intimate heterosexual relationships, by drawing on general organizational or work-related concepts and their own experience of paid work or therapy. It also allows men to resolve the dilemma associated with being in an intimate

heterosexual relationship, by enabling them to position themselves as acceptably masculine, neither overtly chauvinistic nor too romantic. This is achieved by constituting relationships as contexts in which they can talk of doing work rather than talk about being emotional and vulnerable. But some contradictions arise as they talk in this way about taking intimate heterosexual relationships seriously.

There are several strands to this work discourse which I'll address below. The first is that relationships may be as important as paid work.

6.3.1. Relationships are as important as paid work

Simon talked about having a revelation, while watching TV, when a well-known playwright explained that what was most important to him was leaving work and getting home to his wife.

SIMON. ...What, what had hit me between the eyes was the possibility of, of someone, of having a relationship with a woman, as a man, that was the centre of the life. So it wasn't work that was the centre of your life. Work could be very important, but or or whatever. But a relationship could be something that was sustaining, um that was enriching. Was all those kind of things. And really I'd, these hadn't, these hadn't occurred to me before, I have to say. There's something about this that hadn't, that I'd been avoiding or hadn't seen in that way that a relationship could be (short pause) er well I want to use the word sustaining and enriching and and something that was like, was was one of the really important things that made life really worthwhile. And was about, it was an opportunity for you to grow as a person, for me to grow as a person. All those things I'd have associated with work, they were things that I did through my, well you know the choices I have developed, whatever, and the whatever was always, in the end, academic work. So so that kind of hit me between the eyes and I didn't know what it was about. I just recognised here was a man who was a successful playwright, which was something that I admired cos he was a lefty intellectual who was saying it wasn't being a lefty intellectual that what was, what was sustaining and enriching, it was this relationship with this woman which was a long term [his emphasis] relationship and was about

living in a house together and intimacy and not about living separately and doing one's work and all those kind of things.

Simon, by comparing a long-term relationship with paid work, and positioning it as having the potential to be more important and fulfilling than paid work, represents relationships as important because they offer an opportunity "to grow as a person". His own personal growth is the central aim. But the idea that a relationship rather than work could be central to a man's life and his personal growth, is not presented as taken for granted. It is justified, not through his own experience or personal belief, but by explaining it as information which came as a revelation to him, a very powerful revelation which "hit" him "between the eyes", a phrase repeated three times. This account therefore constructs the previous unimportance and non-centrality of intimate relationships to him as a baseline position.

Contradictorily, the account of a relationship as "one of the really important things that made life really worthwhile" is ascribed to "a successful playwright" and "a lefty intellectual", a man admired by Simon for his paid intellectual work. This special warranting suggests that this account is unusual and cannot be taken-for-granted.

Simon talked of having been in heterosexual relationships since his early teens, some of several years duration. With the exception of his current relationship, these predated the time of his revelation about their importance. They were all constructed as temporary and related to *his* life style at the time. I'll return to this construction in a later section, but here I want to point to the dilemma for a man who claims to be politically aware, who has had several long-term relationships, while acknowledging that they were not central to his life (or "the life" in his own words). Rather his stated political philosophy had been to "avoid the domestic".

SIMON. I mean my relationship with Maura [a past relationship lasting 5 years] was also about avoiding the domestic in lots of ways. It was about not having commitments to to that. About not living together. Having a very worked up political, kind of rationalized version of that. You know it was all about you didn't get into heterosexual monogamy because that was where women were oppressed and that kind of thing. So this was a way of being -

avoiding those kinds of traps. Very complicated. (laughs and Angie joins in) Some of that, some of that I still believe in, some sort of it I think is to do with me and not to do with politics.

His avoidance is not of a relationship with her, but of commitment to her, positioning heterosexual monogamy as a trap, in particular a trap for her. His explanation of this as partly political and pro-feminist is interesting in that it allows him to partly position himself as saving her from oppression, with his laughter suggesting he acknowledges the irony of his "very complicated" position.

6.3.2. Separate identity and avoidance of commitment

Simon constructs some of his avoidance as personal and not political. I've already suggested how the men, while resisting a discourse of romantic love and being subject to 'feelings', may be doing heterosexual masculinity. But a common construction of male emotional illiteracy also positions men as being no good at relationships and love (Jackson, 1993; Duncombe and Marsden, 1993; 1995; 1998; Hite, 1988). Contradictorily, male emotional inexpressivity is also part of a romantic narrative, in which fulfilment of the romantic dream comes when the man who has been distant, cold, rude and often physically rough, is transformed into the man of her dreams, where his prior reluctance is explained away by his not having been sure of her, his jealousy or whatever (e.g. Patthey-Chavez *et al.*, 1996; Radway, 1987). The Beast can turn into a prince when Beauty shows how much she loves him (Warner, 1995). But the avoidant stories of the men I interviewed do not follow this romantic narrative, nor do they position themselves as being no good at relationships. Their avoidance of early commitment is not explained by their hiding their love until they could be sure they were loved in return nor because they didn't know about relationships and intimacy. They suggest, instead, that love and freedom are antithetical, rather like radical feminist theorizations of love for women (Chapter 3, section 3.1). Here is another example of professed avoidance, from Robin.

ROBIN. Erm and initially I had a lot of problems with with and I think it's fear of committing erm mainly because in one way or another, I've always been committed to something or other, and also because of my, or not my own belief, other peoples' knowledge of me, that I can almost be too much of a free spirit. Um I didn't want to get

involved. Um and this [his current relationship] I think taught me that in fact you can have your cake and eat it. You can be loved and yet have the freedom to be. Um and that that to me has been the most important revelation, that just because you're in a relationship doesn't mean it cripples you.

Robin talks about relationships not having to "cripple" him in terms of a 'revelation', rather like Simon's account of his revelation that "relationships are as important as work" (in section 6.3.1). This allows both men to construct commitment to a monogamous heterosexual relationship as not antithetical to personal growth and freedom and therefore something that need not be avoided. Their revelations are no romantic epiphanies. Robin is constructing *being* loved as potentially problematic to personal freedom, and his resolution of the dilemma of being committed without losing "the freedom to be" is to "have your cake and eat it", a cliché which emphasizes, while discounting, the dilemma.

By talking of revelation, Simon and Robin can construct their current relationships as important contexts for their developing self-awareness and personal growth, in contrast to previously positioning themselves as finding relationships as crippling, or as a kind of trap. This presents a familiar construction of relationships, one in which a stag night may be termed a 'last night of freedom' for the bridegroom. Simon attempted, in part, to take a non-sexist, non-oppressive political position to account for his past avoidance of commitment, but he also admitted to it partly being "to do with me and not to do with politics".

Ian took a similar position, that of needing "space" (which I understood as personal space and free time away from his partner), which he accounts for in terms of his past inexperience and lack of understanding of heterosexual relationships, suggesting that the "nuts and bolts" of heterosexual relationships can be learned.

IAN. ... It was my um lack of understanding about the way the nuts and bolts of relationships works. And I was like this. And so, in that sense, I tried to change her to give me loads of space, and she was trying to - er yes I think she was very understanding of me actually-trying to help me to see that you don't behave like this if you're in a

relationship. And I eventually changed, I came round to her viewpoint on that one.

Like Robin, Ian has positioned himself as too much of a free spirit in the past, and he too is now able to position himself within a relationship which allows him to be an individual, separate and independent, without having to avoid intimacy. He has offered an explanation of learning about how you behave in an intimate relationship, positioning his partner as a woman who understood his difficulty, suggesting his need for "loads of space" was understandable to her too (as it was also understood by Kitzinger and Powell's (1995) women participants). He also explained (in an extract used earlier in discussing intensity) how he expected now to be able to have a separate identity as well as intensity in a relationship.

IAN. I suppose my ideal relationship is one with this incredible intensity and intimacy, but equally a very strong sense of separate identity. And I don't see this as a paradox. I think in fact in a way, the common idea of a marriage as a kind of blurring of individuality, I don't like at all. I like a sense where you both have, if anything that the relationship is very intense and strong but you almost, it enhances your own and develops your own individuality as well at the same time.

Ian has suggested that wanting both intimacy and individuality might be seen as a paradox, in order to reinvent it as not a paradox at all. He is not giving up on a discursive theme of individuality, rather he is drawing on 'intimacy' to support 'individuality', like Robin's "have your cake and eat it". He is attempting to resist the construction of freedom and intimacy as mutually exclusive, claiming that they can co-exist not only unproblematically but synergistically, emphasizing how intimacy can "enhance" his self project.

Simon, Ian and Robin all constructed avoidance of commitment to explain their past relationships. Now they have constructed relationships as important as contexts in which they can do work, often personal growth work, a concept to which I'll return.

Men utilized other work-orientated talk to explain how they conducted their intimate heterosexual relationships. This allows them to resist being

positioned, or positioning themselves, as not taking their relationships seriously nor being committed to them, by talk of working at relationships.

6.3.3. Working at relationships

'Working at relationships' may sound a common metaphor, associated as it often is with self-help literature and the 'pure' sort of relationship offered by Giddens (1992) as the rational route to modern intimacy. Though not usually gendered, Illouz (1997) found her women participants using work metaphors more than men. Yet it was the men in my study who used them, not the women. I was especially surprised by how the men sometimes drew on examples of their own paid and unpaid work experience, practice and professional expertise in order to represent their conduct in relationships.

Men's relationships were often positioned as involving work, often hard work, where this work is necessary both for the relationship and for personal growth and, in this section, I'll explore this work talk and the work orientated concepts they used. In the West, male status has historically been related to paid work and wealth so this talk of their occupations may be coincidental to the research topic and unrelated claims of status. However, when this work-related talk is used to explain their relationships, then this will function to construct relationships in particular ways. I want to consider these work-related themes, in order to make sense of their possible functions and consequences for intimate heterosexual relationships and love.

'Working at relationships' constructed ongoing relationships and love as in need of constant work and in doing this, men are able to resist being positioned as taking relationships for granted.

TIM. I think love is part and parcel of a, of a, of a relationship and it's something that you have to keep working at. And you can't just assume that it's going to be there all the time. And you can't take, you can't take the relationship, and you can't take people for granted. Because if you do I think the love might actually go away from that relationship. When when you stop valuing the person that you're actually with.

SIMON. ... To to have the kind of intimacy and closeness with Jan I have to be er accepting of ways in which she's different and tolerant of her different needs and and all those kinds of things. So saying 'I love you' is part of like me making, working at the relationship, making it, making closeness, rather than it just being there.

Tim and Simon are suggesting that work is needed to keep love there, that it might go away if it is taken for granted, or not given sufficient time. They are utilising an unusual discourse of love, one which allows them to control and create it, a very different discourse from the discourse of romantic love, within which naturalness and spontaneity are crucial.

ADAM. It's, if you, if you wanted to be a couple, it would have to work naturally, not be forced.

Adam's use of the discourse of romantic love as 'natural' is unusual in my interviews with men. It is not that men do not draw on a romantic discourse, but that they resist positioning themselves within it totally, or partially, or contradictorily. Here I want to focus on the ways they construct relationships as useful and rational and mature.

Daniel, for instance, uses the analogy of DIY. He positions his friend, Paul, as not agreeing with him, yet.

DANIEL. Things have to move forward otherwise there's no point having them. I mean, Paul, my best mate, disagrees with me. I say I say you have to move forward. If you stand still, you know, things go wrong. Like a house. You have to keep renovating it and doing it up, otherwise (laughs) it just falls apart. Cos his relationship at the moment, it's going nowhere. And it's been falling apart. Has been for a while. But he won't hear, you know. He will do though. We're still discussing that. (laughter)

The men do not often explicitly talk about what working at relationships entails, but suggest that it is necessary for the relationship and love to continue. Without this work the relationship wouldn't be maintained. Will, however, talked of setting aside time together to do this.

WILL. I do see a lot of people around me that I don't think do think about their relationships enough. I don't think there's a day goes by without thinking about what what you need to do to maintain the relationship as it is. Ways you have to behave. Praps praps there'd be something to be said for being a bit more laid back. I perhaps go too far. But I think we do both work at it very much. We set time aside for doing particular things. I'm not using that term 'quality time'. (Both laugh)

Will partly problematizes his working at his relationship - "praps there'd be something to be said for being a bit more laid back". This 'working at' talk tends to position relationships as ongoing drudgery, though the work they explicitly mention involves talking with each other, spending time together and telling your partner 'I love you'. This talk, therefore, functions to construct these activities as difficult, possibly especially difficult for men. With the exception of Daniel who is talking about his general theories, the others who talked explicitly of 'working at' relationships (Will, Tim, Nick, Robin, Simon, though I haven't included all the extracts here) were talking about current relationships, so they are talking about successful work, a concept I'll come back to in a later section.

Talking about working at relationships positions the men as committed to the work, and, by implication, to the relationships in which they are prepared to put in this work which is often constructed by them as necessary to the continuance of the relationship and love feelings. But 'working at relationships' conveys drudgery without the enjoyment, excitement or fun that can be read in Adam's 'romantic' account? It also conveys control rather than spontaneity or responsiveness.

I want to look in more detail at some of the work/business concepts which have been used in accounting for relationships and to consider some of the types of work which are being claimed. One such is the work of personal growth, which occurred in the first extract from Simon "it [a relationship] was an opportunity for you to grow as a person, for me to grow as a person".

6.3.4. Personal growth work

One positive account of 'being in love', though not a happy-ever-after story, came from Michael. Though more romantic than most of the accounts as it includes talk of feelings and love, it is also an account of personal development, of existing authentically.

MICHAEL. So I think it [his relationship with Maggie] helped me, to come home, if you like, in so far as the two things were now connected up. So I felt more 'Yes'. You know, 'I'm not an alien in this world' 'There is this'- at least one other creature but but also a way you can be in the world and it still works. So, I think it changed me and made me more committed to that. And also I think that feeling, er that sense of what that the world is er and of perceiving things truthfully in those, has guided me in terms of what I want to do with my life, what I think's important and what I don't like. I don't think that's necessarily to do with say Maggie in particular, but I think having that experience of those kinds of feelings means, you know, it gives you a sort of lodestone of something which is valuable. Which particularly, you know, in an irreligious world, you don't have and you don't have necessarily any moral things about where to go. So that I do have a sense of yes, you know, the feelings I remember having then, the feelings I had about myself and how I was, I wouldn't want to betray. Not because I'm not betraying her, but you know, but betraying that, the person I was then, you know. Erm so I think it changed me to the extent it made me more aware, so it was a sort of catalyst for making me aware.

So for Michael, having been in love has resulted in positive gains for him, gains which are not lost when the relationship finished. It had transformed him and had allowed him to know what he wanted to do in life.

Ian, and Simon (extract in section 6.3.1), also construct intimate heterosexual relationships as contexts in which one can learn about oneself and achieve personal growth. In the next few extracts, Ian is talking about a relationship which is over. He draws on several linked strands in presenting himself and in constructing work in relationships.

IAN. Right the reason it's [a relationship] not going on. I mean on one level, basically she decided to start a relationship with someone else. Erm, on another level, although I was praps upset for a week or so at the time, particularly about the way it happened in a sense. There was nothing dishonest or anything, in a sense, because we did have an open relationship anyway and then it, she ended it and then made a - formed a relationship with this other person. But on a deeper level I felt we'd completed what we had to learn from each other. An interesting paradox is that in the beginning of the relationship there was many difficulties between the two of us. Erm lots of emotional difficulties on all sorts of levels. At least part of this was because I'd never - although I'd had deep friendships with women I'd never actually been in a sexual kind of committed relationship in this sense before so that was actually probably due to my own inexperience. And also my partner at the time, I think she had a lot of psychological problems, particularly to do with relationships. And so we both had a lot to work through on this.

Ian defends himself against being seen as betrayed ("There was nothing dishonest") or rejected by talking of their relationship as "open" and by his explanation that they had "completed what we had to learn from each other". This last account resists Ian being positioned as having lost anything. He was "upset", but for only about a week. He constructs himself as having made gains and the relationship is presented as a project, to be worked through and completed. This is further pointed up by his unusual construction of it as a particular type of work relationship, *a training relationship*.

6.3.5. A 'training relationship'

IAN. ... and in a strange kind of way I almost viewed it as a kind of training relationship and even at the beginning I had an intuition which I shared with my friend that this would not be something that we'd be committed to for a long period, but it would be, we'd both learn very important things from it. So I almost had a sense of its boundedness from an early stage. I'm quite an intuitive person. And I shared this with my friend. She was, it actually made her quite insecure because er she wanted it at the beginning to be a longer

term one. But um, though in the end, of course, it was interesting that she was the one who ended it in the end.

IAN. So with the previous one I view that as a kind of training relationship. I don't want to make this sound very cold-blooded.

Although acknowledging this as "strange" and "cold-blooded", showing that he accepts this representation as generally socially unacceptable as a reason for being in an intimate relationship, the training analogy allows Ian to not only construct this relationship as work but also as temporary. Ian talks of its "boundedness", its impermanence. This can be read as a defensive rhetorical device as the relationship did not last, and because she ended it. There is no talk about missing the relationship because "we'd completed what we had to learn from each other". Why then is it "interesting that she was the one that ended it"? Perhaps because he had said she had wanted a longer term relationship. Or is he supposed to be the one who ends a heterosexual relationship? I take up this question in the next chapter.

The training relationship is constructed as work in two different ways. One involves learning about relationships from each other. The other involves practicing for "the perhaps very important relationship" an ultimate, rather than a "penultimate" relationship.

IAN. I mean, the other person was keener on it than me and I basically went along with it. But I did have this intuition which I felt was important to share with her that er, one thing I said to her, this, for both of us, it would be our second to last relationship. That it would be the penultimate one. What we'd learn from going into this relationship with each other would enable us then to actually, the one we'd have after that, for each of us with other people, would be the perhaps very important relationship. And this seems to be true with, for my friend. And could be true for me.

Ian's "intuition" positions this relationship as temporary and not involving his long-term commitment. Although he talks of going "along with it" which may be read as a statement of passivity, he has also presented himself as in control of setting the boundaries and as having less investments in the relationship as she "was keener on it". This may be read

as avoidance of long-term commitment and yet his construction of their having subsequent relationships with others which would be for each of them "*the* perhaps very important relationship", the ultimate as opposed to the "penultimate one", constructs an ultimate, committed long-term relationship. Despite his previously explicitly anti-romantic talk, "I'm almost deliberately unromantic" and "You know I had that intuition early on that it would be almost like a training relationship, a very unromantic concept, in a sense", is he positioning himself as training for an ultimate romance and 'true love'?

Robin also talked about personal growth and having a relationship in order to learn about yourself. He positions this learning within a "disastrous relationship" warranting this account as "old folklore" rather than his own idiosyncratic idea.

ROBIN. I think I believe the old folklore that you need to have gone through a disastrous relationship before you realise who you are. And I went through one which destroyed all the Hollywood illusions that I I think no-one, that's my own gripe against a lot of society, that no-one says it is normal to have doubts within a relationship. It's it's assumed that there's something unhealthy by it.

Ian's and Robin's accounts can be seen to position some relationships as useful for learning about relationships and oneself. The next section looks at how professional skills can be seen as transferable to relationships.

6.3.6. Achievement and expertise

In Ian's talk of a training relationship ("... and in a strange kind of way I almost viewed it as a kind of training relationship and even at the beginning I had an intuition which I shared with my friend that this would not be something that we'd be committed to for a long period, but it would be, we'd both learn very important things from it"), it can be read that the long-term continuance of this past relationship is constructed as unimportant to him, and not the gauge of a successful relationship. What is constructed as important is that he made gains and did successful work.

IAN. So er, I actually feel very, a deep sense of satisfaction about that relationship, that we learnt an enormous amount in the time that we

were together. Often very difficult but we were always very caring with each other and tried to, kept communicating. We never stopped communicating, no matter how difficult it got. It probably helped that we've both kind of got a therapeutic kind of background. We needed it. We needed all of it. We both grew an enormous amount, as a result of that. We grew a lot. So right, for me, I have very positive feelings about it.

As well as "satisfaction" that the relationship was work well done, drawing on notions of achievement and expertise allows him to claim the ability and mental tools to do this work well. The therapeutic model of relationships, associated with self-help notions of self-growth, communication and work, enables him to draw on this particular kind of expertise and also that gained from 'counselling' others about their relationships.

IAN. ...I've done a lots of, I suppose you'd call it psychotherapeutic /spiritual work on relationships. And a lot of my adult life has been spent, working or being reflective about the way I approach women and intimate relationships.

IAN. ...and I was someone people would ask, often ask about relationships so I'd actually counselled people about relationships a lot.

Ian suggested that he has now trained and is able to put his theory into practice, a very abstract and academic way of talking about intimacy and relationships. The therapeutic construction of relationships also links with his talk of completing something in a relationship, as one might talk about a therapeutic relationship. Nick explicitly talks of putting theory into practice and, at the end of the next extract, draws on his professional expertise in demonstrating his working at his own relationship and the potential problems for those who don't.

NICK. Well my job is relationships. ...And and I'm forever looking outside and seeing what, erm you- I'm looking and assessing other people. Erm, you know, and I think that because of that I've become acutely aware of my own position. And I suppose in my job I have a choice to either put into practice some of the theory that I know, erm or not. And I see around me, within my own colleagues, those that do

and those that don't. And they can be extremely good at their work and have a, and not not be able to put it into practice into their own relationships and have quite a traumatic and difficult background. And vice versa. I mean there are some very very stable couples who obviously do well. And that's because they're able to put their theory into practice very well.

That the men in my study sometimes draw on professional expertise, in this way, to explain their success in their relationships, gives the expression '*professions of love*' other meanings.

NICK. ...I I think about what would it be like to form another relationship and I couldn't stand it. I don't think I could ever achieve and ever get to the same depth and I wouldn't want to go through that process again. Erm so I can't see anybody that's going to be an improvement. Or make me any happier than I already am.

In the last extract, again, a sense of achievement of good work can be read ("I don't think I could ever achieve [my emphasis] and ever get to the same depth"), work so well done that this probably couldn't be repeated. Nick says he has no desire to have to try to go through that process again, which differs from Ian's position of relationship practice leading to a possibilities of a better and ultimate relationship. The men construct themselves in terms of gains they make, such as useful learning and successful practice rather than losses, which are rarely articulated and are thus avoided, or are constructed as possible to avoid. Will explained how he was "calculated" and "careful" so as not to waste his time and take risks. This is far from a 'can't help falling in love' account though it is an account which suggests that relationships are necessary to him.

WILL. ... in fact when I started [current relationship] I was quite cagey I think when I started this relationship, but um, after having had a relationship with somebody before that er I got quite hurt in er - and getting older, I I just was quite sort of erm, calculated - I just wanted to be careful, I just wanted to make sure that I was entering a relationship and I wasn't going to be wasting my time, really, because I didn't, you know, wasting another eight years and then, you know, have to start with somebody again (laughs) and I didn't, you know. I didn't want to, I didn't want to be, not not take any risks

or anything or just, you know, cut that out but I just wanted to be a bit careful.

6.3.6.1. Achievement and perfect relationships

Discursive constructions of success and achievement permeate the men's interviews and a demonstration of this comes from the men's responses to my question "Do you think it's possible to have a perfect relationship?".

Adam, who had positioned himself as "a romantic" within a discourse of "natural" romantic love (Section 6.2) suggested that perfect relationships do not exist, and one that appeared to be would be inauthentic, unnatural.

ADAM. I would not like a perfect relationship at all. I don't think they can exist. Probably, if if you see someone having a kind of perfect relationship, to me it would be, it would be false. Like it would be put on.

However, drawing on a work discourse of intimacy allows the interviewee to claim success and gains from the relationship and to produce a version of perfection.

IAN. It depends what you mean by perfect. ER think my previous one was perfect in the sense that I think we fulfilled our potential- what we had to learn from each other, we did.

Jon, Michael, Nick and Will answered in similar ways by suggesting that it was possible to define 'perfect' in ways which meant they had had or could have a perfect relationship. Limits to the desirability of this construction can be read in the following extracts.

NICK. I think, I see I see in society there are, you know, annoyingly happy couples which I'll be one of those, I suppose, so we'll be one of those.

ROBIN. .. Erm I don't feel that any demands have to be - God this sounds a very sickly relationship actually if I look at it that way. I'm

sorry it always sounds very lovey dovey, you know. (Angie laughs) I mean YUCK, if I could see myself I think I'd be quite sick.

These extracts seem to produce success and potential perfection, while being "annoyingly happy" or resisting being "lovey dovey". Robin has drawn on a very different use of 'sickness', in comparison with the romantic notion of being love sick (as in Chapter 5, section 5.2.4).

6.3.6.2. Commitment as a personal challenge

Nick's "I feel that there's a responsibility for my own, my own sake to stay alive in the relationship and not to, not to sort of become um complacent" can be read as constructing personal challenge, another achievement-related construct. Ian's "We never stopped communicating, no matter how difficult it got" might also be read in this way. In explaining the attraction of his current relationship, Simon also constructs a challenge, a "sink or swim" challenge, which would lead to "something about" him.

SIMON. ... It [his relationship] was a situation in which I was, I was going to sink or swim. And er (laughing tone) and er I knew at the time that er, that er it was like a conscious choice to the extent that er, if I got involved here, I was going to, I was either going to go under or I would resolve something, I would come out the other side. What I would come out with would be something about me. So it was like I knew I was letting myself in for something, and it was like something I had had to do, to try.

Robin constructs his eventual marriage to his current partner as a challenge, a personal challenge to his integrity, which he takes seriously. In a rare articulation of fear, he reconstitutes this fear as a test, a personal test.

ROBIN. Um but marriage, to me, is is, not frightening any more, but it is to me, still very sacrosanct. ... it would test what I really was made of. ... it would test whether I was full of bullshit or real. And that I believe is, you know, is that's the. So I won't take it lightly.

This talk constructs relationships as offering opportunities to take on challenges and to succeed at these challenges, and as important because

staying in them is a matter of life and death, to "stay alive" or "sink or swim". This is reminiscent of current organizational business jargon. 'There are no problems, only opportunities'!

6.3.7. Effective communication: "Communication is it"

Communication theory has become both influential in organisational psychology and in self-help books on relationships, as I discussed briefly in Chapter 2, section 2.10. The RELATE Guide to Better Relationships (Litvinoff, 1994), for instance, devotes 64 pages out of 256 to the topic of communication. In line with this academic and professional interest in it, the men in my study construct communication as a type of work involved in intimate relationships, or part of the work necessary. In several of the men's interviews, they have pointed to the need for communication, particularly effective communication, privileging it as a most, if not the most, important relationship dynamic. In contrast to the construction of men as inexpressive emotionally, perhaps the men I talked with wanted to present themselves as the vanguard of expressive men in intimate heterosexual relationships. Instead these effective communication techniques may be read as another way of claiming expertise.

There were numerous examples in the men's interviews about the importance of effective communication. Tim, for instance, explained how important it is for ensuring that a relationship is not taken for granted, which in turn helps to guarantee its continuance.

TIM. I think that relationships that work are relationships where people communicate with one another. And by communicate they talk. And they listen as well. And that's on both sides. And they understand. Relationships that don't work are those where people probably do communicate but they're not listening to one another. They're not talking to one another. And they're not coming to any compromise when compromise is needed. And they're not willing to work things out. They don't seem to understand that erm, if you don't compromise then the relationship could be destroyed. People almost assume that say for example- well I know of certain cases with relationships that people assume that just because they're married, they're going to remain married, for ever. Because these promises have been made in the past. And it doesn't. Because people can just

walk away if they want to. So yea that bit, the communication thing. Communication, if it's effective communication. That's when a relationship will work. Communication that isn't effective can destroy the relationship. In my opinion.

Tim is quite clear that relationships don't work if the partners do not communicate effectively and listen. Communication is about work, about being "willing to work things out". Communication is about doing and achieving, not merely talk. It is rational, directed, purposeful.

And for Jon, again communication is "the most important" aspect of an intimate relationship.

JON. What's important about a relationship. Yea. Ah. Well. Er I I think probably the most important about a relationship is that the two people need to be able to communicate with each other. And um and that means a whole stack of things. On the, on the first level it's just to be able to communicate, to open one's mouth or to write something down or do something to make an attempt to er communicate with a person. But then that means also at the time when they need to communicate and er, you know, not not a week later when, you know, after it's festered for a week. But also aware one's communicating to communicate as clearly and directly as as possible. ... Communication is it. Because- so in not only communicating with each other on an intellectual level but on a, on a feelings level as well. Er, you know. It's a goody actually. I'm rather pleased with that. Communication. That's that's that's about it for me. Yea.

Rather like the talk about 'working at' relationships, it is not clear what is being communicated and how. Jon's view of communication is rather one way, where what is important is to communicate something to someone else, to do it clearly and directly, and to do it when it is necessary, not later on, which in the context of the interview constituted a complaint against a previous partner. He is constructing a theory of successful and appropriate timing of communication as does Robin when he talked about arguing - "Also we tend to resolve emotional problems far more at right place, right time". My men participants, in this way, are constructing themselves as knowing what is necessary in relationships and in Jon's case, in particular, what circumstances he needs.

The effective communication being constructed here is largely about rational discussion, that is unemotional discussion. In Deborah Tannen's (1991) terms, it would constitute report talk, rather than rapport talk, and yet these men are suggesting that report talk is a pre-requisite for rapport. They are saying that it's good to talk, but the talk must be appropriate, at the right time and people must listen too. They are constructing themselves as experts in effective communication. Others are constructed as not so knowledgeable, and therefore not so expert at both communication and intimate relationships.

6.3.8. A career-related progression of relationships: the right timing for him

A final work-related theme I want to explore comes from a recurrent explanation of how relationships have to fit in with where one is in life, a kind of career progression of relationships. Here is Simon explaining this:-

SIMON. ...I'm just summarizing what I said before really. It's that er I met Jan at a particular time in my life when I was actually trying to construct a new identity that fitted who you need to be as an adult. You know that fitted needing to have paid employment. That fitted um trying to produce an identity that would carry me forward, like in the years after leaving university.

Simon's account privileges his own needs, an account of what is appropriate for him and his life, drawing on an explicit materialistic Marxist explanation.

SIMON. So it didn't, having a relationship like that didn't fit what I want, where I was at that time. In the same way that wanting to er have a relationship, a longer term relationship, seemed to be something to do with, what was, you know, a cultural, a social transition leaving full-time education to to being er in the labour market. And having to, both having to have an identity in relation to that and to kind of material support that actually makes it work. So I've given you good old Marxist about these things. I don't know, I'm thinking off the top of my head actually about this and there is

something in that I'm sure. I'm I'm conscious, I consciously tell myself stories to myself, that are about adolescent romance fitted this particular time of my life. And that, that my relationship with Maura fitted being at university. And at the time I was aware and she was aware that when we were moving out of that it was, that was the big kind of stress on it and it was likely not to survive, and indeed it didn't survive that. It was kind of a transition, life transition.

This suggests that relationships have to fit with where we are in our lives and if they don't they won't survive. Simon practises and reproduces this theory for himself ("I consciously tell myself stories to myself"). Specifically these stories are about where Simon is in his life ("fit what I want"), rather than about his partners' lives. If relationships do fit then they are worth working at. Michael also draws on this theme, though he does this in relation to where both he and his ex-partner, Maggie, were in their lives when they were in a relationship. Here he is talking about the relationship she started with someone else before she and Michael split up.

MICHAEL. I think the other thing about him was, he was a doctor. He was training to be a doctor and he had um, therefore he had this sort stable profession that he was going into. Now Maggie and I were dossers with no goals. Now it's alright if one of you's like that. But if both of you are, then it doesn't really work, very (laughs). So I think that quite likely - she liked him anyway and he had this personality and all the rest of it, but on a, in addition, he had this thing that he knew where he was going in life and all the rest of it.

So Michael's narrative about why their relationship ended, includes an explanation about their orientation to paid work and the importance of one of them having career goals. Michael positions Maggie as someone without these career goals like himself, who therefore needed someone who knew where they were going in life, in their work life. This can be seen as a justification for why their relationship couldn't continue, but it also privileges paid work and material circumstances in explanations of why relationships continue. He more explicitly talked about where they were in life.

MICHAEL. Well I think when, the relationship as it was then, I don't know whether I'd have made the same effort on my own to make something of my life. What little I've made of it. (laughs) Erm whereas if we'd met later, I think maybe if we'd met later on, and then we'd sort of be past that stage- In fact actually and I'm not even sure I agree with who. I think I probably would have made even more of my life if I'd been with her. It would have taken a different path. I think I would probably have made less (pause) concessions, you know, to convention. But I don't know.

He starts by suggesting that had they stayed together he might not have made the career progress which he did. A relationship with her may have held him back, in career terms. Although he loved her, their relationship finishing can be accounted for without having to position himself as no longer loved. He was starting to say that he thought, if they had met later, they might have had a better chance of having a relationship, when he decides to dispute his first suggestion by considering how his life might have been if they'd stayed together. But in the end it seems to be where the man is in life that is constructed as crucial to a relationship. So *his* position in life, rather than hers, can be seen as the limiting factor being presented here.

Daniel and Simon both spoke about how staying in a previous long-term relationship didn't fit with going away to university.

DANIEL. Cos there's like, I mean, all these people, these new girls, (laughs) and everything. So I kind of finished it [relationship with girlfriend, Rachel] .

SIMON. But it's also because of the, you know the, the, for me anyway going to university, I suddenly had all the, you know, horizons open and it would have been very restrictive. I didn't want to, live in, you know, a kind of monogamous relationship with one woman.

So going to university is positioned as a time when continuing with a previous monogamous relationship would be very restrictive, because at university there is so much choice, "all these people, these new girls" and "horizons open".

Similarly, Adam talked about his friends, who "are so much in love", and the problems they will have being separated when they go away, in the following excerpt.

ADAM. It's nice to just look at them and just see what they're like. Cos they're both brilliant people and they ... plus they're really inseparable. ... But I just know they're going to be very sad when they go to different universities and I don't think I'd want that at this stage of my life. Perhaps if I had that when I was getting married or just living with them for the rest of my life, or something like that, or for a very long time, I'd like it. Perhaps. It's special.

While Adam is lauding his friends he is also problematizing their relationship at this time in their lives. He is clearly saying that he wouldn't want an inseparable love relationship at this stage of his life. He was just about to go to university too and this would be bad timing.

A career progression theme draws on the material circumstances of men's lives, such as going to university and finding paid work, and can be used to explain either the end of a relationship or reluctance to have an ongoing relationship. It also tends to position women as less in control of relationships than men, since it was men's lives which were changing in this career progression talk and women positioned as being left behind or currently, and maybe temporarily, suitable. It seems that this talk allows men to take for granted their place in the world of paid work and, to some extent, to position women in the world of relationships, and suggests that relationships are not central to life, as are work and career, despite professions that they are serious about them.

A work discourse, rational and abstract, may still convey a reluctance to engage in emotional intimacy. In the interviews, men have talked of feelings but their style is often abstract, lacking an emotional tone associated with romantic discourse. They work at emotions and create them. Romantic discourse does not dislocate words from feeling as does work discourse. This work talk was often about self, about what the speaker wanted, about what they had achieved, and not about a partner's needs or wants or achievements. The business or work discourse functions to allow the speaker to take for granted their own status and power and choices in life. It articulates a choice of working at relationships which functions to

demonstrate they are taking relationships seriously and allows them to position themselves as exceptional lovers and partners rather than male chauvinists. But in claiming they are doing work, having expertise and making achievements they can still 'do' masculinity. As an 'I can take it or leave it' account of relationships, it is perhaps a male chauvinist account after all and a discourse which allows men to claim control of how heterosexual relationships proceed.

6.4. SUMMARY OF THE ANALYSIS OF THE MEN'S INTERVIEWS

What I have been attempting to do is explicate discourses and discursive themes which men in my study drew on in order to construct themselves as taking their intimate relationships seriously, resolving a dilemma for them around masculinity and engagement in loving and committed heterosexual relationships. The 'wimp', a romantic, loving, gentle and caring man, who gives up some agency and control in return for intimacy, offers a subject position which the men in my study have neither taken nor acknowledged. The role of wimp can be seen to be associated with a discourse which constructs love, especially romantic love, as feminized love (Cancian, 1987) and offers emotional subject positions to women (Hollway, 1984; 1989). The men in my study might have attempted to find a way of accommodating romantic love with a non-oppressive masculinity, by positioning themselves as vulnerable to their feelings or experiencing more feelings. But despite occasional fleeting attempts at talking of 'being in love', most of them take positions which allow them to retain agency, individuality and control by drawing on a work or business discourse, juxtaposing freedom and intimacy for themselves. The romance in the men's narratives, tends to be with themselves, with a quest for their own self-fulfilment and success. Such an orientation can be detected even in the earliest romance tales. Chrétien de Troyes, who is believed to be one of the prime originators of romantic love ideals in 12th century fiction, was interested in both love and the knightly life (Owen, 1993). Though love was a "dominant element", it did not "eclipse" the focus on chivalry and the knight's (the man's) life and how it should be conducted (Owen, 1993, pxix).

Emotions may be explained within the work discourse of relationships, by constructing them as able to be manufactured, created and worked on by men, in order for their relationships to be successful. In the interviews with men, being self-contained, controlled and dedicated to work, is, to a

lesser or greater extent, presented as how one can and should approach relationships, rather than allowing oneself to become emotionally overwhelmed. Being emotionally overwhelmed, experiencing intensity of feeling, is discourses as impossible to sustain and not the basis or gauge of a long-term stable relationship. In this way, the work discourse of relationships resists traditional claims of women's expertise in intimate relationships, and can be seen as undermining a feminist thesis by imposing a masculinist regime of truth on intimacy and a gender *status quo*.

The work discourse of relationships may be seen as drawing on Giddens' (1992) notion of a "pure" relationship or the rational relationships of Illouz's (1997) participants, relationships they (Giddens and Illouz) suggest support the reflexive project of the self and have democratizing qualities. In drawing on a rational unitary self discourse in presenting themselves, the men in my study constructed relationships as serious because they offer contexts in which one can work at emotions and intimacy, and also at the self-project. But responsibility is to oneself, rather than a partner. The emotionally illiterate male chauvinist is sometimes used to explain what they are not. And yet the work discourse of relationships allows men to articulate their own freedom, agency and choice and to construct personal gains and achievements from relationships, while not being positioned as needing relationships.

Patriarchal heterosexism seems to be partly supported and partly undermined by such expectations, which suggest we have to develop ourselves, not be dependent (nor co-dependent) but autonomous. The work discourse of relationships does not efface all contradictions by producing, like psychology and self-help discourse (and some feminisms) an autonomous loving individual who needs no one yet can engage in successful relationships.

Other researchers have suggested that, in intimate heterosexual relationships, women are expected to do the romance and men to do the sex (Wetherell, 1995) because women have romantic genres aimed at them, men pornography (Jackson, 1993, Snitow, 1983). My research so far suggests that though women talk about love and heterosexual relationships by positioning themselves within romantic discourse, men talk more in terms of work and achievement.

It is, of course, possible that with a male interviewer men might have talked more about sex. The next chapter will look at some sexual aspects of intimate heterosexual relationships, by discussing both women's and men's accounts of infidelity. This will follow a comparison of the women's and men's interviews.

CHAPTER 7. GENDER RELATIONS, MONOGAMY, INFIDELITY AND POWER

Before focusing on what was said about 'infidelity' in offering an analysis of the women's and the men's interviews together, I will detail some of the similarities and differences constructed in the women's and men's interviews. This will allow me to say something about how love, intimate heterosexual relationships and the 'power' of love are constructed differentially by the women and men in my study. In comparing the women's and men's accounts I am not presenting an essentialist argument which assumes, and thus reproduces, gender difference. Instead I am highlighting how, in the interviews, the women and men appeared to draw on both similar and different discourses of love and relationships in ways which positioned themselves differently in relation to these discourses and in relation to each other.

7.1. GENDER RELATIONS: COMPARING THE WOMEN'S AND MEN'S INTERVIEWS

I'm going to organize this comparison in relation to areas which intersect and inform each other. These are 1) love and transformation, 2) masculinity and emotion, 3) women's emotion work and men's emotion work, 4) emotion work in the interviews and 5) the 'experience' of heterosexual relationships.

7.1.1. Love and transformation

'I suppose - in a way - we'd got to the end of love. There was nothing else we could do together. She could shop and cook and fall asleep with you, but she could only make love with me.'

'She's very fond of you,' he said as though it were his job to comfort *me*, as though my eyes were the ones bruised with tears.

'One isn't satisfied with fondness.'

'I was.'

'I wanted love to go on and on, never to get less . . . ' ... He said, 'It's not in human nature. One has to be satisfied . . . ' ...

(from *The End of the Affair*, a novel by Graham Greene (1962, p68))

ZOE. I just keep thinking I don't know what I'm gonna do if we split up cos I couldn't imagine being without him. Not, nothing specific but I've just got this great fear of him dying, you know. And he says

he has a bit with me but it doesn't seem to bother him that much like as me. I feel stupid saying it cos it's a bit irrational heh. (laughs)
(from section 5.2.3)

One of the questions I asked participants was whether they thought it was important to be 'in love' in a relationship, and the answer to the question was usually in the affirmative. In Chapter 5, I showed how some of the women questioned whether they still believed this (Dee and Holly in section 5.1.3), whether it provided a stable basis for a long-term relationship (Barbara in section 5.1.7) or whether it was necessary at all in a sexual relationship (Ruth in section 5.1.4). Nevertheless, as I also detailed throughout Chapter 5, my women participants took for granted that they understood the experience of being in love as something deeply felt, overwhelming and hard to resist. In contrast the men either affirmed that love, and being in love, was important in a relationship, or they offered their own definition of being in love.

SIMON. ... the possibility of levels of intimacy and real, real feelings of attachment and closeness to Jan for me, to Jan. And for me that is very important. Er and I think (pause). And if that's being in love and I would be quite happy to describe that as being in love then then that is very important to me in a relationship.

NICK. As as I currently stand um it's very important to be in love with my wife. It's important that I feel safe and secure within the relationship and within myself.

Duncombe and Marsden (1995) asked "Can Men Love?". My male participants, are saying they can. But in doing so they tend not to be positioning themselves within a discourse of romantic love, with the exception of Adam (see section 6.2). In particular, they are not constructing themselves as out of control nor having no choice about loving someone. Redefining love allowed the men to construct love in ways which suited them, in contrast to the women who tended to construct themselves as having no choice about whom they fell in love with.

By drawing on the discourse of romantic love, women constructed their experiences of love in relation to their feelings and what these feelings communicated to them about their partners and relationships. In Chapter 6,

I have argued that the men, instead of positioning themselves within a discourse of romantic love, tended often to construct their own experiences of love and intimacy in line with rational decision making, by drawing on the work discourse of relationships. They also talked in ways which downplayed or resisted romantic feelings and infatuation (section 6.2.1), which were often constructed as overly emotional, irrational, possibly pathological (section 6.2.4). The women participants, as I've shown in Chapter 5, similarly often explained that being in love was about being overemotional and irrational, and also highlighted the problem, for them, of differentiating love feelings from sexual feelings (section 5.1.5). The difference, however, between the men's and women's interviews, was that the men resisted love by positioning themselves as not subject to emotional transformations, whereas women constructed falling in love and being in love as leading to their transportation, if not transformation, into highly emotional states and feelings of being out of control.

BARBARA. ... I was just in this heady state of euphoria, you know. It just - just swept - it felt like being swept along by some wave - I was out of control and everything was out of control ...

To complete the picture of transportation, the recognition of these highly emotional states indicated to the women the importance of their lover as well as the impossibility of resisting their love or passion for him, as I suggested in section 5.2.6. In contrast the work discourse of intimacy, which constructed relationships as contexts within which one could do work, suggested a male transformation, not into a romantic hero but into a man who could at least talk of relationships as important, even as important as paid work (section 6.3.1). The discourse of romantic love and the work discourse of relationships tended to be drawn on by the women and men respectively to explain their own experiences and relationships, and thus suggests that men and women experience love in heterosexual relationships differently. However, from a discursive perspective, any inevitability of these discourses being tied to gender positions tells us more about current cultural expectations of gender relations in the wider social context, than about individual relationships. Discourses have real effects in that they organize our experiences in particular ways, which may be very hard to resist (Wetherell, 1995).

In both the interviews with women and with men, but particularly in the men's interviews, it was possible to see how romantic feelings and a rational engagement with relationships are constructed in ways which position them as antagonistic to each other. The men sometimes drew on romantic discourse in order explain romantic love away as not rational and not a good basis for relationships (sections 6.2.1 to 6.2.4). I have detailed in depth in Chapter 6 how, in the business or work discourse of relationships, love was largely constructed as a rational project of the self, not a collapse into irrationality and feelings, with the self being constructed in this discourse as primarily male. This work discourse, which seems to draw partly on a therapeutic discourse of relationship (Chapter 2, section 2.10), does not produce a male romantic transformation by love but suggests that men can transform themselves into good and serious lovers if they so choose. The failure of love, within this discourse, would follow from a failure to work at the relationship (section 6.3.3). However love could also burn out if there were too much emotional intensity or over-exposure to their partner (section 6.2.2).

In Chapter 5, I have shown how the romantic love constructed by my women participants within a discourse of romantic love, was also partially contested by a more rational positioning of themselves as able to reflect and critique their own romantic longings. However in doing so, the women still drew on personal feelings as the gauge of relationships, seeming largely unable to draw on a discourse that is not about what feels right or not right. The women's interviews suggested women understood that the very emotional 'in love' subject positions they took up were unacceptable by the ways they tended to pathologize themselves as emotionally needy and insecure (e.g. in section 5.2.7). This raises questions about whether, in constructing themselves as excessively emotional, my women participants are engaging in producing their own powerlessness. Alternatively, their powerlessness may follow from their criticizing themselves for their emotionality (*cf.* Lutz, 1997). By distinguishing passion from passivity, it should be possible to disentangle emotionality *per se* from acquiescence to subordination. Men, in contrast acknowledged no difficulties in producing themselves as rational and sensible beings, thus claiming their superiority in a world which valorizes analytic detachment and problematizes (over)engagement with feelings. I'll return to these issues a little later.

Though my focus is on how relationships and love are constructed through talk, we can speculate about the consequences for intimate heterosexual relationships, if the heterosexual partners primarily understand and experience their love in line with these two discourses, the romantic discourse and the rational work discourse, in gender differentiated ways. Problems may well emerge when, for the woman, the man may seem unsatisfactorily emotionally inexpressive and for the man, the woman may seem unsatisfactorily overly emotional and possibly pathologically needy. My women participants' dissatisfaction in past relationships was often ascribed to men's lack of emotional expressivity and reciprocity. For example, when Barbara complained about her lover, it was his lack of emotional expressiveness which seemed to rankle, when instead of saying 'I love you', he said he was fond of her.

BARBARA. ...when he said 'I'm very fond of you ' huh (both laugh) and I sort of got home and walked round thinking 'FOND? FOND?' you know, it seemed like the biggest insult that he could have uh thrown at me - it would have been better if he'd said he hated me, than fond of me, like a cat or a dog. (longer extract in section 5.4)

Robin, in contrast, suggested that 'fondness' (as well as lust) is part of what relating is about.

ROBIN. I don't believe in love. That sounds a daft statement but um I believe in lust and (pause) um a fondness and I don't believe that you can fall in love within in twenty minutes. (also in section 6.2.3)

Is it because I am also drawn to experiencing intimacy at least in part within a discourse of romantic love (and feelings), that I find Ian's talk of a 'training relationship' (section 6.3.5) very cold-blooded, as he himself acknowledged? I suggested to him that perhaps he shouldn't be surprised that this relationship was ended by his partner. I was surprised it didn't end sooner.

ANGIE. Do you think you having shared that [that he saw their relationships as a training, not potentially permanent relationship] with her maybe made the difference between how she she viewed it?

IAN. To an extent, yes. I mean she said that. We talked about this quite a lot. She said that if I had been more committed to her - because I think there was an asymmetry in our mutual commitment, in a way, then that might have made a difference. It would have made a difference to her. Er so in a sense it could be said praps I helped to define it that way.

Though the women and men produced themselves as experiencing love in rather different ways, there were some indications of a potential rapprochement. When the women constructed themselves as attempting a more 'mature', companionate and less out-of-control love (section 5.1.7), this could be seen to be compatible with the men's caring and fond positionings. The tension between the romantic and rational positionings becomes most extreme when we contrast the extremely emotional romantic subject position with the most unemotional subject position (e.g. 'training') found in the discourses of romantic love and work respectively. But, the disparity between romantic and rational constructions of love is not fixed and it seems to diminish when the woman is least emotional (especially not unhappy) and the man is most caring, which inverts the common stereotype of the intimate heterosexual couple, effecting a transformation of intimacy into a 'companionate' love relationship, a happy and settled love. However, this was not the experience described by many of my women participants. Ruth talked of the later stages of her most significant relationship in these terms, as a time which was described by her as when "the relationship was on a sort of um a mutual basis where one, either of us could ring up" (full extract in Chapter 5, section 5.3.2) .

RUTH. ... And um talk about how we felt about each other which was very liberating. And I think for the first time in my life I actually sat down and told a man exactly how I felt and what I'd been through, and, you know, I sort of railed at him a bit for what he'd put me through. And er we sort of settled down into there was, there was a very passionate side to the relationship, because there always had been a very passionate side. But there was also a sort of now different side of it because he was, in some ways he was not a well man. So there was this, there had to be this sort of caring as well.

Ruth has explained how the change in the relationship was preceded by her "railing" at her partner, and for "the first time in her life" telling "a

man exactly" how she felt when she had not heard from him for a long time. She had explained how they had been in a long term affair. Both were married. He had become ill and she had not heard from him, nor could find out how he was, and she had found this very difficult. Their 'companionate' relationship was therefore partly as a result of his illness. At the same time, Ruth's construction of a "liberating" experience is predicated on an unusual (and unique for her) story of complaining to a male partner about what he has done.

Men's constructions of companionate relationships seem to be constructed more straightforwardly within the work discourse of relationships, as part of his claiming success and a happy relationship.

NICK ... I I get a lot out of it. Erm and I perceive that Claire gets a lot out of it. You'd have to ask her how - I mean how do you measure it? Erm but I, you know, I I feel very happy and I get the impression that she is as well.

Despite Nick's earlier talk of working at relationships and putting his professional expertise to work (Chapter 6, section 6.3.6), his wife's happiness is something which is just an "impression".

Later in this chapter I will be also showing how the 'companionate' relationship, or a relationship lacking in passion, is implicated in women's dissatisfaction when it is used to account for her infidelity. This suggests that passion is important in a women's love story, and I will return to this issue in this chapter and in my concluding comments.

A point of agreement in the men's and women's interviews was in relation to the notion of 'love at first sight'. Neither women nor men talked of experiencing this, though they acknowledged that there might be an initial response of sexual or physical feelings. The notion that one should immediately know when one is in the presence of a potential love object seemed expected more by women, and surprise was sometimes expressed when they discovered they had strong feelings for a man they had not initially thought of intimately. Though not characterized as 'love at first sight', 'sudden' realizations of desire for a particular man heightened the intensity of the love story for women (section 5.1.2).

GINA. I've always been fond of him. ... But it's only recently over the past sort of two weeks. I've just thought 'wait a moment. I bloody fancy the guy' you know. ... But I've never noticed that before, do you know what I mean. It's just suddenly recently sort of happened. I don't know if he senses it or not ...

For men, such sudden feelings were usually taken to be simply sexual. Where the women and men also seem in accord is in not positioning male sexual feelings as emotional. Where women seem to differentiate feelings of lust from feelings of love, in order to not act on the former in the absence of the latter (section 5.1.5), men are not so constrained. As Jackson and Scott (1997) suggest, sexuality has been subject to processes of rationalization, and this means that a man can experience sexual feelings without being positioned as emotional, for emotional excess would seem to 'unman' him. In my interviews, the 'rationality' of sex seems to be assumed by both women and men.

Despite these areas of similarity in the interviews, embedded within these romantic and rational modes of discoursing love are two different versions of masculinity, and this is what I will turn to now.

7.1.2. Masculinity and emotion

As I argued in Chapter 5, sections 5.2.8 and 5.3.1, my women participants construct their male partners as finding emotion difficult and as understandably emotionally inexpressive. This is in contrast with themselves, whom they construct as emotionally expressive or overflowing with emotion.

ZOE. I really wish he would tell me when he gets insecure because I can't keep it in and like, ... (longer extract in section 5.2.7)

Such a construction seems to draw implicitly on psychoanalytic discourse in the way it constructs female lability and lack of emotional boundedness coupled with an expectation that a man may hide his emotional vulnerability and thus be emotionally illiterate. The psychoanalytic explanation is built on the different hypothesized resolutions of the Oedipal conflict for boys and girls (see Chapter 3, sections 3.2.2 and 3.4). This emotionally illiterate version of masculinity is subtly used by the women

participants in ways which explain away unsatisfactory elements of male partners' behaviour in current relationships. Where my women participants tended to combine their own love feelings and sexual feelings, they suggested that men might have difficulty doing this.

WENDY ... And as I said sexually before it was really erm not very good. And he's talked a lot about this, how he's found, he found it difficult to think about sex with someone that you love, he was very confused about that.

ANGIE. A Freudian thing isn't it? (laughs)

WENDY. Yes yes, very Freudian, yes. And I think a lot of guys have that but they don't talk about it so much That's why they they they have their wife but they can't think of her sexually, you know what I mean. They go off to prostitutes or whatever. They can only have sex with women in a particular sort of relationship.

ANGIE. So you were saying he loved you then and he thought that affected the sex?

WENDY. Well he said he didn't, he didn't know it was love then. He thinks that it was the sort of seeds of love but that he was so knocked out by it he didn't know what had hit him. And he did what some people do which is to shut down and - I find this quite unusual because I don't shut down.

Wendy hasn't specifically said that her male partner might 'shut down' because he is a man. However his differentiating love from sex by differentiating wives (the women you love and marry) from prostitutes (the women you have sex with) is ascribed to 'a lot of guys'. In Wendy's love story, their love is so strong that he is able to overcome his splitting of women, so she can be both 'madonna' and 'whore'. This was a rare woman's story in which a male partner transforms into someone who acknowledges how he feels.

My women participants often positioned themselves as understanding male emotional inexpressivity as inherent, as part of their knowledge of how heterosexual relationships work (section 5.3.1). In women's accounts, this construction led to women doing the romance for both herself and her partner, by assuming his feelings despite his not often showing them and of waiting for him to show them so they could reciprocate and follow his

lead. However, the women did not tend to question whether they could or should be doing this.

A feminist reading of male emotional inexpressivity and difficulty with emotion, conceives of the male partner as a man who won't engage with emotions because this is incommensurate with hegemonic masculinity. In other words, he is 'the man who won't commit' rather than 'the man who can't commit'. By understanding rather than challenging men's lack of emotional reciprocity and commitment, women give their male partners permission to behave badly as this is understood as men behaving 'normally'. This seems to be one of the crucial ways in which romance narratives give men power by excusing men from engaging with emotion and taking their partners into account. Mary Crawford (1998) understands that women might use the ideas in *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus* (Gray, 1992) in order to have permission to demand particular behaviours from their male partners, such as giving her flowers and telling her 'I love you'. At the same time however, this constructs such expressions as difficult for male partners, despite their apparent superficiality and reinforces the notion that men and women are essentially different.

Men's avoidance of talking about themselves as emotionally taken over with love is thus constructed by women as part of being a man or doing masculinity. However, most of the women participants are not equating their acceptance of inherent male emotional inexpressivity with giving men power, even though this acceptance involves their protecting men from having to be emotional. Women's accounts, which in this way seem to draw on psychoanalytic notions of male emotional illiteracy, contradictorily come from feminist (Chapter 3, section 3.2.2) and pro-feminist reworkings of psychoanalytic theory (e.g. Seidler, 1989). What became part of a feminist orthodoxy was the positioning of women as emotionally stronger and more emotionally literate than men (e.g. Hite, 1991), while also understanding that most men can't cope with knowing this, or with being forced to recognise this. From a psychoanalytic perspective, he cannot recognise it, because it is so strongly repressed. It seems that only part of this theory was explicitly offered by my women participants, that is that men will probably be hopeless with feelings. Women may well think themselves superior in terms of loving and understanding their own and men's emotions, but my interviewees were

not saying this. Langford (1999) suggested that her women participants expressed "evident pleasure in their own maturity and competence" by being "indispensable" to "hopeless" men (Langford, 1999, p80) and this offered them some "compensatory pleasure" in "exploitative gender relations" (Langford, 1999, p81). This 'pleasure' was not so evident in my interviews, though, like Langford's participants, the women in my study often laughed about men's hopelessness. However ironic laughter did not seem to offer 'compensatory pleasures' as my women participants tended to blame themselves for their emotionality while protecting and excusing men from having to engage mutually, and thus they were partly engaging in disempowering themselves.

Also, though my women participants subtly complained to me about men's avoidance of emotional entanglement, men's difficulties and problems with emotion and intimacy were also used to enhance the romance in women's love stories.

BARBARA. I think because of his power and his mystery and his enigma, that I really didn't know what was going on in his head. I really didn't know and I think that fuelled his attractiveness to me and kept that sort of feeling going. Whereas I think that if he had kind of revealed himself and been very open that wouldn't have been there... (also in section 5.3.1)

WENDY ... he went home and he tried not to phone me - he was really unhappy. And he tried to just shut me out of his mind. And er and then he realised, ... he was fighting a completely losing battle. (longer extract in section 5.3.1)

In both of the extracts above, the obstacle of the men's avoidance or attempted avoidance led to highly passionate romantic stories. Barbara's relationship ended, because he didn't change or transform, though she suggested also that, had this happened, it might have reduced his attractiveness for her. While he remained unknown, she could write upon him her romantic desires, but not indefinitely in the face of his avoidance of emotional engagement. Wendy's love story was able to continue because his love was so strong it overcame his attempt to stem it and he was transformed. Both were stories of romantic infidelity. Barbara was talking of her own infidelity and Wendy of her partner's. Infidelity also seems to

offer the possibility of highly romantic narratives, a topic I will return to later in this chapter.

Where men were constructed as unsatisfactorily but understandably emotionally illiterate by women, in contrast, men often constructed themselves as ideal partners. This was as appropriately emotional (not very emotional) and sensible in relationships, though able to work at and manage appropriate emotions of love to sustain a satisfactory relationship. The work discourse of relationships enabled men to construct themselves as successful at intimate relationships, by constructing relationships as relatively emotion-free zones, and I'll return to this notion in section 7.1.5. When men attempted to draw on a discourse of romantic love, they often admitted that they were unable to adequately articulate love, and were possibly confused about it (section 6.1), in much the same way as Wendy constructed her partner above. One male participant, for instance, drew on the well-publicized statement by Prince Charles, who appended "whatever that is" to his statement that he was 'in love' with Princess Diana, when they became engaged. It is possible that this positioning is also informed by other aspects of these men's social positions: that they are performing a white, middle or upper class masculinity.

IAN. This is a very tricky one, this is [whether love emerged in his most important relationship]. It goes back to Prince Charles when he was asked um um. Some journalists asked asked him, when he was, you know, with Diana. They asked him 'Are you in love?' and he said 'Oh Yes I am'. Or what was it, I can't remember the exact phrase, something like 'whatever love is'.

But, instead of my male participants positioning themselves as inadequate in intimate relationships because of their lack of understandings of love, they tended to position themselves as knowledgeable about relationships, as men who took relationships seriously, as seriously as work, as I have argued throughout my analysis in Chapter 6, sections 6.3 to 6.3.8.

NICK. Well my job is relationships. ...Erm, you know, and I think that because of that I've become acutely aware of my own position. And I suppose in my job I have a choice to either put into practice some of the theory that I know, erm or not. And I see around me, within my own colleagues, those that do and those that don't. ... I mean there are

some very very stable couples who obviously do well. And that's because they're able to put their theory into practice very well. (longer extract in section 6.3.6)

The work discourse of relationships allowed men to position themselves and their personal growth and achievement as central in an intimate heterosexual relationship, without their having to be 'in love', romantic or emotionally 'out-of-control'. This again raises the question of whether by resisting emotional subject positions and by not engaging in emotional talk, they are reproducing hegemonic masculinity. In particular, are they taking advantage of women's assumed facility with love stories? They may talk of expectations of finding heterosexual relationships potentially 'crippling' and of intense emotions as problematic, but this may also be a way in which they are constructing themselves as more powerful by positioning themselves as free from such constraints.

ROBIN. ... You can be loved and yet have the freedom to be. Um and that that to me has been the most important revelation, that just because you're in a relationship doesn't mean it cripples you. (longer extract in section 6.3.2)

In the next section I'll look more explicitly at the types of emotion work constructed in relation to heterosexual relationships. Then I will look at the performance of emotion work in the interviews.

7.1.3. Working at relationships: Women's emotion work and men's emotion work

Do men appreciate the women they possess?

Not that many of them are not honourable in their conduct and constant in their affections: but even among these, how few are also capable of understanding our hearts! Do not imagine, my child, that their love is like ours. They feel, of course, the same delight; often they are more carried away by it; but they are ignorant of that anxious eagerness, that careful solicitude, which provokes us to the constant and tender attentions whose sole object is always the man we love. A man enjoys the happiness he feels, a woman the happiness she gives. ... Giving pleasure for him is only a means to success; while for her it is success itself. ... Lastly, that exclusive attachment to one person, which is the peculiar characteristic of love, is in a man only a preference ... ; whereas in women, it is a profound feeling, which not only annihilates all other desires, but, stronger than nature and disobedient to her commands ...

(from *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* by Laclos, published originally in 1782)

According to Duncombe and Marsden (1993; 1998), drawing on Hochschild's (1983) notion, 'emotion work' is largely done by women to smooth the path of relationships by managing their own emotions in line with cultural expectations and by looking after other people's feelings. Duncombe and Marsden's (1998) work acknowledges that men also do emotion work by hiding their negative emotions (their anxieties and anger) in order to protect their female partners from them. Duncombe and Marsden (1998) also suggest that women's emotion work need not always be conceived of as a burden or symptomatic of women's subordination and lack of choices, but may offer a positive identity. Because I am focusing on the constructive nature of talk, rather than assuming the 'truth' this talk describes, I cannot say that my women participants did more emotion work in their relationships than their partners, though they did construct themselves as doing this, and they also indicated dissatisfaction at men's perceived lack of reciprocity. I have argued in Chapter 5 that women construct themselves doing emotion work for their partners by indicating how special their partners are because they provoke such incredible and overwhelming emotions of love, coupled with negative emotions when this emotion work is not reciprocated. For instance Zoe did not construct her partner as doing emotion work for her when he kept his 'jealousy' and 'insecurity' from her. Instead she explained how it made her more emotional and insecure. We might read this as a complaint about his lack of authenticity with her and that for her being honest about feelings is what is important to intimacy and closeness.

ZOE. I really wish he would tell me when he gets insecure because I can't keep it in and like, ... And then afterwards he'll say if I say I was jealous of you and Charlotte, he'll say Well I've been jealous when you've been with so-and-so. And he won't tell me at the time so. I just often guess but he'll just deny it until I say something. And I wish he would tell me because it would make me feel more more secure. (longer extract in Chapter 5, section 5.2.7)

In contrast the men talked of doing rather different work in their relationships, such as making space and time to be together and communicating 'effectively'. So there are intimations that women and men are constructing different sorts of ways of working at relationships, with the women constructing their emotion work as how you do intimacy, as a

'natural' and understandable response to one's partner and one's love. In contrast, the men explicitly constructed intimacy as serious work, which they can choose to do.

SIMON. I mean I I think er, I could stop doing the clucking and the 'I love you', the unnecessary 'I love you's, but er I have an increasing sense that it's important to actually to to work at intimacy and closeness. And er it doesn't just happen. (longer extract in section 6.2.3)

In the women's stories, women's negative emotions could also be seen to emerge in the context of a male partner's lack of emotional reciprocity. However women's expressions of negative emotions were constructed as out of control, as failing to do emotion work. They reflected on their own emotionality but not on how they draw on a rhetoric of emotional control (Lutz, 1997), which has the effect of positioning them as even more emotional. In contrast men tended to be constructed by women as needing to be protected from women's and their own emotions. This means that men are seen as emotionally vulnerable and women's emotion work is in part to protect men from having to acknowledge this. Women constructed male emotional vulnerability as part of being a man and not challenging this notion leads to the reproduction of male power.

In relation to gender inequality and heteropatriarchy, it is in not challenging men and male behaviour, that my women participants are involved in reproducing women's powerlessness to construct equitable heterosexual relationships. Instead, they seem to excuse men when they are dissatisfied with them, and protect their male partners from that dissatisfaction (*cf.* Langford, 1999). The interpretation of perceived unpleasantness on the part of men you love and who you think loves you, as either an inevitable part of masculinity or a sign of their love and desire, does seem to be a symptom of powerlessness. Both of these constructions, of male unpleasantness as symptomatic of being a man or of male unpleasantness as symptomatic of a love he is too vulnerable to express, tend to recur in the women's interviews as I've shown in detail in Chapter 5, section 5.3.1 in particular. The first would seem to mean that women expect to be dissatisfied in heterosexual relationships. The second seems to offer the potential for some heterosexual satisfaction, at the cost of ever having an honest relationship. If women are making allowances for

men, but expect that men cannot make allowances for them, there seems little hope for gender equality.

My women participants have suggested that men gain some advantage from having emotion work done for them without reciprocating. Hite (1991) has suggested that women get around this by getting emotional support from female friends. Again this would mean that women are doing this 'work' for each other, and men are benefiting. This wasn't, however, explicitly mentioned by women in this project.

So there seem to be two different constructions of work being done by women and men. The men constructed their relationships as satisfactory, and within them they positioned themselves as rational beings, neither unpleasant nor emotionally repressed. They offered pictures of happy relationships and happy families, possible through their emotion work, which is a very different form of emotion work from that constructed by the women. Men seemed able to 'work at' relationships because they were also working at themselves (sections 6.3.1 and 6.3.4). The men's stories of relationships seemed to involve fewer explicit assumptions of gender dissimilarity and less asymmetry than women's stories. This makes sense, as those who have power, by virtue of their position in both the social and symbolic order, undermine their position if they acknowledge their power or privileged position (e.g. Sampson, 1993). Though they could be seen to be avoiding being positioned as male chauvinists by taking relationships seriously, I have shown in chapter 6, how the men were subtly drawing on a discourse which allowed them to sound equitable but made them the centre of their relational universe. Though they suggested they took their relationships seriously, did they take their partners' interests seriously?

There were some instances of men acknowledging their need to change and to take their partner's needs and desires into account in a relationship. Ian talked of being persuaded to do this by his partner.

IAN. I wasn't used- I was often unselfish because I was simp- sorry I was often selfish simply because of- I was unaware of taking someone else's needs into account. And I had a lot to learn on that. And my partner wasn't slow to tell me about the times where I simply didn't take her needs into account.

Ian's acknowledgement, that he was often "selfish", points to a baseline position of his ignorance of the need to take his partner into account and, still less, to do emotion work for her. Duncombe and Marsden (1993) found their female participants often suggested that their male partners just did not seem to understand that some emotion work and reciprocity was expected from them. The women in Langford's (1999) study also constructed male partners who appeared to be "baffled" by their partners' hurt and dissatisfaction (Langford, 1999, p95). So when some women have challenged the inevitability of men's avoidance of emotion work, women suggest they have learned that giving others emotional support doesn't come naturally to men and isn't something which men think about.

7.1.4. Emotion work in the interviews

What I want to discuss further is the difference between how women and men performed emotion work for their partners in the interviews, that is how they used the interviews to present and praise the person they loved. We might consider that the women and men were doing emotion work for their partners in their interviews, by constructing them as special and by attempting to protect them from outside criticism. Barbara, for instance, when we discussed her interview after she had read the transcript, told me that she had been wondering, before reading the transcript, what pseudonym I would give her lover. However, she had realised that I had not needed to give him one because she had not named him in the interview. She suggested that this was how she still protected him, even though it had been many years since she had stopped seeing him.

Women's constructions of themselves as emotional made their male partners seem special, even if the woman had later changed her mind about her male partner's specialness. They also talked explicitly about their partners' special qualities.

WENDY. ...He's different to how I knew him before, very different. Well when I say very different, all the things that I liked about him were like a hundred times more there. ... with Matt it was like everything that I had really loved about him as a youngster was magnified a 100 times.

GINA. ... I always thought he was quite intelligent and he always knew what to do somehow and that sort of appealed to me a lot. You know, a sort of form of charisma. And um, what else? Just little things like his smile and his way of wording things, you know.

In contrast, the lack of work to construct their women partners as special, in many of the men's interviews, suggests that their women partners are neither special nor particularly important to them. If emotions indicate our moral state (Crawford *et al.*, 1992; Oatley, 1992), then if we don't feel something about someone, they are not really important to us. The alternative conceptualization, which relies on rational discourse, is that we make something important by asserting its importance intellectually without indicating our partiality to it. This is an academic view, that we argue for the importance of something while seeming unbiased. However, men could construct themselves as special by focusing on what is right for them and their personal growth. Women partners did not need to be constructed as special in themselves to offer a context in which men can produce themselves as growing and achieving through a narrative of self, rather than a narrative of relationship.

IAN. ... I like a sense where you both have, if anything that the relationship is very intense and strong but you almost, it enhances your own and develops your own individuality as well at the same time. (longer extract in section 6.3.2)

SIMON. ... I met Jan at a particular time in my life when I was actually trying to construct a new identity that fitted who you need to be as an adult. You know that fitted needing to have paid employment. That fitted um trying to produce an identity that would carry me forward, like in the years after leaving university. (longer extract in section 6.3.8)

Women participants talked of still having feelings for, and being upset at the loss of, a partner for years.

BARBARA. Well this sort of pining, kind of hankering - yearning- after something I couldn't have, I suppose. And, but I still sort of miss him in a way [many years later]. (part of a longer extract in section 5.2.4)

In the men's interviews, men had a tendency to construct themselves as more desired than desiring, which is perhaps not surprising in view of all that I have argued so far in terms of how romantic discourse tends to construct the male partner as special. For instance Ian, earlier in section 7.1.1, talked of his partner being more committed than he was, as well as her finding his lack of long-term commitment unsatisfactory. This constructs his having more power and a take it or leave it attitude. However he said he was 'upset' when she left him, perhaps for a whole week.

IAN. ... basically she decided to start a relationship with someone else. Erm, on another level, although I was praps upset for a week or so at the time, particularly about the way it happened in a sense. (longer extract in section 6.3.4)

In the women's interviews, male partner's importance is also demonstrated by the stated inability of women to leave them. For instance, Ellen suggested she should have sent her partner away when she discovered he was married, but she couldn't.

ELLEN. ... I also feel erm quite cross with myself for when when he said I would like us to get married I really feel that what I should have said to him was "Well you get your life sorted out and then come back to me". And I didn't say that. I think I was just in too deep.

Alternatively, men tend to be constructed as the leavers of relationships, a topic I raised in section 6.2.3 and will return to later in this chapter.

ROBIN. ...You know where you, yes when I say that it means I won't walk out, I am here for you. I don't care whether you get up in the morning really bad-tempered. That that to me is what that means and that you know er, I won't betray you. (longer extract in section 6.2.3)

This differential construction has the consequence that women are seen to think men are special and irresistible because they (women) say they can't leave them (men), whereas women are constructed as not so special because they can be left, though men may choose not to do so.

In conclusion to this section, women's emotion work in the interviews functions to make their men and their relationships seem special. Men, in contrast, in their interviews, make themselves and their relationships seem special (though the latter are not irreplaceable) and this is what I've termed having a romance with himself. He himself, his self-project and personal growth, seems the object of his quest for intimacy. Is this the consequence of the transformation of intimacy and the rational relationship to which Giddens (1992) alludes, which seem to be understood by men (as Giddens is) and which advantage men?

7.1.5. The 'experience' of heterosexual relationships: emotion-rich zones and emotion-free zones

As I've suggested, women constructed heterosexual relationships as full of emotion and as ideal when they were full of reciprocal feeling and emotion. But they tended to do this by inferring men's emotional investment. The ideal of mutual emotional expressivity would seem to hold out the hope of equality in heterosexual relationships but this is resisted by the expectation of male emotional inadequacy and emotional inexpressivity. This is particularly problematic, for in reproducing male emotional illiteracy, one is also reproducing hegemonic masculinity. The lack of men's emotional expressivity and women's heightened emotional vulnerability in the face of this, may explain why some women talked of wanting a new sort of love, a less emotional love, one based on less extreme emotions. But it was a love based on emotions, nevertheless.

This means that my women participants tended to construct heterosexual relationships rather differently from most of my men participants. For the women, heterosexual relationships were characterized by strong emotions, both hers and his, with hers seen as much more likely to be problematic and difficult to hold in check. In contrast men constructed successful heterosexual relationships as largely emotion-free zones or zones free of uncontrolled emotion. In particular, intense emotions were often constructed as antithetical to long-term happy relationships, and I've written about this in detail in Chapter 6, section 6.2.3.

MICHAEL. ... One of the other things about her and our relationship was a sense that something like that is by definition something transient. And that once - you see you have this intensity of feeling

for someone and the feeling that maybe the day to day level of existence is just not going, is going to mean losing it, okay. And so it might be better sometimes to have a relationship where that isn't there, with someone you're not in love with because then you're not so disappointed that it's so (laughing and Angie laughs too) it's so um daily, you know, stuff. (longer extract in section 6.2.3)

I have argued in Chapter 6, especially section 6.4, that men seem to be contesting women's expertise as relationship specialists. This may be symptomatic of Giddens' (1992) 'transformation of intimacy' which seems to lead to the rationalization of one of the few areas in which women have been taken to have expertise. Contradictorily that expertise may also have served to disempower women by laying upon them particular versions of 'caring' femininity. There is a danger of valorizing women's emotional literacy when this may be a symptom of their lack of power. However this danger may be outweighed by the danger in constructing 'abilities' associated with women, and thus women themselves, as problematic. Also, if women are expected to give up being emotional, this is tantamount to saying that women should be like men, and this produces a masculinist view of the world. Men's avowed rationality and lack of relationality is challenged by psychoanalytic theory as a sham which protects him from experiencing his emotions. However being rational and independent is also, in the current 'scientific' and therapeutic approach to life and relationships, constructed as 'good' and this is advantageous to men who are expected to be like this. It also advantages men by promoting an individualistic approach to working at oneself and one's relationships which draws attention away from the potential of collective action to effect societal change (Kitzinger, 1993). Change is possible when current discourses of emotionality and rationality, and discourses of gender, are not accepted as offering universal, rather than contingent, explanations.

When the discourse of romantic love is taken unequivocally as a discourse of disempowerment, this reinforces the expectation that if women try to take control, then their relationships will fail. At present the 'rules' of romance seem to rely on women being passively active (Willig and Valour, 1999) rather than simply passive. Within the discourse of romantic love, women seem to understand this, and this protects men from having to acknowledge that they are not the only active agent in producing relationships.

It is therefore difficult to be unequivocal about whether women's emotional expressivity is symptomatic of their powerlessness. This is contingent upon a cultural context within which rationality and a down-playing of feeling is valorized. Women might attempt to cease doing emotion work for men which constructs men as special, but ceasing to do something because it is not 'properly' reciprocated, may not inevitably result in empowerment. It seems important not to lay the blame on women for feeling strongly, but nevertheless to ask them to be more critical of men, and to resist blaming themselves for feeling critical. The women's interviews reflect a more developed sense of the social, of how our position in the social world is relative to others, not absolute, and not simply a result of our own abilities and individual work (Gilligan, 1982; Sampson, 1993). It is therefore contradictory when women protect men from similar understandings. It also helps men to retain what would be an untenable position were it not for the material and discursive means by which male power is supported.

Men's unchallenged position as rational and autonomous is built on obscuring their interdependence with others and this reproduces male hegemony (particularly heterosexual, white, middle-class male hegemony). Women appropriating this same, almost solipsistic, position will only result in more vulnerable sub-groups of men and women being cast as more dependent and powerless than at present. I want to urge women to cease helping men obscure how male privilege is built on disguising men's need for others and on particular forms of social organization such as heteropatriarchy. If we cannot develop discourses of love which can challenge and truly transform inequitable relationships, then heterosexual relationships will remain sites of women's disempowerment. Though some may valorize women's emotional literacy, we should recognize that no matter how much women might want to value women's strength in supporting families and men, this should not excuse men from giving emotional support to others. Nor should men be allowed to fail to acknowledge the support they get from others and from heteropatriarchy. They could then become involved in a truly emancipatory transformation of intimacy. An expectation of male violence, however, explains women's reluctance to challenge male privilege, and individual women's actions will have little effect unless male privilege is also challenged more widely, by men as well as women.

I'll come back to questioning how love stories inscribe emotionality and rationality in my final chapter. In the rest of this chapter I want to take 'infidelity' as focus, in order to illuminate some particular ways in which male power is constituted and reinforced in talk about heterosexual monogamy and non-monogamy. If heterosexual coupledness is exploitative of women, perhaps women's infidelity could offer a challenge?

7.2. INFIDELITY AND MONOGAMY

Hogamus higamus
Man is polygamous
Higamus hogamus
Woman monogamous

(from the Oxford Dictionary of Quotations (1998), attributed to William James, a founder of modern psychology)

"I think that if I do start seeing other people it will give me the bargaining power, which I'm lacking. Many times I feel like he has all the power- makes most of the decisions and I just comply- which infuriates me."

(A woman respondent reported in Hite (1991, p416))

Issues of sexual fidelity and monogamy occupy a paradoxical position in relation to feminist theorizing. For some feminists, espousing heterosexual non-monogamy offers a way of resisting female submersion and subjugation to heterosexual coupledness (de Beauvoir, 1953) and of challenging bourgeois morality (Wilson, 1998). For others, such as Hite (1988, 1991), male infidelity has been identified as one of the reasons for women's dissatisfaction in intimate heterosexual relationships, and something to be challenged as it undermines the possibility of more equitable relationships. One of the ways in which double standards are evident in heterosexual relationships is in regard to orientations to extra-relational sexual activity such as infidelity or adultery, as already touched on in Chapter 2 (sections 2.1 and 2.3.1) and Chapter 3 (section 3.6). In some countries women still risk the death penalty for adultery, even if that 'adultery' results from being raped. In contrast men are subject to no equivalent punishments. In such situations, a juridical discourse positions her as responsible for upholding heterosexual monogamy regardless of the man's actions. At the same time, the pervasive assumption of 'infidelity' as

sexual seems to associate it 'naturally' with men more than women, in line with Hollway's (1984: 1989) discourses of heterosexuality.

Liberal humanist talk of infidelity often couches fidelity and infidelity in relationships in a language of consent (e.g. Seidman, 1992), assuming both partners are equally able to give or withhold consent to a partner's extra-relational sex. When adultery is justified through consent, power issues between men and women are rendered invisible, and this supports a *status quo* which disguises men's power to assume his partner's consent. In this way, and because women, rather than men, are expected to link romantic love with sexual monogamy, adultery poses a particular problem for feminism (Shrage, 1994)

In analysing both sets of interviews, the women's and the men's, I want to question whether discourses of infidelity, love and gendered desire construct inequality in heterosexual relationships, and if so, how is this achieved, and how is it or might it be resisted? If women are more likely to be positioned, and position themselves, within a discourse of romantic love, and men are more likely to position themselves within a discourse of sexual desire and sexual expertise (Hollway, 1984; 1989), then this would be expected to impinge on people's stories of monogamy, non-monogamy, choice and agency within their intimate relationships.

Writing about 'infidelity' draws attention to the paucity and ambiguity of the language available to talk about it. 'Infidelity', as intimacy additional to a couple relationship, is assumed to be sexual and problematic to the couple relationship, and indicative of problems in the relationship (e.g. Litvinoff, 1994). Whether or not my participants have used the word "infidelity" or expressions such as "being unfaithful", "seeing someone else" or "having an affair", I use the term 'infidelity' to mean having an intimate relationship, sexual or otherwise, with someone while still in an ongoing relationship with someone else. Words without negative connotations seem to be unavailable. Talk about 'open relationships' is possible, yet there is no neutral term for concurrent relationships, or sex 'on the side'! Talk of infidelity is thus political, in that it engages in dialogues which construct and contest 'normal' and 'proper' sexual relations. I don't want to assume a moral position about the desirability or undesirability of either monogamy or non-monogamy, but to analyse how my participants have done this, and how power within heterosexual relationships is implicated in gendered

discourses of infidelity. This will allow me to develop further my arguments about the gendered discourse of romantic love, or irresistible love.

Works of literature have addressed the issue of women's infidelity, such as *Anna Karenina* and *Madame Bovary*. The recent films, *The English Patient* and *The Piano*, involve love stories between a married woman and a man other than her husband. Of these four examples, only *The Piano* has an ending in which the lovers and their relationship together survives. *Anna Karenina*, *Emma Bovary* and Katharine Clifton (in *The English Patient*) die. Infidelity in literature seems to be represented as often fatal for women. My interest in this topic is in relation to discourses of love, and it was also sparked by an interaction in one of my first interviews, with Barbara. Barbara talked about a past relationship, which she called her "ill-fated love affair". I'd asked her about whether they had made any promises to each other, which Barbara asked me to clarify. The following exchange ensued:-

ANGIE. Well, I suppose I had, I'd been sort of thinking about, you know, maybe in a relationship where you-you do declare certain things, things like, I suppose like fidelity - but it doesn't quite apply, in a way, does it?

BARBARA. No it doesn't. He never said 'I love you'. Never!

Her emphatic announcement of his never having said 'I love you' in the context of promises of fidelity seemed to fuse love and fidelity. I've looked at her story of the effects of her lover's not saying 'I love you' already, in Chapter 5, section 5.4. Here I want to look at how discourses of love, infidelity and gender are imbricated in the interviews. My interviews with men followed a partial, but detailed, analysis of the interviews with women in which I had identified how women and men were positioned differently in women's talk of infidelity. I'll detail the analysis from the women's interviews first, and then follow with my reading of the interviews with men. The position of 'other woman' or 'whore' continues to lurk in the background of the women's accounts as something to be avoided. I will discuss how women tend to position themselves as faithful, and men as inevitably faithless. In the men's interviews, a similar distinction emerges though it is less clear as the men talked less about issues of infidelity than the women. I will also detail the discursive construction of the 'other

woman' and its involvement in positioning women as responsible for heterosexual monogamy.

In telling rich and complex stories of love and their relationships, the women I interviewed talked also about infidelities, their partners' and their own. They all said something about their ideas concerning infidelity, often about their direct experiences of it. Some accounts of infidelity were prompted by the interview question which I asked in relation to the intimate relationship they chose as their most important and significant relationship. I asked whether this relationship involved making any promises, spoken or unspoken, such as "telling the truth" or "being faithful". I introduced the idea of 'being faithful', but in such a way that interviewees were not obliged to pick up on this.

7.3. WOMEN TALKING ABOUT THEIR OWN INFIDELITY

Two women chose 'affairs' to talk about at length. Another three talked more indirectly about their infidelities or 'flings'. In telling such stories, they drew predominantly on two particular discursive themes, one of irresistible passion, love or excitement and the other of dissatisfaction with their current relationship.

7.3.1. Love, passion and excitement

Women, in talking of being unfaithful, articulated their passion and desire. They usually talked of thinking they were 'in love' at the time and unable to resist their lover. Within the discourse of romantic love, they can position themselves as out of control and therefore not responsible for being unfaithful.

BARBARA ... the the affair I had because that was my only experience I, that I've had of, I s'pose what I would call falling in love and it happened to me quite late in life, I was about, in my early thirties, and it had never happened to me before and hasn't happened since ...

CHRIS. At the time - if you'd have asked me that 12 years ago I would have said 'Yes most definitely' [to being in love] (laughs) Now 'No'. It was infatuation.

Ruth chose an affair as her most important and significant relationship, constructing it as an ideal, "it was all the things that you expect" of a relationship.

RUTH. But er it's [an affair], I still see that as the most significant relationship that I've ever had with a man because it was tempestuous and it was passionate and it was, it was all the things that you expect, or I sort of expect a relationship will be. There was, there was every component in it. And so yes so that's, that's my most significant relationship. (laughs and Angie joins in) (Still laughing) Now you didn't expect that, did you?

She expects me to be surprised that she would choose an affair as her most important relationship, more important than her ex-marriage. This constructs affairs as unlikely, in general, to be as important and significant as marriages or openly acknowledged committed relationships. She also positioned herself as experiencing irresistible passion, as having no choice or control but to be with her lover "in the first place", or at the beginning of the affair.

RUTH. ...um I was absolutely besotted in the first place and and er I would have er done anything, gone anywhere.

There were many ways that the women constructed the passion in an affair or a fling as being out of control such as "catapulted", "plummeted", and the "suddenness" of how it "just happened", drawing on the 'romantic epiphany' element of the discourse of romantic love as discussed in Chapter 5, section 5.1.2. However women's talk of high passion and love, which constructed the affair, and the man, as difficult or impossible to resist, was always accompanied by talk which located the affair or fling in the context of an unsatisfactory current relationship.

7.3.2. Discoursing infidelity as dissatisfaction with her current relationship: 'It was to do with my marriage as well'

For Barbara, her marriage was "really too boring".

BARBARA. I was married, in a relationship which was pretty, well it was a habit, it was really too boring. I had two small children. I didn't

work. My life was pretty dull and this, ... it [when she was at a night class and in the company of the man who would become her lover] was like a little shining oasis in my life and we had the most wonderful time.

Her affair was also warranted by her husband's "sort of voyeuristic tendencies". He gave permission, even encouraged her, before her affair began.

BARBARA. It was to do with my marriage as well cos my husband had this, um, strange, I s'pose he must have, sort of, voyeuristic tendencies really. He thought it would be really exciting if I had an affair He was very keen on the idea.

Chris and Ruth both explained that their marriages were effectively over because their husbands were having affairs. In this way, they construct infidelity as leading to relationship breakdown. Their having other relationships, therefore, do not constitute a threat to the relationship because their husbands' infidelities have already done this.

CHRIS. .. My marriage was going wrong at the time anyway because my husband was seeing somebody else and this person's just showed an interest in me.

RUTH. I mean at the time the, the relationship started um I was married and although my marriage was effectively over at that point um, we were sort of leading separate lives, um it hadn't reached the point at which I was prepared to leave the marriage.

Ruth also offered an explicitly tit-for-tat explanation, a getting even account.

RUTH. My my thoughts were that well if if Jeremy's sort of having an affair then I'll have an affair. I'll, you know, I'll do a sort of tit-for-tat thing.

Holly asserted her right to passion and excitement, rather than resigning herself to a boring, not-happening relationship.

HOLLY. But um I've got cold feet this time last year and um I thought I'm, you know, on a bit of a conveyor belt and I'm going to be stuck here for ever with the same relationship and nothing's happening. So I, you know, went out and sought some excitement.

Her explanations for "seeing other people" seemed to be constructed as part of an ongoing quest for a better relationship. In talking about a relationship previous to the one referred to above, she'd said:-

HOLLY. ...I'd actually had relationships behind this other person's back but they weren't, I can just, I know I've got a certain intuition whether I know that a person's decent or not or whether they're going to use you. And I'd had some kind of intuition that it wouldn't last so that it wasn't good enough to finish the relationship for until I met my current partner.

In Chapter 5, section 5.1.3, I discussed Holly's construction of herself as a relationship person. In this context, infidelity becomes a means of checking out whether a better alternative to her current relationship might be available, and by implication subtly problematizes the current one. Holly also suggested, however, after reflecting on this, that what she had said was unusual.

HOLLY. Sounds a bit weird. (laughs)

7.3.3. Discoursing the relationship between infidelity, insecurity and power

An explanation of infidelity as implicated in power relations came from Gina, in that in justifying her infidelity she uses his previous infidelity to produce a getting even, 'tit for tat' account. She also positions herself as not responsible ("I don't know what that was" and "these things happened").

GINA. .. but I think he has [been unfaithful] as well. I think he has as well. I mean he tells me it was a few drunken snogs. I mean this was oh 3 years ago. Or more, you know. But I don't know, my feelings tell me it was something more than that maybe, do you know what I mean? It's, you know, just feelings, I know he doesn't now. I just know instinctively that he doesn't mess around now. ... But what was

very strange was the fact that I was [unfaithful]. I've been, as I said, I've been with him 5 and a quarter years and I was totally totally faithful for 4 and a half years and then in the space of 6 months I have two flings. I don't know why that was. You see I was always the insecure one, you know, the clingy one, whatever. He used to be going out with his mates and I used to think what's he doing and I used to be staying in. And I started going out with friends and you know these things happened and the tables completely turned to the extent that it as quite, you know, he suspected something I suppose.

Gina's unexplainable flings "I don't know why that was" are contextualized within her "instinctive" knowledge that he had been unfaithful before she had. Her "flings" are constructed as unusual because of her being the "clingy", "insecure one" and faithful one of the two of them. 'Insecurity' is discoursed as the individual property of the person whose partner is being unfaithful, or has the opportunity to be unfaithful. Using the expression "the tables completely turned", when she started "going out" and having flings too, constructs these actions as moves in a power game. This positioning is very similar to that taken by Hite's (1991), quoted at the beginning of this chapter, who constructed her being unfaithful as a way of gaining some "bargaining power", suggesting a notion of social exchange and necessary equity in intimate relationships (as discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.6).

However, the constructions of being unfaithful as wielding power, and getting even, from Ruth, Gina and Hite's respondent, suggest that they, as women, are only wielding power in this way to redress an existing power imbalance in the relationship. They are not doing it in order to have more power than their male partner, whose prior infidelity cannot be justified as getting even. When a 'getting even' explanation is used in a woman's account, this positions men as never having less power than his female partner.

The women who talked about having an affair, or of being in more than one intimate relationship at a time, all used this elaborate double accounting for their affairs, of their being out of control through passion or love or infatuation (with hindsight), against a backdrop of a problematic current relationship. This is commensurate with a gendered discourse of sexuality within which women are positioned by women as wanting love

and men as wanting sex, addressed in analysing the women's interviews in Chapter 5, particularly section 5.1.4. Respectable femininity is constructed as non-sexual except through love, or the illusion of it. In relation to being unfaithful, the women are justified to be in another relationship because it involved powerful romantic feelings, and the ongoing relationship was not okay anyway, either because it no longer involved strong feelings (it was boring) or he was being unfaithful (it was not currently the one true love).

This is also what Princess Diana did in her Panorama interview (BBC1, 20.11.95) with Martin Bashir, an interview which Beatrix Campbell refers to a "one of the most important social documents of its time" (Campbell, 1998, p203). Diana, having already positioned herself within a problematic marriage, in which her husband was being unfaithful "Well there were three of us in this marriage", was asked about her relationship with James Hewitt. To Martin Bashir's final explicit question "Were you unfaithful?" she replied "Yes I adored him. Yes I was in love with him. But I was very let down.". She justified her infidelity with reference to love and to Charles' prior infidelity and therefore retains her position as a good or respectable woman.

7.3.4. Women's infidelity is not expected or acceptable

These women's accounts of their own infidelity seem to take for granted that their own infidelity is not acceptable, is not something they expect or hope to do. They give several justifications for being unfaithful, which suggests that explaining their own infidelity is a difficult and complex task. In each account they have in part accounted for their infidelity by describing the pre-existing relationship as somehow unsatisfactory. This may entail describing the relationship as boring, as not as good as a potential new relationship, as effectively over because of his infidelity, or justified as a response to his infidelity.

Sex was sometimes mentioned by the women as an important, though not necessarily pleasant part of an affair. For Ruth her lover "made me feel good about me, as a woman, as a lover, as a sort of sexual entity", where Barbara seems to construct sex as a replacement for warmth and intimacy since "he gave nothing away".

BARBARA. In a way the sex thing was sort of almost irrelevant (laughs) in a funny kind of way and I didn't really enjoy it either. It wasn't very good. He was very inexperienced. But I mean every time we went to bed together, I mean I was so tense it didn't happen often. (laughs and Angie joins in) But it was more of an ordeal than a pleasure. ... it was all over in sort of half a minute and all, all I cared about was sort of trying to cultivate a me that he could love or want and because he gave nothing away I never knew so in a way the sexual thing was something I wanted to get it over with so that I could - I s'pose in a childish way - think well count up the times you know - and every time we did it, it was like a bit more security cementing the relationship. So it wasn't enjoyable.

Barbara constructs having sex with her lover, not as enjoyable, but as an attempt to get love from him, and to be what she thought he wanted. This time it can be clearly read that Barbara is drawing on the premise that women give sex to get love and men give love to get sex, as mentioned above, constructing, for women, emotional intimacy as more important than physical intimacy. This draws on a romantic love tradition in which the spiritual elements are more important than the physical (Gergen and Gergen, 1995). Also, Barbara is reproducing the message which Potts (1998) suggests that women are told, that men "need sex to feel" and that sex is the "direct way to a man's heart" (Potts, 1998, p158). Barbara had described the relationship she and this man had, before they became sexually intimate, as "We had the most wonderful time". However, once sexually intimate, she constructs him as not giving love, and so sex has to replace the emotional intimacy she desires. The onus, however, is on him to be a proficient lover. For her, the affair was not for sexual satisfaction or excitement, but to form a new relationship and for love.

Wendy also explained how "sex wasn't all that - well it wasn't good at all" with her partner, Matt, at the time of their earlier affair.

WENDY. And as I said sexually before it was really erm not very good. And he's talked a lot about this, how he's found, he found it difficult to think about sex with someone that you love, he was very confused about that.

For Wendy, lack of good sex did not get in the way of constructing Matt as someone she wanted to be with, though, it seems she does have to justify it, and consign it to the past. Again the blame for the lack of good sex is placed on him, but the sex was explained as poor, not because of his lack of expertise, but because he loved her, and at that time viewed women in terms of a discourse of proper femininity, which constructs 'good' women you can love (madonnas) and bad women with whom you have sex (whores). Wendy constructs his division of women into madonnas and whores as unintentional, as a result of the understandable and expected psychological conflict and splitting associated with masculinity in psychodynamic discourse.

7.4. WOMEN TALKING ABOUT A MALE PARTNER'S INFIDELITY: NO EXPLANATIONS NECESSARY?

In contrast to the complex double accounting for their own infidelity, when talking about a male partner's infidelity, what is missing from the interviews with women, is an account of why he would be or is unfaithful. An underlying assumption seems to be that men are likely to be unfaithful if they have the opportunity and that women expect men to be unfaithful. The absence of explanations suggests that male infidelity is a taken-for-granted expectation, no reasons are required. An implicit 'male sex drive' discourse (Hollway, 1984; 1989) can explain this. Melissa seems surprised that her boyfriend is still faithful, and still wants to be her boyfriend, when he goes away to university.

MELISSA. Um I thought when he went away [to university], there was always this thing at the back of my mind when he goes away er you know I think he'll start lying probably or just finish it altogether. ... And some, in past relationships I've experienced that, if I'm not there they tend to forget that, not that I exist, but, you know, 'it's alright cos she's not here'. Um I thought he'd be the same even though he said he wouldn't be.

7.4.1. A male partner's infidelity is not explained by problems in their relationship with him

Though their own infidelity was explained in part by problems with their relationship, the women did not talk about there being a problem with his

relationship with them when talking about a male partner's infidelity. Susan specifically resisted this.

SUSAN. So I got - and and I think probably getting quite a long way towards facing up to it [their separating] and seeing that, you know, he says that it's a dysfunctional relationship and I've been rationalizing it to myself and saying 'Well actually it's not the relationship, it's you that's dysfunctional matey'. 'It's not me and I've had enough'.

In response to my asking whether she had said this to him this, she replied:-

SUSAN. Erm no I haven't. But I mean, I think he sort of thinks it anyway. He know, he knows he's screwed up, he knows it's his problem.

Chris, in the quote mentioned before, suggested her marriage was going wrong because her husband was seeing someone else, not that he was seeing someone else because the marriage was going wrong.

CHRIS. My marriage was going wrong at the time anyway because my husband was seeing somebody else ...

The only contexts within which *his* unhappy relationship was used to justify his infidelity was when he was being unfaithful with them. Ellen, Ruth and Wendy who talked of having relationships with a married man, all did this.

RUTH. ...I felt, you know, that I shouldn't really be having a relationship with a married man, because that wasn't really, that wasn't on. But um I'm afraid I rather tried to forget about that side of it. And the more it became apparent to me that he wasn't, this marriage wasn't very happy, the less I worried about it.

ELLEN. I mean I think from his point of view I think that what he did was to join (dating agency) because his marriage wasn't right um but I don't think he went into it thinking I will divorce my wife. I

don't think he really did that. I think he did it, you know, to have a bit on the side, to enjoy himself. I'm sure that's that's why.

WENDY. ...but but both of them unhappy, but she was prepared to be in that unhappiness because of actually saving face amongst a lot of people.

His unhappiness in his other relationship, may be seen as a device for protecting her from being constructed as an 'other woman', another form of disreputable femininity. Ellen explained that she had not known that her partner was married until they had been together for a year and half, and that this posed a great problem for her, though she partly avoids blaming him for this, by fatalizing it.

ELLEN. But er that's that's a great sadness for me because um really the whole of my life I've (small laugh) always said I would never go out with a married man. You know that was just I mean and it's as though somebody up there is looking down and thinking HAHA I'll show her. You know it's really done a dirty trick on me.

I'll address the discursive construction of 'the other woman' in more detail, in section 7.6, but first I'll complete the analysis of women's accounts of men's infidelity.

7.4.2. Women coping with male infidelity

A way of understanding many of the women's accounts of male infidelity is to read them as functioning not as explanations of his infidelity, but as accounts of coping with a male partner's infidelity, or anticipated infidelity, by minimizing its effects. There are some recurrent constructions used in doing this, 'women's instinct', 'he has problems', 'he's been faithful a long time' and 'women's insecurity'.

7.4.2.1. Women's instinct

Some women talked about their instinct as a way of knowing if he had been or would be unfaithful. Gina asserts

GINA. I know he doesn't now. I just know instinctively that he doesn't mess around now.

Similarly Barbara explains how she will know. She explains that instinct is not "mysterious or magical", but about being receptive to "clues". Though she does talk of looking for "evidence" to support her instinct.

BARBARA. And I think if something is wrong like that you know it. Something - somewhere on an instinctive level you just know. I don't - I mean I don't think there's anything mysterious and magical about that. I think you probably just pick up all sorts of little clues without even registering them. So I sort of I actually went looking for evidence. (laughs)

Princess Diana also invoked the power of instinct to answer Martin Bashir's question "What evidence did you have that their relationship was continuing even though you were married?".

PRINCESS DIANA. A A woman's instinct is a very good one. (laugh)

Perhaps her laugh underscores the possibility that this answer will not be considered sufficient to constitute 'evidence' and Martin Bashir's response "Is that all?" suggests that she was right to consider this possibility. Is he questioning the power of women's instinct as non-rational?

Drawing on a notion of instinct allows women to claim some power by constructing 'instinct' as feminine, and as an amulet to ward off or warn of trouble in the relationship.

7.4.2.2. He has problems

Sometimes women suggested their male partners had particular problems, as did Susan "...it's you that's dysfunctional matey" (full extract in section 7.4.1). These problems were not invoked to explicitly justify his infidelity, but they accompanied descriptions of a male partner who had been unfaithful, and thus positioned him as having a difficult time. This can be seen as similar to Hillary Clinton's explanation of her husband's difficult time when he was 4 years old, drawing on psychodynamic discourse to explain his extra-marital relationship with Monica Lewinsky and why she

(Hillary) had not left him. This rhetorical strategy seems to form part of the discursive construction of men as vulnerable and in need of women's protection and understanding which I discussed in Chapter 5, section 5.3.1.

7.4.2.3. He's been faithful a long time

My women participants also sometimes suggested that their male partners had been faithful for a long time. Within this account is, again, an assumption that long term fidelity, or constant fidelity is difficult for men, so his being nearly faithful might be as much as a woman could expect.

SUSAN. And he said that he had actually slept with her. (laughs) So I, my jealous fears were confirmed. But that, that was actually, I think, the last time he had any contact for a long, well until recently.

GINA. ...I mean he tells me it was a few drunken snogs. I mean this was oh 3 years ago. Or more, you know.

7.4.2.4. Women's insecurity

In Chapter 5, section 5.2.7, I addressed how women's insecurity was implicated in talk about emotional involvement with a male partner. Women also often constructed themselves as insecure when talking about being in relationships in which a partner has been unfaithful. However they tended to produce this insecurity as their problem, sometimes drawing on childhood experiences to explain their insecurity.. For example, when Ellen explained how she had not known that she was going out with a married man for the first 18 months of their relationship, she accounted for her insecurity by saying she is "neurotic".

ELLEN. I think I'm just neurotic really. I think I'm er, I think I'm really insecure and er I think somebody who had a more secure childhood would be, would be less um nervous about er losing somebody.

Are women participants drawing on a construction of women's insecurity in such a way that they take responsibility for the relationship as a way of coping with men's infidelity and continuing the relationship? Women's feelings of blame and hurt resulting from a partner's infidelity may also be

used to justify the end of a relationship. This is how Wendy accounted for the end of her marriage.

WENDY. ...After he let me down, he went off with someone else and came back, I never trusted him again. I never trusted him again. And and I used to torture myself with it. ... he was saying 'Well don't do. Don't torture yourself', you know.'I am back. What can I do? What can I say?'. And I'd say 'Well nothing'. I was suspecting him all the time of being ready to go off with someone or having an affair. Urrgh. And that was, it really upset me. So really it was me own beating myself up sort of thing. ... it really hurt. Yea. Really really hurt. In fact I never recovered from it.

The complex accounting around infidelity seems to be about trying to cope with a male partner's infidelity, not in terms of there being a problem with the relationship with him, prior to *his* infidelity.

7.5. A GENDERED DISCOURSE OF INFIDELITY

It seems that the women's accounts of infidelity are gendered in that women offered qualitatively different accounts for their own infidelities from those of their male partners or ex-partners. This suggests that they were drawing on a gendered discourse of infidelity, within which women positioned themselves as inherently faithful, even when they were not, and positioned men as inherently faithless even when they were faithful. Women achieved this by positioning themselves as out of control through irresistible love or passion and by positioning themselves as dissatisfied with their current relationship, the dissatisfaction often stemming from his prior infidelity. In contrast, explanations for the infidelities of their male partners seem more concerned with coping with the aftermath of a male partner's infidelity, when men's infidelity is constructed as unwanted but not wholly unexpected when it occurs and not needing a specific explanation. The identification of a gendered discourse of infidelity is commensurate with findings from other research which has illustrated dominant discourses which position 'good' women as faithful and sexually passive (e.g. in Hollway's (1984; 1989) 'have/hold' discourse), in contrast to 'bad' 'other' women who are faithless and sexually active (e.g. Holland *et al.*, 1998; Lees, 1997), and positions men as inherently faithless because of the 'male sex drive' (Hollway, 1984; 1989).

My findings are both partly similar to and partly different from Kitzinger and Powell's (1995) which I outlined in Chapter 3, section 3.6. They are similar in that women in both studies tell elaborate stories of women's infidelity and account for it as resulting from a lack of emotional closeness and intimacy in her current relationship. But my analysis is different in how women account for *men's* infidelity. The women's accounts of male infidelity in my study are more like the men's in the study by Kitzinger and Powell, in that my women participants and their men participants offered little explanation for a man's infidelity. The women in their study accounted for men's infidelity in terms of having too much emotional intimacy in the current relationship, his not having enough emotional space, but the women here did not do this. Though men's difficulties with women's emotions were intimated in relation to heterosexual relationships (see Chapter 5, section 5.3), this was not given as a reason for a male partner's infidelity.

Although Kitzinger and Powell's work and the present study are addressing issues about how infidelity is engendered through narrative and discourse, our findings differ in terms of how gender operates. One possible explanation for this is that the women in my study are talking about their own relationships, rather than attempting to construct fictional ones. My women participants are drawing on narratives of intimate relationships which allow them to continue with the relationship or end it, by minimising their partner's infidelity or by constructing infidelity as unacceptable. Langford (1999) found differences between how women constructed their own relationships and other women's relationships. Kitzinger and Powell identify the dominant gendered discourses which men and women differentially may draw on to account for infidelity, where my study suggests that the specific purposes of the account in relation to the person doing the accounting also need to be considered. If Kitzinger and Powell's research points out a more general way for women to account for men's infidelity (in terms of emotional intimacy and romance), the specifics of my study suggest that some women attempt to construct maintainable relationships with men through excusing his infidelity by drawing on a 'male sex drive' discourse which will not disrupt any claim of emotional intimacy with him. Drawing on a discourse of romantic love may allow this, but it may also result in the construction of insecurity, pain and hurt which may be difficult to overcome if he is unfaithful. Alternatively,

the expectation of women's hurt and pain as a result of a male partner's infidelity, can be seen as constructing reasons for men to be faithful despite the expectation that he will not be.

In terms of gender equality, in intimate heterosexual relationships, my concern is that these accounts of gendered intimacy continue to reproduce a double standard which implicates women with the responsibility for policing and maintaining heterosexual monogamy, by being faithful themselves and by not dating married or attached men. The gendered positions offered by the discourse of infidelity used by my participants has the consequence of making it easier for men to be unfaithful to women than for women to be unfaithful to men, because it is male infidelity that is constructed as usual and expected. This may be translated into women's insecurity in heterosexual relationships for which women may blame themselves. By blaming themselves for being insecure, they need not leave the relationship. This has echoes of women who stay in violent relationships, blaming themselves for his violence (e.g. Burstow, 1992) and privileges relationships with men over personal satisfaction. Women's hurt and pain may be constructed as part of a discourse of romantic love and be constructed as bearable. Such a romantic positioning seems to mean that only when the pain is seen as having become too great will the discourse of romantic love offer a way out of a heterosexual relationship, unless another heterosexual relationship comes along to offer a woman salvation.

In terms of power relations, if infidelity is constructed as a way of wielding interpersonal power (as suggested in the getting even, tit for tat account of infidelity discussed in section 7.3.3), and is also constructed as expected of men, but not of women, then the women's talk of infidelity as well as demonstrating male power in heterosexual relationships, also reproduces it.

Before offering an analysis of the men's interviews, to see if they engender infidelity similarly to the women, I want to address in more detail how the practice of blaming 'other women' for male infidelity and relationship breakdown, is involved in constructing inequality in heterosexual relationships.

7.6. THE 'OTHER WOMAN'

There are many well known literary examples of how women's heterosexual relationships are privileged over their relationships with women and their sisters (Duncker, 1992). For instance, in Hans Christian Anderson's fairy tale, *The Little Mermaid*, the sisters of the eponymous heroine sell their hair to help her live, and encourage her to kill the prince she loves, which she cannot do. At the end of the story, she becomes a daughter of the air, as she has lost her chance to become immortal through a union with a man. More commonly, as in *Cinderella*, the myth of Cupid and Psyche and in *Beauty and the Beast*, it is the heroine's sisters (or half-sisters) who either oppress her, or encourage her to act against the hero and against her relationship with him. So, the traditional fairy story and myth, like the romance narrative, not only offers up to women the central importance of love with a man, but also problematizes relationships between women. The 'other woman' is portrayed as a bad woman because she is seen to be active sexually outside of marriage or formalized relationships, a 'whore' rather than a 'madonna'. In addition, she is portrayed as bad because she seeks to take away another woman's man and her happiness (Richardson, 1990). For instance in the ballet *Swan Lake*, Odile tricks Prince Siegfried into thinking she is Odette (his *true* love) and this trickery seals Odette's fate. Salvation for Siegfried and Odette comes with their death, and in the most romantic of stage productions, their reunion after death. Men in drama, opera and ballet are easily tricked by other women. A common test has been for wives or lovers to disguise themselves to test the fidelity of their men. He is an easy lay. She must not be.

In the popular media, when discoursing monogamy and infidelity in heterosexual relationships, it seems that women are often positioned as those responsible for and implicated in infidelity. For instance, a series on male infidelity (BBC2, 1996) was entitled "*Mistresses*". Also, when actor Hugh Grant was arrested in the US for lewd behaviour with a sex worker, some subsequent press coverage (e.g. Ironside, 1995) focused on whether Liz Hurley, his fiancée, might lose her modelling contract for not being attractive enough to keep him faithful. This tends to constitute and reconstitute heterosexual monogamy and stability as the province and responsibility of women, not men.

From my analysis of the women's interviews, I have suggested that women construct a male partner's infidelity as expected. My analysis suggests that where 'good' women are positioned as faithful, male infidelity is often excused by presenting it as opportunistic. This fits in with previous research and theorizing which explains how male sexual activity is normalized within the 'male sex drive' discourse (Hollway, 1984; 1989) and in socio-biological discourses of 'natural' reproductive strategies (see Chapter 2, section 2.1.1). Here I want to argue too, that constructing the 'other woman' as 'bad', similarly has the consequence of excusing men from taking responsibility for their sexual behaviour and suggests that heterosexual monogamy relies on 'good' women who won't date or take away another woman's man. Blaming 'other women' for men's infidelity means women's relationships with men are stabilized and privileged.

As a discursive strategy to resist criticising (or leaving) an unfaithful man, blaming an 'other woman' tends to construct a power struggle between women. Barbara talked of loathing the woman with whom her lover had an intimate relationship.

BARBARA. ... And when I knew about his relationship with his lodger ... I mean I sort of loathed her, totally. And in a funny sort of way I still do even though I haven't seen him for three years (laughs), or whatever.

Wendy's story presents the opportunity for a more detailed reading to briefly illuminate this particular discursive strategy and its consequences. Wendy talked about her current relationship with Matt, a man she'd dated briefly many years previously, until he'd returned to his girlfriend, Sue. Subsequently marrying Sue, Matt had now left her for Wendy. Wendy's construction of his marriage as unhappy, justifies Wendy's position as 'other woman' and his infidelity. Only Sue is criticised, not Matt, for staying in "that unhappiness".

WENDY. ...both of them unhappy, but she was prepared to be in that unhappiness because of actually saving face amongst a lot of people that she saw as important.

In traditional terms, Wendy is the 'other woman' as Matt was married to Sue. However, both Wendy and Sue, at some point, have been the 'other woman'.

that is the woman for whom Matt left the other. In the next extract, Wendy suggests that Matt didn't know 'love' before he loved her. In this way, Wendy draws on a discourse of true love to warrant their relationship, his infidelity and her part in it. However, by also talking of his wife as unloved and pestering, she positions herself as Matt's *one* true love, which serves to both authenticate and accentuate Wendy's and Matt's love, by comparison. Contradictorily voicing concern for Sue (drawing briefly on a more sisterly construction), Wendy problematizes and negates Sue's relationship with Matt, first constructing then demolishing any competing claims on Matt.

WENDY. ... and he's never told her that he loved her. ... It's very sad for her isn't it? The only time that he's said anything about love is when she's pestered the living daylights out of him saying 'do you love me?'. ... And he's he's been pushed into a corner to say the words but he has never spontaneously said that he loves her. And he is not a person who has used those words frequently. And in fact he said he didn't believe that you could love anyway. He thought it was a bit of a con. ... And he said that he didn't think that he could feel er the way that he feels about another human being that he feels about me.

Wendy talked of the earlier time when she and Matt had split up and he'd returned to Sue, then his girlfriend.

WENDY. ... what I've structured in my mind, was that he told me was 'I told Sue that I was going to go out with you. Sue said 'Go on. See where it leads you.' ... I thought 'He'll go back to her. She'll win [my emphasis] in the end.' ... So when he went back to her I admired her greatly. I thought 'she's let him be himself' and I created this picture of an angel. She was like an angel and I thought I want to be like that. I want to be strong like that.

The construction of Sue's past permission and strength functions to justify Wendy's going out with a man with a girlfriend, excuses him, and explains why he returned to Sue because she was an "angel" who "let him be himself". This was why Sue "won" then. Now Wendy repositions Sue as unloved, sad, nagging, prepared to be unhappy to save face - not an angel! This justifies Matt's being with Wendy, Wendy being with Matt and lets Wendy 'win'. Her own power is talked up at Sue's expense.

By presenting a power struggle between herself and Sue, one which Wendy can win by 'othering' Sue, Wendy suggests she needs to justify her 'other woman' status. As the power at stake is relative to a man, this tends to reproduce women's relationship with, and dependence on, men. But power and strength to let men "be themselves" hardly challenges a gender *status quo*. When it is 'other women' rather than unfaithful men who are blamed for male sexual behaviour, heterosexual male privilege is both instantiated by and disguised as competition and power struggles between women for love of men.

Having shown how the women's interviews construct men as inherently unfaithful and women as inherently faithful and the problems this poses for the possibility of equitable heterosexual relationships, I'll look at how my male participants constructed infidelity.

7.7. MEN TALKING ABOUT FIDELITY AND INFIDELITY

Most of the men I interviewed spoke of their expectation that their heterosexual relationships would be sexually monogamous. Three men introduced the possibility of non-monogamy. They talked about *negotiated* non-monogamy, in which an act of extra-relational sex, by either partner, would be discussed prior to its performance. Men talked of sexual monogamy as taken for granted, unlike my women participants who talked of wanting fidelity from their male partners but of taking neither male fidelity, nor negotiation about it, for granted. For instance Tim articulated a subtle distinction between his assumption that his fiancée will be faithful, where her specifying his fidelity is what she expects but doesn't assume.

TIM. I just take it or granted that Julie will be faithful. But Julie will tell me that she expects it of me. (laugh) I hadn't thought about that before.

7.7.1. An expectation of women's sexual fidelity to men

The men very rarely talked about a female partner being unfaithful to them, nor of any expectation of this. Such an assumption would rely on the notion of an active female sexuality which is largely absent from the men's interviews. Alternatively female infidelity may be too much of a challenge

to masculinity or heterosexual male power. In Kitzinger's and Powell's (1995) study some 10% of participants (both male and female) did not interpret the expression of "seeing someone else" as being unfaithful, when it was a woman seeing someone else. Only two of my male participants talked about a woman leaving them for someone else, and this was presented in the context of a negotiated 'open' relationship. One incident of non-negotiated infidelity from a female partner was described by Ian as not an act of "betrayal".

IAN. But later she told me afterwards, when the relationship had finished they [she and another man] had been making love that night. Erm so, I mean you could, what you - it's also interesting that that was the only time in the relationship I was insecure about her. It wasn't a feature at all. She was insecure about me. Always imagining, you know, that I was making, you know, getting off with other women. On the whole I was very relaxed about her and I never, at any other point of the relationship, was worried about her having a connection with anyone else. So that was interesting. I may add, perhaps um- I don't feel bad about that because once she described - in fact I even think she was right not to tell me about it at the time because, in the context of the way it happened, it wasn't that she was romantically attracted to this man ... Afterwards I didn't feel kind of betrayed by this. So it was, although in one sense it was violating our agreement, in a deeper sense, I don't regard it as a major one because it was done out of compassion [for the other man] and she wasn't, as it were, two-timing me because on her side there wasn't a sense of developing a separate relationship. It was purely kind of therapeutic in a way. So at least that was, I'm quite happy with that interpretation anyway. (Angie laughs) That's her view and it, I'm quite happy with that.

This extract contains one of the unusual times when a man tells a story in which he is insecure. Ian also constructs this as unusual for him, as it only happened once ("It wasn't a feature at all"), where he offers his partner's insecurity about the possibility of his infidelity as characterizing the relationship (she was "Always imagining" him "getting off with other women"). His complex and elaborate explanation for her infidelity is offered as her explanation. She did it out of "compassion" for the other man, as opposed to her experiencing irresistible passion or doing it for herself.

Ian denied the possibility that she was being unfaithful to him by saying that she didn't want a relationship with someone else more than with him. In this way, women's infidelity is more generally constructed as wanting to create a new relationship, drawing on a have/hold discourse, rather than her wanting sex. This reproduces the complexity of discoursing female infidelity without constructing the woman as an immoral woman, a 'slag', a construction which would make it difficult for Ian to then explain how his relationship with her was important and significant and how he hadn't been "betrayed".

Daniel told a brief story of a woman he had gone out with when he was 15. She had "cheated on" him three times "and didn't really have any morals" he said, thus writing her off as an immoral woman who didn't matter. Otherwise, except for negotiated non-monogamy (which I'll discuss in section 7.7.3), the interviews with men reflect an absence of stories of women being unfaithful to them, and this seems quite consistent with the almost total absence of examples of men's insecurity. In this way, the men, like the women interviewed, constructed 'good women as inherently faithful and also suggested that they could only be in relationships with 'good' women (or these were the only relationships they would talk about, with me).

Robin told a story about how when he met his current partner, they fell in love "by mistake" because they were both already in relationships. He explained, at length, how difficult it was for her to leave her previous relationship, because of her family responsibilities.

ROBIN. And for her I think it was very difficult. ... I think she was not only letting down her partner or fiancé but she was also letting down the rest of her family ... she found that the most difficult.

Leaving her fiancé is described as difficult, even though, as Robin said, her engagement must have been problematic, or she wouldn't have fallen in love with him.

ROBIN. ...a relationship whose very foundations already were cracked because I'm sure that if she was head over heels with the guy, I couldn't have come along and messed it up.

Robin, who elsewhere talked about not believing in romantic love (Chapter 6, section 6.2.3), has drawn on the discourse of romantic love, and of true lasting love, to explain that his partner's relationship with her fiancé could not have been built on solid "foundations" or it would not have been "messed up". The foundational stability of true love is constructed contradictorily as "head over heels", thus love is both stabilizing and destabilizing. However, he doesn't say he had any difficulty in leaving his previous relationship, saying only "it wasn't going at all well". It is taken-for-granted that he can leave a relationship, but that it was much more difficult for her.

Michael talked about his relationship with Maggie, who was going out with Jake when they met. As with the women participants, her leaving Jake for Michael was partly justified by giving her a reason to leave Jake, which was to move into a possibly less oppressive relationship.

MICHAEL. I'm not sure whether er, part of that may have been a consequence, her and Jake started not to be getting on. Because Jake had a slightly paternalistic relationship to her in terms of (pause) well sort of helping her. She'd had sort of problem and so he sort of tended to help her a long time. And I think she felt she couldn't escape out of those two roles so that um this was sort of moving into a freer thing.

Like Robin's story, women leaving men seems to require explanation as did women's infidelity. One of the ways this was done was by recourse to 'an open relationship'.

7.7.2. An 'open' relationship

Libertarian or permissive discourse, post sexual revolution, tends to construct monogamy as a retrogressive institution and values 'open' sexual relationships. According to Wilson (1998), the dominance of libertarian discourse means we are all bohemians now. However, in the main, the interviewees tended not to draw on a permissive discourse of heterosexuality (Hollway, 1984; 1989). Paul suggested that non-monogamy was the modern mode of marriage, though he himself didn't agree with it.

PAUL. I mean the relationship I was talking about is obviously my wife. ... I'm a bit old-fashioned, in in thinking that you can't share yourself around. The physical side of it. Like a lot of people think. You can share yourself around in other ways. I think that one side is is for husband and wife.

None of my women participants drew on a permissive discourse, nor did they talk of an open relationship to account for either their own or their partner's infidelity, drawing instead on a notion of serial monogamy. Two men used the example of a negotiated open relationship to explain being left for another man, and a partner being unfaithful to them. Talk of an open relationship was not used to explain the men's infidelity, but the women's. The notion of an open relationship functions to ensure that the man is not positioned as having been betrayed. I don't want to suggest that the open relationship is a *post hoc* rationalization, or even a lie, but I do want to draw attention to the way a woman leaving a man, or being unfaithful, was very rare in the men's interviews and tended to be explained away, and his leaving or being unfaithful was constructed as more likely than her doing so. The almost total absence of women's infidelities and their leaving men suggests that women don't leave intimate relationships, nor are they unfaithful, unless it has been agreed by the man in advance, or that men don't talk about relationships in which this has happened. The latter seems a more likely explanation.

IAN. Probably one of the main ones [reasons why the relationship ended] is that my er partner at the time went off with someone else. So that was er er- well towards the end. Let's define that more precisely. We'd renegotiated it as an open relationship. Towards the end. It wasn't at the beginning, but towards the end. And she started having a a relationship with someone else.

MICHAEL. Um well anyway, so Jake turned up there and I mean she wrote to say that he'd turned up. And I think they slept together. I can't remember. They may not have done. I mean, at that stage this, that would be categorized in a different way, because at that stage I still felt like the outsider who'd broken into their relationship. So that them being together was like "that's" (laughing) "well them having their relationship". And I'm, I was - the way I thought about that. But I mean, I can't remember whether, I don't think it was

particularly an issue. ... I mean it was almost as if you, it [the relationship] wouldn't be worth anything unless it was freely chosen. And whether you liked other people was irrelevant to how you two felt about each other. And what you did with other people just didn't have anything to do with it. What was more important was when you were together and in your relations with each other.

Michael's story is quite complicated, since it concerns Maggie's possibly having sex with Jake, the man with whom she had been living before she started going out with Michael. In part he describes her relationship with Jake as taking precedence as they were going out first. He also suggests it wasn't "particularly an issue", which writes this off as any sort of betrayal, and within a permissive discourse, relationships with others become irrelevant.

Adam also drew on a permissive discourse to explain why neither he nor his girlfriend could be expected to be faithful when they "both loved sex" Infidelity would just be about sex and nothing else.

ADAM. I don't think I really did expect her, but, to be faithful. But I knew I would have been hurt if she, if she was unfaithful. But, I actually said this to her, making her be faithful being so far away was just really an impossibility. It was (cough) we both loved sex. It was sort of sexual frustration. We'd just be, just making love to someone, with each other not being able to do it so often. It was sort of 'Rrrrahh When are we going to see each other? Rrrrahh'. So we said to each other if the opportunity arose, don't knock it down because of me. Because I'm feeling exactly the same up here. It's er frustrating.

These extracts, from Adam and Michael, suggest that they assume their heterosexual relationships will involve sexual equality. There is some ambiguity, in that Adam seems to suggest that were they living nearer, he might be able to make her "be faithful". But he does construct their feelings, their sexual feelings, as the same and both involving active sexual desire.

7.7.3. Men as the leavers of relationships

Though many of the men did not talk of infidelity, they generally constructed themselves as power-holders in relationships in terms of their being the leavers, rarely the left. Saying 'I love you' sometimes symbolized a promise that a man would not walk out on his partner, suggesting that he could but would not.

ANGIE. So do you tell each other 'I love you'?

ROBIN. ... that to me is a way of saying I won't walk out on you. Um and I'm not going to walk out on her. I'm never going to walk out on her.

Simon talked about a five year relationship which ended when he moved to a different university.

SIMON. Maura had said to me "When you go to X, this is going to, I I think this is going to destroy the relationship. Partly because I'll be in Y" ... "and you're going to leave me in the process". And I'd said, when she was saying this, "Oh No no". But I knew as I said it that there was something in it. And indeed that is what happened precisely.

His leaving is presented as a matter of fact, an event which comes to pass, and its effects upon his partner are ameliorated by his account of her having foreseen this. Her intuition seems to give him permission, furnishes him with less reason to stay because she understands. His leaving, which was also explained before in terms of the relationship not fitting in with where he was in his life (Chapter 6, section 6.3.8), was also explained in terms of his having more power.

SIMON. So it's not like a relation- it doesn't have that power imbalance in it where someone is desperate and the other person doesn't care. Yea that's what I was trying to say about Maura. It wasn't quite that extreme, but there was that element underlying it, she had more investments in it and therefore I had more power.

So Maura loving him more than he does her, gives him more power, and this is offered as if it is an often-articulated sociological premise. This fits with Barbara's explanation in Chapter 5, section 5.3.1, when she said that relationships only work when the man needs the woman more. Earlier in this chapter, such a power imbalance was suggested as the reason for a woman to be unfaithful (section 7.3.3). In this instance, when the man has more power, the relationship is ended by him.

Daniel talked about leaving his 15-year-old girlfriend, Kate, when he was 17, two or three years before this interview took place. He told a story of starting to see "somebody else" and of finishing the relationship with Kate. In the context of the interview, the three and a half month relationship with Kate was chosen by him as his most significant, with intimations that he might eventually get back with her.

DANIEL. ...I mean it just came to a really stupid end really. A typical male end, what I would call. Kind of the grass is greener over there, kind of thing... Um and so I went up there [girlfriend's home] on a Sunday afternoon and er told her. 3 o'clock. I remember. (laugh) 3 o'clock, yea. And said I'd been seeing somebody else for two days and I thought I liked them more than her. And she started crying. And I was crying but I still went through with it. Half half an hour, 40 minutes about this dream which I was going to chop down. (laugh) I thought then and like looking at it now I was kind of - if you're crying about something, you know, it obviously means something to you. I just, it's just that - I can't rationalize it. Cos it's just insane. I just don't know why I did it. So I, you know, we er parted and then I realised within 24 hours that I didn't like this other girl at all. And I just, you know, arhh what's going on. Heartbreak kind of thing. And um yea. Tried to get back with her. Arhhah. This is really really crap. I tried to get back with her for about 3 weeks. And one night I got really drunk with Rachel cos we were like best friends during this period and I ended up sleeping with her.

The importance to Daniel, of the relationship with Kate, is partly produced in his story of ending the relationship, and realizing afterwards that it was a mistake, constructing what he's done as insane. Despite not talking explicitly of his feelings, they were intimated in this extract through his crying and "this dream" he chops down. This is an explicit story of ending a

romance, of being able to end the 'dream' which seems to beg a psychodynamic explanation of masculinity flagged by his "A typical male end". The typical male end is explained in terms of "the grass is greener", emphasizing his choice as consumer and his (maybe unconscious) desire to get his typically male end away elsewhere! He had explained that his relationship with Kate was "not a sexual relationship" (his words), that is they did not engage in penetrative sex, which would have been, as he said, illegal (she was only 15 years old). His finishing with Kate sets the scene for a very sexually active phase for him. The typical male end he effected seemed to enable him to keep considering Kate as the girl he had been in love with, while he has sex with other women. In the next extract, he talks of the time after he ended the relationship with Kate.

DANIEL. ... I was kind of with everybody really. (laughs) A male slapper, just like. (laughs) I was kind of, I don't know. I just, I hit, I must have like hit seventeen and a half and all of a sudden I've like, I don't know. I haven't really stopped since. ... I was kind of looking at everybody else. 'What can I have?', you know. This kind of the, monogamy kind of flew out the window really. (laughs) Uhuh I mean I am still faithful. Well I had a bit of a relationship over the summer and I was, I had opportunities I'll say, with other people, but I didn't take them up because I just don't really agree with it. I I have done it but I mean I don't agree with it really. It's a bit out of order really isn't it? (laughs) If it's generally accepted that you're together and that's it. So but yea definitely something happened. Whether it was related to Kate or whether it wasn't, something definitely changed when I finished with her. Maybe it was just the fact I was seventeen and a half and hormones and all that lot, (Angie laughs) you know what I mean. Brain between your legs, kind of thing. (laughs) I think maybe that was it, I don't know.

Daniel's use of the description "male slapper" to explain his being "kind of with everyone really" points up the apparent lack of derogatory labels for sexually active young men, unlike the extensive variety available to stigmatize women's sexual behaviour (e.g. Spender, 1980). Daniel has tended to draw on male sex drive discourse to talk of his sexual behaviour, which allows him to be active while his sexual partners are constructed as passive and available. He positions himself as looking for "what", rather than who he can have, but also justifies this, giving two possible reasons - his break-

up with Kate and his hitting "seventeen and a half and hormones ...". Rather than ending his romantic "dream", he seemed to be able to keep it alive, by finishing with Kate, leaving her as his ideal woman and still virginal, like the classic romantic heroine.

Daniel's talk of monogamy and being faithful seems very contradictory. He suggests that he is inherently faithful, despite talking of behaviour which obviously contradicts this. He can be trusted and he can be sexually active. He constructs himself as possibly driven by raging male hormones, another variant on the 'male sex drive' discourse and as a means of coping with having finished his relationship with Kate. Like many of my participants Daniel talked about the importance of being trusted. He stated that "trust has to come before love probably", yet also explained that he couldn't be trusted. Later he insists that when he is committed to a relationship, he will be faithful. He will "act right", therefore reconstituting monogamy as the moral order. But the decision about whether the relationship is serious is his ("if I am into it").

DANIEL. ... if I'm with a girl now, then I wouldn't get off with anybody else, wouldn't go off with anybody else because I'm not prepared to have a relationship if I feel there's nothing there. I mean I'm not going to waste my time with something I'm not into. ... So if, if I am into it [a relationship] then I'm going to act right. And that means being faithful.

7.7.4. Women's insecurity and need for men's fidelity

Unlike Michael's notion (in section 7.7.2) that an intimate relationship need not be influenced by other intimate relationships, Simon constructed a model of heterosexual monogamy which seemed to preclude not only his sexual intimacy with another woman, but also emotional intimacy and support.

SIMON. ... and there are also things around, therefore around levels of intimacy outside the relationship. So my relationship with Beth for example is a constant problem. Because it's A) well A) because she's a woman and I used to sleep with her and B) because there's, it has the quality of, we write to each other a lot and it has the quality, it still has the qualities of of a romantic relationship in a way that's

not entirely appropriate, and it gets in the way a bit. So that's that's quite difficult. And Jan has a relation, has a friendship with this Tom, this guy Tom which is similar So those are, so we're we're aware that there are, you know, (pause) friendships outside of our relationship that er that indicate that there are boundaries about what we consider are acceptable. ... I take (it), that Jan is the most important person in my life and therefore I promise that I'm available to her in in very serious ways ... Um and I'm not going to walk out on her. I'm never going to walk out on her. That I don't, I don't have emotional, that I get my emotional support from within the relationship and not not from outside it. I get some of it from outside it but within quite tight boundaries. So a lot of my friends for example are women that mean that I have to be quite clear about what those friendships are. So er I don't start getting my emotional support from those relationships in ways that aren't appropriate. Not necessarily sexually but just in terms of those friendships becoming significant and might start to get in the way of my relationship with Jan.

Simon has here acknowledged that he expects to get emotional support from his relationships with Jan, and that if he got it elsewhere, this could cause problems in his relationships with Jan. This seems to link together an expectation of women's emotion work and heterosexual intimacy. Similarly Ian suggested that his relationships with women had been problematic to his ex-partner.

IAN. ... I mean I've spoken about my partner, her insecurity. That was one of the main things. But she was struck- I'm someone who's very friendly with many people, particularly with women. And if she saw me talking to another woman in my naturally quite intense way it would trigger her insecurity. So that was one source. On my side, largely because I'd spent much of my adult life alone, I wasn't used- I was often unselfish because I was simp- sorry I was often selfish simply because of- I was unaware of taking someone else's needs into account. And I had a lot to learn on that. And my partner wasn't slow to tell me about the times where I simply didn't take her needs into account.

Ian explains how he had to "learn" that his "friendly" and "naturally quite intense way" of interacting with people, though "particularly with women" was a problem for his partner, and it would "trigger her insecurity". He didn't say why he is "particularly" friendly "with women".

Simon suggests the problem of emotional intimacy, outside of the relationship, is two way. For Ian, it is his partner's problem, once again reinforcing her insecurity rather than his. These extracts suggest that men may learn that women will interpret their male partner's emotional intimacy, their friendliness, with a woman as a threat to their relationship and so may indicate a sensitivity to women's feelings. However, this talk also functions to position the speaker as desirable to other women, by reference to their partner's insecurity. Ian does not deny that the women he is being "naturally" intense with might desire him. Robin also suggested this by showing how considerate he was about his partner's position being "compromised".

ROBIN. When I interact with other women, I, whether it's subconscious, but also, maybe, yea this is very conscious. If I met a very attractive woman um - because of my natural thinking 'yea okay so', you know, um. And because I know, well I have a rough idea of how she places herself on the attractiveness scales by the way she says 'ah isn't she beautiful' or. You know, you have an idea. I will make sure whether it's conscious or unconsciously, that in no way is her position of being my partner, in any way compromised. So yes, I might be talking to whoever, but I make it, I feel I I would be suspicious of myself if I met another person and didn't lay those cards on the table.

Here, Robin seems to have constructed himself as desiring other women, and as having other opportunities, which functions to position his partner as needing to know he won't act on this. In this way, he can construct himself as desirable and as a good caring partner, constructing his partner as potentially insecure and jealous. This is remarkably similar to Jim's account in Paul Stenner's (1993) reading of 'jealousy' in interviews with a couple Jim and May. Jim positions himself as having opportunities to sleep with extremely attractive women, whom he termed "friends", which he says he doesn't take up because May would be jealous.

In these accounts, women's insecurity is reconstituted as complementary to men's opportunities and expectations that men will be unfaithful, especially if they have close relationships with women friends. In constructing a male sex drive and rampant male heterosexuality, and women's concern about this, the gender asymmetry in the women's accounts of infidelity is reproduced. Women's insecurity is taken to evidence her investments in a man, and in Simon's terms this gives him more power.

However, a discourse of romantic love may also produce a more balanced account of infidelity, with neither partner having eyes or desires for anyone else. Michael said he was surprised that his partner would "feel insecure", because he thought it was obvious that he was "only really interested in her". His love for her should have made her secure.

MICHAEL. I do seem to remember an occasion when I was with someone, talking, or I kept seeing them quite regularly. It was obvious she liked me, and I also quite liked her. And I seem to remember something Maggie [his current partner] said, or something she did, when talking about just- which quite surprised me because I thought Oh she's worried about her or is being slightly bitchy about that person because, you know, she perceives kind of- But again, I don't remember. It wasn't a major thing. Um and it only surprised me because I suppose, I didn't think she would feel that insecure. Because I thought it was obvious that I was only really interested in, in her. You know. Um. But as I say, I think there were occasions. But again I don't think it was a very strong thing.

Though he emphasizes the relative unimportance of this memory ("It wasn't a major thing" and "I don't think it was a very strong thing"), he does construct his surprise that Maggie seemed threatened by a relationship he had with someone else. He explains this surprise by talking of insecurity as the result of doubting that someone is only interested in you and no-one else. This is in direct contrast to his previous talk about an open relationship (section 7.7.2) in which he claimed his relationship with her is not affected by any other relationships she has. In this extract, women's insecurity is predicated on competition between women for men, via Maggie "being bitchy" about another woman. Similarly Daniel

constructs his girlfriend, Rachel, as hating his ex-girlfriend, Kate, (not him) when he tries to go out with Kate again.

DANIEL. So I slept with her [Rachel] and then 4 days later I tried to get back with Kate again. So Rachel has a genuine hatred of Kate.

These last two extracts seem to draw on a discursive construction of the 'other woman' which I discussed earlier (section 7.6). In so doing, they reconstitute male heterosexual privilege by constructing a man as the object of desire, of love, who may be desired by some other woman.

The men's interviews tended to suggest equality between men and women in the context of fidelity and commitment, by not explicitly acknowledging any male heterosexual privilege. However, the male participants tended to construct it as more easy for a man than a woman to leave a heterosexual relationship. Also they tended to construct women as inherently faithful, and certainly not unfaithful to them, unless they sanctioned it, or the 'infidelity' was part of a negotiated open relationship. In this way, men seem to subtly construct their power and agency to make decisions about when and why they will be in relationships or leave them, with little reference to a partner's feelings or needs, except for her insecurity which can function to symbolize her love for him or to present this as a problem for him.

7.8. SUMMARY OF THE ANALYSIS OF 'INFIDELITY' ACROSS BOTH SETS OF INTERVIEWS

By taking both the men's and women's interviews together to make a reading of 'infidelity', more detailed and lengthy stories of women's infidelities emerged. This was not because there were more occurrences of women's infidelities in the interviews, as there were not, but because it seemed that these infidelities needed to be justified and explained away as non-infidelity. Within a gendered discourse of infidelity, women were positioned as inherently faithful, even when they were not, where men were positioned as potentially faithless even when they were faithful. These interviews about love drew on a gendered discourse of infidelity, rather than the pervasive account, common in self-help literature, that sexual infidelity is straightforwardly symptomatic of relationship problems, regardless of gender (e.g. Litvinoff, 1994).

From the twenty two interviews, there were many infidelities implied, suggesting that monogamy and fidelity are far from 'natural' for either women or men, and emphasizing the socially constructed nature and institutionalization of sexual monogamy. Women seemed to be producing versions of themselves as inherently monogamous despite evidence they produced which contested this, with men largely supporting this version of feminine fidelity. This contrasted with the version of inherently promiscuous and opportunistic masculine sexuality, more pervasively reproduced in women's stories than in men's. In this way, it seemed that issues of infidelity operated as more relevant to women's accounts of love and intimate relationships.

Women's stories of their infidelities were often imbued with a need for the romance and excitement they were not getting in their current relationships and so this positioned them within a have/hold discourse, wanting love rather than sex, yet again. In particular, they constructed a need for passionate love rather than companionate love. In the men's rare stories of women's infidelity, it was usually discounted in some way, not explained by a problem in the current relationship, and usually as negotiated non-monogamy. A woman's betrayal of a man in a serious relationship seems unsayable, as this could cast doubt on his mastery and his success in sustaining relationships, his romance with himself, as I discussed in Chapter 6. The women's references to men's infidelities needed no explanation, except in terms of how women dealt with it, by giving up on him or by coping with it. Men's stories of infidelity were constructed around a need for sex, not for love. However, men constructed their remaining faithful as important to their partners. In this way they reproduced women's insecurity that their male partners were sexually desirable to other women (*cf.* Stenner, 1993).

These stories of infidelity are therefore also stories of gender performance. Women's sexual performance was policed more than men's, by both women (through problematizing other women and the complex stories needed to explain women's infidelity) and men (by a woman partner's infidelity being rarely acknowledged unless the man agrees to it). Women rather than men were constructed as more tightly bound by bonds of love and therefore their infidelity is represented as more disruptive to heterosexual monogamy. While heterosexual monogamy is constructed as the normative

moral state of relationship, the policing of women's fidelity protects men against 'betrayal', while men's infidelity is rarely policed. Both the male sex drive discourse and the permissive discourse, allow (though they don't guarantee) that his infidelity will not impinge upon his love, though it be a performance of his gender. In other words, psychodynamic discourse allows that a man may have his cake and eat it by splitting his desire for love and sex. The proliferation of Freudian, and possibly Lacanian, sexual meanings form part of the situational context of modern romantic love and heterosexual relationships. It seems very difficult to draw on emancipatory discourses of women's sexual desire, while psychodynamic phallogentrism positions men as wanting to wield the phallus, sometimes literally, but always to claim power, where women are expected to be glad to be associated with it. According to these cultural understandings, a woman and a man can't be equal. These discourses which instantiate male power have to be challenged if equitable intimate heterosexual relationships are to be possible. Rather than drawing on psychodynamic discourse which reproduces male power by constituting men's and women's unconscious desires as different, we need to subvert such talk.

I've tended to suggest that conceptions of love and excitement can be used by women to account for their infidelity, and though focusing on talk rather than an assumed reality, my analysis has tended to argue that women's infidelity, because it is explained, needs to be explained; that is that women's infidelity is not as inherently understandable as men's seems to be. I also want to raise the possibility of a slightly different, alternative reading. Women's infidelity may provide the opportunity to tell powerful stories of their love and passion, stories which are difficult to tell about their more settled relationships. The story of a romantic love may be best told about a romantic and passionate affair. The dissatisfaction women talked about in their marriages and long-term relationships were usually to do with the difficulty of sustaining an exciting, as well as an equitable, relationship, when their male partners resisted this. Though the men I interviewed were not the partners of the women I interviewed, their tales of working at and the drudgery of sustaining effective communication, without much talk of feelings, would not seem to offer much of a basis to talk about passion and romance. The women's interviews construct serial monogamy as much more likely than a very long term relationship, agreeing with La Rochefoucauld's maxim that "there are good marriages, but none that are exciting" (Belsey, 1994, p61). For the men I interviewed, if

the romance they tell of is a romance with themselves and their success, they may be telling stories of the 'good marriage' rather than an exciting one.

The gendered discourse of infidelity drew on pervasive assumptions that women's desires and men's desires are different, and that heterosexuality has to be understood with regard to these differences. Women's stories of infidelity have challenged the possibility of long-term companionate coupledness, but not heterosexual coupledness *per se*. Nor did my women participants offer a critique of heterosexual passion. Contemporary heterosexuality, as a system, seems constructed in such a way as to incorporate feminist and other critiques and yet, effectively, there still seems very little space for resistance.

In the next and final chapter, I will again raise questions about how the constructed binary of emotionality and rationality is implicated in the telling of stories of love. In doing so I will address the broad discourses which pervaded the interviews elicited in this project, and question their involvement in the failure of a transformation of gender relations.

CHAPTER 8. SOME CONCLUDING COMMENTS

8.1. TELLING STORIES OF LOVE

Love at first sight, wild love, immeasurable love, fiery love ...

Trying to talk about it seems to me different from living it, but no less troublesome and delightfully intoxicating. It is mad. No doubt the risk of a discourse of love, of a lover's discourse, comes mainly from uncertainty as to its object. Indeed what are we talking about? (Kristeva, 1987, p2)

From a discursive perspective, "living" or experiencing love is only understandable through the discourses available to structure its meanings. My project here has been to show the different ways in which love has been storied and written by psychologists, psychodynamicists, feminists, sociologists, literary theorists and social constructionists. In chapters 5,6 and 7, I have then looked at how my participants have storied it, writing up their love stories as I made sense of them using the feminist discourse analytic method I detailed in Chapter 4. It is not possible to tell a story which is not from some perspective and no one 'true' way in which my participants' stories can be told because reality is not amenable to direct apprehension but is embedded in regimes of truth. What is of interest is the choice of stories told, and the consequences of their telling. Discourses and the objects they produce (Foucault, 1972, 1979) are not fixed, despite attempts to fix them in theories, credos, histories, and law, both religious and secular. The extent to which something becomes open to question or occasions attempts to refix old or traditional meanings can indicate the possibility of cultural shifts, of new meanings and subversions. My method has allowed meanings and shifts of meaning to be highlighted, rather than to be seen as fixed.

I have tried to be explicit about how I have analysed the interviews in terms of discourses of love and gender. In line with the research questions I posed at the end of my introductory chapter, I have considered whether it was possible to talk about heterosexual love without also producing gender differences and inequality, which construct emotional bonds between men and women in such a way as to privilege men. This also allowed me to attempt to identify whether, as Giddens (1992) and Illouz (1997) have suggested, a democratization of love is already underway, with a rational

modernist approach leading to a "transformation of intimacy" (Giddens, 1992) in intimate heterosexual relationships, or whether heterosexual romantic love is incommensurate with feminism and women's liberation (Langford, 1999). However, any reading, discourse analysis or thematic decomposition of textual material is never complete, and so my analyses cannot represent the totality of what may be said, even when one's perspective is made explicit.

What I want to do in this final chapter is to talk about the most pervasive discourses in more general terms than I have done, so far, in order to raise questions about how we tell stories of love. This will lead into a discussion about how a binary opposition of emotionality and rationality is constructed and how this is implicated in gender inequality, which follows on from my comparison of the women's and men's interviews in Chapter 7.

Most mainstream social psychological work failed to help me understand, in any depth, what my participants were talking about. They were not drawing on fixed categories of love with Latinate names and amenable to quantification, although distinctions between passionate/immature and companionate/ mature types of love (Chapter 2, section 2.4.1) were much in evidence. However, when participants have drawn on these well-rehearsed dichotomies such as between 'being in love' (passionate) and 'loving' (companionate), the boundaries around these concepts shift, stiffen and dissolve depending on the love story being told. My participants' interviews, and my analyses of them, have demonstrated that talk of love is extremely complex and, for many participants, inchoate and full of cliché. The extensive literature on romance and its conventions and my own reading of fiction seemed to help much more in approaching a contextualized understanding of participants' stories, both those which were romantic and those which eschewed romance. Participants both reproduced and were reproduced by the discourses and discursive constructions they drew upon. From a top-down Foucauldian approach, the discourse of romantic love (detailed in Chapter 5 and in Chapter 7) and the discourse of working at love and intimacy (detailed in Chapter 6 and at the beginning of Chapter 7) emerged as two broad and pervasive discourses. I've shown how these discourses are often in tension with each other, in Chapter 6, when the men constructed romantic love as problematic and privileged rational relationality, and in the comparison between both sets of interviews in Chapter 7. Both discourses incorporated notions of being in

love and loving, with romantic love constructed as inextricably inscribed with discourses of emotion whereas working at love was constructed as concerned with doing rather than feeling. Despite the complexity of the discourses and the ways they were drawn on, a split between emotionality and rationality is crystallized in the discursive tension between the romantic discourse and the work discourse of love and intimacy. In Chapter 7, I compared and contrasted women's stories of love with men's stories of love in order to point to potential tensions in heterosexual relationships and to show how male heterosexual privilege is constructed in both romantic and rational love stories and in stories of infidelity. In this concluding chapter, I will consider how these two broad discourses split emotionality and rationality, in order to question how they impact on gender inequality and imputed transformations of intimacy and may inform feminist theorizing. Firstly I'll summarize and exemplify my findings in relation to these two discourses.

8.1.1. Telling romantic love stories: the discourse of romantic love

The discourse of romantic love, as I have identified it in the women's interviews, incorporated a clutch of subsidiary discursive themes of feelings of love, true and lasting love and possibilities of a Mr Right who may find it hard to involve himself in mutual love making. However, drawing on a discourse of men's emotional repression and difficulty with love, the romantic love story may still be told and may even be enhanced. While producing herself as overpowered by love, articulating a language of physical propulsion or compulsion such as "catapulting", "plummeting", "head over heels", "insanity", "addiction", with the lover as passive, (exemplifying the link with "passion" in its meaning of suffering), positioning herself as romantic heroine was reflexive.

BARBARA. I mean the first few weeks I was just in this heady state of euphoria, you know. It just - just swept - it felt like being swept along by some wave - I was out of control and everything was out of control - and I couldn't see any way that it could work out and we'd be together so I just didn't think about it. I'd just think enjoy it while it lasts. Except that I couldn't really. Things aren't so clear cut. It just went into a downward spiral.

Despite the roller coaster of emotions, Barbara's "enjoy it while it lasts" constructs being "out of control" as enjoyable, a "heady state of euphoria" on which she could partly reflect. The women talked about whether they could avoid being out of control, and whether they *should*. Women's resistance to romantic love was also imbued with feelings, but more controlled or rational feelings. Being desperate for love, though this was constructed as understandable, was something not to act on as one could fall in love with someone who is not who you really think they are, i.e. you will fall in love, not with a 'real' person but with who you want them to be, drawing on a construction which is usually theorized psychodynamically as projection. So the romantic love stories produced by my women participants often constituted them as being out of control while also able to reflect on their many different feelings. However, in attempting to produce love stories based on partners' mutual feelings of love for each other, romantic discourse, even when drawn on reflexively, required their male partner's involvement. This often seemed to produce unsatisfactory patterns of interaction built on expectations that men can't cope with being seen to be pressured, particularly by a female partner. The women's reflexive romantic positionings take for granted that men have feelings, that they want sex, but that they find emotions difficult and can't cope with emotional pressure from women. I've argued, in Chapter 7, that it is this construction of male emotional illiteracy that needs to be resisted, as well as any straightforward connection between women's emotionality and women's oppression, which holds women responsible for their social position.

In the ways described above, romantic discourse seems to inscribe gender difference, according to the frequent reproductions of men's need to escape from emotional pressure in relationships which is found in both psychodynamic theory (Chapter 2, section 2.5 and Chapter 3, section 3.2.2) and many self-help texts (Chapter 2, section 2.10). Stories of mutual love were rarely fully achieved by my women participants. One came from Wendy, who described her partner, Matt, as quiet, but able to reciprocate her feelings of love by writing down how he feels about her, which shows how special she is. The women's stories, rather than producing men as gods or saviours (Sayers, 1998), mostly produce men who need to be rescued and protected both by and from her emotion work, in such a way that their men don't have to acknowledge it. The problem for feminism, is that looking from the outside, this sort of reflexive romantic positioning can look much

like a traditional 'girl idolizes boy' story. Romances with and without reflexivity, from a non-discursive point of view, may seem rather similar. I have questioned, in Chapter 7, how this is problematic in that it positions men as special and masculinity as the constraining aspect on intimate heterosexual relationships, though masculinity may be characterized differently in the women's and men's interviews. By listening to the subtleties, there is resistance to being oppressed in women's reflexive romantic positionings. However there is little resistance to heterosexual relationship itself. My group of women participants included several women who I know as feminists, yet they were not problematizing heterosexuality *per se*. They were partly problematizing love and partly problematizing men. But positioning men as unchallengeable, for whatever reason, serves to disempower women. I suggested, in Chapter 7, that a very complicated situation exists when feminist arguments, which brought into play the understanding that men will avoid their own emotions and project them elsewhere, are taken as universal truths about masculinity. This situation serves to advantage men and evidences how feminist arguments have been subverted and incorporated in heteropatriarchal discourse. The challenge would seem to be to resist the incorporation of male emotional illiteracy into understandings of heterosexual intimacy, without giving up on the possibility of heterosexual intimacy completely.

One of the difficulties in telling romantic stories without enlisting men's avoidance seems to be explained by understanding it as an obstacle. This is because obstacles to romance, as has been suggested elsewhere (e.g. Radway, 1987; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995), seem to enhance, or be integral to romance. Part of the romantic quest has been to surmount obstacles. Men's expected emotional distancing functioned as an obstacle to intensify women's love stories, as they contradictorily attempted to produce a mutual love story. Another obstacle that was present in some of the romantic love stories came in the form of their partners being already in a relationship, or them already in a relationship. Such situations offered, for women in particular, the opportunity to narrativize highly emotionally involving stories of romantic infidelity and romantic love for another man, as I've shown in Chapter 7. These obstacles seemed to heighten the passion, to allow that love is powerful and exciting enough to overcome such difficulties. Male emotional illiteracy and heterosexual infidelity seem commonplace obstacles to satisfactory relationships, yet perversely they have been used, in the interviews, to enhance the romance.

The romantic narratives drew on hurdles found in the romantic protagonists; women's overemotionality which could drive men away, men's emotional distancing, and forbidden love in the sense of that involving infidelity. They seemed not to draw on traditional obstacles in the form of parents' disapproval or religious stricture. The emancipatory advances in the wider world may mean that love finds fewer of these traditional hurdles to traverse (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995), but if the problems I've mentioned come to the fore, this suggests that intimacy has not been transformed, it has merely regrouped its obstacles which leaves the central intimacy apparently untouched by wider social concerns. For though romantic love stories inscribed gender differences, they tended to explicitly inscribe very little else concerning wider social relations that may either provide encouragement or constraint to particular relationships. Differences of religion and race might have offered obstacles, but my white participants did not acknowledge these as salient or something they thought about in relation to love. Similarly class was largely absent in romantic love stories, though two women suggested they had been attracted to men with 'posh' voices.

8.1.2. Telling rational stories of love: the work discourse of relationships

The work discourse of relationships constructs a head over heart choice, and, in these interviews, a man's choice. The work discourse of relationships constructs romantic love as a facade covering what is essentially a sensible decision about partnership and family. This discourse resists romance by asserting that personal choice has to be rational rather than based on out of control feelings. This sounds commensurate with Giddens' (1992) notion of the democratic "pure" relationship, but the work discourse did not offer sexual equality. Where the rationalist modern route to love was about the ability to make a good relationship, this was scarcely related to the wider social world, except for the relationship having to fit in with where one is in life, in particular where he is in his life.

Most of the men I interviewed positioned themselves within this work discourse of relationships, using rational discourse to resist being positioned within a discourse of romantic feelings, as I've detailed in Chapters 6 and 7. This meant that saying 'I love you' could be presented as

part of working at relationships, which allowed men to talk of performing a masculinity that involved loving and intimacy, but without requiring them to articulate felt emotion. By constructing overwhelming feelings as external, as a sort of miasma which threatened the relationship, they avoided talking about their emotions, despite some claims to be 'effective' communicators who knew about how intimate relationships should be conducted. The pervasive psychodynamicization (in academic and everyday explanation) of men's fear of being emotionally vulnerable has been used elsewhere to explain this emotional miasma as monsters from his id (as in the film *Forbidden Planet*). In contrast, the discursive perspective I adopt sees this avoidance of emotion as evidence of a masculinity policed by a discourse of non-emotional hegemonic masculinity, and critiques the understanding of men's emotional vulnerability in psychodynamic terms as this lets him 'off the hook', that is it allows him to avoid doing emotion work for his partner, though she may be expected to do it for him. There were ways in which men acknowledged their past avoidance of relationships which were constructed as "crippling" and constraining on his freedom. But the work discourse allowed men to claim both relationship and personal freedom, to have his cake and eat it, as I discussed in Chapter 6, section 6.3.2.

The work discourse of relationships allowed men to position themselves as doing non-emotional emotion work, by working at love, but without the concomitant emotions inscribed in the discourse of romantic love. As previously discussed, Duncombe and Marsden (1998) suggest that men do emotion work in the form of controlling their emotions in order not to impose them upon their female partners, which gives the impression of men's emotional distancing or the performance of hegemonic masculinity. This however was not what the men in my study suggested they were doing, as I have detailed in Chapter 7. Where the discourse of romantic love allowed women to position themselves as helping men to be special, women also suggested that they understand that men need to view themselves as already and essentially special. The work discourse of relationships does not require women's emotion work to point up his specialness, as this is taken for granted. Within this discourse, wider social divisions were not made salient, though nationality and class were occasionally mentioned in relation to whether partners were personally compatible in having similar backgrounds.

8.1.3. The romantic and the rational in conflict, and male hegemony

Though both discourses, the discourse of romantic love and the work discourse of relationships, offer ways of constructing intimate heterosexual relationships in an interview context, they don't necessarily tell us about how relationships are conducted with a partner. However the discourses give some indications of how relationships may be constrained and how men and women may be constrained in relation to each other. The discourses and the tension between them are commensurate with research which details difficulties in heterosexual relationships, and they may therefore be useful in understanding conflicts in relationships. I've detailed in Chapter 7, sections 7.1.1. to 7.1.5, the differences which emerge in the interviews between women's constructions of love and experience of romantic relationships and those of men. These may be useful to consider in relationship counselling, as long as power issues are not evaded. If women and men are constructing different heterosexual relationships, it may be very difficult for them to tell joint stories. In particular, since the work discourse of relationships constructs relationships in line with therapeutic and 'scientific' constructions of relationships, it may have become more difficult for women to voice their emotions. They may find themselves silenced if their male partners have become adept at manipulating counselling talk in ways which make them sound equitable and reasonable. This situation has been described to me in the past, by women who have experienced domestic violence and have agreed to joint counselling with their abusive partner or ex-partner. The difficulty of not tacitly colluding with the seemingly reasonable male when talking with both partners was noted by Dryden (1989). Burstow (1992) does not counsel heterosexual couples for this reason.

The gendered discourse of infidelity, as I detailed it in Chapter 7, drew attention to conflict and male heterosexual privilege. As Holland *et al.* (1998) suggest, heterosexuality is not "masculinity-and-femininity in opposition: it *is* masculinity" (Holland *et al.*, 1998, p11). My analysis tends to support their suggestion that "the male in the head" ensures that heterosexuality is male dominated, as both the discourse of romantic love and the work discourse of relationships obscure men's advantages (to the extent that women may construct him as disadvantaged by his difficulty

with emotions), take his life and involvement as central and constraining to any intimate heterosexual relationship. The romantic discourse places man as central, as the romantic object. The work discourse of relationships constructs the man as the central 'working' subject. The discourse of romantic love has not only incorporated the notion of male emotional intimacy, it has engaged with it in ways which seem to increase the power of love and male power together and this needs to be challenged. Instead of accepting that men can't engage emotionally, we have to keep asking why they won't.

The heterogeneity of meanings of love, reflected in this thesis, points up the lack of fixedness and universality of particular meanings, across and within both texts and interviews. This shows that the meanings of love and romance can be struggled with, and the difficulty with which some stories are told points up the potential for change. As Belsey suggests "... the precariousness of its [romance's] propositions makes imaginable the possibility of alternatives" (Belsey, 1994, p14). However the continuity of underlying assumptions I found in researchers', theorists' and participants' stories of love, suggest that the democratization of love and of heterosexuality, proposed by Giddens (1992) and Illouz (1997), may be some way off. From my interviews, the modernist rational work discourse with which some of my male participants structured their stories of intimate heterosexuality offered little scope for sexual equality since they constructed the man's self, personal growth and work as the central concern in heterosexual relationships. It also problematized emotion, and as women and emotion tend to be understood as inseparable, this undermines women's understanding of intimate attachment.

Drawing on rational discourse also produced a much less compelling love story and involving emotional life than did the romantic discourse within which the women tended to position themselves, though their positioning was usually self-conscious and reflexive, suggesting they were deluded neither with love nor with men. Both discourses tended to be used to inscribe gender difference in the form of emotional woman and emotionally inexpressive man, though male emotional inexpressivity was constituted within romantic discourse as his difficulty with feelings, within work discourse as the best way to approach relationships.

In terms of lasting relationships, both the reflexive romantic discourse and the work discourse of relationships offer effective discursive means to end relationships. One can fall out of as well as in to love or decide a relationship is not worth working at anymore. Both construct long-term stability as an ideal, while suggesting this as often unlikely and/or unrealistic. The power of love in romantic discourse seems, in part, in the telling. And, in the telling, the man tends to be constructed as special. The power of love in the work discourse of relationships is constructed, mostly, as the man's power to effect love and intimacy. Within both the romantic and the rational discourses, serial monogamy is constructed as the norm, as a continuing quest for passionate love and as a quest for success and personal development, respectively. Psychology as a discipline and self-help books (see Chapter 2, section 2.10) have been more attuned to the latter, and thus they are implicated in any shifts which have transformed intimacy into a rational project of self development.

8.1.4. Gender and discourses of love and emotion

Psychology stands accused of reproducing the male subject as norm, thereby promoting the 'male in the head'. Though Gilligan (1982) has tended to be implicated in essentializing women and men, she was also attempting, like Henriques *et al* (1984) to change the male subject of psychology, by identifying how developmental theorists produce constructs such as adult intimacy, where 'adults' were synonymous with 'men', without engaging with the contradictions produced in their theories. Equating adulthood with "self and work", 'woman' became non-adult unless she did paid work and became self-absorbed. In this way, psychological theory produced adult womanhood as a contradiction in terms (see also Broverman *et al.*, 1972). By the same token it did not engage with the lack of evidence for men's engagement with intimacy.

The concepts of attachment and separation that depict the nature and sequence of infant development appear in adolescence as identity and intimacy and then in adulthood as love and work. ... Choosing like Virgil to "sing of arms and the man," psychologists describing adulthood have focused on the development of self and work. While the apogee of separation in adolescence is presumed to be followed in adulthood by the return of attachment and care, recent depictions of adult development, in their seamless emergence from studies of men,

provide scanty illuminations of a life spent in intimate and generative relationships. (Gilligan, 1982, p151)

Both discourses of intimate relationship, the romantic and the rational inscribe gender in different ways, with some similar consequences. In this concluding chapter I have tended to identify the two different discourses, of romantic love and working at intimacy with women and men respectively, which is an oversimplification. Adult masculinity seemed to be constructed through work and success at relationships, rather than romance or sex. The men I spoke with rarely positioned themselves as ludic Lotharios. Constructions of both adolescent and adult femininity inscribed romance and feelings, though some adult versions constructed the possibility of a more settled love, with more comfortable feelings accompanying or replacing more intense romantic love feelings. In line with Wetherell (1995), this suggests that women do the romance. Though, instead of doing the sex, men claim to be doing the 'work'.

The potential for telling emancipatory love stories seems to be constrained by the incommensurability of masculinity and the manipulation of romantic genres. Redman (1998) suggested that some young men seemed to have larger investments in romantic discourse, and positioned themselves as romantic hero. There were brief intimations of this in the men's interviews. The two youngest men in my study produced a TV reference and a movie, which I use to exemplify some investment in romance, as well as how they drew on a notion of women doing the emotion work. I will detail these briefly, as this area seems to offer a possibility for further research. There were few times that the men in my study referred to fictional stories, or other stories other than their own, to speak about love, and it was science fiction that Adam and Daniel drew on - *Star Trek: The Next Generation* and *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back*. In the first example, Adam positioned himself as Will Riker, the male character closest to a romantic lead in *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, and his girlfriend as Deanna Troi, a counsellor and empathic non-human (who always looks like a conventionally glamorous female human).

ADAM. .. she [his ex-girlfriend] used to, she used to call me Imzadi. Which -she was a Star Trek fan. This is an alien term for somebody who you just do love but with a spiritual and higher awareness. ...

Deanna Troi. Betazoid. It's the term used to, for her love for Will. When they first met she said (you're Imzadi for me).

Drawing on *Star Wars*, Daniel appropriated the words "I know" of Han Solo, the male hero, who said this in response to Princess Leia saying "I love you" to him, at a time when his life might have been ending.

DANIEL. If you love me then I should - I could turn it around. Seems perfectly reasonable. (inaud) (pause) If you love me then I should (long pause) say I know. (laughs)

ANGIE. Oh right. I see!

DANIEL. That's a Harrison Ford classic out of *Star Wars*. (Both laughing)

By appropriating the words spoken by Harrison Ford, Daniel is adopting the mantle of an actor who is closely associated with several action heroes. Both Harrison Ford (as Indiana Jones rather than as Han Solo) and Will Riker are portrayed as serial womanisers. And the examples are also similar in other ways. In each the fictional man is devoted to his space craft and action. In each the fictional woman has special powers. Deanna Troi, as an 'empath', can feel others' emotions. Leia has 'the force' and telepathic powers. Both examples seem to rely on the woman's emotional understanding. I find this coincidence interesting, since in Science Fiction genres those with telepathic powers are often constructed as oppressed minorities who are feared, used and abused. For instance in the 1990s TV series *Babylon 5*, human telepaths are forced to join the Psy Corps, so that their powers may be bought and sold, and members of the corps police each other. They don't have to be forcibly contained or restrained by non-telepathic 'normal' humans, if they are self-controlled, though their powers are sometimes appropriated by force. This is a powerful analogy for women under capitalism, when their 'emotion work' is both expected and paid for, and often policed by other women, privileging women's relationships with men, rather like the construction of the other woman (Chapter 7, section 7.6).

I am also arguing here that romance narratives come not only in romance genres such as Mills and Boon, but also in other genres such as literary

high-brow texts, detective novels and science fiction, and most modern films include some form of intimate and sexual relationship (usually heterosexual), even if the genre of film seems not at all romantic, for instance *The Terminator* and *Blade Runner*, which are science fiction classics. Though the women involved in these two films do not correspond to the sexual stereotype of passive and dependent, they still need rescuing by the men involved who are strong and active. The men in my study had access to discourses of romance, though except in adolescence, they tended to resist them. My interviews suggest that romance narratives are available to both men and women, but as Jackson (1993) suggests, men tend to construct their competences by resisting romance. However, adolescent men may be positioned, or may position themselves within discourses of romance, whose cultural referents may include more masculinist genres. As someone fairly familiar with Science Fiction genres, this is something I would like to research further.

8.2. WIDER IMPLICATIONS AND SOME PROBLEMS WITH MAKING 'PRIVATE' WORLDS PUBLIC

In this section I want to draw attention to some areas which I and/or my participants paid less attention to, and question why. My analysis, or reading of the interview material, is not offered as a generalization. It addresses the constructed lives and loves of a small group of white mainly middle-class women and men, often with working-class roots. The women and men were economically independent, or could be, or in the case of the youngest participants, they may expect to be when they leave university. Race and ethnicity were not mentioned, and class issues were implied very rarely. Nationality was, but rarely, involved in explanations. Women's stories often tied them to dependants, their children, and this is a strand which I have neglected in my analysis, due to lack of space, and which I could explore further in subsequent analyses. One young woman complained that her partner, as well as not being romantic and impulsive, didn't earn much either. As Illouz (1997) has suggested, higher income can offer enhanced romance and leisure possibilities. Few participants talked about their earnings, though I might have analysed what little was said. As I have already indicated, though love stories inscribed gender, they seem to inscribe little else of the wider world, in any systematic way. Constructions of intimate relationships and families drew on local rather than global factors. Personal relationships were presented as personal, rather than

social. The women's stories were also the stories of the men they were dating, or living with, or married to, whilst the men's stories tended to be about themselves.

It may be that I constrained their stories of love, by encouraging them to focus on their personal experiences, rather than question them on how these personal experiences are political. Perhaps I inadvertently prioritized the couple relationship and how they felt, decontextualized from wider social relationships. Perhaps I was also in search of romantic heroines, strong women who had found ways to construct and experience truly equitable heterosexual love. This did not constrain my participants from including discourses of gender, however, which I did not specifically raise, though many of my participants know me as an active feminist and might have anticipated my interest. I might have asked participants, at the end of the interview, to reflect on whether any wider social relations, such as class, race and ethnicity, impinge on their experiences of love, but I avoided setting the agenda in this way. I started this project because of my interest in how love was implicated in domestic violence, but though I asked about whether participants had ever been in a violent relationship, the very little I was told about specific violence, though revealing, would not allow me to say more than I already have about my participant's stories of love.

8.2.1. Telling stories of love: reflexive romantic heroines and actor-director-producers

While not generalizing about the people in my study (or people in general), I want to offer a scenario to encapsulate the most pervasive gendered subject positions, a scenario that relates to film-making. Such an analogy seems appropriate since cultural narratives of love and relationship informed both the interviews, much research about love, and ultimately my analysis. My knowledge of myths, literature and fairy tale has been probably been more useful to my analysis than my knowledge of mainstream love taxonomies.

Being in love is to be "a protagonist of a story" (Belsey, 1994, page ix). Different stories of love involve a struggle over the meanings of love. Stevi Jackson (1993) quotes Brunt (1988) to argue that falling in love is like "getting to star in your own movie", and this is how many of my women

participants positioned themselves, partly reflecting on and partly revelling in their role, drawing on their knowledge of romantic stories, songs and films to produce highly emotional, sometimes tragic performances, aware of being surveyed by men and the the male in their heads (Berger, 1972; Holland *et al.*, 1998). But if women construct themselves as the heroine of their own movie, their men are often presented as the actor-director-producers of the film, who love her but are otherwise preoccupied. My male participants also tended to position themselves as actor-director-producers, though rarely of a romance, except in adolescence. Their preferred position seemed to be director-producer of a factual documentary, rather than a romantic weepie. In such a role, emotionality would not be appropriate to the more abstract style of the documentary, it would get in the way of producing good work, of positioning themselves within a discourse of work rather than a discourse of emotion. The diva and director couple can choose how they will relate, emote and work together, but they may be at odds, with sexual equality unlikely to follow from consistently privileging rationalist values over romanticist, or by constructing romantic feelings as totally irrational. What is needed instead is a more critical approach to the assumed emotionality/rationality binary, and the over-rationalization of human experience (Jackson and Scott, 1997).

8.3. LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

I have only been able to address what I have been told and reflect on what I understand from my position as a psychologist, a feminist academic and heterosexual woman. I certainly often felt I understood the women I interviewed more than the men. The men's interviews were difficult to read at times because they were so often not couched in the language of relationships to which I, as a woman in western culture, have become accustomed. I tried to read them as attempts to engage with love and intimacy, but was often surprised by the instrumental language of love they drew on. So, in attempting to understand how men talked about some of the crucial issues at the heart of heterosexual relationships, I have suggested that their talk of love is, in some ways, too contingent and self-serving. At the same time, though I thought I understood the women, and my analysis did not challenge this understanding, I was surprised that they constructed men as unable rather than unwilling to fully engage in intimate relationship.

The women's and men's talk of love and intimacy is the stuff of sexual politics and heterosexual relationships, and a means of approaching possibilities of doing love that does not have to rely on constructions of gender, but on sexual, emotional and intellectual closeness and support, outside of assumptions of inferiority and superiority. I would want to incorporate, in further study, interviews with more people, and to extend the project to investigate gay and lesbian love stories, to see if the tension between emotionality and rationality is produced in similar ways.

8.3.1. Emotionality, rationality and feminist theorizing

The discourse of romantic love is problematic for feminism because if we base our personal and political lives on emotional experience albeit reflexively, what do we do when our personal desires and our political affiliations are seen to be at odds? If obstacles enhance romance, then trying to stifle romance may be counter-productive. Despite calls for women to give up loving men, there is little sign in the mass media of any great diminution of heterosexual love (though divorce, serial monogamy and singledom have become more common). My women participants talked of eventually giving up on 'hopeless' men, though not on men in general.

Currently feminist theory is grappling with shifts which are questioning the relationship between the personal and the political. This was demonstrated in *Feminism & Psychology's* Heterosexuality issue (Wilkinson and Kitzinger, 1993), when feminist academics found it difficult to be positive about their heterosexuality, and tended to separate it from their feminist politics. The taken for granted dichotomy between emotionality and rationality means that it is very difficult to take a personal and emotional stance while also being critical and rational. Pearce (1997), in reference to reading fiction, has also suggested that the personal is not political, in that "implicated" reading, that is losing ourselves emotionally in a text, seems not to be possible while taking a hermeneutic rational approach to reading material.

For too long, the rational has been in the ascendancy, in relation to aesthetics, literature and now love. It is time to attempt to be both passionate and political, changing discourses of emotion so that we do not have to defend ourselves for feeling and making connections. We can be

passionate without being passive (Haraway, 2000). While rationality is promoted in binary opposition to and as morally superior to emotional involvement, we risk a compartmental approach to experience as we try to keep our fragmented selves separate. My women participants often wrote off their extreme and intense emotional lives as irrational, drawing on a rhetoric of emotional control (Lutz, 1997), which disempowers them more than would the espousing of passion. While rationality is promoted as the way to live life, emotionality comes to be associated with fiction and vicarious experience via film and literature, and an unrealistic approach to 'real' life. The compartmentalized approach is also a problem in terms of gendered power, because men are presented and present themselves as more practised compartmentalizers and this has payoffs for them in a culture where emotion at work is rarely acceptable or must be 'managed' (Ostell *et al*, 1999). Compartmentalization and rationality are products of the scientific method.

Postmodernism has problematized overarching meta-narratives, and so in attempting to understand the meanings of love, emotion and work, we have to explore partial and contextualized constructions, in order to question the functions and consequences of these constructions for men and women engaging in intimate heterosexual relationships. The understanding of our postmodern sensibilities suggests that we could shape loving relationships as we want them by deciding on our own mutual narratives (Gergen and Gergen, 1995) and worry less about contradiction as it is inevitable. However we must not underestimate the pervasiveness and undermining effects of discourses of gender on the potential for mutual heterosexual love. We may draw on traditional discourses such as the discourse of romantic love, but we could do so with reflexivity and irony, attempting to change the meaning while retaining some signifying practices. My women participants used irony, to laugh at themselves and their doomed attempts to have highly emotionally charged relationships in which they are neither victims of love, nor men. We don't have to see the tragic heroine as a victim, but as telling a particularly compelling story. We can, if we want, read Bridget Jones and Ally McBeal as postmodern reflexive heroines in search of romantic epiphanies, who understand the difficulty of amalgamating a romantic and rational approach to love and heterosexual relationships. Yet both women have problems around food (which is another story), and if this is as good as it gets for women who want 'love', then the future does not look very bright.

The major stumbling block to emotional emancipation in intimate heterosexual relationships seems not to be women's desires *per se*, but the recurrent conceptualization of men's emotional sterility and its association with male/masculine hegemony. What seems to be more necessary than giving up romance *per se*, is to give up falling for men whom we (women) have to furnish with emotions, to give up doing the romance for both ourselves and for men. A feminist project needs to subvert the discourse of male emotional illiteracy, since the understanding that men behave badly gives them permission to do so, and suggests that women with a partly emotionally expressive man (expressions of care and vulnerability that is, not anger) are doing rather well. Masculinity needs to rely neither on women's emotion work, without acknowledging it as necessary, nor on positioning men at the centre of all relationships, using and reproducing male privilege which again is not acknowledged.

There are contradictions in offering any feminist deconstruction, as a feminist narrative brings with it the understanding that power inequality is inherent in gender relations, where deconstruction tends to suggest that all interpretations are equally valid. Some feminist writers have been criticizing contemporary feminism, constructing it as already successful enough (e.g. Walter, 1998) or too successful (e.g. Coward, 1999). My project suggests that it is too soon to write off feminism and feminist analyses as I found male privilege inscribed in both romantic and rational stories of love and intimate heterosexual relationships. Giddens (1992) claimed (without much recourse to empirical evidence) that a transformation of intimacy has taken place and that it was inspired or prompted by women's refusal to continue with unsatisfactory heterosexual relationships. The rational intimacy he constructs seems in line with that constructed by the work discourse of relationships, which takes as central the rational reflexive project of the self, and which I have suggested advantages men more than women. My thesis has offered a detailed reading of the ways in which discourses of emotion, which could lead to possibilities of a more full emotional life, were denigrated in favour of a more rational, work-a-day, narcissistic one. This suggests that the transformation of intimacy as the democratization of heterosexual love may not be well underway if a shift to rational intimacy involves a transformation of romantic feeling into a self-focused discourse of personal growth and success. This shift leaves little room for my women participants' stories.

One possible way of reducing gender inequality could come about by promoting a discourse of care and concern for others, while resisting the gendering of that care. I suggested in my introductory chapter that it was important not to adopt the rational, autonomous self of psychology as feminism's subject (Squire, 1989). A feminism which constructs emotional attachment as dependence and sees this as incompatible with personal freedom and autonomy is in danger of basing women's liberation on the same notions which privilege male hegemony, that is by disguising the needs of others, and constructing 'others' as, if not explicitly subservient, at least inferior (Sampson, 1993). In a capitalistic system, this produces privilege to those who can obscure what they are getting from the system. The apparently antithetic discourses of romance and working at relationships privileged men by reproducing men's involvement in heterosexual relationships as central, as the romantic object of romantic discourse and the working subject of rational discourse. While continuing to draw attention to the sexual politics of love and to encourage lovers to question wider social relationships, we might, rather than giving up on any emancipatory possibility in heterosexual love, find more positive ways to challenge the constructed hierarchical relation between emotionality and rationality implicated in gender inequality. In particular, as I noted in Chapter 7, we could discourage the separation of emotion from sexual feelings which would disturb both men's abnegation of emotionality and also male privilege in discourses of heterosexual infidelity. The success of such a project cannot be assured, as discourses of heterosexual love seem to have successfully incorporated many challenges, leaving little room for 'troubling' gender (Butler, 1990) in everyday talk about love.

I doubt we can yet draw on emancipatory discourses of heterosexual love until we have more emancipatory discourse *per se*. This doesn't mean that one woman and one man can't somehow manage an equal relationship, just that cultural understandings and gendered discourses militate against this, reproducing women as carers or romantic dupes and men as workers whose primary project is themselves. What is needed is a fundamental reconstruction of heterosexuality by shaking the core heterosexual certainties of gender as difference and masculinity as central (Holland *et al.*, 1998). This would then open up the possibility of more diverse stories of intimacy, including stories which pathologize neither emotions nor women. At the same time, attempting to tell more diverse love stories, of

diverse sexualities, could help shake the heterosexual certainties of gender difference, as long as this is not achieved by further reification of the rational autonomous sexual individual. As long as the crucial role of feminist theorizing (past, present and future) is not downplayed, this danger can be avoided.

More women do paid work outside the home than ever before in the 20th century, yet the conditions which many women endure, at home and in the workplace, neither support their work nor value it. Women remain the main unpaid domestic workers. Economic emancipation for women is crucial, but needs a corresponding shift in discourses, so that women are constructed as neither the servant class nor love slaves of men, by themselves, by men or by feminists. Professions of love could then become professions of connection and equality, rather than claims of superiority or delusion.

The world was on fire and no one could save me but you
It's strange what desire will make foolish people do
I never dreamed that I'd meet somebody like you
I never dreamed I'd love somebody like you
I don't want to fall in love
No I don't want to fall in love with you

What a wicked game to play
To make me feel this way
What a wicked thing to do
To let me dream of you
What a wicked thing to say
You never felt this way
What a wicked thing to do
To make me dream of you

And I don't want to fall in love
No I don't want to fall in love with you
(from the song *Wicked game* by Chris Izaak (1989))

I'm so bored with cowards
who say what they want
then they can't handle
can't handle love
(from the song *5 years* by Björk (1997))

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Appendices

WRITTEN INFORMATION FOR PARTICIPANTS ABOUT MY
RESEARCH AND THE INTERVIEW

Thank you very much for taking part in my study which is about what people want and get from their intimate relationships with those they chose to date, live with, marry etc. I want to assure you that although I will want to write what you have told me, you will not be identified by name. I will give you a fictitious name if I quote you and I will not include any details of your circumstances that might identify you.

I hope that you will meet with me for about an hour and a half. There are some specific questions which I would like to ask you, otherwise I hope that you will talk freely and at length about relationships in general, your relationships and what you think is important. I will be tape recording our conversation so that I have a complete record of it. When I have transcribed the interview, I'll send you a copy and after you have had time to read it, I'd like to talk to you again briefly. This can be by phone if that is better for you.

I want my research to reflect what people think, feel and do, what is important to them, and what makes their relationships meaningful. I hope you will be part of this.
Thanks.

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE/ QUESTIONS

What I'd like you to do is to think of what you consider to be your most important or serious intimate relationship. Is that okay?

Is it still going on?

Have you thought about why it is / isn't? Can you tell me about what you've thought?

How and when did you meet?

How long did it last or has it lasted?

When did it become serious for you?
for the other person?

Were you, would you say you were, 'in love'?

Can you describe what that means for you, how it felt?

Do you think it's important to be 'in love' in an intimate relationship?
PROMPT Can you explain why?

Did / do you tell each other 'I love you'?

Do you think your ideas about love or being in love are similar to other people's?

Did your relationship involve any promises, spoken or unspoken, of any sort? PROMPT like telling the truth or being faithful?

Were the promises kept by you?
by your partner?

Have you changed, do you think, since this relationship started?

Has your partner?

Do you think your ideas about love have changed?

Do you think you have a choice about falling in love with someone?

Can you tell me how you might have liked/ or would like/ your relationship to be different?

Did / do you argue?

PROMPTS About what sort of things? Can you give me an example of an argument? How did it end/was it resolved?

Did you/ have you tried to change your relationship or your partner? Any success?

Did you/ do you ever get very annoyed or angry? can you tell me more about that? What about your partner?

Appendix 2.1.

Were you ever jealous or possessive?
Was your partner ever jealous or possessive?
How did you feel about that? Did you want them to be/ not be / jealous or possessive?

Did /does your partner try to make rules for you or demand things from you?
Was / is this okay by you?

Did you / do you feel free to do what you wanted / want? PROMPT can you say more about this?
Do you think your partner felt/ feels free to do what they wanted/ wants?

Do you think it is important, in a relationship, to keep your own separate identity, or not?

Is it possible to say who you think got/ gets more out of the relationship?

Was this relationship, or any other you have been in, violent? Can you tell me more about that relationship? Did you leave?

I'd like to ask you a more general, hypothetical question. Can you think of two relationships, one which you think works and one which you think doesn't work. They can be real relationships or fictitious. Can you tell me why one works but the other doesn't?

Another more general question. If a friend of yours asked you for some general advice on how to meet someone because they desperately wanted to be part of a couple, what would you say to them? PROMPT I'm desperate participant's name. How do I meet someone?
IF NOT MENTIONED Would you suggest they used a lonely hearts column or dating agency?

Do you think it's possible to have a perfect relationship?

I'd like to try a short exercise. If I say half a sentence, would you repeat it and then finish it off with the first thing that comes to you. It's about love. Okay?

If you love me, then you should ...

If you love me, then I should ...

If I love you, then I should ...

If I love you, then you should ...

That's the end of any questions. Is there anything else you'd like to add, any other ideas about love and relationships, any other relationships or whatever, you'd like to talk about?

Thanks very much.
END OF INTERVIEW

When I've typed up our conversation, I'll send you a copy. When you've had time to read it, I'd like to talk with you again briefly, by phone if you prefer. Thanks again.

Appendix 2.2.

EXPLANATION OF SYMBOLS IN THE INTERVIEW EXTRACTS.

Underlining indicates added emphasis or unusual intonation.

CAPITALS indicate words spoken more loudly than surrounding speech.

- A hyphen indicates a noticeable and quite sudden halt to what was being said and a move to a new (newish) subject, maybe an aside.

() Text in brackets indicate extra information such as whether the speaker laughs or pauses. Empty brackets indicate that something is omitted because it includes biographical detail.

... means some talk has been omitted or the extract doesn't begin at the start of the speaker's turn.

(inaud) indicates something omitted because it was difficult to hear with any certainty.

{ Curly brackets indicate overlaps between one person finishing and
{ another starting to speak.

All participant names are fictional, as are any names they mention.