

The Drama-Free Performance of Authentic Friends:

Exploring how New Zealand men make sense of their friendships

By Maree Harete Martinussen

Submitted to Victoria University of Wellington in fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of Master of Arts in Sociology
(February 2014)

Abstract

In contemporary New Zealand, the cultural tropes surrounding the 'good kiwi bloke' and his 'mates' might seem as solid and steadfast as conceptions of kiwi mateship itself. However, the stability of masculinities and femininities is considered in this thesis as an illusion enabled by ongoing reflexive accomplishment, and I focus on how that illusion is achieved through the discursive construction of intimacies within friendships. A synthesis of ethnomethodological and poststructuralist theory informs the discourse analytic approach taken - critical discursive psychology. Drawing on insights from discursive psychological research, particularly Margaret Wetherell's work, I apply the tools of this method to data collected from focus groups. Although my analysis is sociological, I engage with a wide range of theoretical claims from diverse disciplines in discussing my findings.

I find that participant justifications for not engaging in some intimacies are constructed through interpretive repertoires that de-value women's friendship relating. However, I point to the re-signification of intimacies relating to emotional self-disclosing in men's friendships; the task of aligning these 'traditionally' feminine intimacies with heteromale identity is achieved through an interpretive repertoire of authenticity. An authenticity repertoire is bolstered by the reproduction of understandings that uphold ideal friendships as being based on non-obligatory interactions, which are carried out by rational, autonomous subjects. I suggest that these understandings of men's friendships foster a sense of ontological security, but that they inhibit greater responsiveness between friends. The ways in which intimacy of friendships are mediated by discourses of sexism and heterosexism are also explored. The data indicates that mobilisation of sexist discourses functions to build shared male identity, with the subtleties of humour working to obscure prejudiced content. Elsewhere, humour is used to manage intimacies in friendships, via an ambiguous 'homo-play' repertoire, where the contingent linking of sex and gender is exposed. I highlight the complex and context-specific ways repertoires are used and question tendencies within studies of masculinities to map out typologies of masculinities, such as 'softer' or 'orthodox' masculinities, which are often attached to 'types' of men. Overall, I suggest that the careful management of talk about men's friendships generally supports the ideological thrust of the current gender order, in line with Judith Butler's conceptions of heterosexual hegemony. However, simultaneously, the relentless accounting-in-talk around what constitutes men's friendship is indicative of the need to continually perform (heterosexual) man-friend, highlighting the intrinsic vulnerability of heterosexual hegemony.

Acknowledgements

Firstly, many thanks to the participants who volunteered their time to talk to me about their friendships. I appreciate the thoughtfulness and energy provided throughout discussions.

I am indebted to Rhonda Shaw, my primary supervisor. Whether in the form of gentle challenge or articulate insight, you have provided me with inspiration that will be drawn upon beyond this thesis. Thank you for your support and guidance.

I am grateful to Kevin Dew, my secondary supervisor. Your excitement for analysing data is infectious. Discussions with you transformed problems that seemed complicated into simple action plans. Thank you.

I thank Victoria University of Wellington for providing me with a scholarship to complete this thesis, and the School of Social and Cultural Studies staff for their support.

I greatly appreciate the feedback and advice provided by my peers and friends Sunshine Prior, Morgan Hamlin and Josh Barton.

Thanks to Thom Gower for the continued hand-holding and encouragement.

And of course, enormous thanks to Urszula Pruchniewska, my best friend, but also proofreader extraordinaire and partner in my feminist explorations, present and future.

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Chapter 1: Introduction and aims

Friendships are considered an essential part of a fulfilling life. The fundamental importance of friendship is reflected in the fact that it has been a major philosophical topic for at least a millennium (Lynch 2005: iv). Despite a long history of scholarly interest, contemporary meanings of friendship tend to have a taken-for-granted character, and ruminations on friendship often take a backseat to the rather more heady varieties of sexual relationships (Lewis 1993: 39). However, an increasing body of literature has begun to bring friendship back to the fore, particularly in studies of gender and sexuality. During the last three decades, which has also seen interrogations of constructions of masculinities burgeon, theorising has emerged that demonstrates the various ways in which friendship is a gendered phenomenon.

There is however a lack of research investigating the specific ways in which discourses are mobilised that are productive in the gendering of friendships. This thesis explores the ways in which men make sense of the discourses available in the current socio-historical context relating to the gendering of friendships, and aims to detail the ways in which discourses are deployed flexibly and reflexively. Providing detail on how men position themselves as gendered and sexed beings relating to friendships has great potential for examining the broader organisation of gender order. I examine meanings of friendship relating alongside Butler's conceptualising on heterosexual hegemony, where there are strict divides between masculine/feminine and heterosexual/homosexual, which are hierarchically arranged¹ (Butler 1993: 226-227). I assume also that the 'logic' of a heterosexual hegemony is prone to 'un-doings', because it is enabled by performativity; gender requires constant 're-doing'. However, I follow others (Brickell 2005; McIlvenny 2002; Speer & Potter 2002) in proposing that workings of a heterosexual hegemony can be supplemented with sociologically-informed methods that aid in linking Butler's profound but abstract theorising to social action in the everyday. In this thesis, everyday talk is taken to be a primary form of social action and discursive practices are acknowledged as having a central role in the constitution of subjectivity (Wetherell & Edley, 1999: 337).

¹ Further explanation is provided in chapter 3.

One facet of friendships that I focus on is identifying the interpretive repertoires, the sense-making stories, used to construct intimacy and care by the heterosexual male participants of this study. In particular, I aim to draw attention to the understandings of the role that emotional self-disclosure has in constructing meanings of intimacy. Within studies of masculinities, conclusions commonly point to a lack of intimacy within heterosexual men's friendships. Such findings are linked to proposals that adhering to masculine norms reifies independence and stoicism, which closes down opportunities for greater emotional expression, dependency, care, and overall, intimacy (Seidler 1997)., elsewhere in the social sciences, a debate has emerged; some suggest that men's friendships are just as intimate as women's, but simply in a different (non-emotional) way (Swain 1989). I seek to contribute to this debate by providing detailed analysis of how participants make sense of the ways in which they, and others, 'do' emotional expression, dependency, care and intimacy. My findings resonate with much of the previous literature on the ways men's friendships are carried out, where there is a lack of intimacy, but I provide nuance to previous claims through highlighting the specific contradictions and dilemmas that men must constantly negotiate in managing the discourses of friendships, gender and sexuality. In doing so, I emphasise the unstable nature of the gendering of friendships.

The masculine norms of independence and stoicism that are said to underpin men's friendships can be conceptualised as manifestations of the workings of a heterosexual hegemony. It is claimed that the strict self-control that reduces men's capabilities for admitting vulnerabilities is due to fear of not being 'man enough' (Seidler 2006: 9). This imperative to maintain strict self-control is particularly problematic with regards to men's sexuality – it fuels sexist and homophobic behaviour, purported to be obligatory elements of enacting masculine norms (Kimmel 1994: 131). What is often missing from such theorising is a precise account of the reproduction of male identities that treats speakers' (participants') versions of realities as reflective of social context, but also, as *productive* of social context. Moreover, in studies of masculinities, there is a tendency to reify static typologies of masculinities or men. Instead, I follow Edley & Wetherell (2001: 441) in claiming that ideologies are maintained through contradiction, plurality and ambiguity. My analysis of heterosexist and sexist talk in particular emphasises the heterogeneity of repertoires constructed, and shows the ways in which the effects of

repertoires are frequently multi-directional in terms of affecting heterosexual hegemony. Drawing on Speer and Potter (2000), I demonstrate that defining what constitutes heterosexist talk is more complex than is often theorised, and the same applies to sexist talk. Leading from this, I question the plausibility of being able to denote particular men as carrying out hegemonic/orthodox masculinities, or alternative/softer masculinities, given that contradictory discursive resources are used creatively, and according to specific contexts.

In chapter 2, I explore literature which attempts to define friendships, focusing on how changing notions of intimacy affect the prioritisation of different aspects of friendships. I also provide an outline of literature which demonstrates how a system of a heterosexual hegemony provides opportunities and limitations for the ways in which friendship can be performed by men. In chapter 3 I develop a theoretical and methodological framework for studying how gender and sexuality is performed through men's friendship interactions, highlighting the need to prioritise the social practice of talk. I argue that applying insights from critical discursive psychology in analysing the process of performativity can provide empirical grounding to Butler's theorising. I advocate for a reconceptualisation of subjects who reflexively draw on discursive resources in managing friendship interactions and who are highly attuned to their own social contexts.

The analysis in chapter 4 explores the ways my participants made sense of discourses relating to the role of emotional self-disclosing in friendships. I suggest that, contra to much literature, self-disclosing is advocated, but it is a particular masculine variety of self-disclosing, where emotions are expressed in ways that are constructed as logical, necessary and authentic. In chapter 5, I show how discourses of friendship that prioritise autonomy and self-sufficiency underpin the performatives of 'effortless' friendships. Although the effortless friendship repertoire is effective in enabling ontological security, it closes down opportunities for friendships to function as sites for mutual growth and dependence, and is therefore at odds with hegemonic understandings of the way intimacy should be done contemporarily. In chapter 6, I turn my attention to the ways in which participants acknowledge sexism as problematic, but nevertheless reproduce sexist discourses as a means of building shared heteromasculine identity, which has the effect of strengthening friendships. However, I show how friendships may also be used to contest

sexist discourses. Chapter 6 details the varied discursive construction of homosexuality, and demonstrates why taking a discursive approach is effective in being able to produce accounts of the ideological impacts of such (heterosexist) constructions. Also in chapter 7, I show how participants parody homosexual relations in order to mitigate meanings of (feminised) intimacies. This 'homo-play' functions as a tool for acknowledging intimacy between friends, whilst simultaneously reinstating heteromasculine norms which such intimacy calls into question. In chapter 8, I provide discussion and draw overall conclusions; I discuss the wider implications of my findings and make suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2: Background literature and key concepts

2.1 Approaching studies of friendship and intimacies

Developing criteria around what makes a friendship is notoriously difficult, and is interrelated with the question of the meaning and significance of friendships (Spencer & Pahl 2006: 2). What can be said with certainty is that friendship as an identity category is historically specific, as are evaluations of the behaviours and feelings which might produce friendship subjectivities. Pahl (2000: 6) suggests that defining friendship is more difficult than defining familial or romantic relations - we cannot look for formal definitions of 'best mate' in family law as we can 'next-of-kin'. Friendship is known as a relationship that requires continual choice to remain in it (Adams & Allan 1998: 1), and is said to be underscored by notions of equality (Coates 1997: 247). However, these definitions belie the ways in which conceptions of 'choice' and 'equality' change, or, may be gendered. Nevertheless, a lack of prescription may be the reason that friendships represent a fruitful space for exploring the fluidity of gender and sexuality. In particular, many historical analyses expose the porous boundaries and intersections of friend/sodomite, masculinity/femininity or homosexual/heterosexual (Adams & Savran 2002: 337).

A number of recent publications of historical images of men's togetherness point to a contemporary lack of intimacy between heterosexual men, Ibson's (2002) in the United States, and Brickell's (2008; 2012; 2013) in New Zealand. Much of these publications are devoted to showing how nineteenth and early twentieth century men were happy to have their picture taken in poses of a far greater physical intimacy than would be expected in the present day. Both Ibson and Brickell impress the point that changing notions of homosexuality and homophobia affect intimacy, but a great emphasis remains simply on showing a diversity of men's togetherness, at different historical and geographical junctures. In Brickell's publications, a much more multi-faceted picture of colonial New Zealand masculinity is presented, complete with romantic, intimate friendships and playful theatrics for the camera (see 2012 in particular). There is much ambiguity about the exact nature of the relationships of the men pictured in these books. Brickell's (2008: 8; 2013: 15) work places the uncertainty about what it means to be a man, past or present, at the centre of his explorations, and questions our current

historical context which produces attempts at categorising the subjects of the images as mates, lovers or brothers.

Bray (2002) similarly cautions against overlaying current conceptions of gender and sexuality on to the past. He argues that contemporarily, a strict homo/het divide allows straight men to carry out greater intimacies than those of Elizabethan England (2002: 350). Paradoxically, the concept of heterosexuality provides 'protection' from accusations that men's friendships contain eroticism, a protection that was not afforded to men of Elizabethan England. Even though romantic exchanges were part of the conventions of the day, such conventions put a gloss on, and maintained, the rather brutal and hierarchical social relations in operation at the time (Bray 2002: 344). Bray therefore troubles modern assumptions that romantic friendships are necessarily more loving or caring. In contrast, Rotundo (1989: 9) claims that the romantic friendships of young men in nineteenth century United States were genuinely more nurturing and supportive. He notes that sharing beds, as well as hopes and dreams, was congruent with heterosexuality². Rotundo draws on Smith-Rosenberg's (1975) seminal work describing the intimate and passionate bonds of women, also in nineteenth century United States. A key difference between these 'cultures' of men and women is, according to Rotundo, that such bonds between male friends tended not to last past their youth; they were not the life-long bonds of the women described by Smith-Rosenberg (1975). The men's friendships, which acted as a "rehearsal for marriage" (1989: 14), gave way to the 'real thing' of married life. Others have similarly commented that relative increases of importance placed on (hetero)sexual relations acts as an inhibitor of close friendship, particularly contemporarily (Lewis 1993: 44; Sullivan 1999:198).

On a related point, Foucault's focus on the friendship of ancient Greece (see Roach 2012), where friendship was the relationship type of highest value, is a response to the contemporary organisation of society, where sexuality stands as the primary organising mechanism of identity (as cited by Garlick 2002: 565). Foucault's interest in friendship was central to his hopes for the development of an ethics which might compel a new "becoming of queer relationality" (Roach 2012: 8). Although Foucault's ethical project of

² See Katz (2001) for further explorations of the love relations between men in nineteenth century United States.

friendship comes via exploration of the homosexual relations of men, the underlying questions are rebuttals of societal norms which disallow a greater diversity of relationships, both sexual and non-sexual. The explorations in this thesis share this political aim but focus on the (logic of) contemporary relations between heterosexual men-friends.

Despite this being a thesis which is both sociological and about friendship, my prioritisation of the effects of gender and sexuality has meant that I engage relatively little with the growing field of the sociology of friendship. While plenty of the sociology of friendship research discusses gender differences (for an overview, see Spencer & Pahl 2006: 162-167), it is not from a perspective in which gender and sexuality are conceived as ongoing processes. I hope also to avoid some of the positivist tendencies of the sociology of friendship³; certainly, conceiving power as productive and insidious does not feature strongly in these analyses. Walker's (1994a; 1994b) analyses of gendered friendship relating are exceptions in this regard, where she investigates the 'ideology' that women 'do' intimacy more often and better than men. Walker (1994a: 39) argues that the findings of much academic research supporting current ideology are generated via eliciting "representations of what respondents believe their behaviour is – beliefs that are shaped by the respondents' own ideologies". Walker contends that by asking respondents about specific friendships, and not their views on friendships more generally, she was able to elicit responses showing that her participants often carried out their friendships with considerable variation from the gendered friendship ideologies. Whilst her male participants often refrained from practicing more intimate relating with their friends, and therefore conformed to masculine friendship ideology, they did not do so consistently – sometimes they did, for example, verbally self-disclose⁴ when they had worries and fears. Despite their 'transgressions' of masculine ideals, participants "unreflexively [accepted the] cultural boundaries" around gendered friendship relating

³ Creating typologies of friendships is common (Spencer & Pahl 2006), as is detailed specification of differences between friendship and kinship relations (Pahl & Spencer 2004). Also, factors that structure friendship are conceived as separate from "individual processes" (Blieszner & Adams 1992: 18). Such conceptualising is not conducive to exploring how structuring factors might produce subjectivities and meanings.

⁴ 'Self-disclosure' can be defined in broad terms regarding sharing personal information such as thoughts and beliefs, but is highly associated with emotional expressiveness (Parks and Floyd 1996: 88).

(Walker 1994a: 42). Although Walker's sociological studies go further than most working within the sociology of friendship in viewing gender and friendship as ongoing social constructs, her research differs from the present study in that I do not promote the distinction between constructing "gender on an ideological and a behaviour level" (Walker 1994a: 53). Instead, as is discussed in further detail in chapter 3, practicing gendered behaviour and producing ideology are taken to be mutually productive processes.

Indeed, the mutuality of practicing and producing gender is a common assumption for those studying the gendered nature of discourse (Stokoe 2004: 107-108). Feminist research on gender and discourse is diverse; it spans a whole range of disciplines, with no neat boundaries between them (Speer 2005: 8-9). In the next chapter I describe how the methodology I use draws from multiple disciplines. Here I wish to draw attention to a debate within the studies of gender and discourse, relating it particularly to men's emotions in their interpersonal relationships. In 'Men Talk', Coates (2003) studies what men's talk is like through everyday friendship interactions. Coates (2003: 195-200) finds that, echoing the stereotypes set out in the introduction, men's talk is competitive and narratives of heroism are common. Particularly sparking contention is Coates's (2003) claim that men's talk is emotionally inexpressive (see Kulick 2003; Lloyd 2005). In 'Men and the Language of Emotions', Galasinski (2004: 17) argues that Coates's "model of the unemotional man" encourages oversimplification, and that it is gender essentialising. Galasinski (2004: 18) goes on to claim that "models of masculine lack of emotionality (or masculine anything, for that matter) are untenable", and that there are only locally negotiated masculine identities. What is at stake in this debate, is how much we might be able to assume about gendered emotionality before 'finding' it through analysis of talk. Although my analysis more closely reflects Galasinski's (2004) methodology in terms of emphasising locally negotiated identities, I align with Coates (2003) in allowing gender ideologies to be a starting point in investigations – even if eventually showing them as over-simplistic. Foucaultian-inspired postmodern perspectives, which are an influence in this thesis, often emphasise the importance of rendering strange usual ways of making sense (Wetherell 1998: 394). If this is the case, we must be able to have some idea of what makes sense in the 'usual' schema, in order to render it strange. Many of the scholars whose work I outline in this chapter, particularly those that attempt to describe some

variation of 'what men are like', are brought back into discussions in the analysis chapters that follow. I draw on their work because I think their generalisations provide a useful starting point. However in most cases, I go on to suggest that a more detailed and context-sensitive approach allows for nuance to be provided to generalised claims about men-friends and the ways in which they are (not) intimate. I turn attention now to another debate within the social sciences, centring on the gendering of intimacy.

2.2 Debates on defining intimacy in friendships

In analysing the ways that intimacies within friendships are gendered, Walker (1994a; 1994b) partakes in a long-standing debate about how meanings of intimacy and care are valued, displaced or marginalised. One aspect of this debate centres on assertions that conceptions of love and intimacy have been feminised (for a review see Parks & Floyd 1996). Cancian (1986) argues that understandings of expressions of love that dominate contemporary scholarship and public discourse are those based on emotional expression and verbal disclosure - expressions that men are, it is claimed, less likely to show. Instead, men more often express an 'instrumental love-style' predicated on shared physical activities and spending time together. Swain (1989) corroborates this, and contends that men-friends share a 'covert style of intimacy'. This 'active' form of intimacy is not characterised by sharing thoughts and feelings. The benefits of men's active style of intimacy are stated by Swain (1989: 84) as the:

sharing and empowering each other with the skills necessary for problem solving, and gaining a sense of engagement and control in their lives by sharing resources and accomplishments.

Swain (1989: 84) contrasts this with the benefits of women's style of intimacy which is stated as "productive for acknowledging fears and weaknesses that comprise of a person's vulnerability", which is necessary for self-realisation. Thus, the message from Swain, as it is from Cancian, is that the gendered realms of intimacy, characterised by instrumental and expressive styles, are different but equal.

2.3 Aristotle's complete friendship

There is another debate within modern philosophising on friendship that echoes the expressive/instrumental styles of intimacy distinction – the contrasting ‘mirror’ and ‘secrets’ views of friendships. Both views assume that central to close friendship is the disclosure of the self. In the mirror view my self is disclosed *in* the other; in the secrets view, I disclose my self *to* the other (Spencer & Pahl 2006: 39). The secrets view proposes that confiding in one another is the key to intimacy; the greater sharing of information, not available to ‘non’ or lesser friends, indicates a closer friendship (Cocking & Kennett 1998: 514). The emphasis on verbalisation of thoughts and feelings thus echoes sentiments described in the expressive style of intimacy. In contrast, the mirror view does not emphasise the self-disclosing of private information. Instead, simply being together increases intimacy; there is an intrinsic worth in friendship and it is a mode of activity in itself (Sherman 1993: 93). The mirror view of friendship is developed from Aristotle’s philosophising on the ‘complete friendship’, where it is proposed that self-knowledge is increased by seeing ourselves in our friends, and friends may be considered ‘another self’ (Sherman 1993: 102). I provide an outline of the complete friendship here, because in chapter 5 I compare repertoires drawn on by my participants in discussing their understandings of ideal friendships to core elements of the complete friendship.

Aristotle’s complete friendship is predicated on the equality of rights and harmony of interests of the exclusively male citizens of the Greek polis; friendship in this context is a glue for ensuring existing order stays intact (Lynch 2005: 24). Due to complete friendships being based on recognition of equal virtue, it is inferred that its participants have a pre-existing and stable quality of goodness (Cocking & Kennett 1998: 506). A man may give enormously in his friendships, and that is a reflection of his own virtue: “his capacity for friendship with others is a simple and elegant extension of his own easy self-regard” (Sullivan 1999: 193). Only friends who have rational agency are capable of this highest form of friendship. To continue to enable mutual rational agency, friends guarantee each other rights to carry out their agentic action in the ways they see fit (Sherman 1993: 104). Friends are therefore responsible for maximising each other’s opportunities. Importantly, a complete friendship is also entirely non-obligatory and is “ultimately defined by the desire of each person to be in it” (Sullivan 1999: 196). In Aristotle’s words (as cited by Sherman 1993: 96):

For when we are not in need of something, then we all seek others to share our enjoyment... and most of all, we then seek friends who are worthy.

Despite the intrinsic virtue of the friends, it takes a long time to confirm that another man is similarly endowed with a balanced and pleasant life, but once that is established, the complete friendship “reflects a stable judgement of another” (Sherman 1993: 97). As such, friendship is the enactment of the controlled expression and understanding of friends’ mutual goodness, in ways that enable each other to be more self-sufficient.

Prioritisation of self-sufficiency in this model is reflected in Aristotle’s contempt for emotional self-disclosure in relaying personal problems, which is associated with “womenfolk and men who are like them” (Aristotle, as cited by Lynch 2005: 102). According to Aristotle (as cited by Lynch 2005: 102) “a man of a resolute nature takes care not to involve his friends in his own troubles... and in general does not indulge in lamentation either”. The disparagement of emotional self-disclosing that underpins the complete friendship contradicts understandings of intimacy that make up the ‘therapeutic discourse’. This incompatibility of understandings of intimacy is significant when considered alongside Eva Illouz’s (2007; 2009) demonstrations of the ways in which a therapeutic discourse produces contemporarily hegemonic understandings of intimacy.

2.4 Emotional self-disclosing and the therapeutic discourse

According to Illouz (2007; 2009), in the contemporary period the therapeutic discourse dominates in our management of interpersonal relations, and its authority has infiltrated the core ethos of personal relationships, workplaces and the family institution. Whilst Illouz charts a complex set of power relations and historical phenomena to build her argument, in the end she holds the combination of the rise of liberal feminist movements and capitalist economic production as providing the main thrusts for the rise of the ubiquitous therapeutic discourse, along with the institutionalisation of psychology. These cultural persuasions provide the inspiration for the constitutive features of the modern ideal of intimacy where expressing hidden emotions via linguistic expression is critical (Illouz 2007: 29).

The masculine economic world has been redefined through the inclusion of traditionally feminine modes of emotional relating, through programmes of 'improvement' in interpersonal relating between workers, increasing productivity (Illouz 2007: 15-17). It is claimed therefore, that there has been a blurring of gender lines; the therapeutic discourse invites both men and women to (Illouz 2007: 29):

control their negative emotions, be friendly, view themselves through others' eyes, and empathize with others... emotional capitalism realigned emotional cultures, making the economic self emotional and emotions more closely harnessed to instrumental action.

Seeking out intimate relationships through ongoing emotional work is a central tenet of the therapeutic discourse. In part, the therapeutic discourse developed through women using it to understand themselves in their subservient role in the family (Illouz 2009: 121). Thus, the intellectualisation of intimate bonds that comes with the therapeutic discourse was "for the sake of a broader moral project: to create equality and fair exchange by engaging in relentless verbal communication about one's needs, emotions and goals" (Illouz 2007: 34). Both men and women are encouraged to communicate in emotional terms, with others' feelings in mind at all times, in order to secure democracy within relationships, in a quest for an intimacy that can always be improved upon.

In addition to the ongoing verbal emotional self-disclosure standing for a key difference between the intimacy of the complete friendship and the intimacy of the therapeutic discourse, the search for democracy is another important point of departure, and links to notions of (dis)similarity. While the complete friendship assumes sameness, and an equality of participants (which is built into the framework of organisational justice of the polis) the therapeutic discourse does not. The therapeutic discourse is said to have been developed precisely because it was useful in managing relations where there are power differentials in play – between managers and employees in the business world, and between husband and wife in the family setting. The therapeutic discourse necessitates a search for democracy between individuals with dissimilar (emotional) needs, regardless of power differentials.

2.5 Intimacy and masculine vulnerability

Despite Illouz's claims that both men and women engage in relentless verbalisation of emotions, many contend that men have not acquired a vocabulary for this style of intimacy. Men's alleged incapacities for acknowledging and expressing their feelings are central to the calls that men are in a desperate state of crisis, which largely began in the 1990s (for an overview see Benyon 2002: 77-97). This is a view shared by many masculinities scholars, who link the ideals of masculinities with men's aversions and refusals to engage in emotional relating. Seidler has been at the forefront of the profeminist movement that promotes such findings. Seidler (2006: 63) is adamant that the imperative for men to be self-sufficient providers has resulted in men being ill-prepared for friendships. The drive to provide and control leaves no space for admitting vulnerabilities, even to the closest of friends (1992a: 1). Seidler (1992b: 15) similarly argues that many men do not acknowledge their need for friends, and "regard this need as a sign as weakness". For Seidler, rationality goes hand in hand with a socialisation process where men are taught strict self-control (2006: 9):

Through an identification of masculinity with self-control in diverse cultural settings, men learn to relate particular emotions as signs of weakness and so threats to their male identities.

Although Whitehead (2002: 157) argues that masculinity is too often presented as "as a stunted form of socialisation", he does agree that men tend to lack emotional maturity, whether it be because of "a fear of rejection, vulnerability, wariness, guilt, a lack of self-esteem or simply emotional illiteracy" (Whitehead 2002: 157). Thus, there seems to be relative consensus that conforming to contemporary masculinities is incompatible with carrying out emotional intimacies. In chapter 4 I provide analysis on the ways in which discourses around emotional self-disclosing are managed by my participants and propose that some types of emotional intimacies are compatible with masculine identity, including maintaining self-control.

A key factor in needing to stay in control, according to Seidler, is insecurity about masculinity and sexuality; "men must always prove that they are 'man enough' to cope in

the ‘correct’ way with the problems and challenges of everyday life” (1997: back cover). Therefore, it is suggested that it is not just the contents of masculine ideals that are problematic, but a constant fear of not living up to them that perpetuates violent manifestations of power relations. Of course, manifestations of power asymmetries need not be overt or brutal in order for them to be destructive and effective in maintaining dominance. The following section brings together work which seeks to deconstruct what might be termed ‘orthodox masculinity’, which is a manifestation of gender asymmetry, where the maintenance of (hetero)masculine hegemony is naturalised.

2.6 Heterosexism⁵ and gendered friendship relating

Core to orthodox masculinity is anti-femininity, patriarchy, misogyny and homophobia (Sedgwick, 1990, as cited by Anderson 2009: 30). Kimmel (1994: 211) contends that homophobia is “one of the central organising principles” of men’s friendships. However, Kimmel (1994: 131) also clarifies that “[h]omophobia is more than the irrational fear of gay men, more than the fear that we might be perceived as gay”. Instead, it is a fear that men might be like gays (or women), in the sense that they are not ‘real men’ (Kimmel 1994: 131). Speaking to the pervasiveness of the need to remain complicit to the ‘real man’ imaginary, Messner’s (2001: 261) findings show that both the gay and straight athletes he spoke to were complicit in the homophobic and sexist talk of the locker room. The imperative to align selves with the hyper-masculine sporting culture required the gay men who were part of it to reproduce homophobic sentiment despite their unease. This brings to the fore questions about the contextual nature of the expression of sexism and heterosexism, and the inconsistent nature in which men and women might reproduce them in different areas of their lives. The flexible, contextual and situational nature of discourse, and the ways in which sexed and gendered personhood is reconstituted through it, is emphasised throughout this thesis, but there is focus on the ways in which participants use sexist and heterosexist discourses flexibly in chapters 6 and 7.

⁵ Many of the scholars I cite use ‘homophobia’, and I present their work using this term accordingly. However, my preference would be to use ‘heterosexism’. Doing so acknowledges the critique of the use of ‘homophobia’ which individualises and pathologizes anti-homosexuality, rather than speaking to the prejudice of entire societies (see Speer & Potter 2000: 543).

Nevertheless, homophobia is offered as something of a constant variable in investigations of men's friendship relating. Even Swain (1989), who condones men's shared-activity style of intimacy, concludes that homophobia and a reticence to admit any sign of weakness (read: feminine) are key factors that produce this 'alternative' intimacy style. Here, I believe Swain to have missed an opportunity to include a greater focus on the ways in which notions of gender and sexuality are inextricably intertwined in relation to notions of intimacy. For instance, Swain (1989: 84) concludes that the principle advantage of a feminine style of intimacy is that it is "productive for confronting a fear of weakness", but there is no interrogation of the ways in which the logic of gender order, in which femininity is devalued, might produce men's fear of showing weakness.

On the ground, it seems that the reticence to be closer to friends is somewhat inexplicable, including the ways in which physical and emotional intimacies, or the lack thereof, are interrelated. Consider the following statement from one of Reid and Fine's (1992: 142) participants talking about physical intimacy in his friendships, which is analysed under the theme of homophobia affecting intimacy:

It's something that's learned, I think, it's not really how I feel, you know. I feel like touching them, and I feel like giving them hugs and things, there's just something that tells me 'don't get too close to this person', for some reason.

The sentiment here conveys an unfulfilled wish to express closeness. The above statement echoes Fehr's (1995: 140) conclusion where, despite some inconsistencies in findings when reviewing a wide range of research⁶, men would *prefer* a greater level of intimacy in their friendships. Thus, taking the above quote as an example, if a lack of intimacy is placed under the rubric of the effects of homophobia, it provides an alternative view to Cancian's and Swain's claim that the main problem with the gendering of love and intimacy is that men's style of loving is not given its dues. From that perspective, it might be suggested that the above statement emerged because the man

⁶ I include this point so as to show another facet of the the discourses about men's lack of closeness in circulation. However a large proportion of the research Fehr (1995) considers is psychological (although, some is sociological), and is based on survey (quantitative) methods, where the centrality of discourse is neglected, as is the processual nature of meaningful interactions, thereby reducing human experience to statistics (Smith, Harre, & Van Langenhove 1995: 3-8). This is the reason I have not included a review of the available quantitative psychological research literature, which is voluminous, on men's intimacy in friendships. However, see Bank (1995) or Bank and Hansford (2000) for reviews.

understood that he *should* want to hug his friends more, as women do. Alternatively, and more likely from those working from masculinities studies, it might be argued that the effects of the institutionalisation of homophobia create an invisible wedge between men friends, and conflict with wishes to have more intimate relations with them.

Anderson (2009) concurs with the latter sentiment and centralises homophobia in his theorising on men's intimacies. He claims that a lack of both physical and emotional intimacy is, at root, caused by a fear of being socially homosexualised, coupled with a growth of 'cultural homophobia'. Anderson argues that a gradual awareness of homosexuality brought a fear of being socially homosexualised⁷ (2009: 7-8), and this was exacerbated by a lack of distinguishing features of gay men. To a fearful public, gays looked normal – anyone might be gay (Anderson 2009: 7-8). With the real possibility of people being gay, the more reason there was for men to prove to their peers that they were not gay (2009: 7-8). Thus, the two key factors of homophobia are homophobia and an awareness that anyone can be gay. When homophobia peaks, boys and men are obligated to take on a homophobic, sexist and aggressive social identity, and a dominating homophobic discourse reproduces this variant of masculinity (2009: 8). Homophobia is powerful in regulating masculinities; anyone's heterosexuality can be questioned in such a homophobic culture, and being labelled or suspected of being gay is attributed a lower place in the hierarchy.

However, the notion of homophobia is just one part of Anderson's 'inclusive masculinities' theory. The bulk of Anderson's work sets out to detail that homophobia is finally beginning to retreat, along with "a lessening of orthodox views and institutional control of all types of gender, sexual and relationship types, in North American and Western European cultures" (2009: 5). Anderson (2009: 16) argues that there has been a clear decrease of cultural homophobia in the largely white university student population who are part of his extensive ethnographies. Correspondingly, Anderson explains that there has been an increase of 'softer masculinities' and men are "distancing themselves from the corporeal pissing contest of masculinity [and] hyper-heterosexuality" (2009: 153). The wider range of behaviours that now may be coded as masculine includes

⁷ Foucault (1980: 43) similarly makes this point.

emotional intimacies (Anderson & McGuire 2010: 257). It is however acknowledged that an archetype of inclusive masculinities may still include elements of heterosexism and sexism, or other elements associated with hyper-heterosexuality (2009: 154). Anderson's findings clearly highlight a lack of *overt* oppression and stigmatization, where they were recently rife, for example on the sportsfield (Anderson 2011) or in American fraternity houses (Anderson 2007). In chapter 7 I explore the notion of homophobia in relation to my data. However, I emphasise the ways in which my participants orient to the 'problem' of being homosexualised, and through my data, suggest what being homosexualised might look like in more detail, particularly *in the absence of overt* stigmatization of femininity or homosexuality.

2.7 Sexism and gendered friendship relating

As previously noted, the expressions of heterosexism and sexism are intimately linked. Sedgwick (1985: 4-5) argues that men's homosocial desire⁸ enables close male ties, and that in our present society, heterosexual male-male desire refutes homosexuality. Despite shifting patterns of class and gender, homosocial desire remains constant and enables men's dominance; Sedgwick (1985: i) argues that:

[c]oncomitant changes in the structure of the continuum of male "homosocial desire" were tightly, often casually bound up with the other more visible changes; that the emerging pattern on male friendship, mentorship, entitlement, rivalry, and the hetero- and homosexuality was in an intimate and shifting relation to class; and that no element of that pattern can be understood outside its relation to women and the gender system as a whole.

Somewhat similarly, Kimmel (1994: 131) proposes that anxiety over being deemed unmanly by other men fuels sexism and homophobia. Bird (1996) also links male insecurity, power and sexuality, when claiming that the need to exercise power manifests itself in the hyper-masculine, homosocial space of friendship – in an intense competition for the (sexual) attention of women. The pervasive 'activity' of the objectification of women is partly explained in Quinn's (2002: 395) proposals that 'girl watching' mobilises

⁸ Sedgwick (1985: 2) defines desire as "the affective or social force, the glue, even when its manifestation is hostility or hatred, or something less emotively charged, that shapes an important relationship".

an othering process, where the objectification of women depersonalises the oppression of women, and naturalises it. Quinn (2002: 392) posits that inherent to girl watching is a “compulsory disempathy” for those who are watched. Women are objects in the game, not players, and the obfuscation of women’s subjectivity, along with a refusal to consider the effects of the game, results in a lack of engagement with conceptions of the ‘activity’ as harmful. Girl watching is a resource for men’s everyday joking and camaraderie (Quinn 2002; see also Thurnell-Read, 2012). Linked to this, in chapter 6, I draw on Quinn’s analysis when claiming that my data shows the objectification of women as a way of building shared heteromascuine⁹ identities via play.

2.8 Kiwi bloke mythology and the ‘bromance’ phenomenon

The notion of homosocial desire has particular pertinence in relation to the national identity of New Zealand, exemplified by the construction of a ‘kiwi bloke’ stereotype. Law, Campbell and Schick (1999: 23) claim that the ‘kiwi bloke’ has a myth-like status, which is in part acquired through an over-representation in popular media:

There is no equivalent feminine myth, not even a term, to partner the ‘kiwi bloke’. Rural standbys like ‘sheila’ simply don’t carry the same connotations of entitlement or legitimate authority... In cartoon, film, television and literature he performs the strange magic of rendering invisible the variety of ways in which masculinity is constructed, contested and co-opted by both men and women in New Zealand.

Investigating the discrepancies between this mythological figure and the lived realities of men has provided the focus of much work in studies of masculinities in New Zealand (Law et al. 1999: 23). However, Daley (2000: 87) suggests that continual interrogation of the ‘kiwi bloke’ stereotype, implicit in which there is a focus on “beer, work, war and rugby”, may result in lost opportunities to explore alternative masculinities and femininities. In line with this, the present work seeks to build on scholarship which explores a plurality of masculinities, and places emphasis on those constantly shifting assemblages, constituted in discourse. However, given the persistence of the ‘kiwi bloke’ figure in constructing national identity, I nevertheless agree with Phillips (1996: ix) that

⁹ The cultural conflation between heterosexuality and masculinity is termed ‘heteromascularity’ by Pronger (1992); heteromascularity is a central part of orthodox masculinities (Adams et al. 2010: 280).

facing the rough and ready colonial pioneer - the physically tough, beer-drinking, stoic character who can fix anything and is loyal to his mates – is important in thinking about what makes contemporary New Zealand men who they are. It might be additionally contended that New Zealand women will have to face male colonial pioneers if they are to understand themselves. However, Brickell's (2008; 2012; 2013) works, discussed earlier, perhaps suggest that the elements of the colonial pioneer preserved in the 'kiwi bloke' stereotype are reconstituted for today's use, and that some forms of colonial intimacy do not now make up the contemporary constructions of the stereotype.

Even representations that appear to have some purchase in a queering of the 'kiwi bloke' reinscribe a 'rough and rugged' masculinity as New Zealand masculinity. Through analysis of an advertisement for Speight's beer, and the 'Southern Men' depicted, Brady (2012: 355) demonstrates that via media products, and other cultural sites such as sport, a self-conception of 'New Zealandness' is *exclusively* masculine – "New Zealand 'femaleness' is primarily recognisable as a misperformed masculinity". For example, one of the main (male) characters rejects the, otherwise 'perfect girl', because she does not drink Speight's beer, where Speight's beer stands for the most legitimised performance of masculinity - "woman is not quite man enough for a real Southern Man" (Brady 2012: 364). This results in the character's choosing to remain working in rugged, rural Southland with his tough male companion. Despite the homosexual subtext, the 'transgendering' that takes place naturalises a het/homo divide that is always at risk of blurring in homosocial relations (Brady 2012: 369, emphasis as per original):

[A] performace of transgender is deployed to paste over the murky *indistinction* of homosociality that structures and performatively produces the sites of masculinity with which that nationhood is routinely conflated.

The above quote alludes to the necessity of constant re-doing of the distinction between feminine/masculine and het/homo, as well as the role that parody may have in managing binaries. Brady (2012: 368) notes that others who analyse the Speight's advertisements (Campbell et al. 1999; Law 1997) have concluded that masculinity is understood through a framework of authenticity. Although fictional characters are used, they perform the ideological work to legitimate the mythic masculine identity of the Southern Man; he has

historical authenticity. Simultaneously however, the characters invoke nostalgia – these ‘real men’ no longer exist (Brady 2012: 368). What this highlights for Brady (2012: 368) is that, rather than the inauthenticity of the characters being automatically destabilising, “the ironic copy legitimises an original, authentic source”. The Southern Man exemplifies the difficulty in identifying distinctions between disruptive parodies, and those that are simply the reconstitution of binary norms. I turn my attentions to such distinctions in chapter 7, which relate to my participants’ ironic homosexual play and the reconstitution of gendered norms around intimacy.

Ironic transgendering play is an important part of the comedy born out of the recent growth of the ‘bromance’ phenomenon in popular (western) culture. The term ‘bromance’ is a portmanteau of ‘brother’ and ‘romance’, and is defined by Oxford English Dictionaries (2013: unpaginated) as “a close but non-sexual relationship between two men”. Despite the popularity of the term, there is very little interrogation of the significance of it within academia, with Alberti (2013), Chen (2012) and Harbidge (2012) providing exceptions. There are many interpretations of what bromance is, but certainly the successes of the ‘bromantic comedy’ genre of films ride on the tensions and incompatibility between the norms of orthodox masculinities and the intimacies of men’s friendships contemporarily. Alberti (2013: 160) argues that the bromance films reach ambiguous and contradictory conclusions, which point to the ongoing nature of changing masculinities. My findings in chapter 7 echo some of these claims around ambiguity and re-coding of gendered norms – phenomena that is centralised in the theoretical framework I use, which is discussed next.

Chapter 3: Theoretical and methodological framework

3.1 Performativity, discursive practice and masculinities

From its inception, this thesis has centred on interrogating notions of friendship. However, I follow Butler's (1993: 12) formulations and arguments that a heterosexual hegemony is a fundamental organising system of social life. Therefore the performativity of friendship is centrally organised around this framework. However, Butler (1990:151) previously theorised this framework as a 'heterosexual matrix', which is a:

grid of intelligibility through which bodies, genders, and desires are naturalised... [and] assumes that for bodies to cohere and make sense there must be a stable sex expressed through a stable gender (masculine expresses male, feminine expresses female) that is oppositionally and hierarchically defined through the compulsory practice of heterosexuality.

The heterosexual matrix relies on two genders remaining distinct and oppositional. Within this matrix, the sexual pairing of male and female is granted a position as the 'original', and is defined in relation to homosexuality as a 'copy' (Butler 1990: 31). But the fixity of this matrix is an illusion, enabled by performativity. Key to performativity is the notion that discourse does not just describe objects, such as 'man', but enacts (a version of) them. In order for an object to continue to be produced as such, performative acts must be repeated (Butler 1993: 226-227, emphasis as original):

If a performative provisionally succeeds (and I will suggest that 'success' is always provisional) then it is not because an intention successfully governs the action of speech, but only because that action echoes prior actions, and *accumulates the force of authority through the repetition of citation of a prior, authoritative set of practices.*

There are a number of points to emphasise here. Firstly, it is iterability that drives performativity – the performative force of utterances relies on them citing “the power that enables them to produce their words as action” (Brady & Schirato 2011: 45). We re-use meanings available in discourse, and therefore, discourse is not entirely controlled by speaking subjects (Speer & Potter 2002: 153). Also, citations can only 'echo' prior actions – it is “reiteration without an original” (McIlvenny 2002: 116). Lastly, performativity

works through the repetition of citations. The categories of male/female or heterosexual/homosexual are only brought into being by re-citing existing meanings. It is the constant re-doing of gender and sexuality that creates an illusion of stability. Butler (1990: 136, emphasis as per original) writes:

acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are *performative* in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means.

However, the iterability of signs both constrains *and enables* performative agency. The citational nature of discourse offers gendered subjects continued opportunity to resist and transform (Speer & Potter 2002: 153) and the continual citation of gender norms is indicative in itself of the precarious nature of those norms (Butler 1993: 231). Butler's (1993: 12) later reformulation of the heterosexual matrix, heterosexual hegemony, emphasises possibilities for rearticulation. The re-conceptualising around the heterosexual matrix reaffirms the constant construction of gender and sexuality, and therefore the vulnerability of heterosexual hegemony. In his exploration of Butler's work in relation to how we 'do' gender and sexuality in talk, McIlvenny (2002: 116) argues:

Gender congeals through performative practices, but performativity itself is vulnerable to excitation, recitation or mis-citation, resulting in an 'undoing' of gender.

Thus, centralising notions of a heterosexual hegemony function as a reminder to stay attuned to the ways in which the logic of men's friendship practices will be informed by, but most likely constitute, an 'oppositionally and hierarchically defined' system, where gender and sexuality are always mutually related. Similarly, a key benefit of including performativity theory is that notions of fluidity and unpredictability allow for focus to remain on the productive nature of power, where subjects are not distinct from discourses (Beasley 2012: 756).

By emphasising a definition of masculinities as discursive constructs, enabled by the mechanisms of citationality, the theoretical framework relied on here differs from a great body of work in masculinities studies, which is based on Connell's influential theory of

hegemonic masculinity (1987; and see Connell and Messerschmidt 2005 for an overview of developments). The hegemonic masculinity model arose from the need to provide a theory which better reflected the “multileveled and multidimensional character of gender”, and to refute that masculinity could be characterised as having a true ‘core’ (Connell 1998: 475). Instead, multiple masculinities are hierarchical and contested, with hegemonic masculinity being the most legitimated masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity ideologically legitimates its subordination of all other masculinities (for example gay masculinities), and femininities (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005: 832). However, the content of hegemonic masculinity is not static; it is a pattern of practice that changes across time and place (Connell 2005: 76-77). Connell & Messerschmidt (2005: 836) define masculinities as “configurations of practice that are accomplished in social action and, therefore... differ according to the gender relations in... particular social setting[s]”. It is claimed that, despite it being enacted only by a minority of men, hegemonic masculinity remains “normative” - it is the “most honoured way of being a man” (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005: 832). Connell’s approach is advantageous in that it allows for the conceptualising of a diversity of masculinities (Wetherell & Edley 1999: 336), however there are a number of critiques relevant here.

The capabilities of the hegemonic masculinity model to capture the fluidity and dynamism of gender are reduced through the centralisation of configurations of practice, and by de-emphasising masculinity as signification (Lorber 1998: 472). Connell (1998: 475) asserts that “models should not privilege the symbolic dimension of social practice over all others”, where conceiving of objects/subjects as constituted discursively is considered the ‘symbolic dimension’. However, there is no social practice unmediated by discourse (Edley 2001: 192). Any ‘reality’ - of the body, gender, or carrying out an everyday activity - is always constructed via discourse. Further, a focus on definitions of masculinities through ‘what men do’ (configurations of practice) is frequently used to create static typologies - “gay, black... gay black, gay Chicano, white working class... among others” (Messner 2004 as cited by Pascoe 2007: 8), which is essentialising. In countering such critiques, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005: 837) argue that in one site, “different categories of masculinity” can be teased out while recognising “that these are not monadic identities but are always relational and are crosscut by other divisions and projects”. However, as Galasinski (2004) notes, the usefulness of the multiple masculinity

model is called into question if more and more categories are simply added to account for the almost limitless number of differing 'divisions and projects' which Connell refers to. Creating typologies of men (or women) also diminishes the fluidity that a multiple-masculinities model is said to promote. Contra to Connell and Messerschmidt's (2005: 845) claim that "gender hierarchy does not have multiple niches at the top", Edley and Wetherell (1997: 214-215) demonstrate that imperatives of hegemonic masculinities are frequently contradictory, and may be expressed simultaneously in the same utterance.

A greater emphasis on models that allow for fluidity, and for a complex, discursively organised power, links to a point expanded on by Beasley (2012: 754). She denotes Connell's theorising as distinctly modernist, with gender conceptualised as constituted by top-down structuring mechanisms. Beasley (2012: 761) goes on to argue that such thinking is incommensurable with the poststructural agenda that the large majority of feminist works contemporarily develop, exemplified by Butler. As noted previously, Butler proposes that masculinity, and its relationship to femininity, is constructed through discourse and the iterability of signs. Configurations of practice are not the content of masculinity and femininity, but the effects (Schippers 2007: 91). Masculinities and femininities can be thought of as ideologies in the sense that they do the ideological work which provides rationale for gendered practices (Schippers 2007: 91). How and when femininities and masculinities (which are "constitutive of social practice and materially effective" (Wetherell & Edley 1999: 338)) provide rationale for practice then become empirical questions (Schippers 2007: 93).

Thus, a definition of masculinities as ideologies is used in this thesis. Particular behaviours or attitudes become associated with being male, and then may be drawn from to construct identity (Galasinski 2004: 8). Discursive practices have a central role in the constitution of subjectivity; quite simply, "men construct themselves through discourse" (Galasinski 2004: 11). Prioritising an understanding of subject constitution as highly contingent on local context is reflected in the notion that masculinity ideologies are organised by 'institutionalised forms of intelligibility' (Shapiro 1992, as cited by Wetherell 1998: 394). The struggle of hegemonic meanings is always situated (Wetherell & Edley 1999: 351). The power of any statement, or groups of meanings, is relative to its emergence in its particular (historical) context, and is productive of its context.

It is a lack of grounding in contextualised examples that has been cited as problematic for Butler's theorising on performativity. Speer and Potter (2002: 152) write of Butler's "abstract theorisation of discourse as a producer of gendered subjects". In order to remedy this, they suggest an approach which emphasises the "way that gender identities are locally occasioned... rather than the effect of decontextualized... 'reiterative' acts" (Speer & Potter 2002: 152). McIlvenny (2002: 141) concurs and suggests that "a revised approach would have to be suited to investigating how the reiteration of norms is achieved and made observable-reportable". Brickell (2005: 28) similarly highlights that, despite the innovations of Butler's theorising on performativity and subversion, "a lack of clarity exists over the capacity of action held by [subjectivated] subjects relative to the power that enables their existence in the first place". Butler's emphasis on gendered subjects always coming into being, the necessity of reiterating norms that precede our existence, and subjects being only the effects of discourse, leave unresolved questions about how selves might be reflexively constructed, and act as agents of social change (Brickell 2005: 36-40). It is suggested that insights from ethnomethodological approaches can supplement performativity theory in two key areas – accounting for agentic subjects, and providing an empirical account of performativity (Brickell 2005; McIlvenny 2002; Speer & Potter 2002). Ethnomethodology provides the tools for studying how social actors use and make meaning through their interactions, and can aid in providing detail of the practices that constitute the performativity of gender, sexuality, and friendship.

However, despite there being similarities with ethnomethodological theorising and Butler's¹⁰, ethnomethodological works have been criticised for not contextualising analysis in wider social and cultural processes (Wetherell 1998: 403), and therefore, de-emphasising macro social power relations (Brickell 2006: 101). There is also tendency in ethnomethodology to overlook the ways in which members' methods (the seemingly formulaic ways in which we participate as competent members of society in the

¹⁰ Earlier theorising within ethnomethodology may be seen as precedents to Butler's theorising on performativity. As Brickell notes, Goffman (1977, as cited by Brickell 2006: 93) argued that social practices, such as language use, produce the social phenomenon that they speak of, including gender and sex. And Goffman, like Butler, rejected a sex/gender distinction, emphasising that such differences are the "outcome of the application of meaning through language in the first instance" (as cited by Brickell 2006: 93).

everyday) are open to change as a result of historical changes in the organisation of categories such as gender/sex (Thorne 1995: 98). Blending a poststructural approach with ethnomethodological methods can help avoid these shortcomings. An emphasis on poststructuralism's anti-foundationalism, and the productive nature of discourse, provides the conceptualising for the historically-contingent nature of doing gender, sexuality and friendship. The methodological framework applied in this thesis, namely, critical discursive psychology, draws on both poststructuralism and ethnomethodology, and is detailed in the next section.

3.2 Methodological tools of critical discursive psychology

Introduction to critical discursive psychology

This thesis employs the theory and methods of what is often termed as critical discursive psychology, and in particular, a strand which synthesises a 'fine-grained' ethnomethodological analysis with Foucaultian-influenced notions of discourse¹¹ (Wetherell & Edley 1999: 338). Since the mid-1990s there has been growing interest in theorising masculinities from such discourse analytic approaches with Margaret Wetherell and Nigel Edley making significant contributions (Edley 2001; Edley & Wetherell 1995; Edley & Wetherell 2001; Wetherell & Edley 1998; Wetherell & Edley 1999). Discursive psychology employs a constructionist approach that foregrounds how, through text or talk, people's descriptions – particular versions of reality – play a constructive role in our social world (Potter 2005: 472).

Similar to Butler's (1993: 136) formulation of performativity, where utterances enact what they purport only to describe, the everyday understandings of gendered friendship conveyed in the data/talk gathered for this thesis, are treated as social practices that do things (Speer & Potter 2002: 155). Also in line with Butler's anti-foundationalist theorising, whilst not commenting on matters of ontology, the categories of true/false, acceptable/unacceptable, or man/woman are treated as discursively constructed (Speer

¹¹ A divide has emerged within discursive psychology regarding the limits of conclusions that can be drawn from textual analysis. In contrast to the poststructuralist-inspired analysis here, some argue that a conversation analytic approach is superior. In the conversation analysis approach, broad social categories, such as gender, are only relevant to analysis if they are explicit features of the text; it is claimed that this perspective avoids importing analysts' assumptions into the analysis, which is a form of 'theoretical imperialism' (see Speer 2001 for an outline).

& Potter 2002: 157). Importantly, the discursive psychological approach treats such distinctions as analysable discursive *accomplishments* (Speer & Potter 2002: 159). In this section I will discuss a number of the core concepts drawn from the critical discursive psychological approach which are employed in this thesis.

Interpretive repertoires

The paradox of people being both the products and producers of discourse¹² is central to the theory underpinning critical discursive psychology (Edley 2001: 190). Speakers use discursive resources creatively and flexibly; however, social action in conversation is enabled only through culturally recognisable performances of discursive practice (Seymour-Smith et al. 2002: 255), enabling ‘intelligibility’. Discursive action and social structures are co-constitutive (Finn 2008: 104) and participants’ talk “reflects not only the local pragmatics of that particular conversational context, but also much broader or more global patterns in collective sense making and understanding” (Wetherell & Edley 1999: 338). I am interested in detailing wider historical and cultural power relations through individuals’ use of the interpretive resources available to them. A key ‘tool’ for doing so is identifying the ‘interpretive repertoires’ my participants use. Interpretive repertoires are “recognisable routine[s] of arguments, descriptions and evaluations found in people’s talk often distinguished by familiar clichés, anecdotes and tropes” (Seymour-Smith et al. 2002: 255). The shared understandings conveyed through interpretive repertoires have a taken-for-granted status; demonstration of this characteristic of interpretive repertoires can be observed when speakers show their recognition of a whole framework of understandings following the introduction of one “fragment of an argumentative chain” (Seymour-Smith et al. 2002: 255). Uttering just half a word has the potential to immediately spark speakers’ demonstrations of their deep familiarity with any given topic in unfolding conversation.

¹² The concepts of interpretive repertoires and discourses are similar. The concept of interpretive repertoires is employed when conceiving discourse as “much smaller and more fragmented, offering speakers a whole range of different rhetorical opportunities”; ‘interpretive repertoire’ places more emphasis on agency, rather than wholly subjectified subjects (Edley 2001: 202).

Subject constitution

The 'story-lines' of interpretive repertoires often include 'characters' - subject positions with associated roles and rights (Seymour-Smith et al. 2002: 255). The subject positions available via interpretive repertoires, and their local deployment, provides information about the broader ideological context in which they arise (Edley 2001: 217). In line with a poststructuralist view, there is emphasis on social agents' lack of a 'true' identity. Instead, the social actor is "dependent on the various positions through which it is constituted within various discursive formations" (Mouffe 1992, as cited by Wetherell 1998: 394). However, it may be interpreted from this that 'pre-formed' subject positions are in circulation, as provided by particular discourses. Wetherell (1998: 394) clarifies that it is the highly occasioned and locally situated nature of emergent conversation that fuels subject positioning. Edley (2001: 210) similarly argues that "subject positions can be defined quite simply as 'locations' within a conversation. They are the identities made relevant by specific ways of talking". As such, identities are conceptualised as resources for accomplishing social action. In constructing accounts of themselves, individuals must draw on and negotiate often competing repertoires (Edley 2001: 202). The constant realignment of individuals to dual or plural concerns is a pervasive feature of talk and one that a considerable proportion of my analysis is dedicated to.

Contradiction and dilemma

Much of our everyday discourse is organised around 'lived dilemmas', with the common sense of different interpretive repertoires being contradictory. Billig et al. (1988) highlight the necessity of organising talk and thought in conflicting ways; essentially, talk is organised as a perpetual argument, because it enables the development of 'answers' to everyday-life questions. Justifications for positions taken on any understanding/attitude/behaviour are accomplished rhetorically, which simultaneously produces counter positions. Although subtly achieved and not necessarily with intent, this positioning and counter-positioning is often explicit and discernible through analysis of interactions (Billig 1991: 43). Thus, any social object, 'friends' for example, is constructed rhetorically and is developed "as opposing positions in an unfolding, historical, argumentative exchange" (Edley 2001: 204). I pay particular attention to the ideological dilemmas of participants, for example, when repertoires of care and intimacy meet repertoires of masculinities.

Rather than accepting inconsistencies in positioning and accounting as a problem, I follow Edwards (2003: 33) in viewing these as potential paths into analysing what actions are being performed in talk. It is common for people to describe a particular phenomenon on one occasion, but to provide a different description on another. By looking into the details of those particular contexts and interrogating how the talk operated, sequentially, rhetorically or contextually, it allows focus to remain on the situated actions being performed on each occasion. There is no need to interrogate the phenomenon for which there might be conflicting accounts, because “they may have dubious status as a phenomenon” (Edwards 2003: 33); I am not interested in the validity of accounts as ‘true’ representations. However, exposing what conflicting concerns are being managed is a key task.

Ideology and intelligibility

The way I employ ‘ideology’ in this thesis links to the function of interpretive repertoires, which act as sense-making devices. Billig (2001: 217) argues “[i]deology is the common sense of a society” where the logic behind ideologies goes unquestioned. Ideologies conceived this way may also conform to the Marxist definition of ideologies, where sets of ideas further the interests of ruling groups, but Billig’s (1988, as cited by Edley 2001: 202-203) definition focuses on everyday sense-making. These ‘lived’ ideologies make up the common sense of what is often termed ‘culture’; they are contradictory and used flexibly by speakers (Edley 2001: 203). I think in this sense we might link the iterative power of citations to the way I use ideology here. In both cases, the authority in determining what makes sense, or is intelligible, comes from a prior framework of understanding.

As has already been noted relating to interpretive repertoires, our current social context offers an often large number of ways of talking about particular social objects, but discursive resources will always be limited. There are limits to formations that are intelligible to speakers in a particular historical context, with some of these formations holding more cultural sway than others. However, the discursive resources that make up formations which hold cultural hegemony *must be reconstituted to meet the rhetorical demands of immediate contexts*, and their hegemonic status may therefore be complicated

in the process. This is one of the reasons that lived ideologies circulating in the everyday are chaotic, complex and contradictory. The effectiveness of particular ideologies depends on how they are mobilised - the contents of any ideology need to be both 'picked up' and accomplished in interaction (Wetherell & Edley 1999: 353). The ideologies of masculinity, femininity or friendship are repeatedly 'brought into being' through participating in recognisable ways of self-presentation and adapted to context, for example, when participating in a focus group with fellow male friends, facilitated by a female researcher. Wetherell and Edley (1999: 352) provide the following:

Hegemony is a version of the world which is reality defining. Such versions are plural, inconsistent, achieved through discursive work, constantly needing to be brought into being over and over again. This is the chief character of hegemony rather than its definition as an already known and fixed set of ruling ideas. It is a relative position in a struggle for taken-for-grantedness.

Speakers' orientations and evaluations, the procedures used to work meaning into an utterance, provide a mechanism for ideology; with naturalisation and continued citation, comes hegemony. This discursive work has the potential to carry, construct and naturalise ideology, or of course, the potential to contest, subvert, or denaturalise it (Wetherell & Edley 1999: 352). This is why a context-specific approach, which is also attentive to broader social context, is advocated here.

In this thesis, I investigate which versions of realities are discursively constructed about the category 'man' or 'friend', in order to identify some of the ideologies in play, principally through identifying interpretive repertoires. Another key aim is to analyse how normalisation/naturalisation occurs, as part of an ideology becoming dominant. I might therefore ask, 'how are particular gendered practices presented as 'fact', and how is the validity of alternative constructions denied?'

3.3 Research methods

Focus groups¹³ create opportunities for greater interaction between participants, and “are invaluable for examining how knowledge, ideas, story-telling, self-presentation and linguistic exchanges operate within a given cultural context” (Barbour & Kitzinger 1999: 5). Carrying out focus groups was therefore selected as an appropriate method of data collection because participants’ intersubjective meaning-making is centralised in my analysis. Also of paramount importance was being able to collect data on the discursive practice relating to the management of sexual, gendered identities; focus groups are ideal for this (see Allen 2005: 35-36).

Participants were informed that they could talk about whatever they liked as long as they considered it related to friendship more generally, or their own friendship experiences. However, each participant was also given a question sheet (see appendix 2), along with an explanation that they could answer questions of their choice from the sheet if and when they felt like it. Most participants used the question sheet as starting points for conversations throughout the sessions; most did not work through the questions in order. I think the slightly unstructured format encouraged wider-ranging conversations and helped to facilitate a more informal environment. Prior to the focus groups, participants were provided with an information sheet that explained the aims of the research (“to explore the understandings and meanings of men’s friendships in New Zealand”) and to describe the format of the focus groups. A consent form was also signed by all participants for confirmation that they understood the explanations how the research would be carried out. Both of these forms were approved as part of the ethics application for the research; confirmation of approval can be found in appendix 5.

The majority of the friend pairs and groups considered themselves to be very close personal friends, but one group’s friendship was born from a community group they were members of. All twenty-two participants¹⁴, who contributed through seven focus groups, completed an optional form at the end of the session providing information on ethnicity,

¹³ Some of these ‘groups’ were formed by just two participants. Although focus groups are generally described as constituting three or more participants (Barbour & Kitzinger 1999: 7), my justification for employing focus groups remains applicable for gathering data from sessions where just two participants were present. I consider the ‘dyad interviews’ to be focus groups in that interaction between participants was encouraged and is the focus of analysis.

¹⁴ Pseudonyms have been assigned for all participants to protect their anonymity.

age and sexual orientation, and a summary of this information can be found in appendix 3. Appendix 3 also includes details of how participants were recruited, which was either through my informal networks (friends or family of my friends or family), via a poster placed in various public spaces (see appendix 4), or by emailing community groups who I thought might be interested. All participants identified as heterosexual¹⁵; all were able-bodied and were recruited in the urban centres of Wellington and Tauranga, New Zealand.

Attempts were made to recruit participants with diverse identities and demographic attributes. In terms of age, class and ethnicity, this was achieved. However, it is important to note that diversity within my sample is positive inasmuch as it is then more likely that I have captured a greater diversity of, what Hutcheon (as cited by Delph-Janiurek 2001: 46) terms, 'discursive communities'. Discursive communities are groups of people who "share highly complex sets of linguistic, rhetorical, ideological and social knowledges, perspectives and beliefs", and are often shaped around notions of gender, class, ethnicity etc. (Delph-Janiurek 2001: 46). I reiterate a similar point in chapter 7 in discussing the benefits of taking a discursive approach when defining heterosexist talk. My focus is on studying how participants use interpretive resources to construct everyday understandings and identities, rather than emphasising how particular discursive practices might be representational of stable attitudes and identities (of particular demographics). In saying that, it is unfortunate that I did not have the time resource to include any LGBT or heterosexual women participants, and to analyse the interpretive resources of those discursive communities relating to friendship. Further, with my focus on investigating the use of discursive resources commonly deployed by heterosexual men, this thesis risks criticism that this category is an artificial one, and that a more appropriate demarcation of a discursive community would have been more specific than 'heterosexual men'. Including more participants would have provided greater opportunity for investigating differences in sense-making patterns, within the community of 'heterosexual men'. However, this problem is offset by my simultaneous focus on

¹⁵ When recruiting, I did not specify that I was seeking heterosexual men only; neither did I seek out gay/bi men explicitly. In retrospect, I could have made greater efforts to recruit gay/bi men from the outset, but time restraints meant that I had to recruit and start transcribing quickly. I responded to this by re-focusing the research on heterosexual men explicitly.

studying participants' local organisation of talk, and viewing that in itself, as significant social action, and reflective of broader social organisation.

My approach throughout the construction of this thesis has been abductive. I drew on literature to develop the research problems and research questions, and to decide on the theoretical lenses that I have applied. However, in line with the discursive psychological principles that underpin this thesis, a rather more inductive approach was taken when analysing the data. It is the patterns in my participants' talk, their choices in what to account for and how, that provides the basis of my findings. The data could have been interpreted to show what interpretive resources are available on many topics that have not been included. Nevertheless, an analysis and interpretation based on the topics that I have identified – informed by both patterns in the data, and literature - are useful in providing an outline of common understandings of friendships and related subject positions. An overarching aim guiding my analysis was to use my data to demonstrate "how gender operates as a powerful organising practice for making sense of everyday reality" (Seymour-Smith et al. 2002: 262), in relation to men's friendships.

The focus group conversations were video-taped. I was informed by a number of participants that they forgot they were being filmed, and it seemed like the nervousness that some participants had regarding this aspect of the focus groups dissipated quickly after discussions began. Referring to the (visual) material was useful when trying to elicit a greater understanding of what was occurring in participant interactions, but it was not analysed. I transcribed all but one of the recordings¹⁶, which allowed for greater familiarity with the material. The transcription conventions used can be found in appendix 1. Initial analysis involved (re-)reading transcripts, focusing on what was being accomplished in conversations, the subject positions created or closed down, and the accounts produced when opinions or descriptions were being provided. More detailed analysis of particular stretches of talk followed. As findings were concretising I read them alongside (both familiar and unfamiliar) literature.

¹⁶ A third-party transcribed the last recording (I received ethics committee approval for a transcriber, who signed a confidentiality form), and I re-transcribed the sections of it that were related to my initial findings, identified through analysing the transcripts from previous focus groups.

Other female researchers of masculinities have put forward reflections on how interviewing/facilitating focus groups with men affected the types of talk that arose during research (Allen 2005: 50-53), and what the power implications are between researcher and participants (Willott 1998). Allen (2005: 50) counters suggestions that men fashion their gendered/sexual identities around expectations that a female researcher will expect 'softer' versions of masculinity, arguing that it is "too simplistic to suggest that... being female [will produce] more examples of particular portrayals of masculine self". Like Allen (2005: 52), there were times when I 'probed' for 'alternative' expressions of masculinity, and these were frequently responded to with unexpected responses that would be difficult to class as 'softer' masculinities or otherwise. To borrow from Allen's (2005: 51) experiences further, even though I could not generate a shared hypermasculine identity with my participants (where they were constructed), I (unknowingly) colluded in the reproduction of discourses which make hypermasculine positions available. I highlight an example of my contribution in reproducing a sexist repertoire in chapter 6. Thus, my gender will have affected how responses were given, and the same would be the case if the researcher were male. A point which I impress repeatedly throughout this thesis is that identities are highly occasioned, and generalisations about 'softer' masculinities can be misleading (chapters 6 and 7 in particular detail why we should be cautious). Unfortunately, time restraints meant that I did not carry out my analysis taking into account my gender in any concerted way and I rarely make suggestions about it being something that my participants attend to.

With regards to power dynamics, I believe that stating from the outset that the discussions in focus groups should be guided by participants avoided creating an environment where participants felt 'oppressed' by an 'expert' (Willott 1998: 175). In support of this, there were many occasions where participants asked what I thought about topics of discussion, in varying degrees of 'challenge'. In saying that, I did not experience the disempowerment that Willott (1998: 180) discusses. The following four chapters contain twenty-two excerpts from the focus groups in which the 'open' and wide-ranging nature of discussions is shown.

Chapter 4: Self-disclosing: difficult but virtuous

4.1 Introduction

One of the topics I set out to explore was how men used their friendships as a platform to help them work through personal problems, and to explore what effects this might have on other aspects of friendships. As was noted in chapter 2, it is suggested by many masculinities scholars that the inner world of men's lives is kept a mystery, via adherence to masculine norms. Seidler (2006: 9) centralises men's unwillingness to expose vulnerabilities, because of competitiveness, and suggests this is due to a socialisation process where men are taught strict self-control and to value rationality. There is a link made between controlling the self and sexuality, with decreased support and intimacy between friends.

In contrast to much literature, participants described self-disclosing as a positive element of their friendships. Despite this, only some ways of self-disclosing were evaluated as acceptable. In the excerpt below self-disclosing is described positively. Here, Andrew explains how his friendship group has grown to be able to 'talk about things'.

4.2 Data and analysis – valorising self-disclosure

Excerpt 1

1. when people get older i might expect people to move apart and
2. become- at least i i would say that for us it's all been the
3. opposite. i mean (.) maybe teenagers are more self-centred as well (.)
4. and maybe (...) i think, as we ar:e at this age, more willing to
5. talk about things and be logical and that kind of thing
(some lines omitted)
6. cos everyone has things they need to talk about in times of their
7. lives. once you realise that you should talk about it like (.) then
8. you do and so you keep doing it. well probably when we were teenagers
9. we did that less.

Andrew creates a picture of a very close friend group. This is firstly achieved via comparison to other people who often "move apart" (L1)¹⁷. Being close is linked to being older and being "more willing to talk about things" (L4-5); it is implied that self-disclosing is one reason they are still close. Self-disclosing is also linked to a lack of self-centredness

¹⁷ References to specific lines in the excerpts are indicated by 'L' followed by the line number, shown in brackets; in this case, I refer to line 1.

that was present in their teenage-relating (L3). Further, “talk[ing] about things” is packaged up with being “logical” (L5); it is presented as common sense that self-disclosing facilitates good friendships. Andrew elaborates on the development of being able to self-disclose (L6-9). Discrete categories are created for those who do self-disclose and those who do not, with a realisation separating the two. This is an example of a position often taken by my participants – Andrew makes it clear that he is a disclosing man, not the ‘other’ non-disclosing type of man.

Another pair that I spoke to, Simon and Arapeta, conveyed their relationship as close and as surviving many difficult times where self-disclosing was needed. Simon provides a contrast between someone who others can talk to, such as himself, and those who cannot.

Excerpt 2

1. a lot of guys that I socialise with... end up getting into heavy
2. conversations with me so maybe... a lot of guys haven't got people

Simon presents himself as the type of man that others can self-disclose to. He is not close with these men, like he is with Arapeta, he simply “socialises” with them. He therefore suggests that these men may not have anyone else who they can approach, like they can him.

The value placed on self-disclosing in the last two excerpts is clear. It is an admirable personal quality and an indicator of good friendship. Why then, is it taken for granted that many men are non-disclosers? And why is a particular realisation required in order to do it? Some answers can be found via an analysis of excerpt 3, where William discusses men lacking a culture that facilitates frequent self-disclosing.

4.3 Data and analysis - men’s serious and difficult self-disclosing

Excerpt 3

1. i also think that women have culturally the opportunity to express
2. themselves to friends more frequently than men do. but, unless it's
3. a really bad problem umm (.) quite often men will reserve (..) or be
4. reserved in terms of describing a problem that they have and not
5. want to burden a friend, unless it's really- you can really count on
6. that friend, through the through whatever that problem might be.
7. women on the other hand i think are willing to discuss topics that
8. range from 'what hair colour shall i get' to you know 'i'm very
9. concerned about so and so because their relationship to whomever is
10. very problematic to me and i think it's going to reflect on the
11. family' whatever that might be

William draws on an interpretive repertoire that promotes the idea that it is due to cultural norms that men do not have the ability to self-disclose as often as women do (L1-2). There is a framing of women's self-disclosing as positive - women have opportunities whereas men have barriers. However, women's relating is devalued in a number of ways in this short stretch of talk. Through constructing women's self-disclosing as occurring more frequently and in relation to a greater range of topics, William constructs men's self-disclosing as a more exclusive and discerning process.

The problems which men are said to disclose are constructed as more grave; William emphasises that it must be a "really bad problem" (L3). It is also implied that the problem will be serious in that it would be considered a burden to a friend (L5). The sentence construction of women's talk in line 8 is in the easily recognisable format, 'that range from... to...', which implies that the topics range from those that are insignificant, through to those that are significant. The example of hair colour is used to illustrate the insignificant, with the topic of family and personal relationships illustrating the significant. However, more detailed analysis shows an evaluation of the provided example(s), which should constitute 'significant', as potentially trivial. That William acts out women's speech is important. As Maybin (2001: 65) points out, an evaluative accent is often added when speakers construct the words of others. I suggest that the evaluative accent here is negative.

In the example(s) William supplies, the woman's 'problem' of the relationship reflecting badly on the family has not happened yet; what has eventuated is the woman's emotional response to it. William also constructs the example so as to make the problem seem unnecessarily complicated. Reworded, the story goes, 'the woman is concerned about someone else, because of their relationship with (yet) someone else that is problematic to the woman, which might reflect on her family'. In addition, each element of this tripartite problem relies on the woman's evaluation of it actually being a problem; William does not choose an example which would be more convincingly considered a factual problem. In particular it is the woman's personal, correct evaluation of other people which would decide whether this is a problem or not (L4). William constructs an example of a women's typical problem, which is constituted with other people's problems ("so and so" (L9)), their personal relationships, and the woman's emotive evaluation of them.

The following example from another focus group session resembles the previous quote in a number of ways. For example, Arapeta also suggests that women's hair is a likely topic of conversation, and acts out the telling of women's problems in a list format:

Excerpt 4

1. women tend to (.) from what I can tell tend to just go 'bleugh'...
2. women tend to be a lot more 'this is happening, my hair's falling
3. out, I killed someone today'

The notion of women mixing their expression of concerns that are insignificant (their hair), through to significant (death) is repeated. Women are reported to talk about these wide-ranging topics easily and indiscriminately – they “just go ‘bleugh’”. The representation reproduced is that women talk about both the significant, which might more closely resemble understandings of ‘self-disclosure’, and the insignificant, interchangeably and constantly. Conversely, men are said to find it difficult to self-disclose, however, as the data in the following excerpt shows, their self-disclosing is constructed as consisting of serious and significant matters. In excerpt 5, it is also claimed that men's self-disclosing is expressed with unconstrained emotion in comparison to women's friendship relating. In line with the data, I develop an argument for participants understanding this type of self-disclosing as, what I am terming, ‘authentic’ self-disclosing. The conversation shown below directly follows excerpt 3, and begins with me asking about a statement that William makes in lines 4-5 of excerpt 3 – that sharing problems might be a burden to a friend.

Excerpt 5

12. Maree and so do you agree that if men don't talk to each
13. other more it is partly because they don't want to burden
14. their friends? ((a number of the men look confused in
15. response to my question)) Is that is that (.) s- sorry, is
16. is that what you-
17. Justin eh?
18. William no. i think it has to do because
19. Justin yea um
20. Joe yea
21. Justin no
22. William you gotta suck it in
23. Mike yea
24. William until it comes to a certain point
25. Joe ya can't stand it
26. William you realise that it's important for you not to suck it in
27. but to be able to express yourself (to someone)

28. Justin and once it the threshold has
 29. William who values are are already similar to yours and somebody
 30. who is willing to listen, which is also very important
 31. Maree mm
 32. William and whose opinions you respect
 33. Justin ok and once that threshold is is reached it's all hanging
 34. out um you know th the the for one one thing i've seen with
 35. with women talk is often, it's superficially very intimate
 36. and very the subject is about emotions emotional stuff but
 37. there are still constrains, still very formulaic

It is agreed that, primarily, it is not because of risking burdening a friend that men are reticent to self-disclose, but because men have “gotta suck it in” (L22). The gravity of a personal problem must reach a “threshold” (L25) before they are disclosed. Also expressed, however, is regret about not being able to talk about problems before they become unbearable. After all, it would be better to not arrive in a place where “ya can’t stand it” (L25). Thus, there is a dilemma here. Both sides of this dilemma are expressed simultaneously when William states “you realise that it’s important for you not to suck it in but to be able to express yourself” (L26-27). Coming to this realisation and expressing yourself is positive; it should be done. But up until this point of realisation, men are forced to ‘suck it in’ – it cannot or should not be done. The men must grapple with these two competing cultural ideals.

There are a number of features in these excerpts which show strategies for navigating this dilemma. Note that it is not suggested that men should unlearn having to ‘suck it in’, and perhaps not uphold the resilience and stoicism that is implied. Instead, justifications for men’s low levels of self-disclosing are provided. One strategy is to close down a masculine subject position which includes frequent self-disclosing, via the story-lines that position only women as carrying out frequent self-disclosing behaviour, and de-valuing this behaviour. In addition to constructing women’s self-disclosing as voluminous and including trivialities, as per excerpts 3 and 4, the de-valuing of women’s self-disclosing is achieved here by posing it as “superficially very intimate” (L35). The emotions expressed are said to be inauthentic – they are “formulaic” (L37). By contrast, it is claimed that while men’s talk is not characterised by (inauthentic) emotional language like women’s talk is, it is in fact *more* emotional. Because men only self-disclose once reaching a breaking point, they then communicate completely unconstrained, in ways that women generally do not. The script created is one where men’s self-disclosing is of genuinely

serious content, and conveyed with raw emotion; this can be assumed, because men are resilient to (small) problems, and do not need to talk about them like women do. Therefore the belief that men cannot or should not self-disclose more frequently is justified.

Although it was somewhat retracted between excerpt 3 and 5, I believe the mention of self-disclosing as a burden is linked to this repertoire of talking about emotions and problems as serious and 'weighty'. There is also emphasis placed on having a friendship that is solid enough to withstand the telling of these grave issues. In excerpt 3, William states that in order for self-disclosing to take place you must have a friend that "you can really count on" (L5). In excerpt 5 he extends on the conditions which need to be met: friend's values must be similar to yours, they must be willing to listen, and you must respect their opinions (L29-32). Claiming that a friend must meet all of these requirements does rhetorical work in constructing such friends as rare. This relates to Simon's suggestion in excerpt 2 that not many men have people to talk to. The version of reality created in excerpt 5, one that occurs frequently across my corpus, is one that puts great emphasis on the conditions of the friendship being right, rather than men placing focus on the masculine ideals which make self-disclosing difficult. It is another way of managing the dilemma of self-disclosing being good, but difficult.

In the following excerpt however, Arapeta privileges self-disclosing over the "male thing" that makes self-disclosing difficult. He places responsibility on friends to 'push through' these difficulties.

Excerpt 6

1. so it's it's a bit of a male thing at times. but other times you-
2. but you know like you get over that. kind of when you realise
3. that we all need help and all need friendship and that. (..) the
4. other thing is that when you realise that you'd be there for
5. them it helps you kinda go 'actually i'- and it's the hardest thing
6. (.) as a guy (.) to- when someone- cos we always say 'how're ya goin
7. how're ya goin' y'know (.) it's the hardest thing both to reply to
8. that honestly if you are struggling and also the hardest thing to
9. ask agai:n if you sense someone's struggling and they've said
10. they're fine. But (..) bravery means pushing beyond, bravery in a
11. friendships means pushing beyond the initial barrier and with guys
12. that's often there

Arapeta's use of "it's a male thing" (L1) to describe the "barrier...with guys that's often there" is used in a similar way as 'having to suck it in'; the contents of these specifically

manly phenomena naturalised and remain uninterrogated. While not questioning the existence of a 'male thing', Arapeta does suggest that it can be overcome. The repertoire of self-disclosing requiring a breaking point is drawn on (L11). However, he also describes another type of realisation in lines 4-5. It helps men self-disclose if they are able to realise that they themselves would be there for other friends if needed (L4-5). A privileging of being there for friends justifies further efforts required to get over that barrier. Despite this rationalisation, bravery is still required in order to 'push beyond' the self-disclosing barrier.

4.4 Discussion

Throughout this chapter I have shown the ways in which participants framed self-disclosing behaviour as indicative of a good friendship, and that emotionality within friendships is considered important. However, this was achieved through valorising particular constructions of self-disclosing behaviour in which the masculine ideals of rationality and self-control remain central. These particular styles of emotional relating are encouraged to the extent that being a man who cannot self-disclose was posited as undesirable.

It is conceded by participants that it is problematic in itself that men find it difficult to talk to friends about personal problems, and it is assumed that men will self-disclose with difficulty. However, a variety of justifications are provided for self-disclosing remaining infrequent. The subject positions constructed for men are those that disallow self-disclosing as an everyday activity; only serious problems should be shared. Self-disclosing more often within friendships might introduce risk that the contents of men's talk will be considered a less weighty and insignificant type – as women's is purported to be. Ironically, it is believed that because women's expression is embedded in an emotional framework, it is less likely to convey authentic emotion.

An evaluation of whether men's and women's relating actually occurs in the manner as it is understood by my participants is not of significance here. It is important however, to highlight that these justifications are productive in maintaining the long-held view that men are not disposed to frivolous emotion. Such understandings are drawn from and reproduce discourses that represent women as having easily-triggered emotional responses (Simon & Nath 2004), but also those that set women's talk as trivial and

gossip-laden more generally (Cameron 2006: 67). The forms of emotional relating valued by participants is, at least in part, born from making it distinct from what is believed to be women's talk that lacks a demarcation between significant and insignificant, and is unnecessarily imbued with emotional evaluations. As was mentioned in chapter 2, such conceptions of feminine communications can be traced back to at least ancient Greece.

I highlighted the emphasis placed on having particular friends to self-disclose to, and the construction of such friends as rare; it is assumed that many (other) men do not have this type of friend. I suggested that this works as another way of managing the dilemma that men should self-disclose, but infrequently. The bravery that is required to self-disclose is considered indicative of a good friendship, and the action of overcoming this barrier is a challenge that women friends are positioned as never having to rise to.

As discussed earlier, a lack of self-disclosing within men's friendships is often put down to an emotional illiteracy. Whether men do have the ability to converse in emotional language or not, I suggest that this form of emotional literacy is understood as a feminine variety, characterised by superficial and trivial emotions. This is incongruent with ideals of masculine identities regarding self-disclosure. Leaving this 'emotional illiteracy' undeveloped guards against a pollution of authentic emotions that are highly valued *because they are rare and are produced with difficulty*. In line with this, the men do not appear to engage in the values embedded within the therapeutic discourse which advocate a constant evaluation and verbalisation of emotions. But perhaps the high value attributed to having the ability to self-disclose *sometimes* is an indication of the influence of the therapeutic persuasion.

Seidler (1992b: 20) asserts that men have an aversion to showing vulnerability, due to their socialisation in which all men are perceived as competitors. There does appear to be reticence in showing vulnerability here, but there is little to indicate that in this case this is due to competitiveness between friends. In fact, if friends are able to show their vulnerability, it signifies strength and valiance. Seidler's focus on men's reticence to self-disclose, because of its incongruence with the contemporarily valorised masculine values of rationality and self-control is supported here. However, Seidler sets the expression of emotions in opposition to rationality and self-control; my analysis shows that participants draw on competing discourses in which both are valorised. Thus, while

associations between emotions and femininity exist and are undesirable, and considered trivial and inauthentic, there is a second competing discourse at play whereby emotions can be expressed in ways that are logical, necessary, and authentic. If conceptions of love have been feminised, there appears to be some movement towards reconstituting that discourse so as to make it congruent with masculine subjectivities.

Chapter 5: Effortless friendships and authenticity

5.1 Introduction

The following chapter focuses on the repertoires that participants drew on to provide evaluations of what makes a good friend, or an ideal friendship. One of the most pervasive repertoires present in my corpus of what good friendship relating is revolved around it being easy, or effortless; friendships should be “no drama” (James). In some cases these ideas were put forward in response to the following, from the participants’ question sheet: “Do you think that friendships require less effort to maintain than other sorts of relationships? Why?”. There may be a case for saying that the question is leading – it might take some communicative preparation or repair work to discuss a friend(ship) being difficult if the person being discussed is in the room. However much of the talk shown in this chapter emerged when discussing other topics. My participants showed recognition of just a “fragment of the argumentative chain” of an established interpretive repertoire and used it as a reference point to build on (Edley & Wetherell, 2001: 443). Only a slight reference to the topic was required in order for the other participants to demonstrate their familiarity of a whole framework of understandings of the ease of friendship.

It came as a surprise to find that there was great resonance between my participants’ descriptions of their effortless friendships and elements of Aristotle’s ideal friendship – the complete friendship (explained in chapter 2). I also introduced the idea that understandings of intimacy in the complete friendship was incompatible with the therapeutic discourse (Illouz 2007); demonstration of this is highlighted throughout this chapter.

5.2 Data and analysis - friendship as a non-obligatory social practice

There were different interpretations and manifestations of the drama-free-friendship repertoire. The first I discuss relates to lack of effort associated with keeping in regular communication or seeing each other. There are many examples of this ‘lack of contact’ repertoire in my corpus; Simon succinctly conveyed it via, “one of the cool things about being a guy I reckon is like you could not talk to each other for like six months and it doesn't mean a heck of a lot”. Irregular contact as a positive feature of friendship seems

counterintuitive, but in excerpt 7 Joshua and Andrew discuss the ways in which not being obliged to stay in contact is beneficial.

Excerpt 7

1. Andrew i wouldn't care like (.) if you were going and doing
2. something for two months i wouldn't say 'oh you have to
3. see me every day', that's not really why we hang out,
4. because it's necessary, but also just because it's good
5. times
6. Joshua that's definitely one of the things that i like most
7. about our- that that sort of- before- that we've got from
8. then is that (.) i dunno at least with my girlfriend and
9. stuff her friends, they sort of, they get so angry if
10. they don't see each other
11. Andrew hh
12. Joshua they feel like they're being neglected and there's this
13. constant level of upkeep and it's just it's just the
14. absolutely opposite of what i look for in a mate or in a
15. friend. it's like, it shouldn't take maintenance, it
16. should y'know it should be good and it should be
17. regardless of what you've been doing
18. Maree ye:ah
19. Andrew you should want to hang out
20. Joshua yea
21. Andrew not hang out because
22. Joshua because you feel obliged to
23. Andrew yea
24. Joshua i mean, if you're being a prick, y'know, you're gonna-
25. you can piss people off, that's different, but you
26. shouldn't piss people off just because you, you haven't
27. had your regular bi-weekly two hours hhh
28. Maree yea i kinda had a question about that actually, like
29. about how easy or difficult is it to maintain your
30. friendships as opposed to, say, your familial
31. relationships, or your romantic relationships
32. Andrew right now it's incredibly easy cos we want to do so much
33. together
34. Joshua mm
35. Andrew and i think because we're so tight umm i don't really
36. have any worries about maintainin- maintenance when i go
37. overseas or:: anything like that
38. Joshua we go away- y'know andrew goes away, I do other stuff
39. y'know we're busy we do quite different stuff fairly
40. often so i don't think maintenance has ever really been a
41. concern
42. Andrew yeah
43. Maree mmm
44. Joshua that's one of the things i love about it so much

The undesirability of obligation to maintain regular communications with friends is clear, for example, where the men (collaboratively) state that you should “not hang out” “because you feel obliged” (L21-22). A lack of demand to keep in contact is clearly conveyed when Andrew states “I wouldn’t care, like, if you were going and doing something for two months” (L1-2). Andrew positions himself as not the sort of friend who

would be upset if his friend went away. It is notable also that the second part of this sentence conveys something of their subject positioning as busy men. Their lack of emphasis on depending on each other is justified by their need for doing “quite different stuff fairly often” (L39-40).

In addition to a lack of regular contact being a necessity sometimes, there is a more overt framing of lack of contact being a positive feature of the friendship in itself, with rhetorical work going in to convey the benefits of maintaining the relationship this way. For example, Joshua makes clear that it is unacceptable to “piss people off” by demanding “your regular bi-weekly catch-up” (L26-27). Friendship relating which entails regular meetings is likened to an official meeting. The strict regularity is exaggerated to the extent that it is a joke. Not only do expected and regular friendship meetings infer a burden, but they connote superficial, or inauthentic, friendship relating, as between associates who meet for a formal meeting. Another way in which non-obligatory friendship relating is constructed as an indicator of a good friendship can be seen in the statement “it should be good and it should be regardless of what you’ve been doing” (L16-17). Joshua constructs friendships as, ideally, being ‘good’ enough to withstand time or geographical distances. Similarly, Andrew states that it is because they are “so tight” (L35) he does not worry that their friendship will be affected even when he goes overseas. Ironically, lack of contact is promoted here as signifying a close friendship.

An effective way of promoting means friendships as non-obligatory and authentic affairs is through comparison to women’s friendship relating. According to Joshua, his girlfriend’s friendships require a “constant level of upkeep” (L13). This work is characterised in part as emotionality - the women feel “angry” (L9) and “neglected” (L12) when their friends are deemed to have not been in contact enough. In contrast to the men’s non-obligation interactions, the women are described as being obliged to be in touch frequently – not doing so results in friends being angry or upset. Both the demands for friends to be in contact, as well as the emotional responses when that does not happen are deemed unacceptable choices. Joshua says “it’s just the absolutely opposite of what I look for in a mate” (L13-14).

Viewing a lack of regular communication as an indication of a ‘tight’ friendship provides an alternative perspective to the common trope of men’s lack of communication as a

deficiency. This repertoire confirms a sense of confidence in the friendship. Secondly, there is an understanding reproduced that if friendship relating is non-obligatory, it is then voluntary, and occurs out of desire. It is another way of presenting the friendship as authentic. Thirdly, men's lack of communication does not necessarily indicate a lack of care, and the repertoire carries with it understandings that friends should support each other in the ways that they need. If, for whatever reason, a friend cannot spend time with you, not insisting that they must is a way of letting them be free to do other things they need to do – like go overseas.

In excerpt 8 Stephen expresses similar sentiments regarding the differences between men's and women's friendships regarding obligations, but provides an alternative reason for not insisting that friends make regular contact. In this stretch of talk there is a linking of laid-back friendships, getting in contact being on a non-obligation basis, and the absence of self-disclosing.

Excerpt 8

1. i actually think- you know, it's hard to generalise, but i think (.)
2. guys kind of put a bit less store in friendship and are a bit more
3. laid-back about it, less likely to be offended by lack of contact
4. and a:nd i don't kind of feel that someone has to have a great deal
5. of interest in what's happening to me in my life.
- ((some lines omitted))
6. i've talked to richard when there's been the odd rocky moment and
7. that (.)in the relationship because i know i can trust him and
8. say- an you know but I'm not necessarily gonna go 'a' to 'z' through
9. it. i'm not necessarily going to try to get richard to help me solve
10. the problem (.) but i'll kind of- i will say to him (..) y'know
11. y'know 'a few things have come up' or something

As in excerpt 7, Stephen reproduces a repertoire that conveys men being “laid-back” about their friendships, whilst women are likely to be “offended by lack of contact” (L2-3). There is another explanation provided for why women make each other feel obligated to be in regular contact. Rather than impressing the point that people should be free from friendship relating obligations so as to “do quite different stuff”, as in excerpt 7, Stephen orients to the possible ‘problem’ friends “take a great deal of interest to what’s happening to [him] in [his] life” (L4-5). Lack of contact as a positive attribute is directly contrasted with the de-valued characteristic of women's friendships whereby there is an expectation others take great interest in their lives.

In explaining why he will not partake in the feminine behaviour of 'taking too much interest in others' lives', Stephen states his refusal to expect Richard to help solve his problems (L7). This is emphasised by providing an extreme case scenario – the phrasing around having to go through it “‘a’ to ‘z’” (L6) assists Steven in conveying the evaluation that it is unnecessary to self-disclose in detail. Not being more reliant on Richard is similarly justified by implying that it would negatively impact Richard if he had to help solve the problem for Steven. In this way, self-disclosing is framed as work that is unnecessary and undesirable, thereby functioning as a justification for men's friendships having the laid-back status that they do. Even in a situation where a friend is willing to admit he has a problem, it is presented as natural that he will not ask for help and risk burdening a friend.

In excerpts 7 and 8 repertoires are mobilised that centre on lack of obligation facilitating the most valued type of friendship relating. This accounting sets non-obligatory friendship relating as authentic because it is born from desire - an equal desire to carry out friendship relating, like the complete friendship. The participants of the complete friendship are also said to practice their friendship in recognition of their common virtue. Perhaps something similar can be seen here in participants' building of repertoires which tell of the confidence in friendships always remaining good and easy. Regardless of their friendship relating being punctuated by absences, they are presented as stable entities. The data certainly suggests that, like Aristotle, participants prioritise self-sufficiency and privilege friends' choices and agentic actions.

Stephen's claiming that self-disclosure is unnecessary and too burdensome for friends is reminiscent of Aristotle's proclamation that friends do not 'lament' of their problems, as women do. The belief that self-disclosing introduces unwanted and unnecessary effort relies on the same evaluations of women's over-emotional talk mentioned in chapter 4. The data shows that men's 'laid-back' friendships are characterised by autonomy, non-obligation and a lack of emotional talk. This construction is aided via repertoires that hold women's friendships as constituted by interactions that signify dependence and obligation. These obligations are believed to necessitate ongoing management, and this is in turn linked to meanings of superficiality, unnecessary (negative) emotion and instability within friendships. In contrast, the representations of men's friendships as stable and strong, are reminiscent of Aristotle's position on the fixed quality of goodness

of friends, which is realised through being together. I return to discuss the relevance of this in the discussion section of this chapter.

5.3 Data and analysis - forging and (re)producing friendship identities

In the next section, there is an understanding conveyed that effort is not required in order for the men to be their 'real' selves. In addition, there is repetition of some of the repertoires already outlined in this chapter regarding: a) friendships remaining intact despite distances of time or geography, b) the understandings of authenticity of friendship interactions that are born from non-obligation, c) not requiring engagement with (work-intensive) emotions.

Excerpt 9

1. Maree uh what about that next section um do you think that
2. friendships take less effort to maintain than other sorts
3. of relationships
4. Rob heck yea
5. Jordan yea
6. Harry yea
7. Dave definitely
8. Maree and why, can you make comparisons between them?
9. Jordan i think for us (..) mmmh oah just clicks aye?
10. Harry i think friendships emerge pretty organically like
11. Jordan yea
12. Harry most people don't go out saying 'i'm going to make friends'
13. like, you just, all of us- you just happened to end up in a
14. position where you're friends with them.so you've never
15. actually, this sounds real bad, but you never made an
16. effort in the first place and therefore you don't really
17. have to going forward that's the way i feel anyway, like,
18. and with my really good friends i know i don't have to make
19. an effort like every- when i see them next it'll be just
20. the same anyway
21. Maree yeah
22. Dave mm (.) i find it's definitely with people who i'm really
23. comfortable, I just act completely myself
(some lines omitted))
24. Dave but you get what was i was saying before, you know, you
25. just act yourself
26. Jordan yea
27. Dave you don't need to put on any front, you don't have to act,
28. and you don't have to smoke marijuana ((this is a reference to a
previous conversation))
29. Jordan yea
30. Dave and stuff to hang out, you just
31. Jordan well i'll come here
32. Dave cos you still smoke, but
33. Jordan who cares
34. Dave who cares, yea
35. Jordan yup
36. Dave yea, you're just yourself
37. Jordan i'll come here to see dave, and then dave won't be here so
38. and i'll just

39. Dave chill
 40. Jordan walk past and do then do my own thing he doesn't have to
 41. look after me or anything
 42. Dave so yea, there's definitely different levels depending on
 43. the friend
 44. Maree yea
 45. Dave mm
 46. Rob but i think, what Harry said is right, you know that a real
 47. friend is someone that you don't have to try with, you
 48. know, you can not talk to them for mo- years, months and
 49. then when you see each other again it's just like
 50. Jordan like yeah, nothing had ever
 51. Rob like you saw them yesterday
 52. Jordan yup
 53. Rob that's- nothing beats that feeling i don't reckon

Throughout excerpt 9 there is a repeated message that with “real” friends, you “don’t have to try”. It is clear from this talk that some friendships constitute an important resource for gaining ontological security¹⁸. A sense of biographical continuity¹⁹ is conveyed in two ways. Firstly, there is much confidence that your close friends allow for a space where you can be your ‘real’ self, a singular and coherent self-identity; Dave says “I just act completely myself” (L23). It is his ‘real’ identity that he is able to perform when he is with close friends. This notion is reproduced in the assertions that you “don’t need to put on any front” or “act” (L27) and the phenomenon is described as a common experience for everyone. This is indicated in the generalising position taken in many instances in the excerpt, for example: “a real friend is someone that you don’t have to try with” (L47).

The second way in which a sense of biographical continuity is described links the idea of being yourself over a longer timescale. The joy of meeting with old friends and nothing changing appears repeatedly across my corpus, but here it manifests as: “nothing beats that feeling I don’t reckon” (L53). As per excerpts 7 and 8, irregular meetings are described as not affecting the relationship. In other words, the friendship, or, the specific friendship identities, are framed as unchanging. Rather than orienting to any kind of development or change of selves, in the short or long term, we have here a picture of the meeting of authentic selves. An understanding is conveyed here whereby individuals do

¹⁸ Ontological security refers to a “person’s fundamental sense of safety in the world and includes a basic trust of other people. Obtaining such trust becomes necessary in order for a person to maintain a sense of psychological well-being and avoid existential anxiety” (Giddens 1991: 38-39).

¹⁹ Where an individual is able to sustain a narrative about the self, in spite of threats to ontological security (Giddens 1991: 39).

not play part in the development of their friendship - there is no responsibility admitted for it – the friendships just happened and keep on just happening.

Cocking and Kennett (1998: 509) provide a critique of the complete friendship that is relevant here. They highlight that the complete friendship implies friendship relating is engaged in by autonomous, fully formed and self-sufficient individuals. They demonstrate this in outlining the way in which Aristotle emphasises that “in choosing a friend we choose another self” (Cocking & Kennett 1998: 506). Friends mutually recognise each other’s virtue as “pre-existing ‘firm and stable’ features” (Sherman 1993, as cited by Cocking & Kennett 1998: 506). As such, the complete friendship lacks reference to the unfolding interpretation of one another. The ways in which social relations create our friendships goes unacknowledged in both my participants’ and Aristotle’s accounts. Therefore, an alternative account is precluded, where the self a friend sees is one that is produced just for that friend, in response to that friend in specific contexts, in a continuous manner. The Aristotelian-esque view my participants take seems to go against other contemporary understandings of intimate friendships. Lynch (2005: 103) for example, argues that Aristotelian view of friendship avoids the fragility that comes with modern intimacy where:

concern and awareness shared by friends suggests a notion of friendship as a creative enterprise – one in which the possibilities for relationship between self and other are open to construction and to change.

By downplaying the ways in which the self that friends see is produced through the intersubjective experience of friendship interactions, independence and autonomy is further valorised. The discursive resources used here posit that the closer friends are, the more those friends are clearly defined and unchanging selves, rather than selves who have become more receptive and better at interpreting friends. The potentiality of the uniqueness of each friendship is glossed over, because there is a lack of reflection on the way particular friendships developed, and are developing. The constant ‘choice’ men make to maintain their friendships goes unexplored; discourses are not available which foster reflection on interpretations of each other’s needs. The confidence in the unchanging nature of friendships brings a sense of ontological security, but, perhaps it prohibits of a style of intimacy that comes with reciprocal dependence that is attentive to changing needs.

In addition to the repertoire of ongoing friendship relating being easy, in excerpt 9 a repertoire is in play around the ease of becoming friends. This is constructed, for example, through the following statements: “friendships emerge pretty organically” (L9), “you just happened to end up in a position where you're friends with them” (L12-13), and “you never made an effort in the first place” (L14-15). However, contradictorily, excerpt 10 shows how in a later discussion it was agreed that finding new friends is difficult, and that is time and ‘work’ involved.

Excerpt 10

1. Rob i find myself cutting short of making new friends
2. sometimes, just sometimes. because i know- you know how
3. we were talking about the time thing? ((directed at Harry))
4. Harry hh i can't fit you in buddy hh
((some lines omitted))
5. Dave i dunno sometimes when you meet a new person, sometimes i
6. can't be bothered with the effort of
7. Jordan with having to start a new friendship
8. Dave til you get to the barrier where you can be yourself
9. Harry it just takes too long aye
10. Dave yeah like it might take, it could take up to six months
11. Jordan yeah
12. Rob eight months, a year before are over the barrier where you
13. can just be like here and fart and just be like 'hehe that
14. was funny aye' hh
15. Jordan yeah another thing about trying to make new friends is like
16. will they fit in with your other friends like you know it's
17. like, i may like 'em but you know, these guys might think
18. that he's a prick.

In opposition to the repertoire of friendships ‘just happening’, this short discussion provides a different story. Despite initially framing the issue as a problem of time (L1-4), in expanding on what takes the time, another element of work that is required to make friends is raised, centring on being yourself. In the example provided, not only should new friends be at ease with breaking the social norm of farting, but in finding it funny to do so, there is suggestion that finding a commonality in terms of sense of humour is also key. Jordan further highlights that it could be a problem if your new friend does not “fit in with your other friends” (lines 15-16). In addition to spending time and energy getting to the point where you are comfortable with new friend, you may also have to manage relations with your existing friends because of them.

Given the contradictory and dilemmatic nature of talk, the discrepancy of messages between excerpts 9 and 10 is not unusual. But it begs the question - what are the two

contradictory ideologies about friendship, circulating as common sense? As shown throughout this chapter, when friends have to 'try', it is an indication they are not good friends (regardless of whether 'good' is interpreted here as a general evaluative term, or a 'close' friend). A friendship in which efforts are made is deemed inauthentic. This provides reason for my participants denying that their relationship with their current good friends has ever been an effort. The idea of effortlessness within good friendships is naturalised to such an extent that linking any kind of effort to current good friends is undesirable.

The descriptions of the work involved to become friends relates to earlier discussions where I suggested that there is a preference for idealising friendships which see the meeting of fully formed, autonomous individuals, and an avoidance of change. Excerpt 10 shows the difficulty of maintaining this position, where there is description of the work involved in producing particular friend-selves. A version of reality is presented where there is a binary of 'yet-to-be friend' and 'friend' categories with a "barrier" (L8; L12) separating the two. The effect of constructing friendship as being achieved once and for all is reproduction of the idea that friendships do not require ongoing work. Although the effortless repertoires downplay the evaluative and interpretive work of friendship, it seems that this work is a more labour intensive process for new friends. (Do we share the same sense of humour or will my new 'friend' simply be disgusted if I fart?). The following excerpt provides another example where the effort of friendship relating is exposed, via discussion on a friendship undergoing change.

The next excerpt follows directly on from that shown in excerpt 9, which ends with Rob and Harry claiming that when meeting up with good friends after a long period of time, it is "like you saw them yesterday".

Excerpt 11

54. Harry sometimes i reckon it does umm. like it's interesting
55. for me, like having been single when all your friends
56. are, like having getting girlfriends and like, getting
57. into the like long-term relationships with people,
58. that changes it quite a bit cos if you're at a
59. different sort of stage, like they generally- (.) it's a
60. natural thing they'll start to hang- have less time, to
61. hang out (.) and you can't hang out sometimes in the
62. same- especially if they live with them and like-
63. they're in their own place. so like one of my best
64. mates from school when i go to his house now (.) like
65. it's quite different. like it's always Tuesday nights,

66. cos that's when she goes to her parents' house for
 67. dinner
 68. Maree oh yea
 69. Harry i don't think we dislike each other
 70. Rob ((pretends to cough)) bullshit
 71. All hhh
 72. Harry but it's just like, then we can just be ourselves and
 73. like that's changed so much because before we used to
 74. just hang out whenever and just like play play station
 75. or whatever, and now he's like in that (.) point on in his
 76. life where they're living together and that's changed things
 77. quite a lot. so i think other relationships can impact
 78. on friendships as well. it depends on where you're at in
 79. life.

Harry claims that when a friend has a long-term girlfriend, it negatively affects friendships. There is less time for friendship relating because one of the friends instead spends time with their girlfriend. It was claimed earlier that it does not matter if friends do not see each other often; the friendship is just as good because nothing changes. But here, even though Harry sees his friend relatively often, not hanging out is repeatedly claimed to be a problem. Thus, a framing question becomes, why is it seen as problematic if friends see each other infrequently because they have a girlfriend, but not for other reasons?

There are two subject positions constructed here for men-friends – single friends, and friends who are part of a romantic couple. The friends who are part of a(nother) couple are purported to be “at a different stage” (L57-58). Although the change to hang out less is framed as “natural” (L59), and therefore not one blame is attributed to, the effects of this change are repeated as undesirable for Harry. There is two main changes described, one of not being able to hang out as often, and something of a more significant but more intangible change.

A lack of time is framed as a problem through Harry and his friend only being able to hang out when the girlfriend is not home. Relating to this, Harry emphasises how things used to be easier - “we used to just hang out whenever and just like play play station or whatever” (73-74). The use of ‘just’ here, used twice, is analogous to ‘only’, and works to emphasise a simplicity in their relating which is contrasted with the changed, present situation. It is notable that Harry does not refer to the change as instigated through a choice that his friend has made. Rather, sentiment is conveyed that “it’s a natural thing they’ll start to hang- have less time” (L58-59). I think the disfluency in this statement, where Harry

slightly re-frames mid-sentence, is telling. The sentence direction changes from “they’ll start to hang-”, which denotes intent on the part of a friend, to “have less time”, which conveys lack of choice. Foregrounding the explanation of not having time works to de-emphasise a possible interpretation that Harry’s friend chooses to spend time with his girlfriend and not him, and that he has in some way been rejected.

Although Harry is clear to convey that his friend’s choice is reasonable, the effects of that choice mean that they cannot hang out whenever they like. Irregular meetings are cited as changing the friendship on a fundamental level, as evidenced in the repeated message of change (see L57, L64 or L75-76). As was mentioned earlier relating to beliefs about how women’s friendships operated, it is an undesirable characteristic of men’s friendship to include explicit obligations within friendships, particularly if there is a risk that emotions will be generated as a result. This might explain why Harry shows preference for accounting for changes as a problem of not having the time to hang out.

An additional issue is referred to when Harry makes relevant tensions between him and the girlfriend in the statement “I don’t think we dislike each other” (L68). Although this effectively raises the *possibility* that they *do not* like each other, it is followed by a justification that shifts the focus away from it simply being a case of them not liking each other. Harry clarifies with, “but it’s just like, then [when she is not present] we can just be ourselves” (L71). The suggestion is, not that he does not like her, but that he does not like the change in his friendship relating that occurs when she is present.

Importantly, if we accept also that the self-as-friend identities are produced through interactions with friends, if a friend is perceived to have changed, for example by going on to “a different stage”, then the accompanying friend-identities that are produced must also change. This may present a challenge to the ontological security which rests on being friends with someone for a long period of time and nothing changing. Or, if a friend feels rejected by a fundamental change in the friendship, managing this may also have to become part of the interactions that make up the situated social practices that produce friend-identities.

Whilst the repertoire of the ease and stability of friendships is a pervasive one, where a main imperative seems to be for friends to simply be themselves and stay ‘laid-back’, there are times when efforts come into view. Getting to know a friend, and developing a seemingly

constant friend-identity for them, requires effort and time. Harry's predicament presents an example of expectations and ongoing dependencies that are denied legitimacy through the effortless repertoire.

The topics of the next two excerpts centre on appropriate responses to friends if they have acted badly or been offensive. Excerpt 12 provides an example where efforts are required specifically to downplay the work of friendships.

Excerpt 12

1. Maree and what like- in comparing to other sorts of
2. relationships like, people you go out with or your
3. family or whatever, do you think=
4. James =girlfriends are a lot more maintenance than friends
5. All hhhh
6. James if i offend these guys y'know it'll be like 'oah he's
7. Eric yea
8. James he's being a bit of dick' y'know hhh
9. Eric yea hhh i wouldn't care
10. James and they'll accept me for being a bit of a dick hh
11. Maree hhh
12. James but a girlfriend isn't really like that hh
13. Matt yea friendships are probably like the lowest maintenance
14. and (.) if they're high maintenance you probably
15. wouldn't want to be their friend
16. Eric yea
17. James no drama or anything

Eric agrees with James that he “wouldn’t care” if James has been “a bit of a dick” (L35-39). However, at the very least, James’s dick behaviour must be recognised as potentially offensive by Eric, presumably where some kind of social rupture or negative reaction must be produced in order for it to be deemed potentially offensive. Following this, it must be forgiven, ignored, or perhaps simply deemed inoffensive after all. Nevertheless, the acceptance of dick behaviour is constructed as valued, and constitutes part of the ease of friendships. The offense given is downplayed in mutuality with the offence taken; both the effects that friends might have on each other, and the work involved in managing them are de-emphasised.

The ways in which this gives stability to the friendship can be seen by comparing it to understandings of ideal relationships informed by the therapeutic discourse. The description of the glossing over of ‘dick’ behaviour is antithetical with the ways that relationships are purported to be handled by the self-reflexive individuals who are encouraged to look for problems in their relationship, in a bid for continuous

improvement and intimacy. The men construct a picture of potentially offensive behaviour not constituting a problem, and therefore not requiring attention. There are parallels again to the complete friendship, where the intimacy between friends can be assumed, and where friends' judgements of one another's character remain stable.

It is claimed that the same 'dick' behaviour would however be considered unacceptable by a girlfriend, and having to manage these upsets constitutes "a lot more maintenance" (L41-42). We do not have a description of how girlfriends hold the men accountable but it is implied that girlfriends expect that the men will not act like 'dicks', and if they do, the girlfriends react negatively to it. In other words, the men are obliged to interpret girlfriends' expectations about what is offensive, and act in accordance. Conversely, with friends, there is less need to engage with the particularity of the circumstances which might generate 'dick' behaviour; it is likely to be brushed over. Avoidance of holding friends accountable for 'dick' behaviour is a way of avoiding the risks that come with having expectations and obligations to one another. The men paint a picture that it is acceptable, or expected, that friends will be 'dicks' sometimes – and that other friends will not become high maintenance by paying heed to offensive behaviour. There is resonance with the repertoires constructed where women are too easily offended and have too many expectations of each other (excerpts 7 and 8). Conversely, the subject positions constructed for men-friends here is that they should not be easily offended. It seems there is an implicit paradoxical directive operating here where the expectations friends should have is to have few expectations.

In the final stretch of talk in this chapter, Matiu claims that some friends can make each other accountable for their 'dick' behaviour, but not all. The response follows a question about whether the participants have any friends that are more like family, or vice versa.

Excerpt 13

1. Matiu with my cuzzies. they're like friends yeah yeah.
2. definitely like friends. umm but they do have that
3. extra element to them being cousins.
4. Maree yeap
5. Matiu umm so therefore they can tell you ta (.) y'know ((makes
a movement that indicates 'go away' violently))
6. All hhh
7. Matiu yeah and walk away and and not even be fazed by it
8. y'know hh they can get away with it even cos they're
9. whānau but yeah. i know there's bros that can actually
10. do that but y'know, because it's a relationship that's
11. outside family, it sort of comes back to y'know. it's

12. about maintaining that relationship. so (.) i dunno
 13. how far they'll go. maybe you know, i know that these
 14. two won't hesitate to tell me to piss off if they want
 15. to
 16. All hhhh
 17. Matiu and i'd accept that. i'd accept that. take it on the
 18. chin. and i'll see you tomorrow bro hhh

Like the girlfriends in the previous talk, a subject position is created for friends who are *whānau*²⁰ which entails the possibility of them expressing negative emotions in response to other friend-cousins' behaviours. This is demonstrated in Matiu's explanation that friend-cousins can admonish him, and then walk away unfazed (L5-7). In contrast, such confrontations are not presented as congruent with the terms of most friendships. This is achieved by emphasising the rarity of friends "that can *actually* do that" (L9-10), emphasis added). The repertoire constructed in excerpt 12 is replicated here. It is understood that friends avoid emotionally charged interactions and do not call each other up on their behaviour; friendships are believed to be more stable, less volatile, and less effort that way.

Although these effortless friendships are not disparaged, in excerpt 13 there is suggestion that friendships in which confrontation interactions are acceptable indicate a 'closer' variety of friendship. Why does Matiu believe other friends might avoid this confrontation? "It's about maintaining the relationship" (L11-12). There is orientation to the fragility of a typical (effortless) friendship; they are conceived as resting on more uncertain terms compared to *whānau* relationships. In demonstration of this, Matiu shows an aversion for categorising the friends who are present as those who cannot confront each other. He explains that, like his cousins, they can tell him to piss off without risking the friendship (L13-14). Matiu likens his friends that are present to his cousins who "have that extra element" (L3), who are willing to engage in emotional exchanges if expectations are not met. The stronger commitment implied in these friendships, conceived akin to familial relationships, can sustain confrontational interactions.

Despite the 'work' of both reflecting on the ways in which friends' problematic behaviours can affect each other, and articulating them through emotions, the framework of the therapeutic discourse does not appear to be drawn on in Matiu's descriptions. In

²⁰ Family, or extended family, in te reo Māori.

the representations created in excerpt 13, the friend-cousins simply “walk away” and Matiu says that he would accept admonishment, he would “take it on the chin” (L17-18). There is not description of ongoing verbalisation of emotions to iron out problems that emerge.

5.4 Discussion

In this chapter I have provided detail on how a number of interpretive repertoires were constructed that uphold a perception of men’s friendships being laid-back and drama-free. I have highlighted the ways in which the unmoving confidence of friendships is foregrounded by participants, and have suggested that this is enabled through their autonomous friendships. I link the repertoires of autonomy and self-sufficiency that my participants use to discourses which uphold non-obligatory friendship interactions constituting the best sort of friendship relating, a link that Aristotle also makes.

In order to sustain the presentation of the good/easy friendship, a number of elements of friendship relating that are constructed as work are downplayed, or go unacknowledged. Firstly, by valorising independence and non-obligation, the ways in which friends do have obligations or dependencies on one another are obscured. That obligation or dependency may simply take the form of playing ‘Play Station’ or some other form of ‘hanging out’ on a regular basis, but not fulfilling that expectation may affect friends nonetheless²¹. Obscuring obligation and dependency also closes down possibilities to include interactions which represent such ‘maintenance’, such as more regular contact, or more self-disclosure.

Secondly, the ways in which friends affect and are responsive to each other are de-emphasised. Because emotional interactions are deemed constitutive of maintenance-intense relationships, there is an imperative for participants to *not* reflect on or mention offensive or thoughtless behaviour. Thirdly, the ways in which friendship identities are produced for and through friendships are overlooked. Recognition of the constant work

²¹ An unrecorded discussion with one of my participants after a focus group exemplifies the taken-for-grantedness of the goodness of friendships in this schema. I was told by one of the dyad interviewees that he had never thought about the other participant being his ‘best mate’ until the focus group. The men met most days, and the men’s families also had friend-like relations, and therefore social gatherings were frequent. Despite this, the repertoires of daily life had not been facilitative of reflections of the relative importance of a friend, as denoted in the words ‘best mate’.

of interpreting and evaluating friends is precluded through repertoires which support understandings akin to the complete friendship - autonomous individuals simply engage in activity to grow an assumed goodness. There is less conceptual space here for friends to imagine their friendships as a source of mutual growth and dependence, which is at the core of contemporary understandings of intimacy.

The de-emphasis on the work involved in friendships and the effects of friendships can be linked to the complete friendship functioning to maintain existing social order between similar individuals. The complete friendship was never intended to account for difference and the potential conflict it might bring to friendships, which is reflected in an aversion to emphasising intimacy in friendships. Although there comes with the deep affinity of the complete friendship a certain type of assumed intimacy, this is enabled through its participants 'mirrored' goodness (Lynch 2005: 103). The recognition of difference is obscured. In Lynch's (2005: 103) words:

[Aristotle's] concern is to preserve the advantage he sees in the bond of civic friendship. But to do so, he must downplay the potential for disruption in relationships between friends formed on the basis of choice, dependent on reciprocity, and established on a model that supports the notion of care and concern for a friend for the friend's own sake.

Whilst the therapeutic discourse encourages participants to try and understand selves' and others' emotional needs regardless of accepted power differentials, the intimacy of the complete friendship comes through assumed equality. The complete friendship necessitates a lack of attention to difference in order to exclude some people from being able to carry it out. Similarly, downplaying mutual responsiveness reduces the potential of acknowledging the uniqueness of friendships, actualised through unfolding interactions and co-constructed friendship identities. I do not suggest that my participants should engage with social science theory on the fluidity of identity construction. Instead, I emphasise that the repertoires drawn on offer few possibilities for acknowledging the ways that friends impact on, and orient to, each other – that constitute positive or negative interactions – which facilitate self-realisation and care.

However, maintaining autonomy and self-sufficiency is a way of maximising ontological security that friendships can offer. The solidity of these friendships is achieved by not engaging with friends in ways that might risk the relationship. Lynch (2005: 103) evaluates Aristotle's complete friendship as avoiding:

recognition of the complex social and ethical terrain associated with relationships between friends, and hence of vulnerability and fragility: change, difference and conflict in friendship can destabilise the friendship.

My analysis shows that an important accounting strategy employed for the continued devaluing of such emotional interactions relies on their demarcation as constituting unnecessary maintenance. The logic of the effortless friendship repertoire is tautological. Because the friendships are good and effortless, it provides basis for them continuing in this manner, and questioning these terms would signify obligation, and perhaps emotions, which are antithetical to 'good' friendship relating. This is bolstered by claims of the confidence within friendships – participants then do not need rules about what is expected from friends, the relating is assumed to be good.

Chapter 6: Homosociality, sexism and anti-sexism

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to reflect on how available discourses of sexism and anti-sexism operate in the homosocial setting of men's friendships. In particular I analyse the way my participants managed their talk, and correlating identities, surrounding discourses of the objectification of women. I aim to show how the occasioned nature of sexist/anti-sexist talk is managed alongside discourses of heteromascularity and friendship. I suggest, after others (see for example Edley & Wetherell 2001: 441), that an effective analysis of the operations of sexism requires acknowledgement that the repertoires by which sexism emerges will be varied and used flexibly. I have not shown the full range of contradiction of sexist/non-sexist repertoires in my corpus. For example, there were occasions when my participants made clear that they believed in equal rights for women, or that women were important and intensely highly valued people in their lives. I have prioritised the detailing of the construction of sexist discourses, particularly when sexism is not explicitly indexed, so as to expose something of its often subtle workings.

In chapter 2, I introduced the work of a number of masculinities scholars who argue that sexism and heterosexism are an integral part of heteromascularity culture and are central to the reproduction of identities aligned with orthodox masculinities. Quinn's (2002) insights on girl watching feature in this chapter; I support her findings that girl watching provides a resource for men's everyday joking and is a way of building shared heteromascularity identities (2002: 387). There is also evidence to corroborate Quinn's (2002: 392) thesis that inherent to the 'game' of girl watching is a "compulsory disempathy" for those who are watched. These notions are explored via analysis of excerpts 14 and 15. I argue that in the context of friendship, where much interaction emerges in frames of play, it may be a difficult task for speakers to introduce (serious) concerns of sexism. However, despite this, excerpt 17 demonstrates the ways in which conversationalists' may use their interactional skills to build rhetorically sound arguments in 'difficult' situations, for example, when a friend contests another friend's objectification of women, and does so without loss of face or overt confrontation.

Bird's (1996) findings that I introduced earlier are relevant here; she proposes that the objectification of women is a manifestation of the competitive relations in homosocial settings. Those 'successful' in gaining women's attentions gain a higher rank in the organisation of hierarchical masculinities. Somewhat contrarily, my findings show that sexist repertoires were reproduced as part of bonding or supportive interactions. There is some congruence with Kimmel's (1994: 131) claims that the objectification of women, is produced out of fear, primarily of being deemed some variety of 'sissy' by other men. However, I suggest that what is oriented to by my participants, is not other men's approval, but congruence between identity positions and ideals bound up in the discourses of heteromascularity. Analysis of excerpt 16 shows how participants work collaboratively to construct both ideals about men's sexual performances, and accounting strategies which function to support each other, when ideals are not met. I propose that repertoires reproducing a sexist 'active man/passive woman' dichotomy (Allen 2003) are drawn on throughout these interactions. This repertoire is inherently dilemmatic for participants and therefore organises the accounting strategies undertaken.

Another ideological dilemma around notions of sexism for the men is shown in excerpt 14. There are competing requirements for speakers to a) distance themselves from sexism, thereby avoiding counters of being prejudiced, whilst b) performing heteromascularity identity which reproduces sexism - a dilemma that Korobov (2004) emphasises.

6.2 Data and analysis - the activity of girl watching

In excerpt 14 Arapeta both justifies girl watching, as well as attends to the possibility of it being offensive. This stretch of talk emerges when discussing the differences between the participants' friendships with women and men.

Excerpt 14

- | | | |
|-----|---------|---|
| 1. | Apareta | so for example i i wouldn't talk to to my friend my female |
| 2. | | friend, but we're <u>real</u> close, about what i like in a woman |
| 3. | | physically because <u>she</u> will judge that as me being |
| 4. | | superficial (.) and it <u>might</u> be but it's a natural kind of |
| 5. | | what you're attracted to. whereas i can talk to simon about |
| 6. | | that |
| 7. | Simon | in fact i encourage him to (.) hhh |
| 8. | Maree | compare notes? hh |
| 9. | Arapeta | he wants me to make stuff up to keep the conversation going |
| 10. | | hh umm (.) but y'know you- and at the end of the day they are |
| 11. | | kind of superficial things and they don't always matter when |

12. you kind of choosing a partner (...) but it just allows you to
13. talk about those things guys are interested in things- visual
14. stimuli

The ways in which girl watching is problematic from a woman's perspective is brought into focus by Arapeta, with his acknowledgement that his female friend would consider him "superficial" (L4). However, Arapeta justifies his girl watching with a number of accounting strategies. For example, he immediately counters the possibility of his 'superficiality' with the justification that "it's a natural kind of what you're attracted to" (L4-5). This format is repeated later in "they are kind of superficial things... but it just allows you to talk about those things guys are interested in... visual stimuli" (L11-14). The rhetorical construction of these statements is effective in naturalising girl watching. Firstly, because the statements are framed as justifications, it supports his inference (L3) that his female friend judging him for girl watching is unfair. Secondly, the structure in lines 12-13 around being 'allowed to talk about the things you need to' mimics a discourse used in therapy; the phrasing intimates that not talking about girl watching might be injurious to psychological health. Thirdly, the 'girl watching is natural' argument is strengthened with a lexical choice that is reminiscent of scientific testing protocol. Stating that men are interested in "visual stimuli" (L13-14) invokes a scientific explanation for all men evaluating women in this way. Fourthly, and linked, the generalising statement of guys being allowed to talk about "those things [they] are interested in" (L13) suggests that *all* guys are interested in girl watching. There is semblance here with some of Speer's (2001: 120) explorations of how men position themselves around a macho man (i.e. orthodox masculinity) subject positions. She argues that a common way of constructing masculinities is to avoid being categorised as a macho man, whilst supporting the construction. This is achieved by embracing elements commonly associated with orthodox masculinity, but portraying that embracing as through a lack of choice. Arapeta's framing of girl watching being natural for men is an example of this. He claims he has no choice to not embrace girl watching and be part of the heteromasculture in which it operates - it is purported to be part of his 'natural' make up as a man.

Despite the 'girl watching is natural' repertoire, Arapeta distances himself from it when, in lines 11-12, he constructs his identity as a man who considers evaluations of women's physical attributes less important when "choosing a partner". Doing so is an attempt to

pre-empt potential criticism that he evaluates *all* women this way. This justification is possibly motivated by him talking to a female researcher.

There is indication that the girl watching is a form of play in Simon stating that he encourages Arapeta to report back to him about it and laughing (L7). This is reminiscent of the multi-player aspect of girl watching, which Quinn (2002: 392-394) notes. Linking to the compulsory disempathy element of girl watching, although Arapeta raises the possibility that girl watching is problematic, he frames this as a personal problem for himself. This is the case even when he highlights that his female friend may take issue with his girl watching; the problem is framed around him being considered superficial. Girl watching as undesirable for the watched, or references to the objectification of women more generally, are not mentioned.

Excerpt 15 similarly indicates a compulsory disempathy, but it also points to a reliance on girl watching as part of shared masculine identity. The following passage of talk emerged when the Arapeta and Simon were discussing the difficulties of self-disclosing within friendships. Humour is highlighted as a resource to manage that difficulty. Girl watching is identified as an exemplar topic constituting humorous talk, which is also referred to as “surface” or “bullshit” talk.

Excerpt 15

1. Arapeta we actually do surface as a strategy for getting to the
2. deeper stuff (.) cos you don walk in and go 'heya goin mate
3. (.) o:ah o:ah i really hurt here' ((holding his hand on his
4. heart and facing Simon))(.) you do do the bullshit first
5. which is kinda like 'ya heya goin yea, oaw look at that
6. girl' or (.) HA
7. All hhh
8. Arapeta you know you do we kinda have a joke (.) it's not really
9. surface it's joke. and it's not it's not superficial cos it's
10. actually a really important part of (..) relaxing with each
11. other.

Arapeta asserts that a certain amount of ‘surface stuff’ and joking should take place before the “deeper stuff” can be discussed (L1-2). Demonstrating the extent of girl watching as a naturalised part of joking together, in producing an example that is *designed to function as an illustration of everyday play*, or, “surface stuff”, Arapeta imagines a moment of girl watching between friends (L5-6). The mutual objectification of a woman is posed as an acceptable and likely example activity that functions as “a really

important part of relaxing with each other” (L10-11). There is support here for Quinn’s claims that the naturalisation of the objectification of women centres on it emerging as play.

The talk in excerpts 14 and 15 show how ‘positive’ evaluations of girl watching can facilitate bonding. By setting girl watching as natural for men there is support for the notion of the objectification of women building heteromascuine (sexual) identity. Men who girl watch perform ‘one of the guys’, and not one of the girls or one of the gays. Another aspect of performing one of the guys is highlighted by Arapeta’s assertion that joking is an important part of friendships. This takes on pertinence here when it is taken into consideration that sexist exchanges transferred via irony and humour often remain “rhetorically insulated and difficult to challenge without looking puritanical, naïve, or lacking in sense of humour” (Mills, 2003, as cited by Korobov 2004: 179). Those wishing to overtly contest girl watching emerging as play are disadvantaged in that they risk being perceived as ‘spoil sports’ of the girl watching game. Thus, girl watching as fun is doubly problematic. Firstly, as is shown in excerpt 15, objectification of women is valued not just in itself, but as a fun activity. Secondly, rejecting girl watching on moral grounds, in a serious frame, would be a difficult task in interactional terms.

6.3 Data and analysis - negotiating a passive woman/active man dilemma

The talk in excerpt 16 emerges as part of a discussion around competitiveness in friendships and shows another way in which sexist repertoires were reproduced, alongside repertoires of ideals of heteromascuine sexuality. The example provided concerns the potentiality of participants being sexually undesirable to women as part of a particular type of interaction the men outline, which occurs in bars – being ‘cock blocked’. Harry explains that whenever he starts talking to a woman in a bar (I refer to her as ‘target woman’) with the possibility of developing a sexual relationship, target woman’s friends take her away.

Excerpt 16

- | | | |
|----|-------|---|
| 1. | Dave | yea remember what we were talking about ((speaking to |
| 2. | | Harry))? you know, like as soon as one girl gets hit |
| 3. | | on, the other girls= |
| 4. | Harry | = <u>yeah</u> that pisses me off |
| 5. | Dave | see? ((directed at Maree)) that competitiveness |
| 6. | Maree | hmm? |
| 7. | Harry | girl’s friends is the worst thing |

8. Maree oh hhh
 9. Jordan yea
 10. Harry they always like come and they're like 'oh c'mon let's
 11. go let's go' ((imitates the friend of the woman talking
 12. Harry)) and i'm like 'what's whatta you doin? why?'=
 13. Jordan =cock block
 14. Maree yea but that's a protection thing isn't it rather than
 15. a competition?
 16. Harry yea but they do it on purpose i reckon
 17. Dave nah i reckon=
 18. Jordan =i reckon it's because the attention's not on them
 19. Maree oh
 20. Harry exact- YEAH
 21. Dave yea the attention's not on them
 22. Jordan they're grabbing them but they're really saying 'look
 23. at me look at me'
 24. Dave and then whereas guys if, you know, if we set them up
 25. which obviously happens you know we're like 'ye::ah
 26. bo::y'(.) see we egg them on where girls are just like
 27. nah'

The target women's friends are labelled here as being a 'cock block'; I will continue labelling these friends as such. Although the men here do not explicitly state that they are trying to talk to women so as to have sex with them, it is implied in the label 'cock block' that it is the men's in-roads to developing some sort of sexual relationship that is at stake. The cock blocks are able to carry out their block easily – they simply take away their (target woman) friend. Dave explains that if a man is successful in gaining favour of the target woman, perhaps through the help of a friend, he deserves congratulating and support, indicated here in the use of the emphasised "ye::ah bo::y" (L25-26). As is found elsewhere (Wetherell 1998: 400), male sexuality is constructed as performance and achievement. That these 'set-ups' are said to "obviously" (L25) happen naturalises the expectation that this is what men friends should do for each other – try to secure further interactions with women for their friends.

The conversation draws on dominant (hetero)sexual discourses that set men as active and women as passive, and where women are vulnerable to falling victim to fulfilling men's sexual gratification (Allen 2003: 218). In line with this logic, this excerpt shows men describing themselves in the active position. They try to talk to (target) women who are less willing, and there is complaint that women do not 'egg each other on' to engage with men (L24-27). I too am complicit in maintaining these discourses when, in lines 14-15, I suggest that perhaps the women wish to take their friends away because they want

to protect them. The men effectively become a battleground for oppositional ideologies of a) men must secure sexual interactions with women; and b) women do not want, or are reticent to engage in, sexual interactions with men.

Although the passive woman/active man repertoires are drawn on and reproduced, women are also described as having powers over men. So successful are the cock blockers that they are deemed a formidable force. Harry positions himself as a victim to them, who are the “worst thing” (L7). However, the legitimacy of the cock blockers in an active role is denied. Harry asks of the cock blocker, albeit figuratively, “what's whatta you doin? why?” (L12). Her actions are perplexing and unnecessary; they are not deemed appropriate or fair actions and deserve questioning.

In addition to being named a ‘cock blocker’, the cock blocker’s supposed inappropriate behaviour is delegitimised with the reporting of the ‘cock block’ being motivated by jealousy. The cock blocker is competing against her friend for the men’s attention (L18-23). Presenting the motivations of the cock blocker in this way serves a dual purpose. Firstly, it works as a strategy to deal with the potentially damaging representations of the men as undesirable and worthy of rejection by women. The men agree that target women leave only because of their cock blocking friends; there is no suggestion that they leave because they choose to after making an evaluation of the men. Secondly, by claiming the cock blockers are jealous, it bolsters the men’s reported desirability – both of the (figurative) women wanted the men to look at them. Simultaneously, the agency of the target woman is denied by insinuating that she leaves only because her friend pulls her away.

Thus, the repertoire that women either are, or should be, sexually passive, is incompatible with a heteromasculine repertoire that emphasises the importance of securing sexual interactions. Another imperative of heteromascularity that is at risk of not being met here is being desirable to women (Anderson 2008: 106). The men orient to the problem of not meeting that imperative by constructing alternative reasons for not securing the affections of target women, thus avoiding loss of face. In this particular stretch of talk, cultural tropes involving women being jealous and competitive regarding their physical attractiveness are mobilised in order to avoid possible evaluations of the men being

undesirable to the women. The clear collaboration of suggesting and agreeing upon the cock blocker explanation for women not engaging in sexual relations can be viewed as an interaction that promotes support and alleviates anxiety when the ideals of heteromascuine sexuality are not met.

6.4 Data and analysis - non-confrontational anti-sexism between friends

The dilemmatic nature of sexist repertoires and masculine ideals is clear if we contrast the previous stretch of talk with the following. In the previous example (and those prior to it), women's subjectivity is denied, but in the next stretch of talk the objectification of women is constructed as highly offensive. Harry uses the focus group as an opportunity to tell a story about his negative reactions to Dave's sexually explicit talk.

Excerpt 17

1. Harry when i first moved in (.) the way dave ta:lked (.) about
2. gi:rls
3. Dave hhh
4. Rob hhh
5. Harry it just like shocked me (...) literally (.)
6. All hhh
7. Harry seriously, and i had i had a talk with him about it
8. Maree really? hh
9. Harry i was like, yea aye, you remember that? ((to Dave))
10. Dave i'm i'm pretty explicit ((to Maree))
11. Harry i was like 'it it freaks me out man' (.) especially being
12. around ((name of woman who lives in house)) cos she's one of
13. my best friends so i was like 'i wonder how she feels about
14. that' and umm (.)
15. Rob YOU'RE A BAD BOY ((shaking his pointed finger)) hhh
16. Dave hhh
17. Jordan hhh
18. Harry that took me like
19. Maree so you were offended and ((name of woman)) wasn't?
20. Harry umm=
21. Rob =nah but ((name of woman)) has known dave longer=
22. Dave =yea
23. Jordan so she's gotten used to it
24. Dave so me an- i do speak like that with ((name of woman)) as well
25. hh
26. Rob yea
27. Harry but i didn't know and i was like maybe- you know umm (...) so i
28. was just like- yea to me it was just totally foreign aye cos
29. i'd never seen that before, like in front of a girl saying
30. some of the most the most the most disgusting things ever
31. Rob hhh can you please give me some examples?
32. Harry he's gotten better though to his credit, like i don't think
33. you do it as much as you used to.

Harry uses both his own reactions, as well as the imagined responses of the woman who lives in the same house to convey the level of indecency of Dave's talk. He sets himself in

such stark contrast to Dave in recalling that it was “totally foreign” (L28) to hear such talk about girls. Harry puts in a great amount of interactional work to soften what could have otherwise been a rather damning form of disapproval between friends. One of the ways this is achieved is by ensuring descriptions constitute a continual relaying of past events. (see L18; L11; L27-30). By setting the point of contention in the past Harry manages to highlight the problematic behaviour without directly challenging Dave’s current behaviour. Directly confronting Dave is also avoided by Harry relaying his *reactions* to Dave’s explicit talk, rather than providing evaluative terms for the talk itself. He says, for example, that he was shocked (L5), that it freaked him out (L11) and that he had never seen someone talking like that (L29). He does provide one direct evaluation of the explicit talk when he says that Dave said “the most disgusting things ever” (L30), but again, the directness of this is reduced by placing it in the context of his story, in the past. He at no point makes evaluations of Dave himself; he does not, for example, say that Dave himself is disgusting when he speaks “like that”.

In addition to achieving a less confrontational tone, keeping the story in the past works as a rhetorical device for strengthening the argument. When Harry recalls his shocked reactions, they are not offered as opinion, but as occurrences, and are therefore not easily contested. Moreover, the effect of repeating descriptions of past shock and dismay Harry experienced further implicates Dave’s *current* offensive behaviour. We know that Dave still talks “like that” (L24). Thus, each iteration of Harry’s reported shock serves to proclaim the severity of Dave’s current, unacceptable explicit sexual talk, but somewhat indirectly.

Dave makes no attempts to refute the claims that he is routinely sexually explicit and offensive, in fact he explains twice that he is (L10, L24); his lack of attempt at justification suggests his acquiescence with Harry’s claims. The other two friends do not explicitly comment on whether the explicit talk is offensive or not, but their reactions point to corroboration of it being so. Jordan, for example, says that the woman who lives in the house has “gotten used to it” (L23); by posing it as something she tolerates, it can be deduced that a negative evaluation of Dave’s talk is being made. Like Jordan, Rob does not seem to take a side here. However, he indicates his complicity in the disciplining by gleefully calling Dave a “bad boy” and laughing at him (L15). Indication that the reprimand has come to an end is found in Harry crediting Dave with decreasing his

explicit talk (L32-33). Applauding Dave in this manner suggests his relative authority on the matter; the subject position taken, of de-valuing the objectification of women, is accepted. Whilst this stretch of talk constitutes a form of discipline, Harry does so in a non-confrontational and convincing manner; it is difficult for Dave to contest the complaints conveyed as they are. Through making his feeling offended known, Harry conveys an evaluation of some forms of the objectification of women as unacceptable, which is taken to be valid by the group, including the 'perpetrator'.

6.5 Discussion

In this chapter I firstly analysed some of the ways men talk about women as sexual objects (or subjects) that, in the end, deny the harm in the objectification of women. Although girl watching was oriented to as problematic for women, accounting strategies worked to defend continued perpetration and to distance speakers from appearing as unreasonable. This accounting took the form of the construction of repertoires that posit the objectification as natural for men, as merely a form of play and as an activity that creates understanding and closeness between friends.

I then showed how discourses of sexism may be used to support friends when they do not manage to meet the ideals of heteromale sexual identity. Here, women were constructed as competitive, jealous, overly concerned with their perceived physical attractiveness, and denied agency when being 'non-compliant' to the men's 'wishes' – achieving the imperatives of heteromale sexuality. Despite the negative evaluation of women, sexism was *not* oriented to by participants. They did not attend to the possibility that they would be perceived as prejudiced. I propose that, in part, their (lack of) accounting reflects a prioritisation of attending to the 'problem' of being perceived as being rejected and undesirable to the target women, over the problem of being perceived as unkind or prejudiced. Also, like the analyses regarding the justification of girl watching, the interactions and meanings produced were congruent with ideals of friendship and being supportive of friends. Sexist activities (girl watching) were constructed by participants as promoting intimacy between friends, and sexist talk (reproducing a passive woman repertoire) was mobilised as a sense-making tool when risk of being perceived as less of a man emerges.

An alternative view is provided to the explanations that Bird (1996) and Kimmel outline, which centre on competitiveness between men, and fear of being exposed as not 'man enough'. My findings highlight the importance of accounting for the ways in which sexist talk is produced in specific contexts, and I wish to reflect on this in relation to the following quote from Kimmel (1994: 128):

Think of how other men boast to one another of their accomplishments – from their latest sexual conquest to the size of the fish they caught – and how we constantly parade the markers of manhood – wealth, power, status, sexy women – in front of other men, desperate for their approval.

Firstly, one of my key findings is that sexism is reproduced through friendship interactions in ways that promote conviviality and shared understanding. The discussions by my friend participants constructed the objectification of women, and securing sexual interactions with women, as collaborative enterprises. Friends were not seeking approval from other men per se, but they were nevertheless encouraging one another to fulfil requirements of the ideal that Kimmel seems to be describing. For example, sex was constructed as an achievement, but one that friends encouraged others to succeed in, with the recognition of accomplishments being shared. The repertoires of friendship, and associated subject positions (accepted ways of being a friend) affected how sexist talk emerged. I did not find evidence of the intense competition that Kimmel or Bird write about.

It should be taken into consideration that the focus groups I carried out are perhaps unlikely to emulate environments in which participants understood them as (interactionally) appropriate spaces to boast about their 'manly' achievements, such as sexual conquests. But this nevertheless brings me to my second point. Like others (for example Edley & Wetherell 2001; Speer 2002; Korobov 2004), I suggest that more effective analysis of the operations of sexism requires acknowledgement that the discourses by which sexism emerges will be fragmented, varied and used flexibly; individuals' positioning in relation to such discourses will reflect this heterogeneity. It will not always be the case that men boast about their sexual 'accomplishments', and sometimes men will consider it appropriate to admit that they have not achieved that goal. Sexist discourses are used flexibly to meet the demands of specific (friendship) contexts.

It is a lack of a context-sensitive approach that leads to intimations that men will neatly fit into particular categories, for instance sexist or non-sexist. For instance, with regards to Kimmel's claims that 'traditional' masculinity is produced out of fear of other men, my participants did not so much display a fear of exposing their potential 'shortcomings' to other men (their friends), but to intersubjectively-understood and produced repertoires of what constitutes a shortcoming. These repertoires can be contradictory. For example, we have both non-sexist and sexist repertoires produced here by the same group of men – different contexts 'required' different responses on questions of gender relations. In a similar vein, by not taking a more context-specific approach, a sense of the lived reality of on-going construction of discourse is lost. For example, as Korobov (2004: 186) notes, balancing the norms of heteromascularity and those of liberal equality linked to non-sexism are not so much about "balancing pre-established cultural norms but is rather a lived ideological dilemma – a dilemma that is repeatedly constructed and managed within local conversations". This emphasis foregrounds the "practical ideological tensions" (Korobov 2004: 187) and the available discursive resources available that men manage in the everyday.

In relation to Kimmel's and Bird's assertions that men behave in sexist ways because of masculine norms, I follow Wetherell and Edley (1999: 353) in proposing that these norms are in fact discursive practices. Whether it is the visual parading of a sexy woman or its re-telling, it is shared discursive resources – a limited pool of sense-making stories - that "produce subject positions... and work ideologically to maintain power relations" (Edley & Wetherell 2001: 440). The sense-making repertoires I have outlined in this chapter may be considered as simply individuals' beliefs, but, there are ideological implications for taking for granted and stating as factual, for example, the existence of jealous cock blocking friends, or men's natural, biological need to objectify women. In addition, norms are not as stable as is implied in Kimmel's quote. Regardless of the rhetorical effectiveness in portraying and justifying accounts as commonsensical, the different requirements for how to be a man, or a man-friend, change according to context.

An example of contradiction, an inconsistency of positioning that both Kimmel (1994: 131) and Bird (2006: 130) highlight, is that men carry out sexist behaviours in homosocial settings, even when they admit that it is not consistent with their beliefs. If we consider the ways in which the objectification of women emerges as joke or play in

friendship interactions, a possible answer is provided as to why men do not voice their contestation. Not only would contestation mean some kind of confrontation between friends, it might also carry a high risk of being accused of not having a sense of humour, and loss of face. Furthermore, when sexism is conveyed via humour it is an inoculating device; it provides protection for the speaker from appearing “shallow, sexist [or] ignorant” (Korobov 2005: 242). Sexist talk conveyed via irony or hyperbole is less likely to be identified as sexist in the first place. This perhaps reduces the potential for the social practice of talk within friendships to offer a space for contesting sexism. The salience is heightened when read alongside the assertions of participants that effortlessness is a highly-prized element of friendship relating. Nonetheless, the playing out of non-sexist discourses, and an awareness of the objectification of women as harmful (even if that was at times denied) is an important finding to point to here. The serious rejection of sexist discourses is still quite possible, and at times, granted authority.

Chapter 7: ‘Homohysteria’ in action and a managing intimacy with humour

7.1 Introduction

In this final analysis chapter, I focus on the ways in which heterosexism operates in my participants’ talk, and relate my findings to Anderson’s inclusive masculinities theory. I explained in greater detail inclusive masculinity theory in chapter 2, but a fundamental tenet of it is that in our contemporary cultural terrain, levels of homohysteria are reducing, along with a decrease in the cultural fear of being homosexualised. These trends are tied in with another important change. Orthodox masculinity’s hegemonic position in the gender order is being dramatically challenged, with a higher cultural value attributed to “softer, more tactile and emotional forms of heterosexual masculinities” (Anderson 2011: 565). However, although Anderson and his colleagues have a wealth of research to support their claims that there is a decreased anxiety and fear over being homosexualised (for example, Anderson 2005; Anderson 2007; Anderson 2008; Anderson 2009; Adams et al. 2010; Anderson & McGuire 2010; Peterson & Anderson 2012), I would suggest there is a lack of sensitivity to the highly contextual and processual nature of meaning-making throughout the works.

For example, the following participant statements, taken from research based on inclusive masculinities theory, are taken to be evidence of decreasing homohysteria: “I think it’s cool having gay guys around” (Anderson 2007: 611); and, “I have absolutely no problems with gay men” (Anderson & McGuire 2010: 255). However, there is consensus between those who take a discursive approach to studying prejudicial talk that it is a fundamental task of speakers to portray themselves as caring and egalitarian (see for example Edwards 2003; Speer 2002; Speer & Potter 2000). From this perspective, the above quotes can be problematised. For example, taking a liberal, gay-friendly stance is often combined with, and masks, subtle anti-gay sentiment in heterosexist talk (Korobov 2004: 182; Speer & Potter 2002: 167). I aim to provide detail on the evaluative practice that occurs in talk, where meanings of the same attitudinal object (homosexuality) are highly variable and dynamic (Speer & Potter 2000: 545). In doing so, I hope to avoid treating talk as simply representational of “attitudes as mental constructs that can be used to distinguish between individuals, or as predictors of behaviour” (Speer & Potter

2000: 545). Rather than interpreting talk as representational of stable attitudes, and attaching those attitudes to particular types of men, I view talk as performing actions. In this chapter I examine how 'homohysteria' or being 'homosexualised' gets done in-talk. I return to the advantages of providing a context-sensitive discursive approach to exploring homohysteria and heterosexism in the discussion section of this chapter.

Heterosexism is thoroughly institutionalised and operates via a diverse set of practices (Braun 2000: 133), so what specific interpretive repertoires are evident in my corpus that support heterosexism? And, how are those interpretive repertoires used as discursive resources and reconstituted in talk? Similar to questions raised in chapter 6, where attention was drawn to the ways in which speakers must manage contradictory repertoires relating to sexim, in what ways do my participants distance themselves from heterosexism, whilst portraying themselves as non-heterosexualist? The excerpts shown in this chapter are not easily defined as representing either queer/gay-friendly or heterosexist stances; often they are both. It is my aim to show the complexity of the ideological field of homohysteria, while demonstrating that a detailed analysis allows for conclusions to be drawn from this relative mire.

7.2 Data and analysis - homohysteria and homosexualising

The following stretch of talk is illustrative of some of the dilemmas that speakers manage when attending to heterosexist concerns. There is a tension for the main narrator surrounding what kinds of associations with homosexuality are undesirable. The talk centres on a recent event whereby Rob's friend told him he was gay.

Excerpt 18

1. Rob we were sitting out for lunch and he was like 'bro ummm YOU
2. KNOW I'M GAY AYE?' and i was like
3. Harry hhh
4. Rob hhh like he's trying to just put it out there and i was like
5. 'ye::ah i kinda got the feeling that you were gay' and he's
6. like 'oh yeh, sweet' and then we were like we just carried on
7. lunch from there and then-
8. Harry hh awesome hh
9. Maree hh really? hh
10. Rob (.) um yea cos i didn't want i didn't want to make it
11. awkward for him because it probably- it would've been
12. really hard for him to actually say that (..) but you know he
13. knows i got a missus and everything (..) but now now that-
14. i've always thought he was gay and i've always hung out with
15. him. but now that i kn:ow that he's gay, i still hang out
16. with him, but i always like think if it's a situation where

17. it's just me and him
 18. Jordan you're just consciously thinking in the back (.) yea
 19. Rob you're just consciously thinking in the back
 20. Harry mmm
 21. Rob like, what are other people thinking? you know whereas before
 22. i didn't do that
 23. Jordan do i look gay cos i'm walking with him kinda thing yeap
 24. Rob nah nah it's- oah (.) umm yea a little bit like that a little
 25. bit like that
 26. Harry but you kind of interpret what he does a little bit
 27. differently, like if he does something you might think he's
 28. got a slightly different motive then before
 29. Rob nah i don't nah nah nah, nah nah. so like our friendship
 30. hasn't-
 31. Maree you just worry about what other people think
 32. Rob YEAH yeah i'm just like
 33. Maree but do you care?
 34. Rob ((shakes head)) nah

Rob informs the group that after his friend declared himself as being gay, further discussion on the topic was avoided (L6-7). It can be read in my questioning response, “really?” (L9) that I oriented to Rob’s lack of willingness to talk to his friend about his homosexuality as potentially problematic (prejudicial). Rob is then forced to provide a counter about why the topic was brushed over. This comes in the form of an explanation that his unwillingness to talk about his friend’s coming out to him was a form of protection – he did not “want to make it awkward” for his friend (L10-11). Rob’s accounting therefore avoids discussion of him feeling uncomfortable about his friend outing himself. However, it is clear from his next utterance that his friend being gay is a concern for him. Rob clarifies “he knows I got a missus and everything” (L12-13), thereby attending to the possible problem of others perceiving elements of homosexuality within his friendship. Note that Rob draws attention to his friend’s knowledge (“*he knows* I got a missus”). This works to close down the possibility that his friend has designs on him, as well as reaffirm his heterosexual status. The use of “and everything” is a rhetorical strategy to encourage listeners to extend the understanding of his friend not being attracted to him, beyond that afforded via Rob having a girlfriend. It seems that being the object of gay affections is understood as something that is homosexualising.

The change from Rob just thinking his friend is gay, to knowing he is gay, is oriented to a number of times throughout lines 13-21. However, Rob seems to have trouble in describing exactly how knowing his friend is gay has changed things. Rob does explicitly orient to the problem of worrying about what other people think when they see the pair

together now (L16-17; 21). When Jordan suggests “you're just consciously thinking in the back” (L18), which Rob repeats, and completes with “what are other people thinking?” (L21), the use of the impersonal ‘you’re’ is generalising. It is implied that *everyone* would be worried about what others think. Worrying about what others think is therefore confirmed as a natural response to hanging out with a gay friend. This works to support the status quo of people perceiving homosexuality as notable and problematic.

Throughout lines 13-16, Rob emphasises that he always was, and still is, willing to hang out with his friend. These are orientations to the potential counter-claim that his friend being gay bothers him and he might treat his friend differently. Conversely, despite bringing attention to the way in which his friendship has not changed, throughout the same three lines, Rob repeatedly orients to the problem of his friendship changing. These contradictory positions show that Rob is caught in an interactional dilemma. He pre-empts potential claims that his friend being gay bothers him, which would position him as prejudiced, whilst expressing that his friend’s outing himself does indeed bother him.

Although Rob cites people seeing him and his friend together as a problem, explicit descriptions of the troubling interpretations onlookers might make are never made. Given that Rob does not explain which interpretations of the friendship he does not want people to have, his friends who are present attempt to clarify these reasons. Jordan assumes that he does not want people to think he “look[s] gay” (L23). First Rob disagrees, inoculating himself from being perceived as heterosexist. But then changes his mind, saying, it is “a little bit like that” (L24). Whilst not entirely letting go of the inoculating position, he concedes that, partially, hanging out with his friend is problematic because people might think he ‘looks gay’. As is noted elsewhere (Speer & Potter 2000: 560), being labelled gay is not always treated as negative; that meaning must be worked into it by speakers. Although throughout this extract no-one says that being gay is bad or wrong, we can see quite clearly here that it connotes negativity. This comes, for example, via the evaluation that to be perceived as ‘looking gay’ is an unwanted condition.

Harry goes on to suggest that what has changed in the friendship is that Rob “might think [his friend has] got a slightly different motive than before” (L27-28). Similar to his closing down of possibilities of his friend being attracted to him earlier, Rob responds to this

suggestion emphatically with “nah I don’t nah nah nah, nah nah” (L29). His strenuous denial is part of a rhetorical strategy that shows his continued orientation to his friend’s homosexuality being a problem he must attend to. I then suggest that the issue is that Rob worries about what people think, as Rob himself suggested earlier, which is agreed to (L24-25). I follow this with a question about whether he cares what people think. Rob reads my evaluation in the question that he should not care what people think, and replies “nah”. Following my lead, there is further denial that his engagements with his gay friend, and others’ interpretations of them, bother Rob.

Both directly, and indirectly, heterosexism and homophobia are oriented to throughout this excerpt. Rob’s denials that his friend’s homosexuality is a concern, and his reluctance to discuss why it is problematic for others to see them together, denote awareness that such prejudice might reflect badly on his identity as a speaker (Speer & Potter 2000: 552). They are indicative of a cultural climate where discourses that openly support the validity of homosexuality are valued, as per Anderson’s theorising. Simultaneously, from the very outset, homosexuality is oriented to as a problem and constitutive of repertoires that construct homosexuality as undesirable. Likewise, talk is managed in ways that accomplish a distancing from engagement in homosexual relations. For example, a status quo for homosexuality’s devalued status is rationalised here. Rob’s constructions of his friend being gay resulting in personal difficulty for him are effective in this respect. The men’s self-positioning is reflexive to heteromale norms which deny any associations with homosexuality, but, this self-positioning must be done using repertoires that do not state openly that being gay is wrong or unacceptable.

I have drawn on a singular excerpt to discuss the possible organisation of heterosexist talk, and to illustrate some of the ways ‘homosexualisation’ might play out in the everyday. In doing so I hope to have shown how contradiction, dilemma and multiple-positions of self in a particular context might support heteronormative discourses. In the next section, the focus remains on the ways in which attempts at negating ‘homosexualising’ are carried out, but the analysis is slightly broader. Attention is paid to the different ways a particular pattern of talk – something akin to a ‘bromance’ narrative – surfaced across my corpus.

7.3 Data and analysis - managing intimacy with the humour of homo-play

When intimacy and closeness of friendships entered some of my participants' discussions, there was an orientation to being homosexualised; participants attended to tensions around their performing of intimacy. One way that some groups of men routinely managed this tension was by using humour. Humour is often employed to maintain boundaries of moral codes; what people find funny (or unacceptable) constitutes a "cultural thermometer" (Medhurst 2007: back page). The often vicious joking in homosocial settings is testament to the potentials of humour being used to maintain a strict hetero/homo divide (see for example Mccann et al. 2010). The name-calling 'pussy' or 'faggot' and such like are examples of this. However, humour may also be used to move existing boundaries. Just as Arapeta acknowledged when stating his preference for initiating self-disclosure with joking (chapter 6), humour can be used to create sites in which taboo subjects or difficult topics can be broached (Oring 2008).

The particular type of joking interactions that I refer to here centre on participants' parodying themselves as being gay, or making jokes about the similarities between their friendship relating and interpersonal relating between romantic couples. I term this interpretative repertoire 'homo-play'. Like Alberti's (2013) assessments on the successes of the bromantic comedy genre, the humour in the homo-plays rest on the tensions which come with the incompatibility of discourses of intimacies relating to 'inclusive masculinities', and the (lack of) intimacies associated with 'orthodox masculinities'.

Importantly, even though the humour is easily recognised, it relies on double-meanings and ambiguity. For example we might ask, what meanings are in play when heterosexual men light-heartedly simulate homosexual relations within their own friendships? Is it a way of reaffirming homosexuals as 'others' by parodying them? Or, if heterosexual men affectionately joke about their close relationships, is it a way of validating the intimacy that is made reference to? What are the ideological effects of homo-play if heteromasculine sexuality is fundamentally defined via its difference from femininity and homosexuality? In the following section I argue that the homo-play allows men to acknowledge intimate aspects of their friendships in ways that do not risk their heteromasculine status, however conversely, there is an endorsement of 'traditionally' feminine intimacies, which subverts heteronormativity.

An example homo-play is shown in excerpt 19; I used part of this excerpt in chapter 4 regarding self-disclosing, which is the main topic of conversation here.

Excerpt 19

1. Simon i've got about three or four guys in my life that (.) i'm
2. very open with
3. Arapeta so i'm not- it's not just-=
4. Simon =ara arapeta is one of them (.) it's not just you bro
((directed at Arapeta, and smiling))
5. Maree hh
6. Arapeta hurt
7. Simon and umm and i can't really speak for what it's like for- like
8. i i don know if a lot of me:n are like that cos I find that
9. (.) a lot of guys that I socialise with umm in a lesser kind
10. of intimate way (...) well not kind of ((grabs at Arapeta's
11. nipple)) y'know touchy way ((smiling))
12. Maree hhh
13. Simon umm end up getting into heavy conversations with me so maybe,
14. i dunno, maybe a lot of guys haven't got people

The joke begins when Arapeta feigns disbelief that he is not the only one that Simon is “very open with” (L2-3). The humour relies on presenting the friendship as being similar to a monogamous romantic relationship. More specifically, the joke relies on the unlikeliness of their relationship being ‘too intimate’. But what spurs the likening of their relationship to a romantic dyad and the humour contained within? I suspect that this joke about romantic exclusivity may not have worked if the activity in question was not about being “very open”. The men make a link between intimacy as related to self-disclosing, and intimacy as per sexual/romantic relationships, and manage that tension with a joke.

There is similar linking made in lines 9-13. In Simon stating that he socialises with some guys “in a lesser kind of intimate way”, he is also conveying that he *is* more intimate with some friends. The intimacies being referred to are those that come with the “heavy conversations” (L13) of self-disclosing. However Simon pre-empts a claim that the intimacies are of a problematic (homosexual) nature, ironically, by parodying men in a romantic relationship. Perhaps the joke here is more firmly a parody of not just of a romantic dyad, but a (homo)sexual one, with Simon reaching out to squeeze Arapeta’s nipple, and suggesting that their relationship is “touchy” (L12), to intensify the homo parody. The joke is funny because of the discrepancy between the physical intimacy in their homo-play and the unlikeliness of physical intimacy emerging in their ‘real’ friendship. The irony and exaggeration does not cancel out the homo message, but it

greatly mitigates it. However, that the homo message holds such currency as humour is an orientation to concern of intimacy in the friendship. Their adoption of irony exposes their closeness as something that requires interactional management (Korobov 2005). Nevertheless, the ironic delivery allows the men to reaffirm both their heterosexuality, and acknowledge the intimate nature of their friendship.

Excerpts 20 and 21 also speak to the currency that the ironic likening of friendships to romantic relationships has as play.

Excerpt 20

1. Eric he called me his second girlfriend to his girlfriend the
2. other day hh
3. All hhh
4. Eric (get rid of) a few days hh
5. James he's only second cos he doesn't send me any 'x's back
6. when he texts me. so you're number two. sorry eric.

Here, Eric re-tells James speaking of him as a second girlfriend. As part of understandings of orthodox masculinity, one might posit that it is some kind of taunt to liken a man to a girl. However, it is the closeness of a girlfriend/boyfriend relationship that is oriented to, rather than a suggestion that he is feminine or homosexual. Eric's public re-telling of an event that, presumably, occurred in private, suggests that their closeness is something to be proud of, even if in the guise of a joke that he is someone's girlfriend. However, when James furthers the joke (L5), he more firmly plays with intimacy as romance, stating that Eric would be his girlfriend if he included kisses ("x's") when he sends James text messages. The last part of the joke (L6) switches to play on the idea that it is Eric who wishes that he was James's girlfriend, indicated in James apologising for having to let Eric down on that front (L6). He therefore plays with the heteromasculine imperative of being attractive to others, but subverts it somewhat with the homo-play theme here.

There are no explicit details provided about why it is that James likens his and Eric's relationship to a boyfriend/girlfriend one. However, everyone understands the joke, including myself who has never met the men before. We are able to fill in the gaps because we understand the bromance repertoire being replicated, and the irony implicit in it. Nevertheless, there are hints to aid listeners in joining up the dots on how James and Eric's relationship resembles a romantic one. Their communications seem to be frequent, with texts being sent as an on-going activity (L5-6), and it was just "the other day" (L1-2)

that the described event occurred. At this stage of the focus group, they have already told me that they hang out at university and on the weekends. Spending lots of time together, engaged in a range of activities, is an indication of their closeness. The men manage the tension that comes with closeness with bromantic humour.

Excerpt 21 is another example where the affection between the friends is part of a humorous exchange. Preceding the text shown is a discussion in which the men claim that it is common to describe a friend's good qualities to other people, but not to a friend directly.

Excerpt 21

1. Rob yea like 'they're cool' (.) he wants to be my my brother in
2. law ((pointing at Harry)) so hhh
3. Harry hh i told ((Rob's girlfriend))'s sister, she was over once, i
4. said that hhh i go i go 'hey ((woman's name)) we could get
5. married (.) and then I'd be rob's brother-in-law'
6. All hhh
7. Harry i was like 'i like you too but'
8. All hhhh

The first part of the re-told joke is that Harry casually suggests to the sister of Rob's girlfriend that they could carry out the (very serious) act of getting married. We learn why the implausible suggestion is being made in the second part of the joke. It is divulged that the marriage would enable Harry to be closer to Rob; they would then be related as brothers-in-law. The last part of the joke, where he tells the woman "I like you too but" (L5), augments the idea that Harry's attentions are towards Rob, and not the woman. Similar to excerpt 20, it seems there is pride in being the object of such affections, with Rob prompting for this joke to be told. Regardless of its clear status as a joke, there is evidence here that it exaggerates an existent high regard for Rob. The joke is born out of a discussion of men not telling each other of their good qualities directly, but it being common to tell others about those good qualities. In line 1, Rob links the idea of talking about non-present friends in positive terms ("they're cool"), and positions himself as one of the friends who might be referred to as 'cool' via making Harry tell the joke about wanting to be his brother-in-law. Excerpt 22 shows that later this admiration is reciprocated by Rob. However, the tone is serious and results in the declaration of admiration being derided.

Excerpt 22

1. Rob but i appreciate like everything that when you get to know
2. harry everything else about him
3. Harry aww ((touches his heart))
4. Jordan ((makes a gesture to Harry intimating giving oral sex))

This declaration of genuine appreciation prompts Jordan to parody Rob sucking on Harry's penis. In excerpts 19, 20 and 21 men's intimacy is raised as a joke and exaggerated with parodies of romantic relationships. The proclamations of intimacy that emerged in jest, where closeness is suggested but remains a caricatured parody, went unquestioned. In fact, the jokes tend to escalate for a few turns after their initial introductions. Note that Jordan does not make fun of the men being too close as friends, or raise questions about Rob being too emotional. He does not invoke a bromance repertoire whereby the closeness of the men is gleefully exalted. Instead, when Rob expresses his feelings about his friend in a serious frame, the non-sexual status of the relationship is questioned. Without the inoculation that a joke frame provides, the statement is evaluated as being too intimate, and derision is mobilised to maintain that boundary. Rob's heteromascularity is questioned via comedic innuendo, therefore counters to it would have been difficult to formulate without being perceived as lacking in sense of humour (Korobov 2005: 227). The humour works similarly, but with more potential to work in an oppositional direction for de-stabilising heteronormativity in excerpts 19, 20 and 21. Meanings of intimacy within friendships are raised via humorous exchanges, and the intimacy bound up in the humour goes unquestioned. In these cases, ironic humour is used as a discursive tool to diffuse the tension surrounding the practice which may have once been considered 'un-manly' – acknowledging the intimacy of same-sex friendships.

Three types of intimacies that connote femininity in the examples used in this chapter are self-disclosing, spending a lot of time with friends and admiring friends. At face value, these activities/qualities may not appear to be feminising or homosexualising, but the management of discussions, particularly the sequential organisation of serious and joke frames, shows that these activities retain feminine meaning. First there is introduction of a type of intimacy, which then escalates to parodying of sexual/romantic relationships. This sequential linking shows a conflation of intimacy with femininity, and then of femininity with homosexuality. There is dual purpose to the intensification of homo-play.

Firstly, the move into the realm of the unreal, the ridiculous, works as a softener to the homo message, ensuring that heteromasculine identities are intact. The exaggeration creates incongruity, where the discrepancy between what is being referred to and reality is highlighted. In other words, at the core of the humour are messages that point to the implausibility of 'too much' intimacy between friends, whilst still making those intimacies relevant to the context. Secondly, the tongue-in-cheek deliveries guard against further questioning. An unintentional effect of the lack of clarification is that traces of both het and homo meanings are imbued in the interactions.

7.4 Discussion

Although typifications of behaviours such as those that fall under 'inclusive masculinities' (or 'hegemonic masculinities') may be useful as determining broad historical shifts, there is a risk that their use encourages a mapping of certain types of behaviours to certain types of men. Instead, masculinities are viewed here as cultural ideals, bound up in competing arguments, which are constantly being drawn upon and re-used variably and flexibly (Edley & Wetherell 1999). In focusing on the discursive tools participants utilise, I have contributed to answering questions about how different versions of homosexuality are produced, and how masculine positions are created in variable distance from these versions.

It is important to point to the impossibility of untangling people's evaluations of homosexuality from the construction of homosexuality itself (Speer & Potter 2000: 545). As per the analysis of excerpt 18, in highlighting the discomfort and undesirability of being associated with homosexuality, a particular construction of homosexuality itself is exposed. Evaluations did not construct homosexuality as 'wrong' for gays, but as a highly undesirable identity for participants. This finding leads to questions about what counts as heterosexist talk. Speer and Potter (2000: 564) propose that:

crudely quantified definitions of what counts as homophobic talk, may help us to challenge the most extreme manifestations of heterosexism... but tend to be less effective or even be positively misleading when we are dealing with the sorts of articulate individuals seen in our current material.

The exploration of the homo-play repertoire in this corpus exemplifies both the difficulties in defining what counts as homophobic/heterosexist talk, and also, participants' deft management of interactions that are pregnant with multiple-meanings. When participants reproduced the homo-play repertoire, they did so with reference to their own heterosexual friendships. Therefore the evaluation of this constituting heterosexist talk at all might be questioned. However, participants' sequential handling shows the talk to be heterosexist. The tension comes – first, in the sequential ordering – through inclusion of discursive practices that are associated with femininity, and then the parodies of homosexuality follow. Despite the parody of homosexuality, the tension lies in managing masculine identity. However, masculine identity cannot be untied from (hetero)sexual identity. This brings into view participants' orientation to anxiety of being homosexualised (or analogously, feminised) via intimate relating within the context of their friendships. In this sense, the men are not participating in homophobic talk, but we can see the ways in which their talk reproduces heterosexism, where notions of gay and feminine are conflated, and are not portrayed (seriously) as a legitimate ways of being.

Although this conflation might suggest a simple policing of heterosexual hegemony, the ironic performances allow for a reconstitution of gendered discursive practice. Ironic humour aids in being able to make these inclusions, or, re-codings. Irony provides some 'protection' for the speaker against being perceived as doing friendship in feminine ways. As such, intimacy does seem to be an increasingly acceptable part of men's friendship-identities, as per participants' frequent orientation to it. However, participants' delivery of their evaluation on intimacy via irony means that its ideological impacts on heterosexual hegemony are two-directional. The homo-play repertoire reproduces the notion that being close to friends is associated with femininity and homosexuality. But it also functions to bring in a wider range of intimacies into everyday discourse and normalises them, thereby producing 'softer masculinities'. However, given the complexities of the ideological fields of homosexuality and intimacy, we should be wary of attempting to class some men as carrying out inclusive masculinities and others, orthodox masculinities. For example, Anderson (2009: 98) claims that:

it is the social unacceptability of the expression of [homophobic] beliefs that leads to the decreased policing of sexual and gendered boundaries: for inclusive masculinities, a culture must be free of men having to prove their heterosexuality.

Disparagement of heterosexism and 'proving' of heterosexuality took place simultaneously in-talk. It is the study of such contradiction which leads us to the most pervasive forms of anti-femininity and heterosexism, where the exercise of power is subtle and mundane.

Chapter 8: Discussion, reflections and concluding comments

8.1 Overall discussion

In this thesis I have explored some of the ways in which discursive resources are used in constructing heterosexual men's friendships. Attention was paid to the local accomplishment of the performativity of gender, sexuality and friendship, and the context-specific construction of these phenomena, despite a heterosexual hegemony underlining their organisation. I highlighted some of the lived dilemmas that men must negotiate regarding discourses of masculinities and friendship, with particular focus on the ways discourses of intimacy are managed. In doing so, I identified instances of resignification. It was clear that speakers orient to the risks to masculine identity associated with emotional self-disclosing and intimacies relating to being close friends.

I showed how emotional self-disclosing and admitting vulnerability was mediated by a lived dilemma. Even though self-disclosing was associated with women, it was understood as sometimes necessary, and men-friends being unable to self-disclose was an undesirable position to hold. Through this dilemma, we can see a de-stabilisation of meaning around self-disclosing as performative of femininity, or, as Illouz (2007: 34) puts it, there has been a 'blurring' of gender relating to emotional communication. Thus, there appears to be a re-coding of *some* forms of emotional relating from feminine to masculine. The re-coding of emotional self-disclosing may have resulted in the admittance of vulnerability becoming easier, but only through reconstitution of repertoires which construct men as 'man enough' or rational enough to face those difficulties. Thus, the narrowness of available subject positions for men-friends relating to self-disclosing comes into view – only serious problems can be disclosed for men-friends to be rendered 'intelligible' within current frameworks of understandings of gendered self-disclosing. Given that participants drew on both discourses of 'instrumental' (masculine) and emotional/expressive (feminine) intimacies, future research exploring how different discursive communities make sense of these two broad repertoires would be useful in contributing to debates on the gendering of friendships and intimacies. Similarly, I noted that the reproduction of effortless repertoires relied on valorising autonomy and self-sufficiency, traits associated with masculine discourses. Further research might investigate whether these repertoires are used by other discursive communities,

including how they are employed to construct feminine subjectivity in friendship interactions.

On the surface, women's friendships were constructed as more supportive and more conducive to discussing personal problems. However, more detailed investigation demonstrated the subtlety of the workings of sexist repertoires, in that women's talk was perceived as over-emotional and trivial. Therefore, an ideological effect of men's accounting strategies for not self-disclosing more often is a de-valuing of feminine relating. Thus, although my findings may point to greater intimacies within New Zealand men's friendships, in terms of utilising repertoires that support self-disclosing, the construction of those repertoires supports a heterosexual hegemony. This echoes feminist concerns that even if 'alternative masculinities' become more dominant, it may not necessarily lead to a change in gender order. Segal (1993: 634) points out:

Many feminists remain sceptical of the greater diversity of masculine styles in the new male order... It may be that what most men would like... is the possibility of adjusting to the new times (the irreversible entry of women into the workforce, women's greater control over fertility and sexuality today) by a loosening up of masculinities while leaving older privileges and power relations intact.

The de-valuing of women's talk is an example where sexist and heterosexist discourses were used to accomplish the demands of friendship relating. I also argued that sexist repertoires provided sense-making devices when the ideals of heteromascularity were perceived to not have been met, as well as promoting shared heteromascularity identity through sexism-as-play. There were instances when speakers oriented to the problem of being perceived as sexist whilst making justifications for objectifying women. Making justifications for sexism reproduces sexism, as part of a performance of (hetero)masculinity, however, doing so simultaneously acknowledges that there are alternative ways of doing gender. The very claiming, for example, that it is natural for men to objectify women, is indication that it is problematic, *as a fact*, that objectifying women is acceptable/natural. Balancing the two cultural norms of sexism and liberal equality is part of the ongoing reconstitution of these two contradictory discourses. Studying how such contradictory discourses operated in-context allowed for greater

appreciation of the ways in which the demands of the identity category of 'friend' produced them.

Similar dilemmas were outlined in relation to the subtle and complex workings of heterosexism. The analysis which highlighted the careful management of identity work to avoid being perceived as both gay (being 'homosexualised') and heterosexist, exemplifies why hegemonic masculinities are more productively conceived as ideals constructed in discourse, *that are constantly re-constituted in-use*. Ideals are 'out there' ready to be emulated, as per much theorising from masculinities studies, but they must be re-constituted to reproduce existing meaning (re-ciation), or alternative meanings (mis-citations). Focusing on participants' concerns and evaluations, and not simply attempting to categorise men as carrying out, for example 'inclusive' or 'orthodox masculinities' (Anderson 2009), allows for a more accurate illustration of how, for example, heterosexism is constructed in particular contexts.

In my discussions on the homo-play repertoire, I highlighted its capacities for subversion. However, there is greater emphasis in this thesis on the ways in which play and irony subtly and effectively maintain heterosexual hegemony, as is the case elsewhere (Korobov 2004; 2005). As such, I wish to emphasise Butler's (1990: 139) arguments regarding the significance that parodic repetitions have for investigating opportunities of sex/gender de-stabilisation. However, in line with a critical discursive psychological approach, I suggest that investigations of ironic play should be grounded in analysis which shows how the local accomplishment of gender and sexuality gets done through everyday examples. Focusing on ambiguity is useful as a reminder of the limitless "openness of linguistic and cultural signification" (Butler 1990: 40). But as the homo-play analysis shows, there is also benefit in attempting to transform ambiguous gestures into accurate accounts of the ideological effects of discourses that are multi-directional for social and political change. Speer (2002: 372) similarly points out that ironic talk can function to resignify meanings - making jokes about the 'common sense' of sexism, for example, de-naturalises sexist discourses as common sense.

Although I focused on the patterns of my participants' accounting to formulate my findings, I did so whilst reading them alongside a wide range of scholars. In particular, I reflected on some of the claims of those who have attempted to theorise on the

underlying 'conditions' which reproduce elements of orthodox masculinities – sexism, heterosexism, fears of not being 'man enough', and competitiveness (Bird 1996; Kimmel 1994; Seidler 1992b). I suggested that not taking a context-sensitive approach meant that the ways in which men negotiate a plethora of discourses and subject positions are obscured in such theorising. I agreed that different ideals of how to be a man are provided by sense-making stories already in circulation, however, I emphasised that ideals of masculinity are produced intersubjectively in-talk – these gendered ideals are produced, with the aid of delicate rhetorical construction, through interaction. Through stories that are understood as making sense in particular contexts, different versions of 'man' are produced, and the reality of him is instantiated, and further naturalised, through their usage. This may be why, for example, I could see very little in my corpus to support claims of men's friendships as a site of intense competitiveness; it may not have 'made sense' in a focus group environment. Similarly, although I refer to many of the interactions in my data as 'friendship interactions' their emergence in a focus group setting may be significantly limiting in terms of the types of discursive resources mobilised. Perhaps future research might make use of naturally occurring data.

Despite the limitations of the research setting, even in this relatively small corpus, reliable propositions can be made about how some of the discourses underpinning contemporary men's friendships are constructed. Through paying attention to participants' orientations, the subject positions in play, and the interactional consequences of the organisation of talk, I showed how gender, sex and friendship were achieved through talk. For example, there were similar understandings identified across the corpus which I have labelled the drama-free, or effortless, repertoires. In a variety of ways, these repertoires provide the discursive resources to construct a particular masculine version of friendship that prioritises autonomy, independence and non-obligation. The effortless repertoires close down opportunities for men to carry out friendships that are more mutually dependent, to include more frequent self-disclosing, or to have high expectations of each other; these practices are currently connotative of feminine relating. Importantly, another effect of the effortless repertoire is that not engaging in greater emotional relating or expecting too much from friends facilitates ontological security. The effortless repertoires reproduce understandings that friends

should have a stable judgement of one another. The sentiments of authenticity that were invoked in discussions on self-disclosing were also apparent in the effortless repertoires. Whilst feminine relating was connotative of instability and (unnecessary) anxiety for participants, masculine relating was associated with relaxed confidence. Although I have not included analysis of how my data might relate to the 'kiwi bloke' stereotype, I think some parallels can be drawn between that stoic and confident character, and in particular, 'his' "connotations of entitlement [and] legitimate authority" (Law et al. 1999: 23), with my participants' use of repertoires that reproduce men's 'authentic' relating and unchanging confidence.

I showed how the conceptions of intimacy made possible through the drama-free repertoires were antithetical to modern conceptions of intimacy influenced by the therapeutic discourse, in which on-going work is a key feature. Through identifying the similarities between participants' evaluations of what good friendship relating is, and Aristotle's philosophising of the complete friendship, I suggested that friendships underpinned by effortless repertoires are assumed to be good and equal, and therefore do not require relationship work to 'fix' anything.

In this respect, it is difficult to see how the discursive resources of the drama-free repertoires would be useful for a de-stabilisation of gender norms. As part of the effortless repertoires, being inattentive to others' needs is exalted, and attempting to understand the needs of those in which people are engaged in relationships with is constructed as unnecessary work. The values that uphold the naturalised 'easy friendship' – assumptions of equality, autonomy and lack of obligation - may not be the most useful for producing hegemonic masculinities that are empathetic to difference, and questioning of the status quo. Additionally, in order to construct effortless repertoires, participants of this study reproduced understandings centring on women-friends making unnecessary demands on their friends, and as having easily triggered emotions. Perhaps there is a link between such sentiments and the repertoires found elsewhere, where feminists' affirmative action for acknowledged inequalities is rejected as extreme (Edley & Wetherell 2001: 454). In both cases, the key message is that it is a feminine quality to look for problems where there are no problems and to create unnecessary 'drama'. Given the status of men's friendships as easy and always good, perhaps sexist and heterosexist discourses reproduced within men's friendships will be resilient to change. However,

even being in an effortless, stable friendship requires performatives of that relationship to produce it, and thus, there is always opportunity for transformation. There is opportunity to increase greater responsiveness to friends by not perceiving responsiveness as performative of (feminine and) unnecessary 'drama' or 'maintenance', but a way of seeking understanding of the needs of friends and the ways in which friends affect one another.

8.2 Reflections on the research process and concluding comment

Sedgwick states in 'Between Men' that her aim is to "explore the ways in which the shapes of sexuality, and what *counts* as sexuality, both depend on and affect historical power relationships" (1985: 2, emphasis as original). Sedgwick's emphasis on sexuality perhaps reflects Foucault's proposal that sexuality is the primary organising mechanism of identity contemporarily (as cited by Garlick 2002: 565). However, Foucault suggests that this need not be the case, and that sexuality might be demoted as a social organising mechanism, with friendship being designated the "becoming of a queer relationality" (as cited by Roach 2012: 8). This opens up a possibility that exploring what does not count as sexuality might alert us to power relations that are productive of a greater diversity of forms of togetherness. My starting point in my investigations for this thesis was to highlight the possibilities of a greater diversity of men's togetherness. I hoped that by identifying the various ways in which men produce interactions that denote care and intimacy it might illuminate the ways in which friendships could be attributed a higher importance in our daily lives. However, in retrospect, I underestimated the power of the gendering mechanisms which construct 'care' and 'intimacy' in our present society. Pronger (1992: 1) argues that the myth of the static in/out of sexuality "conceals the truth of our humanity by making us see each other always through the filter of gender". It might be interpreted that 'care' and 'intimacy' stand for some sort of 'truth of humanity' that Pronger promotes. However, 'care' and 'intimacy' do not escape the gender filter. I underestimated the discourses that are productive in maintaining a symbolic hegemony of masculinity over femininity, which are materially effective. This is why I centralised Butler's conceptualising of a heterosexual hegemony in this thesis, and the reason that I have attempted to provide detail of its organising powers. In doing so, although I highlighted some instances of de-stabilisation, I may have overlooked instances where heterosexual hegemony was subverted.

Sedgwick (1985: 2) also makes the clarification that she opts to use 'desire' over 'love' in discussing homosocial relations, because 'love' is more often used to describe an emotion, whereas 'desire' is better suited to provide argumentation around the "structural permutations of social impulses". Similarly, 'intimacy' does not have to be emotively charged to have structuring effects; Illouz's theorising on the rationalising therapeutic discourse is illustrative of this. When I set out on this research, to explore the presence of care and intimacy in men's friendships, I had in mind 'intimacy' as demonstrable of emotion. I am quite conscious that in the development of this thesis, my use of 'intimacy' changed, and my discussions are often reflective of 'intimacy' as defined more akin to a structuring force. In this sense, interpretive repertoires identified in this thesis indicate that intimacy between men-friends might present itself as encouraging disempathy for women. Intimacy might fuel heterosexist talk. Intimacy might come in the form of reconstituting repertoires that endorse emotional support remaining rare. And intimacy might require that men-friends are inattentive to the ways in which they affect each other. But, intimacy might also be experienced as a little-discussed assumption of things being good and easy, and as an important source of ontological security, or as a simple and no-fuss sort of care that is always there.

Reflective of the plurality of discourses and subject positions available for men-friends, discussions in this thesis have been wide-ranging, and I have not attempted to provide a single coherent narrative of the contents of men's friendships in contemporary New Zealand. I have however provided insights into both what the key tenets are that make up some of the common sense-making discursive resources available to men-friends, their relation to heterosexual hegemony, and how meaning is worked into discursive resources in their local deployment. Outlining some of the contradictions and dilemmas, a pervasive feature of talk, has allowed me to draw attention to the rhetorical nature of the construction of gendered friendship relating. Each utterance may be conceived as the next in an argumentative chain, in a continuing battle for taken-for-grantedness of what constitutes men-friends.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Transcription conventions

=	no discernable gap between speakers' turns
?	signal stronger 'questioning' intonation
.	falling, stopping intonation, irrespective of grammar
-	self-interruption; incomplete utterance
(.)	short pause
(..)	longer pause
wo::rd	lengthening of sound preceding colons; greater number of colons for greater lengthening
WORD	indicates increased volume
<u>word</u>	emphasis
(word)	word unclear
((word))	transcriber's comment
hhh	voiced laughter; more 'h' symbols indicate longer laughter

Appendix 2: Example participant question sheet

<p>Basic stuff about your friendship</p> <p>How do you know each other, when and how did you become friends?</p> <p>What do you do together? How often do you get together?</p> <p>What would you say your shared interests are? Are there any topics you particularly disagree about?</p>
<p>Function/meaning of friendships</p> <p>Do you think that friendships require less effort to maintain than other sorts of relationships? Why?</p> <p>Do you have different sorts of friends that you do different things with? Have differing levels of trust with?</p> <p>How important are your friendships to you? Do you think friends have been more or less important to you in various times of your life?</p> <p>What is the most important thing that you get out of having friends? What do you look for in a friend?</p>
<p>Naming and talking about friendships</p> <p>Would you use 'mate', 'bro', or something else perhaps? Do you use the term 'best friend(s)'? Is there a difference between a 'mate' and a 'friend'?</p> <p>What do you think about the term 'good cunt'? Would you describe any of your friends as 'good cunts'?</p> <p>Why do you think it's acceptable for heterosexual women to talk about their 'girlfriends' but men don't talk about their 'boyfriends'?</p> <p>Do you talk about your friendships with your friends?</p>
<p>Friends as part of a support network</p> <p>Would you say that your friends understand you more than anyone else?</p> <p>Do you talk to your friends about things that you wouldn't talk to other people that you are close to, for example, romantic partners or family?</p> <p>How has this changed over different periods of your life?</p> <p>Can you think of a time when one of your friends was feeling anxious/stressed/ill and you tried to help them (or vice-versa)? What did you do?</p>
<p>Stereotypes about men's and women's friendships</p> <p>Men's friendships are said to include more competitive behaviour than women's friendships. Do you agree/disagree? What impact does it have that men have the stereotype or are more competitive? Why would men be more competitive?</p> <p>Men are said to avoid talking about personal matters compared to women in their friendships. Do you agree/disagree? Does it matter? Is either better/worse?</p>
<p>Cultural representations of men's friendships</p> <p>Are there any representations of friends or friendship that immediately spring to mind that are particularly accurate or inaccurate?</p> <p>Have you heard the term 'bromance'? What do you think about it?</p> <p>Do you think representations of friendships in are changing (in film, TV, or other media)? How?</p>

Appendix 3: Summary of focus group composition and recruitment method

	Method of recruitment	Number of participants	Age range	Ethnicity (Figures in brackets if applies to more than one participant)	Participant by pseudonym
1.	Emailed organiser of community group	7	63-79	Non-New Zealand European (5), Pākehā (3)	Jed, William, Joe. Justin, Kevin, Mike, Evan
2.	Personal network	2	59	Pākehā (2)	Richard, Stephen
3.	Personal network	4	23-31	Samoan/Chinese/European, Chinese (2), Pākehā/Māori	Harry, Dave, Jordan, Rob
4.	Poster	2	22-23	Pākehā (2)	Andrew, Joshua
5.	Poster	3	18-20	Pākehā (2), Pākehā/Non-New Zealand European	Eric, Matt, James
6.	Personal network	2	42-47	Cook Islands, Pākehā	Arapeta, Simon
7.	Personal network	2	31-34	Pākehā, Māori (2)	Matiu, Reid, Cain
	Total	22			

Appendix 4: Poster for recruitment

Do men care?

Stereotypes tell a story of men being competitive and egotistical around their friends, whilst women are assumed to be caring and supportive... Is there any truth to this?



I want to hear your opinions about what it means to be a friend as a man in contemporary New Zealand. I am looking for groups of friends (between 2-6 individuals) of any age (over 18) to participate in this study.

This is an exciting opportunity to contribute to knowledge about how men's friendships are carried out in New Zealand, and is part of a Master's in Sociology. Taking part will mean you and your friend(s) spend an hour talking on the topic of friendship at a place and time convenient to you. The discussion will be informal and confidential; refreshments will be provided. Contributions to this project will be greatly appreciated and each participant will receive a \$20 voucher as thanks.

maree.martinussen@vuw.ac.nz

maree.martinussen@vuw.ac.nz

maree.martinussen@vuw.ac.nz

maree.martinussen@vuw.ac.nz

maree.martinussen@vuw.ac.nz

maree.martinussen@vuw.ac.nz

maree.martinussen@vuw.ac.nz

maree.martinussen@vuw.ac.nz

maree.martinussen@vuw.ac.nz

maree.martinussen@vuw.ac.nz

Appendix 5: Ethics approval



Phone 0-4-463 5676
Fax 0-4-463 5209
Email Allison.kirkman@vuw.ac.nz

MEMORANDUM

TO	Maree Martinussen
COPY TO	Rhonda Shaw
FROM	Dr Kathy Nelson, Acting Convener, Human Ethics Committee
DATE	21 March 2013
PAGES	1
SUBJECT	Ethics Approval: 18677 Performing men's friendships in contemporary New Zealand

Thank you for your application for ethical approval, which has now been considered by the Standing Committee of the Human Ethics Committee.

Your application has been approved from the above date and this approval continues until 31 January 2014. If your data collection is not completed by this date you should apply to the Human Ethics Committee for an extension to this approval.

Best wishes with the research.

Kathy Nelson
Human Ethics Committee