# THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH

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# An Exploration of Emotional Participation within Couple Relationships

**Fiona McQueen**

# Declaration of Original Work

I hereby confirm that I have composed this thesis and that this thesis is all my own work. I also declare that this work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

**Signed** _____**on** _____

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# Acknowledgements

Thanks are due first to my supervisors, Lynn Jamieson and Angus Bancroft. Lynn's unfailing support and understanding have given me the confidence to undertake this research, and I have learnt hugely from her. Despite my often not making sense, Lynn has helped me navigate the terrain of completing a PhD thesis, and I will be eternally grateful. Angus has been my 'go-to guy' throughout this drawn-out process, always available to help me when I'm feeling stuck, and with a keen eye for my making unwarranted assumptions, he has guided me into a much more critical thesis than would have been possible without him. Thank you both for all of your time, kindness, patience and wisdom.

Very special thanks should go to my participants, many of whom I have now been in contact with for over five years. The generous sharing of not only your time but your trust, thoughts and feelings has made the writing of this thesis possible.

Thanks must also go to my wonderful 'PhD pals' who have provided fun, advice, support and laughter throughout the last six years. These wonderful people include my 'sociology crew' of Eric Chen, Paul Whybrow, Liaping Matsau and Sam Friedman. Followed by the lovely ladies of 22 Buccleuch Place – Emma, Fiona, Valeria and Christina. And my colleagues in the CRFR Attic – Emma, Eloi, Julie, Sarah, Harla, Aoife and Scott. Special thanks must also go to my leading ladies, without whom I would certainly have given up hope – Mo(rag) Treanor, Sharani Osbourne and Marguerite Schinkel – you have inspired me to do better, but most of all, to keep going. Thank you, ladies, it has been an honour to get to know such strong and fiercely intelligent women.

Final thanks must of course go to my long-suffering family. Thank you especially to my mum Frances for her generous childcare provision and support, and to my mother-in-universe Sue for her selfless support. I am very blessed to have such incredible women looking after me, and my daughters – I couldn't have done it without you.

Last but not least I must thank my incredible partner, Ben Cowgill, who has endured my undertaking this research without complaint. While I mused the nature of gender

and emotion he very quietly showed me just how lucky I am to love a man like him, whose support and generosity have never faltered. I dedicate this thesis to Ben and to our two daughters, Ella and Sofia, the other two 'outputs' from the last six years. You have made this undertaking considerably more complicated, but a thousand times more rewarding!

# Abstract

The study is informed by work from the 1990s which looked at emotional aspects of couple relationships and how this interacts with gendered power (Duncombe and Marsden, 1993, 1995; Benjamin, 1998). The context of couple relationships provides the backdrop to explore experiences of men and women navigating their emotional lives through a period of social change in which men are becoming more emotionally open. I examine to what extent emotional participation is moving towards being more equal, and whether this has an impact on gender relations within couple relationships, including consideration of how love can exist within unequal divisions of labour. The central analytical concepts of gender, power and emotion will be explored in order to look at whether there has been a change in practices of emotional participation in couple relationships.

This thesis is a mixed-methods study exploring understandings of emotional participation within couple relationships. It is based on an online survey of 1,080 people, telephone interviews with 44 survey participants and 31 face-to-face interviews with participants living in Scotland. I explore the issues of communication, emotional skill and emotional capital through the narratives of men and women who are single and in relationships, predominantly heterosexual but not exclusively.

This research design was used to test findings from previous research to enable an understanding of how gender shapes cultural constructions of emotional habitus within intimate relationships. I extend Burkitt's concept of 'emotional habitus' (2014) to argue that 'gendered emotional habitus' (plural) are pervasive and enable the reproduction of heterosexuality within couple relationships. These habitus provide little room to negotiate alternative ways of doing gender, yet there are signs of a 'clash of ideals of masculine emotion' due to an increase in the value of emotional skills and the commonsensical discourse that it's 'good to talk', found in the therapeutic discourse (Brownlie, 2014). I argue these signs of social change have led to a shift away from relationships in which women crave emotional fulfilment but do not receive it, to relationships in which men too want emotional closeness with their partner. The change in gendered ways of valuing emotion have impacted on

how men and women perceive and manage their couple relationships, which is explored in depth through the concept of emotional participation.

# Chapter 1 – Introduction

This thesis explores emotional participation in couple relationships in order to consider how gendered power is reproduced, resisted and renegotiated within them. I will argue that the context of couple relationships provides an ideal space to consider changes taking place in gender due to the high level of research that has been conducted on gender equality in the private sphere. Through researching the ways that emotion is central to perceptions of fairness and a sense of appreciation, I will comment on how love is possible within an unequal division of labour, and how gendered power is both reproduced and resisted at the same time. I acknowledge the feminist emancipatory agenda which has guided this research, through a desire to reduce gender inequality in couple relationships, recognising the socially disadvantaged position of women as a gender group. My interest in gendered power within the context of couple relationships began with my undergraduate dissertation on female sexual pleasure. I was struck by the vastly different experiences of heterosexual couple relationships described by the fifteen women interviewed – in particular differences relating to how respected the women felt in their relationships, how they communicated with partners and how they expected men to behave. These differences led to a desire to conduct research that included men (as well as women) in order to look at how gendered power works in couple relationships, leading to my original research focus on sexual communication. This focus changed over the course of the three stages of data collection to look at emotional experiences as these became prominent in the results from the survey initially conducted.

When I began reading for my Masters dissertation research, I found a large body of research conducted in the late 1980s and 1990s into power in couple relationships. The prevalence of female voices, both in terms of researchers and participants, was striking (Duncombe and Marsden, 1993; 1995, Knudson-Martin and Mahoney, 1998; Benjamin, 1998; Komter, 1989; Hochschild, 1990), with much of this literature describing a style of heterosexual relationships that seemed pessimistic compared to the interviews I had conducted in 2008. The majority of the women presented in previous research craved emotional closeness and good-quality communication,

which their male partners were not providing. Conversely, the majority of men who had been interviewed were described as being emotionally remote, leading to women doing emotion work on themselves to refurbish a sense that their relationships were acceptable (Duncombe and Marsden, 1995, 1998; Hochschild, 1990). The overall picture of highly gendered, very unequal couples surprised me. My own biographical position as a woman living in a social world which is more complex than this picture added to my surprise, specifically the lack of emotion demonstrated by the men in this body of research. The picture drawn for my undergraduate research was of women who mostly felt valued within their relationships and had a high level of agency in managing these, particularly in reference to their sexual autonomy, which included descriptions of how these women ended relationships in which they did not feel respected, and how ultimately their ability to enjoy sexual pleasure was dependent on a sense of trust with their partner, which in turn relied on feeling close to them.

The hypothesis that couple dynamics have changed, due essentially to the influence of feminism since the 1980s and 1990s, has driven this research. I aim to explore empirically my sense that women *do* have considerable scope for exercising agency, despite a continued unequal division of labour, and that men are no longer the emotionally closed-off characters they were once seen to be. I aim to consider how gender interacts with power in couple relationships to explore whether, as I suspected, the 'private sphere' provides a space for gender to be transgressed in ways that are not possible within the public sphere. Couple relationships provide a 'harbour in a storm' or a part of social life which provides a space in which to be more flexible in performances of masculinity or femininity due to a sense of trust in one's partner, and also the lack of a wider 'audience' to judge these gendered performances. At the same time I also acknowledge that the very distinction between 'private' and 'public' social spaces is itself highly contested (Letherby, 2003).

## 1.1  The Bigger Picture of Emotion in Couple Research

A body of previous research looking at couple relationships was conducted in the late 1980s and 1990s which included a consideration of emotional aspects of these

relationships (Duncombe and Marsden, 1993 and 1997; Knudson-Martin and Mahoney, 1998; Mansfield and Collard, 1988; Hochschild, 1990). The overarching findings of this research were that women craved emotional intimacy with their male partners (Brannen and Moss, 1991; Benjamin, 1998), while the men included in (only some) of these research projects were reluctant to provide this intimacy (Knudson-Martin and Rankin Mahoney, 1998; Mansfield and Collard, 1988) or in some cases were emotionally negligent (Duncombe and Marsden, 1993 and 1995). Duncombe and Marsden's influential work highlights the gender difference in emotional participation in heterosexual couple relationships. They claimed that "gender asymmetry in relation to intimacy and emotion work may be the last and most obstinate manifestation and frontier of gender inequality" (1995, p.150). Highlighting the connection, as all of this body of literature did, between emotion and power within couple relationships, they describe male power as depending on the 'deference' or 'complicity' of women (1995, p.160). Connell (1987) discussed the relationship between gender, power and cathexis, highlighting the interrelated nature of these, describing how relations of power function as a social structure which constrains social practice, shaping "the daily conduct of emotional relationships" (p. 97). Emotion is therefore gendered but must be understood within the context of power – both in terms of who makes decisions, and in terms of the division of labour.

Giddens' (1992) work in *The Transformation of Intimacy* feeds into the idea of emotion being related to equality (or power) through his central claim that relationships are becoming more equal as individuals choose to pursue a 'pure relationship'. He suggests that couples can become more equal as men are more emotionally open, leading to a 'generic restructuring of intimacy' (Giddens, 1992, p.58). Related to this, there has been a growing discourse concerning the 'emotionalisation of men' (Lupton, 1998), which values men being more emotionally open, especially in their couple relationships (Giddens, 1992) and this can be understood in relation to work around the de-traditionalisation of gender (Beck and Beck Gernsheim, 1995). Seidler (1991) has related this prioritisation of men's increased emotional capacity within their personal relationship to the influence of feminism, as it reflects the desires of heterosexual women This agenda and the

related notion of equality in couple relationships are highly gendered themselves, leading as they do from the influences of feminism.

## 1.2   Research Questions

The research focus, aim and research questions have changed over the period of conducting this research, with the findings from one method determining the main topic being investigated in the subsequent data collection method. Below is the aim and the research questions that were adopted going into the third and final data collection process, the face to face interviews. While the aim has changed to focus on emotional participation in place of sexual communication, the overarching focus on how power operates in couple relationships has been maintained throughout.

*Aim*

To explore the ways emotional participation reproduces or resists gendered power in couple relationships.

*Questions*

- What is required to have emotional participation in couple relationships?
- Is emotional participation gendered within couple relationships?
- Can women have agency within unequal divisions of labour, and if so, how?
- Have male accounts of emotional participation changed since the body of research conducted in the late 1980s and early 1990s?
- How does emotional participation interact with gendered power in couple relationships?

## 1.3   Overview of Methodology

A comparative research design has been used to compare male and female accounts of emotional participation in couple relationships, looking for similarities and differences in order to gain a deeper understanding of gendered power (Bryman, 2006). In order to explore possible divergence from the central findings of previous research into power in couple relationships I utilised an online survey to capture gender differences in responses to statements about attitudes within couple

relationships. This survey included a focus on sexual communication, conflict in relationships and emotion and had surprising results, particularly in relation to the picture of women as lacking agency through avoiding conflict (Benjamin, 1998). In contrast to findings from previous research, my survey data portrayed women as being more confident than men in raising issues in their relationships, while the main area of gender difference was within the emotional elements of couple relationships. As will be discussed in later chapters, these survey findings led to a change in focus from sexual communication (in the survey) to how emotion interacts with gendered power (in the face-to-face interviews). Following on from the surprising survey results and change in focus to emotion, two subsequent stages of data collection were undertaken in the form of 44 short telephone interviews and 31 face-to-face interviews. The results from the survey, which will be discussed in the findings chapters (4 and 5), led to a specific focus on emotional participation including how expectations and experiences of emotion are gendered. Within the survey findings the topics of conflict and sexual communication did not have strong gender differences, while statements related to emotional communication had strong gender differences – leading me to hypothesise that the emotional aspects of intimate relationships are highly gendered and so must have a link to gendered power. It is the nature of this link that I have explored throughout this thesis.

## *1.4*  **Key Concepts and Analytical Themes**

Connell (1987) asserts the need to distinguish between "the *global* or macro-relationship of power, in which women are subordinated to men in the society as a whole, from the *local* or micro-situation in particular households" (p.111). This thesis relies on three key concepts which operate at a global level: gender, power and emotion. While they all leave a trace at the local levels of investigation, they are employed as the overarching *theoretical* focus for this thesis. There will be a full discussion of these key concepts in Chapter 2, where a review of literature will be provided, however they are also explored through the use of three analytical themes. These themes combine ideas from sociological literature in ways which facilitate a coherent argument to be made about the ways gender, power and emotion interact

within couple relationships. They frame the way the data presented here will be organised and in so doing show the problems this thesis is addressing. These three themes will now be outlined while the detail and definitions of all ideas contained within the thesis will be covered in greater depth in the literature review in Chapter 2.

### 1.4.1  Theme 1 – Heterosexuality and Agency

The concept of heterosexuality (Jackson, 1999) will be utilised to access the often hidden ways gender frames expectation and practice within couple relationships, particularly heterosexual relationships.  Through employing the concept of heterosexuality as an institution, how performances of gender impact on emotionality will be examined, but without focusing on sexuality, or sexual aspects of couple relationships. Central to this goal is a consideration of agency. Previous research in the area of emotion in couple relationships has painted a picture of women wanting their male partners to participate emotionally in their relationships, while men have been described as reluctant to engage emotionally. This description limits women's agency within their couple relationships, focusing on the ways they are complicit in repeating 'myths of equality' within unequal relationships. Through focusing on the ways women do have agency in their couple relationships, and looking at the ways men's operations of agency are constrained by their performances of emotionality, this thesis questions the picture of heterosexual relationships painted by previous research while acknowledging that the gendered system in which we discuss heterosexual couple relationships still favours men in complex and plural ways. Agency is a vital component in understanding gendered power, by making the social agent the focus of analysis. I will be drawing attention to the choices made by individuals in how they 'do gender' and understand the implications of this performance of gendered identities. What will be suggested through this theme is that the idea of emotionally reluctant, powerful men and resigned unhappy women from previous research is no longer accurate.

### 1.4.2 Theme 2 – Gendered Emotional Habitus

'Gendered emotional habitus' is a concept based on Burkitt's 'emotional habitus' (Burkitt, 1997), which in turn is based on Bourdieu's concept of habitus. Burkitt (1997) suggests a model of emotion that is relational, in emphasising the social nature of emotions – understanding emotions as learnt through the socialising of the habitus, and stressing the importance of cultural context in understanding emotions. This concept has been extended to include a consideration of specifically how gender impacts emotional habitus so that the compelling nature of traditionally gendered emotional habitus (plural) becomes apparent, with glimpses of an alternative gender neutral habitus appearing. The concept includes both embodied aspects of emotion and social aspects, leading on to how these habitus interact with gendered power. This theme incorporates the empirical concepts of emotional participation, emotional expression and experience, emotion management, vulnerability and expectations. It provides the apparatus with which to consider how gender frames emotional experience as this is both below the level of conscious and the focus of reflexivity. A concept is therefore required which can accommodate both the conflict between habitus and reflexivity (Adams, 2006) and an understanding of how gender interacts with emotion. This theme will enable a better understanding of the ways the empirical data being presented here supports the claim that emotions are directly related to power. In the context of couple relationships this theme will explore how emotion is underpinned by the institution of heterosexuality, as well as emotion being central to theme three – 'conflicting ideals of masculine emotion'.

### 1.4.3 Theme 3 – Conflicting Ideals of Masculine Emotion

This theme will consider the ways in which cultural ideals around the gendering of emotion and intimacy impact on performances of masculinity. This specific focus on changes within masculine ideals of emotion reflects the argument that men are becoming emotionalised (Lupton, 1998). Through combining the empirical foci of emotional management, vulnerability and expectations, this theme will consider the ways in which performances of masculinity are undergoing a conflict of ideals of

masculine emotionality. I will argue that we are faced with polarised positions of a 'traditional' hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1987) which valorises the 'unemotional man' on one hand, and a more contemporary discourse that prioritises the importance of being more emotionally engaged on the other (Brownlie, 2014). The conflict regarding men's emotionality impacts not only on men but crucially on women. Through women's highly gendered role of predominantly being responsible for the emotional well-being of their male partners, women take on the role (if they feel it is required, or possible, or an effort they are prepared to make) of emotional educator or guide which is indicative of the less powerful position of 'women focusing on the male' (Knudson-Martin and Mahoney, 1998). Contained within this theme is an exploration of how men 'manage' their emotions in performing emotion work on themselves, a concept usually associated with women. This theme will consider how the picture of unemotional men who deliberately withdraw their emotional support, present in previous research, needs to be unpacked. I will address a central problem raised in this research of how better to understand the conflicting ideals of masculine emotionality – through engaging with male accounts of their couple relationships.

The combination of these three themes will lead to an empirically informed consideration of how emotional participation within the context of couple relationships interacts with power dynamics in gendered ways. That leads to a central argument that social change is happening within this context, which requires attention and analysis, an endeavour this thesis goes a small way to addressing.

## 1.5 Chapter Outline

This thesis will take the following format: a literature review chapter, methods chapter, three findings chapters, and finally a discursive conclusion chapter. The literature review will present previous research and set out the central concepts that will frame this report from sociological literature on relationships, gender equality, emotions and masculinity. The three themes outlined above will also be discussed in more detail, including the literature that is relevant to them, showing how they blend different areas of literature in order to construct a meaningful theme that is relevant to this thesis.

Following on from the literature review, the methods chapter will describe how this research was conducted, including sections describing each of the three stages of data collection and how these have fed into each other in the overall research design that has been utilised. This chapter will also discuss the feminist epistemology that has informed this research throughout and will expand on what that has meant in practical terms for conducting this research. The first of three findings chapters is Chapter 4 and is entitled 'Female Accounts of Emotionally Participating in Couple Relationships' which will present the accounts of eleven of the fifteen women interviewed. Central to this chapter is the premise that most of the women presented in this thesis are bound by their traditional feminine gendered habitus into a role which entails the employment of emotional skills to do relational emotion work as they are (almost all) responsible for the emotional well-being of their relationships. That traditional feminine role supports a gender binary that underpins highly gendered roles within heterosexual relationships.

Chapter 5, entitled 'Male Accounts of Emotionally Participating in Couple Relationships', examines the prevalence of a sense of vulnerability experienced by men in relation to their emotional lives. This chapter goes on to suggest a traditional ideology of masculinity: defining men and boys as superior through being unemotional is pervasive within the emotional habitus (plural) of men, leading some to experience their emotions as problematic and unwelcome, although this is not the case for all of the men. At the same time there is a genuine desire to be more emotionally open – something that is valued more within culture today than when previous research was conducted in the 1980s and 1990s (Duncombe and Marsden, 1993, 1995; Knudson-Martin, 1998; Benjamin, 1998; Komter, 1989; Hochschild, 1990).

This leads on to Chapter 6, entitled 'The Nexus Point of Heterosexual Couple Relationships – Understanding Gender at Work', which explores points at which female and male accounts can be compared. This chapter will discuss the ways in which women are expected to be responsible for the emotional well-being of their couple relationships, which can lead to emotional capital when this work is appreciated. It will also look at the ways appreciation interacts with perceptions of

fairness within unequal divisions of labour in order to contribute to research looking at how women can claim to be happy in their relationships despite inequality.

The final chapter is the discussion and conclusion chapter, which will tie the findings together and suggest the answer to questions such as 'why do women put such high value on men trying to emotionally participate?'. This thesis will suggest that this is due to women gaining emotional capital from their emotional skills being valued, recognising that this gives them power at the local level of their relationships, although at the global level this exchange has little effect on gendered power. Additionally this chapter will ask questions about the potential for transgressing the gender binary in considering 'what would a gender neutral emotional habitus look like?'. I will argue that the potential for conceptualising a gender-neutral emotional habitus is itself transgressive, and fraught with difficulties, using the findings from Chapters 4, 5 and 6 to support this claim. Before moving on to the presentation of findings it is necessary to look at the bigger picture around this research in the literature review chapter.

# Chapter 2 – Gendered Power and Emotion: Reviewing Gender Equality and Social Change

Equality relates to power within the private sphere as the concept of equality seeks to make tangible the complex ways gendered power impacts on day-to-day lives. The context being presented in this chapter highlights the temporal specificity of when this research has been conducted – namely in the 2010s. The changing nature of gender ideology is of central importance to the claims which will be made within this report, specifically in reference to emotion within couple relationships. This chapter will begin with an overview of the three key concepts within this research, including definitions of these in order to frame the following review of literature. The bigger picture of work within the area of gender equality will then be presented in order to highlight where this thesis fits within this and show how it informs questions raised by previous work. Finally this chapter will present the key literature that has informed the three analytical themes which frame the research findings being presented, so that these are clearly defined before being used in the findings chapters of this report.

## 2.1 Key Concepts

As stated in the introduction, the three key theoretical concepts being addressed are Gender, Power and Emotion. It is necessary to examine how these are being defined in order to illustrate the ways this research seeks to contribute to theorising the nexus point between them.

### 2.1.1 Gender

Gender is a central concept within sociology, often understood to be a socially constructed and performative aspect of social identity and social structure. This can be traced very specifically back to Ann Oakley who brought the concept into the social sciences, and everyday discourse, with her book *Sex, Gender and Society* (1972). Since its introduction, gender has proven to be a highly political concept, challenging biologically determined views that one's sex determines one's social

position and capabilities, providing an alternative view that masculinity and femininity are not 'natural' categories. Despite this concept being within the public lexicon for over 40 years, pervasive beliefs related to sex differences continue to be evident in all walks of life, both at interactional and institutional levels (West and Zimmerman, 1987). The political nature of researching gender relates directly to gender inequality; while sociologists wrote about masculinity and femininity before the 1960s and 1970s, much of this work treated sex roles as functional. It has been the influence of feminism in raising questions around domination and subordination which has made the topic of gender directly related to operations of power (Schrock and Schwalbe, 2009). Gender is thus a name given to cultural practices that differentiate men from women, with men possessing an advantage at the expense of women (Schrock and Schwalbe, 2009; Martin, 2003; West and Zimmerman, 1987). Men are (usually) biological males, and women are (usually) biological females, but an individual man or woman must present themselves as either a man or woman – a particular performance of gender is required (Goffman, 1977; West and Zimmerman, 1987). This performance involves a process of mastery of "conventional signifying practices through which the identity 'man' [or 'woman'] is established and upheld in interaction" ( Schrock and Schwalbe 2009, p. 279 ). A convincing performance of masculinity will lead to men being able to claim the privileges and rights attendant to them through their membership of the dominant gender group, while for women the successful performance of femininity will give them access to the rights and lack of privileges attendant with membership of the subordinate gender group. Given the powerful organising principles of gender it is not surprising that gender is a primary lens through which both men and women view the world (Davis and Greenstein, 2009). A specific area of interest to this research is how men understand their performances of masculinity and view this 'primary lens'. Masculinity will be discussed in detail here as there is a wide range of masculinity literature that this thesis contributes to.

## 2.1.1.1 Masculinity

Over the course of interviewing and analysing the collected data it became apparent that the performances of masculinity being discussed by the male participants in this research were varied and very rich. For this reason masculinity has become a major focus of this research, addressing a significant gap in literature through focusing on the relationship between masculinity and emotion.

The emergence of masculinity as a discrete area of sociological investigation was a gradual process beginning with the increased interest in gender which was intensified by second-wave feminist influence in the 1960s and 1970s (Schrock and Schwalbe, 2009). Significant contributions were made to the questioning of gender, specifically in relation to men and masculinity, before 1980 (see Kessler & McKenna, 1978; Tolson, 1977). The area of 'critical studies of masculinities' (CSM) developed through acknowledging the unrecognised nature of gendered power, leading to a large body of theoretical and empirical work in this area. Carrigan et al (1985) have been cited as being the first to synthesise this argument and propel it into the mainstream in highlighting that male power operates in subordinating women, but also in establishing a hierarchy between men. Through focusing on the interaction between masculinity and heterosexuality, including the relationship between masculinity and homosexuality, Carrigan et al (1985) synthesised previous work (Connell, 1983) in a way that determined the path of CSM (Schrock and Schwalbe, 2009). Since then CSM has repeatedly asserted the plural nature of masculinity, emphasising the importance of acknowledging the impact of structural inequalities such as race, ethnicity, class, sexuality and global location in understanding masculinities (Connell, 1995; Kimmel, 1994; Mac an Ghaill, 1994).

A recent review of the area of masculinity research has called for the need to refocus once again on the original goals of this area of academic enquiry, stating that the trend for 'masculinity and (fill in the blank)' research has lost sight of the need to examine the ways in which male power is established and maintained. Future work in this area needs to aim towards:

trying to understand (a) the social construction of gender in general and (b) the reproduction of gender inequality. We have suggested that these problems stem in part from a tendency to reify masculinity, to erroneously see it as an essential quality of male bodies, and to treat it as if it had explanatory power. Moving forward will require, we have suggested, reclaiming and revamping some of the basic insights of a critical sociology of gender that emphasizes practices and processes. This means maintaining distinctions between anatomy, sex and gender categories, and the identity work that both locates individuals within categories and reproduces the categories themselves." (Schrock and Schwalbe, 2009, p.289).

Schrock and Schwalbe go on to warn against the circular thinking contained in masculinity whereby it becomes a cause of men's behaviour, and at the same time a form of practice performed by men's bodies leading to a lack of agency on the part of men (MacInnes, 1998). Instead they call for references to be made to 'manhood acts' so as to discourage "the reification of masculinity and to redirect analytic attention to what males actually do to achieve it." (Schrock and Schwalbe, 2009, p.281).

The claim made by Schrock and Schwalbe (2009) that masculinity studies needs to refocus on gender inequality is similar to the suggestion from Hearn (2004) that Critical Studies of Masculinity needs to retain the *critical* element, which is directly related to power – specifically gendered power. He goes on to clarify in saying:

> The 'criticalness' within CSM comes particularly from a concern with power, that is, gendered, usually predominantly men's, power. This is not to say that all men are (all) powerful or men are all powerful; that is not so; this is especially clear from a global perspective on men. Rather it is that power is a very significant, pervasive aspect of men's social relations, actions and experiences, and that these matters have continued to be neglected in mainstream social science (p.52).

Through directly looking at how gendered power interacts with emotion, and specifically how performances of masculinity impact on emotion, this research can be described as contributing to the project of *critical* studies of masculinity.

## 2.1.1.2 Hegemonic masculinity

The central concept of Connell's (1983, 1995) 'hegemonic masculinity' has been taken up within masculinity studies, framing much of the research and theoretical work taking place within this area since the 1980s. It is a structural-level theory of masculinity, and when combined with Connell's (1987) theory of gender and power is critical, as highlighted by Hearn (2004). Hegemonic masculinity is defined as:

> not a fixed character type, always and everywhere the same.
> It is, rather, the masculinity that occupies the hegemonic
> position in a given pattern of gender relations, a position
> always contestable. (Connell, 1995, p.76)

Hegemonic masculinity describes the social processes which create and legitimise male power through a masculine hierarchy, highlighting how this subordinates women, and certain groups of men. Two concepts are key to this understanding of hegemony: *domination*, which refers to the material acts which subordinate specific groups, and *marginalisation*, which challenges the legitimacy of certain masculinities. Through working together these two forces produce one culturally acclaimed ideal form of masculinity – the hegemonic masculinity which is exalted to privilege certain forms of masculinity above femininities or subordinate masculinities (Cornwall and Lindisfarne, 1994).

While Connell (1995, p.82) stresses that a vast majority of men will never live up to hegemonic masculinity in their own lives, their complicity in sustaining it as an ideal provides them with a 'patriarchal dividend' bringing "honour, prestige and the right to command" along with the material dividend of higher wages in rich capitalist countries. Hegemonic masculinity preserves the interests of the male collective, despite the majority of them being subordinated or marginalised by it, as it legitimates the subordination of women, thus maintaining male privilege. Hegemonic masculinity has been widely incorporated into CSM due to its strength in ability to explain interactions between multiple masculinities at a structural level, focusing on gender identities and power (Hearn, 2007). Connell's more recent work (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005) stresses the importance of recognising hegemonic masculinity as plural, suggesting that the term hegemonic masculini*ties* is now used in its place,

in order to emphasise the inter-relationships between differing forms of masculinity as well as between men and women. Hegemony 'requires the policing of men' as well as women so that "*the concept of hegemonic masculinity presumes the subordination of non-hegemonic masculinities*" (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 846).

As with any highly influential theory or concept, hegemonic masculinity has been widely critiqued, including warnings that an over reliance on this can limit the scope of academic inquiry (Rowe and McKay, 1998) and that some academics see hegemonic masculinity even when the subject of inquiry is far more complex (Moller, 2007). Whitehead (2002) argues that hegemonic masculinity is a limited, reductionist term, while Beasley (2008) calls for recognition of how positive forces of hegemony can occur. Further criticism relates to the lack of explanation of how multiple hegemonic masculinities exist together or are interconnected, as different fields of social life would suggest differing hegemonic masculinities located culturally and historically (Coles, 2007). Coles (2007) suggests that men can move between these fields over the course of their everyday lives and over the lifecourse, so that what is subordinated by a particular hegemonic masculinity may still be dominant in relation to other men in differing fields. Hegemonic masculinity is also critiqued for emphasising the structural level of power operations at the expense of investigating how individuals can resist or reproduce male power (Whitehead, 2002), an area this thesis goes some way to consider. In summary, although many criticisms have been made of the concept of hegemonic masculinity, it continues to be the main theory within masculinity studies, referenced in most articles published on the topic.

This wide range of critiques of hegemonic masculinity points towards the claim that CSM is currently moving away from this central concept, in search of new ways to think about masculinities (Anderson and McCormack, 2014). This has been supported by Haywood and Mac an Ghaill (2012) who argue that the diversity of experience reported in current literature calls for a move away from the theories of the 1980s and 1990s. Hearn et al (2012) suggest that in Sweden, where masculinity research has been conducted for longer than in the UK, a 'third phase' of research is

taking place with a new generation of researchers who are not as entrenched in older frameworks.

## 2.1.1.3 Inclusive masculinity

While hegemonic masculinity continues to be a highly influential concept within the area of masculinity, one suggested alternative to hegemonic masculinity relates directly to the topic of homophobia and is developed by Anderson (2009). Anderson (2009) suggests that a move away from 'homohysteria', or fear of being socially perceived as gay, reduces the effectiveness of homophobia being used to regulate the boundaries of masculinity (Kimmel, 1994; Plummer, 1999). There is a broad range of work on young masculinities, often within school settings, describing how a process of distancing from homosexuality and femininity is central to establishing heteromasculine privilege (Connell, 1987; Jackson 2006; Richardson 2010). This process in turn leads to boys and men rejecting all behaviours coded as homosexual (Kimmel, 1994; Plummer, 1999). Anderson (2009) suggests that the process of masculinity becoming more inclusive is leading to gendered power becoming more evenly distributed between men, moving from being vertical and dominating, to more horizontal and progressive in settings which are less homohysteric. Anderson (2009) suggests that this has resulted in an opening up of cultural space for men and boys to be more soft in their masculinity, including being more tactile and gentle, expanding the ways they can perform masculinity in credible ways (Anderson and McCormack, 2014). This includes the opening up of possibilities to be more emotionally expressive in environments in which there is a reduced fear of these acts being condemned as 'gay'. It is crucial to acknowledge that the focus of *Inclusive Masculinity Theory* is extremely limited in its scope as it only discusses masculinity in reference to men and ignores the wider issues of male power, patriarchy or the 'critical' aspect of CSM discussed in looking at gender inequality through its exclusive focus on male-only interaction. The theories within Anderson's book (2009) are explicitly concerned with homophobia and homohysteria between men, and at no point address the relational aspect of men interacting with women. This

criticism was acknowledged briefly by one of the main scholars who ascribes to the theory of inclusive masculinity when he said that his research in high schooling does not consider the impact of girls on the construction of masculinity (McCormack, 2011). However, this brief mention of the presence of women in the social world feels like a very minor acknowledgement of the shortcomings of this theoretical approach. Anderson (2009) and his fellow exponent of this theory (McCormack, 2011) have fallen into the trap of losing sight of the main focus of CSM – gendered power. Despite this shortcoming in Anderson's theory, and in lieu of theoretical alternatives to hegemonic masculinity, inclusive masculinity will be utilised in this research as one of many theoretical tools to explore the ways that men participate emotionally in their couple relationships. One thing to emerge from this theory is the suggestion that there is some evidence that emotional communication, which has traditionally been characterised as feminine, is becoming less threatening to performances of masculinity than previous literature suggests (Duncombe and Marsden, 1993). In turn this thesis will argue that the movement towards men being more emotional will have an impact on power, but unlike Anderson (2009), this is in reference to gendered power between men and women rather than solely between groups of men.

### 2.1.2 Power

It is not sufficient to discuss power dynamics without a more comprehensive discussion of sociological understandings of power. This exploration will begin with a meta commentary on Bourdieu's theory of power.

### 2.1.2.1 Meta Commentary on Power

Bourdieu's theory of power relies heavily on the notion of habitus, defined as "The habitus – embodied history, internalized as second nature and so forgotten as history – is the active presence of the whole past of which it is the product" (1995: 56) which highlights the corporeality of social conditioning, rendering the cultural basis of cultural practices invisible. Bourdieu's central argument is that agency is constrained by a 'generative' principle which is governed by the internalised external social structures in the habitus (Rafanell and Gorringe, 2010). 'Symbolic violence' operates

at an unconscious level whereby individuals experience embarrassment or a feeling of inadequacy when they reveal a subordinate social position through their social action. This feeling of embarrassment or inadequacy is a reaction to not behaving in accordance with the dominant properties of social life to which everyone should aspire (Bourdieu, 1995). This is therefore a consensual conception of power as the powerless reproduce their own subordination through assuming the powerful group's view of the world. Thus, the embodied habitus is the primary level at which the operation of power takes place, functioning through the "rooting of the most fundamental structures of the group in the primary experiences of the body" (Bourdieu, 1995, p.69). This focus on the body makes Bourdieu's theory of power highly relevant to this research as it provides a means through which to understand how embodied experiences of emotion are directly related to the internalisation (through the habitus) of gendered norms. Through the concept of habitus, the direct link between *feelings* which are widely considered to be personal and unique to individuals and wider operations of gendered power become clearer.

Bourdieu's theory of power is less helpful in exploring how entrenched power relations within the habitus actually play out in everyday interaction, and how it could possibly be changing. Due to his assertion that social interaction mainly reinforces prior dispositions with little possibility of changing them, a homogenous habitus is at the root of the "social dynamics of consensus and stability of prevalent social forms*"* (Rafanell, 2003, p.123). This means that change at a societal level is very difficult as dominated classes cannot 'transcend' the reality of the doxic order, which is determined by pre-existing social structures which in turn give authority to the symbolic hierarchy. This difficulty in using Bourdieu's theory of power is in part due to it being 'extrinsic': it considers power to be outside of individuals' actions "thus failing to provide explanation of the bases/nature/origin of power – but also renders agency, resistance and domination analytically obscure" (Rafanell and Gorringe, 2010, p.608). This research has found that the symbolic hierarchy can be 'transcended', although this is far from straightforward, through men seeking to change the ways they are constrained into un-emotionality. This therefore limits the

ability of Bourdieu's theory of power to fully explain the ways gendered power is operating within couple relationships.

Bourdieu's more recent work, 'Masculine Domination', does address the area of gendered power directly. In 'Masculine Domination' Bourdieu (2001) discusses how the masculine order is legitimised in societies without need of justification. He explains this in terms of symbolic violence, which operates to reinforce and maintain the commonsensical nature of gender differences and power imbalances. He explains the way this operates when saying:

> symbolic violence is exercised only through an act of knowledge and practical recognition which takes place below the level of the consciousness and will, and which gives all its manifestations ... their 'hypnotic power' (2001, p.42).

Through conceiving of symbolic violence as 'below consciousness', Bourdieu sees masculine domination as a "system of structures, durably embedded in things and bodies" (p.41). While it could be easy to consider masculine domination as men colluding (subconsciously) to maintain the status quo of women doing the demanding job of being responsible for the home sphere, it is the 'below consciousness' nature of masculine domination which leads to the significance of Bourdieu's work to this thesis. This empirical research is deliberately examining the ways masculine domination is being acted out by men – but also by women – *as well as being resisted by men as well as women* in couple relationships. This assertion is a crucial aspect of 'male power', as it highlights how 'men' are not 'doing' or actively maintaining privilege in a conscious way, but are equally trapped in hetero-normative constructs of gender which constrain them, as well as constraining women. This understanding of masculine domination, when combined with the idea of the habitus, presents a picture of power which operates at an unconscious level and is very difficult to change. The main weakness of this theory is, particularly in the context of couple relationships, the lack of 'space' for awareness of or resistance to power relations. I argue that several of the participants in this research are aware of resisting gendered power, in complex ways, so that while this theory of power,

and particularly the concept of habitus, are informative for my understanding of power, it is not sufficient.

## 2.1.2.2 Gendered Power

Gendered power, or male power as it is sometimes referred to in this thesis, refers to the operations of power which maintain or reinforce patriarchy. Patriarchy is defined by Hearn (2012) when he says "I will used the term 'patriarchy' as shorthand for male domination, to identify social contexts where men as a social group have ongoing power advantages over women as a social group" (p.173). This definition is referring explicitly to the macro level of operations of power, implied by the term 'patriarchy' itself. Within the context of couple relationships, however, patriarchy is less useful a concept as suggested by Hearn when he says:

> the public/private distinction is about the overall constitution
> and distribution of power, and involves hierarchical notions
> of domain and control. Moreover, it is associated especially
> with the form of the state, and there is always an uneasy
> balance in the public/private relationship (2012, p.180).

This suggests that it is hard to operationalise the macro level concept of patriarchy, and indeed gendered power, in empirically meaningful ways due to its pervasive and unwieldy nature.

As mentioned in the last chapter, Connell's (1987) theory of gendered power draws on three central structures: labour, power and cathexis. Labour refers to the allocation of types of work; power refers to the structure of power which is a "set of social relations with some scope and permanence" (p.107) and cathexis relates to 'sexual social relationships' that organise emotional attachments. These three structures reinforce how gender is a "practical accomplishment: something accomplished by social practice. It is a fundamental feature of the way we have knowledge of human beings" (p.76). Authority within the main axis of the power structure of gender is connected with masculinity, but this is immediately complicated as not all men have authority in all circumstances. While for Hochschild (1990) gendered power is not discussed explicitly but rather subsumed by the concept of gender equality, the three components she asserts as being central are the

same as Connell (1987) – labour, power and emotion. Through her research focusing on the quest for equality and happiness in modern marriage she concluded that unequal power relationships were maintained by men and women. Her detailed qualitative work describes how emotion within couple relationships suffers through unequal power balances as women, who generally have more egalitarian gender ideologies, feel their domestic labour is undervalued, including their emotion work. These structural understandings of gendered power see emotion as being a constituent part of the structure of how gendered power operates, but do not provide a framework with which to connect the global to the local level operations of gendered power.

Thus the understanding of power used in this research is that power operates at structural (or *global)* and interactional (or *local)* levels simultaneously, impacted by social relations, specifically gender, influencing the outcome of any situation. This definition acknowledges the importance of interaction and the body in operations of gendered power, which in this thesis will be considered in reference to the third and final key concept: emotion.

### 2.1.3 Emotion

Despite several sociologists talking about emotions within their writings, emotions did not become a specific topic of interest until the 1970s (Turner and Stets, 2005). Those sociologists who study emotions highlight how "emotional lives are untidy" (Brownlie, 2011, p.462) yet central to understanding social relationships and "perhaps this is the magical quality of emotions; they can turn everyday acts into interactions laden with meaning" (Smart, 2007, p.60). In attempting to get away from understanding emotions in a psychological, individualistic sense, sociologists have characterised emotions as socially shaped and embodied responses to social stimuli. However, it is necessary to recognise that there is a range of emotions common to all humans which is perhaps rooted in our biological make-up, while cultural and historical meanings vary (Craib, 1995). This construction of emotion as being *in* social relationships is echoed by Barbalet (2002) and Burkitt (1997) who claim that it is vital to recognise emotions as essentially communicative "occurring **between**

**people** and not expressions of something contained inside a single person" (Burkitt, p.40, emphasis in original).

Burkitt (2014) emphasises the social nature of emotions, saying that people script emotional scenarios in relation to others but also bring with them emotional dispositions which have been developed through their biographies. As well as combining the past of the individual and the social nature of interaction, he also acknowledges the importance of power within social relationships, stressing that:

> emotions have a complex pattern embedded as they are in the multiple networks of social relations and power relations, affording different positions and possibilities for government, opposition and resistance (p.166).

He does not, however, address the gendered nature of emotions (Holmes, 2014), nor how emotion relates to gender power in social relations as will be focused on in this thesis. However, his understanding of emotion as being social leads to a focus on the nature of emotions, so that:

> in relationships with others one is always affected in some ways by the other, by what they say or do, and this can be involuntary in the sense that we are not always entirely in control of our emotions (p.137).

He goes on to clarify that:

> we are all caught in the balance of affect and affection, of involuntary feeling and reflective control, in a dialogue (sometimes reflective, sometimes not) of impulses, feelings, emotions and social expectations (p.137).

Presenting a definition of emotions which provides an explanation of the complex relationship between control, reflecting on emotion and the embodied nature of emotional feeling, Burkitt (2014) provides a sociological perspective of emotions which facilitates the exploration of emotional dispositions that can at times be "complex and ambivalent" (p.136). The centrality of the social nature of emotions for Burkitt (2014) emphasises the way:

> people express *both* a sense of self-power *and* vulnerability to being subjected to others' viewpoints on them – the imagination of which makes them feel certain emotions about

themselves – in dialogical interrelations to others (p.159, emphasis in original).

Prioritising the interactional loop of emotional expression and experience which occurs in social relations, mediated by the internalised expectations of others' viewpoints, leads Burkitt to acknowledge the role 'others' play in emotional experiences which are often experienced in embodied ways. This concept of emotion will be adopted in this thesis, as it opens up a space to acknowledge the complex means by which emotions are experienced in embodied ways while being relational, social and directly related to power. There is also recognition that when discussing or researching emotion it is important to acknowledge the competing forces of involuntary and reflective understandings of emotion.

Defining emotions is a difficult task. The term 'emotion' itself derives from common language, and as such refers to a wide array of experiences including both positive and negative, from mild to intense, and sensations that can be simple or complex (Gross and Thompson, 2007). Throughout this thesis the term 'emotion' subsumes others including sentiments, affect, feeling and the like (Turner and Stets, 2002), so that it is being used in a broadly defined manner, to include all aspects of affect and affection (Burkitt, 2014).

## 2.1.3.1 Emotional Reflexivity

When considering the concept of emotional reflexivity it is necessary first to define reflexivity. Archer (2003) defines this as being an achievement that describes the mediatory process between the internal and external via which people react to the situations in which they find themselves. Burkitt (2012) stresses the importance of conceptualising reflexivity as involving not only an internal conversation, but the role others play in our reflexive stance, saying:

> this cannot be disentangled from the way that others regard us and respond to us, evaluating our actions and ourselves, or from the way that we *imagine* that they do. (Burkitt, 2012, p.460).

The key here is the word 'imagine', emphasised by Burkitt himself – this imagining is related to what we expect others to think of us. Within a <u>gendered</u> emotional

habitus our own expectations and values frame what we experience in our internal experience of emotional reflexivity. I argue that these expectations and values (around emotion specifically) are gendered, and for many people highly gendered. These values and expectations are of course developed through experiences, and relate to both interactional knowledge, for example what might annoy one's partner, and also cultural knowledge about the 'feeling rules' in any given situation.

Within the context of this research where the process of regulating emotions, expressing emotions and any decision-making processes around this are central areas of investigation, the concept of 'emotional reflexivity' sums up all of these aspects of emotions. However, Holmes (2010) stresses that not everyone is equal in how competent they are in their emotional practices or interpreting other people's emotional practices correctly. Holmes (2010) suggests that:

> The ability to interpret one's own and others' emotions 'successfully' is not about recognizing authentic versus managed emotions but about being able to engage in meaningful ways with the emotional ups and downs of living within a complex and uncertain world. Whether and which types of individuals are equipped to deal with this emotionalisation of reflexivity, how they might go about it, and its consequences are questions in urgent need of further theoretical and empirical attention (p.149).

Highlighting the plural ways emotional experiences are interpreted and understood in everyday life, Holmes (2010) can be seen to echo Burkitt (2014) here in emphasising the effect of biography as well as social interaction in understanding emotion and drawing attention to the ways emotional biographies vary widely. Again what is missing is a consideration of gender specifically. It is hoped that this thesis will contribute to understandings of how emotional reflexivity is conceptualised by the men and women in this research.

## 2.1.3.2 Emotion Work

Arlie Hochschild (1983) introduced the highly influential concept of emotional labour into sociology, and more widely into the public imagination, referring to the requirement to appear happy and manage feeling within employment. This concept

was extended to refer to the private sphere and became 'emotion work' defined as the "management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display" (p.7) and is recognised as being highly gendered. Emotion work is not only performed on the self, through self-management, but also by the self upon others (Hochschild, 1979, p.562). This concept has been widely used and employed within sociology and within research on intimacy and personal relationships (for example Erickson, 2005; Duncombe and Marsden, 1995; Minnotte et. al., 2007; Umberson et al, 2015). Erickson (2005) states that within the context of couple relationships:

> the idea that husbands and wives may have to work at caring and intimacy contradicts what many may wish to believe about love and marriage. The deeper the bond between people, however, the more the emotion work is likely to take place (Hochschild, 1983, p.68). Offering encouragement, showing appreciation, listening closely to what someone has to say, and expressing empathy with another person's feelings (even when they are not shared) – day after day, year after year – represent emotion work of the highest order (p.339).

In her research using two waves of postal survey data collected over 1995–1996 from 335 married parents (225 of whom were women), Erickson (2005) found that the performance of emotion work is highly gendered. However she also looked at the gendered meanings of emotion work, finding that emotion work was more closely linked to the construction of gender than were housework or childcare (p.348).

Erickson (2005) found that women regarded emotional support of their husbands as part of their family work, while men construed their performance of emotion work as part of their interpersonal relationship, not in terms of their role as a husband – a distinction that relates to how gender identity construction impacts on performances of emotion work. Erickson (20015) used the instrumental-masculine and expressive-feminine subscales of the Personal Attributed Questionnaire to measure whether individuals are more traditionally feminine or masculine. The instrumental-masculine scale evaluates scores of independence, self-confidence, decision making, feeling superior and standing up to pressure. The feminine-expressive scale compiles a score in terms of being emotional, devoting self to others, being gentle, being helpful to

others, aware of others' feelings and being warm in relation to others. She concluded that men who scored highly on the feminine scale performed more emotion work amongst the male participants, while for the female participants more emotion work was performed when women scored highly on either the masculine or feminine scales of gender construction. Erickson (2005) demonstrated that "the performance of emotion work represented a form of instrumental action, not merely an expression of their 'kindness towards others'" (p.348) as women did more emotion work regardless of whether they were otherwise more 'masculine' through being assertive and confident. While the instrument being used here to measure gender identity construction is very blunt, in that it refers to highly stereotypical measurements of femininity and masculinity, it does serve to highlight how emotion work is deeply part of 'doing femininity' even when women are also described as being agentive and instrumental. The concept of emotion work will be described again in Theme 2 – gendered emotional habitus.

## *2.2* Bigger Picture – Gender Equality

In order to consider the bigger picture of sociological work within which this thesis sits, a review of the area of gender equality will now follow including a discussion of: gender equality and social change, social change in personal relationships, emotional aspects of gender equality and qualitative research in gender equality.

### 2.2.1 Gender Equality and Social Change

Gender equality has been widely researched within sociology, in line with a feminist agenda. Today, in 'the West', it is arguably 'common sense' that women have the same right as men to vote, to enter politics, to go to university or to work outside of the home, thus gender equality is conceived of in generally individualistic terms, in relation to political and legal rights (Bryson, 2007). Within sociology gender equality has been on the academic agenda since early feminist sociologists such as Ann Oakley began studying women and insisting on the importance of including women within sociology as a discipline (Oakley, 2005). Since the early 1970s sociology has continued to understand gender and gender equality in different ways, mapping the process of social change which has been taking place since the 1960s (Haste, 1992).

A brief history of this change includes several factors including female presence in the UK workforce, equality in income from paid employment and educational attainment of women. Up to the middle of the twentieth century the 'male breadwinner model' of employment and family was prevalent, based on a 'feudal' allocation of market work to men and domestic work to women (Crompton, 2007). But from the 1960s onwards there was a permanent rise in the number of women in paid employment. In the early 1970s this was at 56%, climbing to 72% by 1998 (Busch, 2010). While it is difficult to argue that there is gender equality within employment, it can be argued that there are marked improvements being made in some areas of gender equality – such as the increase of women managers in the UK from 8% in 1990 to 29% in 2002 ( Hunt, 2009).

Educational attainment also reflects the social change which has seen women emerging from the domestic sphere, with women receiving 53% of all National Vocational Qualifications in 2007/8 (Office for National Statistics, London, 2009). In terms of being employed, up to the point of having children men and women are equally likely to be in employment (Woodroffe, 2009). Many women remain in paid employment after having children, with 40% of mothers in paid employment in 1980, however this figure had risen significantly to 70% in 2008 (Scott, Dex and Joshi, 2008).

The impact of this structural change on the way gender operates at the micro level has been widely discussed in sociology, from both a theoretical standpoint and an empirical one, through research into the day-to-day operation of gender, particularly in the private sphere. A leading sociological approach which attempts to address the recent period of rapid social change is the individualisation thesis, which suggests that traditional social relationships are losing their meaning so that new options open up for individuals to perform their identity in more individualised ways (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Bauman, 2003; Giddens, 1992). This theory suggests a causal connection between a growth of individualisation and the 'rights revolution' by which women claimed gender equality (Sullivan, 2010). For Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) this means that old rules determining social action can no longer

be relied upon to help make decisions, therefore relationships become 'thinner and more fragile' under the pressure of the instability inherent in constant negotiation (2002, p.97). Bauman (2003) echoes this point when saying that "kinship networks feel frail and threatened" due to a lack of stability in boundaries around how relationships should operate. Gross (2005) critiques this position in saying that when most de-traditionalisation theorists refer to individualisation they are referring to the decline of what he calls "regulative traditions" relating to intimacy and the family. He states that while there is some evidence that these are in decline, this does not mean that reflexivity, understood as unbounded agency and creativity, has rushed to fill the void (p.298).

A more positive interpretation of the individualisation thesis is posited by Giddens (1992) in the highly popular book entitled *Transformation of Intimacy* wherein he suggests that the releasing of traditional constraints on identity has 'freed up' relationships leading to a greater potential for gender equality in the private sphere. The work of Giddens (1992) will be returned to and considered in more detail later in this chapter; however at this point it is important to note that his work along with that of Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995) and Bauman (2003) have collectively been heavily critiqued for not relating to empirical research in the area of couple relationships and for failing to recognise the significance of social class, gender inequality or gendered power (Jamieson, 1999; Crow, 2002; Smart, 2007). Beck (1995) and Bauman (2003) also describe social change as a dramatic apocalyptic process emphasising speed and drama through using references to 'juggernauts' and 'volcanoes' (Sullivan, 2010). An alternative approach to understanding the period of rapid social change taking place in gender and the private sphere is provided through looking at cohort attitude change research (Cunningham, 2008).

## 2.2.1.1 Understanding Social Change

It is possible to examine different explanations of how social change takes place at the micro level. One such approach is the cohort-driven model which suggests that:

> Social change occurs as members of more recent cohorts
> adopt new ideas and behaviours in response to the prevailing

> conditions during the 'impressionable years' of childhood
> and early adulthood (Cunningham, 2008, p.301)

This argument asserts that social change is essentially the result of population turnover, and past a certain point a generation will not change their social attitudes but instead 'level out' leading to attitude stability (Alwin and Krosnick, 1991). This understanding of social change is highly informative for this research as it directly locates the point of change that has occurred over approximately the last fifty years, pin-pointing a specific cohort of people who underwent significant shifts in attitudes throughout their childhood and early adulthood which led to the social changes tangible in statistics capturing the number of women entering the job market, moving away from the modern 'male breadwinner' mode and staying in employment after having children. Research by Cunningham (2008) looks at the three cohorts of the 'Intergenerational Panel Study of Parent and Children' longitudinal research which was conducted in the United States and included 848 white women who gave birth to a child in the summer of 1961. These women took part in the research in the form of surveys conducted in 1977, 1980, 1985 and 1993. The study concluded that the mean levels of women's support for the 'male breadwinner, female homemaker family model' declined at each interval from 1977 to 1985, but were essentially stable from 1985 to 1993. The level of education of the women in the study had a big impact on attitudes so that the:

> overall summary is that women who have had a high level of
> education are more likely to be more emancipated, and will
> experience less attitude change over their life course. While
> women who are less educated will experience more attitude
> change over their life course as they become more
> emancipated (p.311).

They concluded that through comparing cohorts within their study it was apparent that after the late 1980s there was stability in attitudes towards the breadwinner model, so that individual aging was not affecting attitudes. This led them to suggest that a period effect through which cohort replacement has led to rapid attitudinal change amongst this sample, due to early years attitude shifts rather than aging itself changing opinions on gender. It is important to acknowledge that these changes were not part of some inevitable process but rather have been fought for and struggled

over decades, hard won through daily contestations and negotiations (Sullivan, 2010). This understanding of social change, with its emphasis on attitudes, must also recognise the plurality and difference contained within the complexity of this process, which occurs in situated, located contexts (Sullivan, 2010).

## 2.2.1.2 The Importance of Gender Ideology

Part of the shift in attitudes towards domestic arrangements, including whether women should work, is a gender difference in attitudinal shift regarding gender ideology. Men have been slower to change since the 1970s in the United Kingdom (Ciabattari, 2001), although both women and men became more egalitarian in the 1990s compared to previous periods (Bolzendahl and Myers, 2004). This gender difference in egalitarian attitudes is central to considering gender equality as a social principle and its application within couple relationships, particularly heterosexual relationships. Suggestions as to why this is the case include the rationale that as women potentially benefit more from gender equality they are more likely to hold egalitarian gender beliefs (Barnett and Rivers, 2004). This belief in women gaining benefits from gender equality is facilitated by processes of socialisation, education or personal experience (Davis and Greenstein, 2009). Braun et al (2008) suggest that gender ideology is the most legitimising principle in accounting for international differences in perception of fairness with the domestic division of labour, and highlight the complex way cultural expectations around gender can impact on the domestic sphere. These more egalitarian attitudes in women have been found to be passed on to children (Bliss, 1988, Thornton et al, 1983) with sons being highly influenced by egalitarian fathers (Myers and Booth, 2002). Nearly all studies over the past 20 years examining the effects of gender ideology on the household division of labour and fairness have reported the importance of gender ideology (Davis and Greenstein, 2009). Through examining survey data from 22 countries from the 1994 International Social Survey Programme, Breen and Prince Cooke (2005) state there is quantitative evidence to show that, on average, women in every country included in their research had more non-traditional gender attitudes than the men in that country.

Perceived fairness is the focus of current research considering gender equality in the private sphere, almost all of which employs quantitative methods and does not include an emotional element (Kawamura and Brown, 2010; Thompson, 1991; Hawkins et al, 1995). The overarching finding from this body of work is that gender ideology is of central importance in perceptions of fairness in divisions of labour. Included in this body of work is research conducted in Israel testing the importance of gender ideology between three groups of women: traditional, transitional and egalitarian (Lavee and Katz, 2002). Based on a survey of 1,124 married men and women of different religious and ethnic backgrounds with at least one child, this research suggests that for egalitarian women there was a lower level of marital quality, for transitional women relationship satisfaction was mediated by a sense of fairness, while for the traditional women the sense of fairness did not impact on marital quality. The study pointed to the importance of gender ideology when considering satisfaction within relationships and in understanding perceptions of fairness within divisions of labour.

When considering the shift in gender ideology outlined above, the importance of this change in terms of gendered power can be seen. Connell (1987) argues that gendered power does not operate in an orderly structure, but rather is imposed through cultural ideas. The distinction between the global and local levels of gendered power allows women to have more authority, to the extent that some local contexts may even contradict the global pattern of male authority. However this contradiction would lead to a 'backlash' as Connell (1987) describes: "Such departures may provoke 'policing', i.e. attempts to establish the global pattern locally as a norm. They may also signify structural tension that leads to large-scale change in the longer run" (p.111). I argue that the changes in gender ideology discussed above are part of a process of social change moving, very gradually, towards gender equality while constantly being constrained by entrenched cultural knowledge.

## 2.2.1.3 Social Change in Personal Relationships

As Jamieson (1998) highlights in her book *Intimacy*, sociology has been researching married couples and reporting on greater equality in couple relationships since the

1960s, including Young and Willmott (1973) who talked of marriage becoming more symmetrical. Interest in this area rose rapidly during the 1980s and 1990s when there was a high level of interest in the private sphere within the social sciences, particularly in sociology, looking at issues around the division of labour (Greenstein, 1996; Sanchez and Kane, 1996; Press and Townsley, 1998), marriage stability (Coleman, 1988; Zvonkovic et al, 1996), changes in parenting (Haas, 1993) and gender equality in the home (Blaisure and Allen, 1995; Chafetz, 1995; Hawkin et al, 1995).

Before going on to summarise this research it is necessary to acknowledge the homogeneity of the sample of populations being presented in this literature review. All of the research that has been presented in this review of literature relates specifically to married, heterosexual couples, usually who have at least one child, often only reporting the data collected from women. This is also the case for most of the research presented in the next part of this section when considering qualitative research in this area from the UK. While the sample of couples being reported in these bodies of research has been chosen for specific methodological reasons, it is necessary to acknowledge that this thesis has employed a more inclusive sampling frame as will be discussed in the next chapter.

Research looking at how parents spend their time shows that mothers take on primary responsibility for the home as well as the childcare, including the time required for domestic chores (Sullivan, 2010). This highlights the general case where over three quarters of women say they have primary responsibility for the day-to-day care of their children in the home (Ellison, Barker, and Kulasuriya, 2009). Other research into fathers' share of time spent with children shows that while time commitments of fathers to children are increasing, mothers still consistently do more multi-tasking, more physical labour and spend more time overall with their children (Craig, 2006). Recent research looking at young co-habiting dual-career couples (Van Hooff, 2011) found that despite couples having similar professional employment, the gender differences in responsibility for the home was remarkably similar to traditional gender roles, with women assuming this responsibility. While

these women stated that their jobs were important to them, their relationships were ultimately more important and some even saw the home as their priority over work (Van Hooff, 2011). This apparently pervasive division of household labour down gendered lines, despite couples working the same number of hours in similarly professional jobs, is striking especially when considered in relation to research conducted with people of the same age (early twenties) which concluded that they saw gender equality as already achieved and no longer an issue for them (Kelan, Gratton, Mah and Walker, 2009).The combination of these findings show a distance between equality as a social principle, and equality in practice within the private sphere. So it seems that gender equality as a general social principle is hard to disagree with, but when considered within the domestic sphere pervasive inequalities still exist and are less likely to be seen as problematic by people in their twenties (Kelan et al, 2009).

Budgeon (2013) suggests that the disparity between the official equality discourse and understandings of equality in the private sphere "complicates the ways in which gender ideals organize social relations" (p.331), leading to questions around how these two aspects of equality can be reconciled in couple relationships, as suggested by Smart (2007, p.79) when she states:

> if we no longer accept the idea that love is impossible where there are inequalities, then it becomes important to consider how these apparently competing forces manage to co-exist.

This assertion is echoed in the body of quantitative research conducted in the United States which has found that despite dual-earner families consistently reporting unequal divisions of labour, women usually report this to be fair (Coltrane, 2000; Gager and Hohmann-Marriott 2006; Lennon and Rosenfield, 1994). This leads to questions around why such a belief should be the case, especially given the increase in egalitarian gender ideology since the 1960s (Davis and Greenstein, 2009).

The unequal divisions of labour within the domestic sphere is a direct result of the continued increases in women's labour force participation and modest increase in men's share of domestic work (Bianchi et al, 2006; Gershuny, 2000; Hook, 2006; Blossfeld and Drobnic, 2001). The importance of housework and childcare

arrangements and perceived equality becomes important within couple relationships as demonstrated in longitudinal research involving married couples in the UK who had their first child in 1970. This research showed that a man's failure to share in childcare and housework increased the risk of divorce over the following sixteen years, regardless of whether or not the mother was in paid work (Sigle-Rushton, 2010). This finding was in turn supported by research conducted more than three decades ago which found wives' thoughts of divorce reduced when their husbands contributed more to housework (Huber and Spitze, 1983). This is confirmed by more recent research stating that among married women, marital satisfaction is significantly affected by whether or not they are content with the division of household tasks (Bradford Wilcox and Nock, 2006). Meanwhile, the likelihood of second births within families increases significantly along with husbands' greater contribution to domestic labour in Germany (Cooke, 2004) and in Hungary and Sweden (Olah, 2003). The wide-ranging body of research into the division of labour and topics such as 'men's family role', which itself has over 700 papers published in academic journals each year (Lewis and Lamb, 2007), are of great interest and importance when researching gender equality, however their focus on more structural and quantifiable aspects of gender equality are only part of the picture of what is happening in couple relationships.

Essentially what can be seen to be happening is a process of change where women entered the male domain of paid work outside the home in increasing numbers, including after being married and having children, and obtained higher levels of qualifications, so that the performance of 'femininity' became more plural with the increase of women in paid employment outside of the home. As part of a feminist interpretation of equality, there was widespread discussion of how this change in the public sphere would impact on the private sphere. It is important to remember the context of the research in this area, especially the large body of work conducted in the 1980s and 1990s. This body of work, I argue, reflects the social conditions in which the researchers themselves were living and trying to make sense of – specifically the lack of change in the gendered division of labour *in* the home which

'should' have changed to reflect the increase of labour women perform *outside* of the home.

Arlie Hochschild (1990) was one of the first people to discuss the importance of gender ideology to the division of labour, citing the importance of emotional responses to gender beliefs as central to gender strategies. She refers to the lack of gender symmetry in the process of social change in the private and public spheres of social life as the 'stalled revolution' in her book entitled *The Second Shift*. Here the 'stalled revolution' refers to the increased participation of women in the public sphere, with no corresponding increase on the part of men participating in the domestic sphere. In *The Second Shift* (1990) Hochschild showed through the use of observation of couples with young children how they understood their gender ideologies and managed their behaviour to rationalise these. She argued that equality in marriage is elusive as men have greater power in heterosexual relationships and this continues to structure marital relationships. Her central concept of the 'stalled revolution' (1990) refers not only to the lack of equality in who does the housework, childcare or has responsibility for the home, but also the participating women's expectations of greater equality in their relationships.

In Hochschild's research, the women were the 'revolutionaries' in the sense that they had gone into the workplace after having had children, but were faced with a 'second shift' of labour when they returned home as their male partners did little to support them. Hochschild (1990) draws on traditional gender ideologies to emphasise the effort made by these women to manage their disappointment and resentment towards their partners, to explain the lack of effort made by their partners, through discussing what is to be 'expected, normal and fair' among married couples. Hochschild (1990) stressed that women were reluctant to raise issues of inequality with their partners as they were concerned about this leading to conflict or marriage breakdown, and that the women participants in her research perceived the lack of effort to perform household labour as a lack of their partners' care for them.

Essentially men have not changed their performance of unpaid labour inside the home to compensate for women being at work. This is arguably because for women

this social change over approximately the last 50 years has been a positive opening up of possibilities and choices, but it has not had the same direct impact on the lives of men. For men this change does not bring great benefits – rather it does not provide *any* obvious benefits at a structural level. Instead it undermines aspects of male privilege, especially in relation to the traditional breadwinner division of labour. This context has provided a 'problem' present in much of the literature reviewed in this chapter where the issue of men not having become more egalitarian in the same way as women is impacting on couple relationships in many ways. So while this thesis argues that there has been an impact of the rapid period of social change discussed, it is important to acknowledge the wider context, in line with Duncombe and Marsden (1995) who say that:

> We would agree with Maynard than any sociological exploration of the personal and emotional must be firmly located in the context of wider gender inequalities of economic and political power (1990, p.154).

It is necessary to acknowledge that all of the literature which considers the division of labour specifically, or gender equality more generally, contributes to the same emancipatory, feminist agenda of understanding gender inequality within the private sphere, with the aim ultimately of reducing this.

Examples of research looking specifically at gendered power in couple relationships includes Komter (1989), the work of Allen (2003) and Hockey et. al. (2007). Komter (1989) suggests in her research with married couples that as men's formal and institutionalised power decreases in Western societies, informal and not necessarily institutionalised ways of sustaining and reproducing power inequality between women and men are becoming more visible. Within her research subtle behaviours within couples were symbolic of gendered power such as men ignoring their wives' discontent or anger at unequal divisions of labour. Komter (1989) concludes that it is in these unobtrusive ways that male privilege is maintained without using brute power, but with the same effect of women not having sufficient power to effect the change they desired in their couple relationships. Allen (2003) conducted research with young people leading her to argue that while male power is still pervasive, there

is space for the young women with whom she spoke to exercise some degree of agency in their sexual relationships. Allen (2003) goes on to suggest that a more complex understanding of how power operates in heterosexual relationships is required as the notion of male domination is too simplistic to describe the accounts of her participants.

### 2.2.2 Emotional Aspects of Gender Equality

It is not sufficient to measure equality or power in couple relationships through measuring the division of labour alone (Eichler, 1981). Research in the United States has found that marriage is more likely to break down if there is inadequate love or intimacy from spouses (e.g. Amato and Rogers, 1999; Gager and Sanchez, 2003). Within the United States a body of quantitative research has been conducted in the area of gender equality, or equity, and has found that emotional elements of couple relationships impact on perceptions of fairness (Hawkins et al;, 1995, Wilcox and Nock, 2006; Kawamura and Brown, 2010). One model suggested by Thompson (1991) to understand perceptions of fairness, the 'distributive justice framework', was designed specifically to see more clearly the empirical connections between Hochschild's (1990) allocation of the 'second shift' and women's sense of fairness (Hawkins et al, 1995). This model suggests wives will "perceive the allocation of family work as unfair if they lack some valued outcome" (Hawkins et al 1995, p. 695) of their relationship, including interpersonal outcomes such as feeling appreciated. Hawkins et al (1995) tested this theory using questionnaires in five major metropolitan areas of the United States, of which 234 were fully completed by married women with at least one child who were working over 15 hours per week. Based on this sample of women they found that from several tests of possible factors, wives' sense of appreciation for their domestic labour was "by far the most important predictor of fairness" (p.718), reinforcing the findings of Hochschild (1990) and Komter (1989). But they stressed that more research was required to understand the nature of the emotions that led to feeling appreciated within the context of couple relationships.

Kawamura and Brown (2010) built on the work of Hawkins et al (1995), seeking to examine the importance of how much women perceive themselves to 'matter' to

their husbands. Using data from 489 interviews conducted with married women in 2000 they sought to examine the relationship between wives' perceptions of fairness and emotional dynamics of the whole marital relationship rather than just appreciation for housework performed. In doing so, their aim is similar to the goals of this research, although using a different theoretical approach Kawamura and Brown (2010) assert emotions are key components of contemporary marital relationships. Kawamura et al (2010, p.980) defined mattering as:

> how much a wife perceives she matters to her husband. In other words, whether she feels her husband is there for her when she needs him, he cares about her, he provides emotional support to her, appreciates her, and so forth. Thus, mattering to her husband is one of the emotional rewards, or interpersonal outcome values, wives receive in marriage.

This definition is very close to the term 'emotional participation' used empirically in the research of Duncombe and Marsden (1993), which will be reviewed later in this chapter. Kawamura et al (2010) found that mattering is important – i.e. feeling respected and receiving a level of concern from husbands was positively related to perceptions of fairness by women, demonstrating the importance of emotional aspects of perceived fairness and, by extension, equality within couple relationships.

Wilcox and Nock (2006) add to the picture being painted of emotion being central to perceptions of fairness, through directly addressing the importance of men's emotion work to marital quality. Wilcox and Nock (2006) used a data set from a 1992–1994 wave survey of 5,010 couples from across the United States to test their hypothesis that the assessments women make of the emotion work men do in their relationships will be a crucial determinant of their marital quality. They define "husbands' marital emotion work as any effort to express positive emotion to their wives, or to set aside time for activities focused specifically on their relationship" (p.322). They conclude that:

> men's emotion work (and women's assessments of that work) is the most crucial determinant of women's marital quality. It is more important than patterns of household labour, perceptions of housework equity, female labour force participation, childbearing, education and a host of other

> traditional predictors of global marriage quality. This finding
> suggests that the functions, character and stability of
> contemporary marriages are intimately tied to their emotional
> well-being (p.1340).

Linking this to perceptions of fairness in the division of household labour, they found that women who reported unfairness, or didn't respond to the question on this, were significantly more unhappy with their husband's emotion work. Wilcox and Nock (2006) suggested that their data demonstrates that women who are less happy with the fairness in their household division of labour are less likely to receive emotion work and are less satisfied with this emotion work from their husbands. They state:

> We suspect that higher expectations of intimacy and equality
> among women, especially more egalitarian-minded women,
> have led them to view their husbands' emotion work more
> critically; we also suspect that these expectations have
> increased marital conflict and – in turn – dampened men's
> marital emotion work (p.1340).

This suggests a causal relationship of changes in gender ideology leading to reduced accounts of emotion work being performed. It is crucial to remember here that this paper was published on data from survey results from 1992–1994, over ten years before Wilcox and Nock's paper was written. Given that this was a period of particularly rapid change in gender ideology (Bolzendahl and Myers, 2004), it is valuable to consider more recent research findings in this area.

While this big picture of the importance of appreciation and the performance of emotion work coming from American quantitative data is highly informative in framing the research being presented in this thesis at a societal level, it is less useful at highlighting the nuanced experiences of this emotional aspect of couple relationships. What is required therefore is a more qualitative understanding of what gender equality or fairness or emotional closeness means to individuals. Several highly influential texts published in the 1990s addressed this point, including *The Transformation of Intimacy* by Anthony Giddens (1992), *Intimacy* by Lynn Jamieson (1998) and the work of Duncombe and Marsden (1993, 1995, 1998). This body of work, alongside a body of qualitative research, will now be reviewed in order to

show the ways in which the ideas contained in this literature have shaped the research presented in this thesis.

## 2.2.2.1 Qualitative Research into Gender Equality and Emotions

Knudson-Martin and Rankin Mahoney (1998) reviewed interview data collected in 1989 from 12 'egalitarian couples' selected from a larger sample of couples they had previously interviewed according to their use of a 'language of equality'. This research reports very similar results to Hochschild (1990) in referring to 'myths of equality' being developed amongst most of the couples wherein they avoided issues that were causing inequality within their relationships. Through restricting the possible range of behaviours, expectations and appraisals of the benefits and costs of their relationships, couples were able to call situations 'fair' when they were neither equal nor took into consideration the needs of both partners. This strategy is explained as a necessary process to resolve the clash between couples entering into a relationship with egalitarian ideals and expectations on one hand, as well as traditional expectations on the other. This is in line with the suggestion already discussed of women having a more egalitarian ideology than men in the uneven process of social change that has been taking place since the 1960s. This gender difference in ideology is compacted by the unequal resources and power with which men and women enter their relationships, making the achievement of gender equality difficult (Knudson-Martin and Mahoney, 1998). For Knudson-Martin and Mahoney (1998) the central issue preventing equality in the couples they researched was not the tasks and practical dilemmas of family life, but the assumptions and related power around whose needs and desires were prioritised, saying:

> Couples talked as though their relationships were equal and frequently reported wanting a 'different' relationship than their parents had, but most of the discussion was limited to talk about males doing more housework and did not address or challenge the assumptions of male power undergirding traditional constructions of gender and marital relationships. Other aspects of male role change, such as learning to be more empathic or attentive, were rarely addressed. If power differentials were raised at all, their concerns were framed in terms of the wives' personal lack of assertiveness or separate

> identity but not in terms of the husband's need to be more
> attentive and responsive…. The popular attitude that "women
> love too much" was expressed by several husbands and
> wives. The focus on women's need to change in itself
> indicates the extent to which power differentials were
> operating in these marriages. (p.88)

This quote draws attention to the central importance of emotion when researching equality in the private sphere, and the need to look at the way this links to power. It highlights how the focus on 'who does what' housework can obscure the interpersonal dynamics within a couple and obfuscate the inherently gendered power dynamics that are taking place. Employing 'myths of equality' enabled several couples in their research to use a language of equality in ways that made them feel that their ideologies of equality were being realised, while in actuality their relationships were not judged to be equal by the researchers (both experienced marriage counsellors). In fact Knudson-Martin et al (1998) deemed all of the 12 couples to not have achieved equality, mainly due to the continued privileging of the male participants' needs over the female participants'. This research highlights once again the connection between gender equality and emotion, and how this relates directly to the operation of gendered power. In a UK context, work within this area was also taking place at this time by the highly influential researchers Duncombe and Marsden (1993, 1995, 1998).

The research conducted by Duncombe and Marsden (1993, 1995, 1998) looked specifically at heterosexual couple relationships including the areas of emotional participation, emotion work and emotional power. In their 1993 article Duncombe and Marsden discuss the role of ideologies of love and intimacy and the theories related to the gender division of 'emotion work' in personal relationships. The article was based on pilot study data collected as part of their ESRC funded research exploring the British Household Panel Study's pilot project on Household Allocative Systems (Pahl, 1989), which noted that couples explain their financial arrangements by referring to their couple status. Their response to this was that there was an emotional component missing to most research looking at couple relationships as these focused exclusively on the instrumental aspects of "work, domestic labour and

finance" (p.225). This emotional component was explored through their ESRC funded project which interviewed, both together and apart, sixty mature married or cohabiting heterosexual couples with subsamples of gay and lesbian couples.

Over the course of their pilot project Duncombe and Marsden (1993) conducted interviews and focus groups which gave the strong impression that "Most of our women respondents felt their male partners were lacking in what might be called 'emotional participation' in their relationships" (p.225). The concept of 'emotional participation' has been adopted as the central concept being empirically explored in this thesis, in that participants were asked to define this concept during all interviews. According to Duncombe and Marsden (1993), emotional participation is the idea that there is a gendered inequality of emotional response within the relationships of their participants, whereby men say they care about their couple relationships, but within those close relationships fail to disclose their intimate emotions. They relate this absence of disclosure to a lack of skill in labelling or expressing emotions, particularly in comparison to women who disclose weakness and reveal emotion more easily. However, Duncombe and Marsden (1993) do point out that their account is dominated by female voices, which is explained when they say:

> It will be evident that this preliminary account of our research has largely focused on women's 'complaints' of what they perceive as men's failure to relate emotionally. However, this is in line with other research, and we make no apologies for the way our account mirrors the phenomena of male non-disclosure and gender asymmetry in emotional behaviour. (p.228–9)

They concluded that their male respondents did have feelings but these were theirs and not to be disclosed, while some men acknowledged that they would like to be more emotionally open with their partner but didn't know how to go about doing this. Duncombe and Marsden (1993) suggest that men are less prepared to disclose intimate emotions due to fears from early socialisation that any vulnerability might be exploited, suggesting there is a gender difference in ability and willingness to disclose emotionally and to 'do' intimacy in personal relationships. They go on to conclude that:

> Such inequalities of actual or expressed emotional need for
> intimacy are integrally related to gender inequalities of
> power, for true intimacy between men and women would
> imply an equal emotional reciprocity… So men's
> withholding from women of emotional validation which they
> seek through intimacy may become a source of male power,
> and indeed some women reported that they experienced
> men's usual emotional 'remoteness' as a form of power. In a
> mysterious way, the giving or withholding of emotion and
> intimacy thus becomes one kind of 'carrier' of gender power.
> (p.236)

Here Duncombe and Marsden (1993) explain how, echoing the ideas of Knudson-Martin and Mahoney (1998) and Hochschild (1990), power and emotion are directly linked in couple relationships, and emotional aspects of personal relationships must be researched in order to investigate the ways gender inequality operates within the private sphere.

A focus on emotion was continued in the work of Duncombe and Marsden in their 1995 article '"Workaholics" and "whingeing women"' wherein they address the 'mysterious' way in which emotional intimacy carries gender power through presenting the findings from their ESRC project, concluding that the men in their study appeared to not understand there was a problem in lacking emotional openness. Instead these men felt their relationship problems were caused by sexual difficulties (i.e. women not wanting to have sex) which women felt arose due to a lack of emotional intimacy. The desire for emotional connectedness on the part of the women was interpreted by many men in their research as 'whingeing' which was felt to be unfair and disloyal after men had been working all day (hence the title). Duncombe and Marsden (1995) concluded that women's potential to exert emotional power over men is limited by a failure on the part of men to recognise women's emotional needs and women's reluctance to withdraw their emotional services from men who do not return their attention. So that when relationships are breaking down, the performance of emotion work by women may well obscure the degree of their exploitation so that at some point they eventually are unable to maintain the "illusion of happy coupledom" (p.163). This point of maintaining 'an illusion of happy coupledom', or a 'myth of equality', or performing a 'psychological "maintenance

program"' (Hochschild, 1990, p.273) is a central concern within the majority of work in this area in the 1990s. I suggest this directly relates to the rapid period of social change which had impacted upon the relationships being researched at this time, as these couples were the first to form relationships within a popular discourse of equality and undergo the uneven effects of social change in gender ideology. For the women who were more egalitarian in their views, they only realised once they were in relationships, predominantly marriages, that gender equality in the home sphere was highly elusive. This is supported by the work of Mansfield and Collard (1988) who studied 65 British couples who were newly married in 1979, finding that after only a couple of months they had 'fallen into' traditional divisions of labour with husbands who lacked emotional openness, leading to high levels of disappointment.

Brannen and Moss (1991) found similar findings when conducting longitudinal research with 243 London-based new mothers who were in dual-earner couple relationships, although these women did not express dissatisfaction despite their unequal division of labour. Instead they concluded that the women in their study could forgive domestic inequalities in labour, if they were receiving emotional support from their husbands. This was interpreted as a deliberate effort on the part of these women to invoke low expectations and over-emphasise the domestic labour their husbands did perform. This practice of valuing male domestic labour more highly than female labour replicated a finding reported by Backett (1982) who through researching parenting concluded that very little progress had been made towards achieving equality in the domestic sphere. Yet, despite this pervasive inequality couples could be happy in their relationships, through mutual 'buying into' a discourse of equality while their practical arrangements were in fact traditional in pattern. Implicit in this analysis of unhappy women tolerating emotionally unequal relationships is the issue of agency. I argue that there is a lack of agency on the part of the women in this body of research which has changed in the research being presented in this thesis – a central point that will be returned to in Theme 1: Heterosexuality and Agency.

The final conclusion made in Duncombe and Marsden's 1995 article is that:

> any consideration of changes towards greater equality
> between the sexes must take account of how heterosexual
> masculine identity has traditionally been bound up with
> maintaining emotional distance as a defence against intimacy.
> (p.165)

This focus on masculinity and emotion and its impact on power within couple relationships has directly influenced the research presented in this thesis, which is focused on how emotional participation is conceptualised, experienced and valued and in turn impacts on power dynamics within couple relationships. The third article by Duncombe and Marsden to be reviewed here was published in 1998 and examines the emotion work that women do, but also the emotion work men do, concluding that the performance of emotion work leads to a loss of authenticity. They review previous literature and state that despite several concepts being available to describe the emotional work that takes place in couple relationships, there are few empirical examples to substantiate these. They refer to the work of Hite (1988) who reported a kind of 'emotional contract' between married couples in which the woman is expected to emotionally nurture her husband, a phenomenon Duncombe and Marsden (1998) also report being present in their research findings. However, they also draw attention to the ways men perform emotion work on themselves in order to conform with their own ideology of masculinity through suppressing their emotions, in contrast to women's emotion work which relates to expressing emotion. They suggest that this suppressing of emotion leads to men feeling hollow and unable to talk about their intimate emotions, and while some had used 'shallow acting' to present themselves as emotionally engaged with their wives in order to avoid divorce, this acting had in fact led to a loss of authenticity which resulted in them stopping this relatively quickly. They go on to conclude that more research is needed into how individuals understand the emotion work they do, despite the claimed difficulties in researching men's emotional behaviour, within a framework which allows for recognition of the differently gendered ideologies around emotion. It is exactly this area that this thesis addresses with a focus on emotional participation – in particular male experiences of this, and how this relates to performances of masculinity.

While this is not an example of qualitative research, arguably the most cited sociological book written on couple relationships and the changing nature of these in reaction to rapid social change is *The Transformation of Intimacy* by Anthony Giddens (1992). This book was widely read outside of sociology, impacting upon the discourse around intimate relationships during the 1990s, and while it has been widely criticised within sociology, mainly due to its lack of basis in empirical research, it captured the imagination of the wider public in a way sociological texts rarely do. Giddens' (1992) central argument in this book is that the process of moving into modernity has produced the idea of romantic love, beginning in the late eighteenth century. This is in contrast with the pre-modern era in which there was no intimacy in romantic love, as the basis of marriage was essentially functional and economic rather than based on love. He describes how "in the current era, ideals of romantic love tend to fragment under the pressure of female sexual emancipation and autonomy" (p.61), stressing that a new type of love has therefore emerged – confluent love. Based upon the need to 'open oneself up', confluent love is "active, contingent love, and therefore jars with the 'for-ever' and 'one-and-only' qualities of the romantic love complex" (p.61); it presumes emotional equality. Giddens (1992) suggests that "love here only develops to the degree to which intimacy does, to the degree to which each partner is prepared to reveal concerns and needs to the other and to be vulnerable to that other" (p.62). In this way Giddens stresses the centrality of emotional equality as well as the importance of 'disclosing intimacy', of essentially talking about emotions and feelings which he sees as central to establishing a 'pure relationship'. Giddens (1992, p.58) refers to the 'generic restructuring of intimacy' in moving towards the pure relationship which is defined as:

> entered into for its own sake, for what can be derived by each person from a sustained association with another; and which is continued only in so far as it is thought by both parties to deliver enough satisfaction for each individual to stay within it.(p.58)

While this description at first glance seems ideological and optimistic, it has been widely criticised for failing to take into account the evidence of empirical research

into couple relationships (Jamieson, 1999), and for failing to take into account the importance of social inequalities which might inhibit the freedom central to the pursuit of pure relationships (Jamieson, 1999; Crow, 2002; Smart, 2007). In not acknowledging these axes of social difference Giddens has effectively ignored the power imbalances present in couple relationships.

*Intimacy* by Lynn Jamieson (1998) is an influential sociological book which reviews empirical research around the issue of intimate relationships, including couple relationships. In proceeding with this review she concludes that disclosing intimacy is not the dominant type of intimacy in couple relationships, but rather empirical research highlights the centrality of practical acts of love and care such as doing household chores. She stresses the influence of the continued male breadwinner, female house-worker notion in preventing gender equality, stating that intimacy without equality is possible, but inequality will undermine intimacy if practical acts of care are not performed. Orly Benjamin's (1998) article focusing on emotion and negotiation in marriage supports the conclusion of Jamieson (1998) that it is necessary to focus on the connection between emotional and practical aspects of couple care and acts of love. She concludes from her interviews (with 28 women from four different occupational backgrounds) that women's varied biographies impact upon their ability to negotiate within their couple relationships, particularly in relation to emotional disclosure from their partners. Benjamin (1998) stresses the importance of women prioritising male emotional disclosure as:

> emotional disclosure, particularly that which relates to feelings of anger and hurt, is a most powerful means in the project of undermining men's institutionally framed power bases. This finding seems most significant for the theoretical interpretation of women's reported frustration with men's limited disclosure. The findings imply that this characteristic male reluctance to 'talk' serves traditional men's privileges. (p.790)

Benjamin (1998) states that there is a need for research into men's experiences and perceptions of male lack of emotional openness, which this thesis goes some way to addressing. However it must be acknowledged that, as mentioned by Benjamin (1998), the emphasis on emotional closeness has resulted from a prioritising of this

by women, not by men. It is women who have called for men to be more emotional in their couple relationships, which must be remembered when considering whether or not there is a moral imperative on men to participate emotionally in these relationships.

The context of previous research focusing on gender equality in couple relationships serves to frame the starting point of this research – the point from which it began. What follows is a more thorough review of the literature which has informed the three themes that were introduced in the last chapter.

## *2.3* Analytical Themes

Three themes have been constructed in order to analyse the data presented in Chapters 4, 5 and 6, as outlined in the introduction. This final section of the literature review will now discuss in more detail the specific literature being blended within each theme. This literature has been chosen in order to provide a clear sociological frame with which to discuss the findings presented here. These themes overlap and relate directly to my core argument about how emotional participation interacts with the reproduction of (and resistance to) gendered power within couple relationships. Because the themes will be used as discrete tools to present the findings of my research, it is necessary to outline the literature that these themes draw on.

### 2.3.1 Theme 1 – Heterosexuality and Agency

As discussed in the introduction, 'heterosexuality and agency' is a theme which runs throughout this whole thesis as it combines two key concepts – gender (through heterosexuality) and power (through agency).

## 2.3.1.1 Heterosexuality

Within the context of couples, gendered relationships are often naturalised so that the performance of gender identities becomes invisible, in particular within heterosexual couples, so that the gendered nature of everyday practices come to be rendered unproblematic. For this reason, gender will be examined through the lens of heterosexuality in this research, enabling access to the hard-to-reach nature of how gender is performed, produced and reproduced in everyday life in order to move

from 'theory' to 'practice' (Hockey, Meah and Robinson, 2007). There is a growing body of research within sociology considering the institution of heterosexuality (Hockey et. al., 2007; Jackson, 1999; Chung, 2005; Sieg, 2007; Richardson, 1996). Defined as an institution, as well as being a particular form of practice, experience or identity, heterosexuality "structures and organises understandings of individuals, as well as sexual and familial relationships, that are not included within the construction of the category 'heterosexual'" (Richardson, 1996, p.3). In this case, heterosexuality does not refer only to the types of sex in which individuals are engaging, or with whom they are having that sex, but also to the socially constructed beliefs which underpin social institutions, and frame everyday life. It is with this understanding that I am using the concept of heterosexuality – to refer to the ways most of the population 'do' heterosexuality every day without reflecting critically on it (Jackson, 1999). This definition does not refer to sexuality in itself, but rather applies heterosexuality as a lens with which to view emotional participation. Heterosexuality is a flexible institution, reflecting patriarchal structures, but at the same time providing "room for manoeuvre within these constraints" (Jackson, 1999, p.133). So it can be argued that heterosexuality is a pervasive, unmarked social category which is both 'everywhere and nowhere', resisting critical reflection, dominant and 'taken for granted' (Hockey, Meah and Robinson, 2007, p.180). However it is necessary to recognise that heterosexuality has undergone a period of rapid social change, which has led to an opening up of ways of 'doing' heterosexuality. Just as there are plural ways of performing gender, there is wide diversity in the performance of heterosexuality – leading to the use of the term heterosexualities, which can be used to appreciate the differences in meaning and experience (Hockey et al, 2007). This plural term implies a focus on identity and recognition that heterosexualities are not homogenous but in fact are multiple and complex, exercising different degrees of agency and resistance to hegemonic expectations of gender (Hockey et al, 2007; Smart, 2007). It acknowledges the potential for individual practice to potentially destabilise or reproduce heterosexuality, and looks to identify the complex ways processes of reproducing or resisting institutionalised forms of heterosexuality can happen simultaneously (Jackson, 1999, p.50).

## 2.3.1.2 Agency

Agency has been chosen as a key concept in this research due to its ability to refocus the concept of power in an 'agent-centred' way. Agency has been defined as:

> the ability to define one's goals and act upon them. Agency is about more than observable action; it also encompasses the meaning, motivation and purpose which individuals bring to their activity, their sense of agency, or the 'power within'. (Kabeer, 1999:438)

Agency refers to the motivation and thinking behind behaviours and actions as well as any actions carried out. This highlighting of the non-physical, and potentially unspoken, elements of agency are important in researching relationships. However it must also be acknowledged that the meanings attached to agency are contextually based (Wray, 2004) and thus context must be explicitly considered when using this concept to access agent-centred experiences of power. As Wray (2004) stresses, agency does not have to necessarily be at odds with dependence, neither does power necessarily equal control.

An example of exploring experiences of agency within sexuality can be seen in the research by Marilyn Meadows (1997) into experiences of women in heterosexual relationships. This research was conducted with thirty women aged between thirty to forty years old, based in the UK. It describes the development of robust concepts of selfhood containing the idea that they have the right to sexual pleasure. She noted that older women were more successful at negotiating what they wanted from within the boundaries of male power than were younger women. But at the same time these women recognised that ideal choices "are traded off against practical realities, gains, losses, in the balance that makes up daily life" (p.149). This suggests that in Meadows' (1997) research, time and age themselves, for some women, increased their ability to communicate what they wanted and to be clear in saying what they didn't want. These findings are supported by the survey findings which will be discussed later in this thesis and point towards the importance of considering how agency operates in the process of 'trading off' different priorities within couple relationships. Meadows'

(1997) research highlights how agency is affected by age, but is also present in situations where all of one's desires are not necessarily met.

When reviewing the findings of most of the previous research into gender equality, particularly that from the 1980s and 1990s, there is an impression of women who have little agency. From Knudson-Martin et al's (1998) 'myths of equality' to Hochschild's (1990) 'stalled revolution' to Duncombe and Marsden's (1995) 'Workaholic and Whingeing Women' – even up to Van Hooff's (2011) more current research on dual earner couples – women are painted as having little agency within unequal divisions of labour and a lack of emotional closeness. This can be seen in the discussion around why women continue to report being happy in structurally unequal relationships (i.e. within an unequal division of labour), for example Van Hooff says "Further research is needed into the fact that many educated, financially independent women continue to take primary responsibility for domestic chores when they have the resources not to" (2011, p.27).

What is specifically lacking is a more developed discussion of what agency these women have and whether they are exercising it in their personal relationships. I do not want to characterise the female participants in this research as 'cultural dopes' nor as 'docile subjects', as this was not the way these women presented themselves throughout this research. Rather one of the key purposes of this theme is to explore the ways in which 'the personal is political', reflecting the sentiment that:

> power, in the fullest sense, was present in the most personal
> aspects of people's lives, especially in regard to women's
> disproportionate responsibility for households, childcare and
> 'emotion work' more generally. (Hearn, 2012, p.187)

This theme therefore looks directly at how individual actors are exercising agency within their gendered performances specifically of emotional support, emotional participation or emotion work. Through combining the lens of heterosexuality, in looking for expectations and performances of gender, with the concept of agency, we can consider the ways power is being exercised at an agent-centred level, while acknowledging that power involves 'trade-offs' in order for relationships to function in day-to-day life.

## 2.3.2 Theme 2 – Gendered Emotional Habitus

'Gendered emotional habitus' is a concept created within this thesis as an extension of the pre-existing 'emotional habitus' present in the work of Burkitt (1997) which does not address how emotion can be understood as gendered. This theme will lay out how this newly extended concept will directly engage with the ideas encapsulated by emotional reflexivity, emotion work and emotional capital in order to illustrate how these all overlap and interact with one another, specifically in gendered ways.

## 2.3.2.1 Emotional Habitus – An Embodied Approach

Emotions have been identified as a key site where bodily experience is tangible and communicable (Bourdieu, 2001). Williams and Bendelow (1998) stress this point when discussing how to conceptualise emotions, saying *"they are most fruitfully viewed as embodied existential modes of being, which involve an active engagement with the world and an intimate connection with both culture and self"* (p.154). Here Williams and Bendelow (1998) place less emphasis on the culturally situated other (Illouz, 2007) than does Burkitt (1997, 2014), and instead emphasise the importance of embodiment within understanding emotion. The centrality of the body in experiencing and communicating emotion makes it impossible to dismiss the body. However, the question of how to conceptualise the body is a complex one; McNay (1999) states the nature of this problem in saying:

> As the point of overlap between the physical, the symbolic and the sociological, the body is a dynamic, mutable frontier. The body is the threshold through which the subject's lived experience of the world is incorporated and realised and, as such, is neither pure object nor pure subject. It is neither pure object since it is the place of one's engagement with the world. Nor is it pure subject in that there is always a material residue that resists incorporation into dominant symbolic schema. (p.98)

The central importance of cultural, symbolic and sociological aspects of life experience in understanding an embodied sense of emotion is acknowledged here.

Young's (1990) collection of essays 'Throwing like a girl' states that women are limited by 'inhibited intentionality' so that they view their bodies as something to be acted on, confined and enclosed. By accepting this view of female embodiment, the supposition that men are holders of power and women are subordinate is confirmed, suggesting that gendered power relations are embedded in the body and re-constructed daily in bodily practice (Young, 1990). I extend this notion to emotion and to include male embodiment and will suggest that the gendered power relations are made visible through the performance of emotionality in complex ways. The extent to which bodies are aware of these embedded values, or complicit in their reproduction, is a critical area of debate. While there is difficulty in attributing agency to female bodies due to the power relations embedded within gendered bodies, this research employs the concept of embodiment in a reflexive sense, so that recognition is given to the abilities bodies have to question and negotiate what they 'should' be doing (Gorringe, 2007). It is therefore crucial to consider the ways emotion includes both reflective and involuntary experience and the potential for an awareness of habitus and how this is experienced.

Burkitt (1997, p.43) uses the concept of 'emotional habitus' in which he explains:

> Here, I am following the notion of disposition as found in the work of Bourdieu (1991) and Wittgenstein (see Schatzki, 1993), in that dispositions are not mechanical responses to a given situation, but are more like conditions which may or may not become manifested in certain contexts. One could say that a culture provides for people an emotional habitus, with a language and set of practices which outline ways of speaking about emotions and of acting out and upon bodily feelings within everyday life. Individuals are trained in the emotional habitus from infancy and, through this, develop emotional dispositions that can be expressed in certain contexts throughout a person's life. Emotions, then, are both cognitive and pre-cognitive; they involve culturally informed interpretation, but are also bodily dispositions instilled through social practices.

This process through which the body is socialised to react to certain situations with emotional responses, I will argue, is gendered. But first it is necessary to think through the implications of using the concept of habitus within this emotional

context. As mentioned previously, 'habitus' is a concept made popular through the work of Bourdieu referring to the embodied, unconscious phenomenon through which our characteristics are enacted unthinkingly – which is partly what defines them as habitual (1977, p.79).

Habitus (plural) are always developed with reference to certain fields, so that though we pass through multiple fields, the collection of these tend to be common for certain social groups (Adams, 2008). These "fields engender and require certain responses, 'hailing' the individual to respond to themselves and their surroundings in specific ways to the point of habituation. 'Habitus' is the collective term for this array of dispositions" (Adams, 2006, p.514). So that, as Adams (2006, p.514) explains:

> the ticks and traits of our established habitus are the result of an experiential schooling stretching back to childhood. The sense of ease in our surroundings – 'le sens pratique' (the feel for the game) as Bourdieu refers to it (Bourdieu, 1990: 52) – thus develops as an unconscious competence: the habitus becomes 'a modus operandi of which he or she is not the producer and has no conscious mastery'. (Bourdieu, 1977: 79)

The habitus cannot therefore be reflexively known as it is beyond the grasp of consciousness, with many scholars claiming that this leads to Bourdieu's theory being excessively deterministic (Alexander 1994; Lamont 1992). However, Adams suggests that within Bourdieu's concept of habitus there is a possibility to be reflexive as a form of habitus – when required within a field, for example within academia or in a 'crisis' situation (2006, p.515). Here reflexivity is understood as "the systematic exploration of the unthought categories of thought that delimit the thinkable and predetermine the thought" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.40). However, claims of determinism are still hard to shift as within this understanding of reflexivity "is a world where behaviours has its causes, but actors are not allowed their reasons" (Jenkins 1992, p.97) so that "the habitus will always submit to the field" (Adkins, 2003, p.36 in Adams, 2008, p.516).

Adams (2008) suggests that there are ways to combine the concepts of habitus and reflexivity, with McNay's (1999) work highlighting how Bourdieu did not

sufficiently recognise that in contemporary society the 'crises' emanating from movement between fields discussed by Bourdieu is routine. In her work on the subject of reflexivity and gender, McNay (1999, p.107) says Bourdieu "significantly underestimates the ambiguities and dissonances that exist in the way that men and women occupy masculine and feminine positions". Therefore "the habitus cannot be said to always ensure unproblematic alignment between demands of the field and subjective dispositions" (McNay, 1999, p.109). Within this understanding:

> whether or not reflexivity will occur, or lead to any kind of radical transformation in the micro-social structures of existence and/or the broader social field, depends on the 'particular configuration of power relations' (p.109) in any given context. (Adams, 2008, p.518)

This understanding of how habitus can be reflexive is central to this theme, as the emotional habitus (plural) being described through this theme are not based purely in the habitual, but incorporate emotional reflexivity, emotion work and emotional capital. I will argue that all of these aspects of emotional habitus are also gendered.

### *2.3.2.2 Gendered* Emotional Habitus

It is widely recognised that emotion has been gendered since antiquity, traceable in the work of Plato and Aristotle (Lupton, 1998). Binary definitions of 'emotional women' and 'unemotional men' are aligned with other gendered binary pairs including irrational/rational and private/public. In this way femininity is characterised as emotional, irrational and related to the private sphere – and this is inferior to masculinity which is unemotional, rational and related to the public sphere. This definition sees men as more of mind and reason, more controlled and suited to the public sphere, thus requiring an acknowledgment that men's emotionality and emotional participation in couple relationships must be understood within the context of wider, structural gender inequalities as expressed by Williams (2001, p.96) when he says:

> Confessions of male insecurity, emotional impoverishment and feelings of powerlessness moreover, may merely gloss over continuing social inequalities between men and women, providing seemingly simple 'solutions' (the need for 'freer

emotional expression') to what in fact are deeper, if not intractable, problems of male dominance and oppression.

There has been little empirical research into emotional differences between men and women, which is surprising given the public discourse around the gendered difference in emotion. One study that has examined this area was conducted by Simon and Nath (2004) who conducted quantitative research in this area. Gender-specific emotion beliefs predict male-female differences in feelings and expressive behaviour, such as Hochschild's normative theory about emotion, arguing that 'feeling and emotion rules' define to what extent men and women can be emotionally expressive, leading to cultural norms determining for individuals how appropriate is their emotional expression (Hochschild, 1975). These norms are used to enable individuals to judge when their emotional expression is appropriate, or whether they should engage in emotion management, expression management or both. In 2003, research (with 1,460 respondents) tested this theory by examining data collected from the emotional module of the General Social Survey in the USA. This research looked for data related specifically to experiences of sadness and anger, and found that there was little gendered difference in the experience of these (Simon and Nath, 2004). However there were gendered differences found in the frequency of expressing these, supporting a psychological hypothesis that the expression of emotion is more highly socialised than experiences of emotion (Brody and Hall, 1993; Kring and Gordon, 1998). This distinction between experiencing and expressing emotions highlights a central point of consideration for this theme – the distinction between internal processes and understandings of emotions and the social, interactional nature of emotion. This is a distinction which in itself is hard to maintain, especially when employing a definition of emotion that is inherently social (Burkitt, 2014).

## 2.3.2.3 Emotional Reflexivity, Emotion Work and Emotional Capital

Holmes (2015, p.61) states that:

> As relations with others become more diverse and less well-defined, and social conditions more complex, emotional reflexivity is increasingly necessary – people drawing on

> emotions to navigate their path, especially when facing new situations or ways of living where an emotional habitus is little help and feeling rules are unformed or unclear (Holmes 2010).

She continues to say that "Emotional reflexivity is not skills exercised by individuals, is not purely cognitive nor exercised in isolation; it is embodied and relational, in ways beyond the habitual; infusing people's interactions with others in the world." (Holmes 2010, p.61). Holmes (2010) stresses that not everyone is equal in how competent they are in their emotional practices or interpreting other people's emotional practices correctly. As discussed in the 'emotion' section of the key concepts section, Hochschild's concept of 'emotion work' is widely recognised as being inherently gendered, with women performing this in their couple relationships and involving skills which are largely identified as feminine in nature (Daniels, 1987).

Through conducting surveys with 156 couples, with a survey for each partner, Minnotte et al (2007) found that individuals reporting they perform more household labour than their partner also reported performing more emotional work. This supports the idea that perceptions of fairness of household divisions of labour are related to emotional aspects of couple relationships, as previously discussed. They also found that when women have a 'work-to-family spillover' of stress, men perform less emotion work in their couple relationship while women perform more, with men withdrawing emotional support. This finding supports the idea that emotion work is considered to be predominantly women's work by not just women, as seen in the research by Erickson (2005), but also by men who expect women to do this form of labour, and if women do not, these men feel aggrieved and withdraw their support. This quantitative consideration of emotion work suggests interesting avenues for considering the gendered nature of emotion work, but it is also limited in its scope to understand the processes that are taking place at the micro level. For example, what is recognised as emotion work and is this understanding itself gendered? How does this process of withdrawing of emotional support actually feel to those people involved? And how does gender identity construction interact with these highly personal experiences? It is crucial to remember when considering

research in this area of personal relationships the potentially emotive and fraught circumstances in which men are withdrawing their support, so that a qualitative lens will be highly beneficial in considering these aspects of the gendered performance of emotion work. These questions will be addressed through the analysis of the theme of gendered emotional habitus.

The concept used empirically throughout this research was 'emotional participation' (Duncombe and Marsden, 1993), and it is necessary to acknowledge that this empirical focus is closely related to Hochschild's concept of 'emotion work' (1983). A decision was made to use the more ambiguous and inclusive concept of 'emotional participation' within interviews as it is less well known and avoids connotations of the feminist, gendered concept of 'emotion work'. Specifically I felt that the word 'work' in this context was not helpful in how I was framing my exploration of emotional experiences within couple relationships. For analytical purposes however it is necessary to acknowledge that the concepts of emotion work and emotional participation refer to the same practices of providing emotional support to one's partner, while also doing 'work' on oneself in order to provide this support. An issue which needs to be addressed is the often limited way 'emotion work' is employed in quantitative research (Erickson 2005, Minnotte 2007), in referring to the *interpersonal* interaction of providing support to one's partner. While this makes up part of the concept, this theme is also concerned with considering the ways emotion work is performed on the self, and how this too is highly gendered.

Craib (1995, p.155–6) acknowledges that both men and women are engaged in:

> at least two interlocking forms of emotional work: the 'internal' work of coping with contradiction, conflict and ambivalence and the 'external' work of reconciling what goes on outside with what one is supposed or allowed to feel. There are of course as many ways of dealing with all this as there are individuals – and some will conform more with the social stereotypes with which they are presented and others less, but it is important to realise that whatever stereotypes an individual might appear to meet – whether the unemotional, frigid male or the warm, caring female – he or she will be engaged in intense emotional work. We are not talking about society allocating emotional labour to women; rather, men

> and women might engage in different forms of labour or
> might be assigned different ways of displaying their
> emotional labour. In this context apparently 'unemotional
> behaviour is very emotional'. The only true unemotional
> behaviour I know of is death.

Here we can see Craib reinforce this distinction between the 'internal' and 'external' nature of emotions – calling for recognition of how these two spheres of emotion work are gendered in *plural* ways. I extend this distinction by Craib (1995) to refer to both 'internal' emotion work, done on the self in order to manage emotional experiences, and 'relational' emotion work which is done for the benefit of someone else. Through recognising the way 'relational' emotion work is being done *for* someone else I am moving past Craib's 'external' emotion work, which is concerned with reconciling the internal emotional experience with external feeling rules.

Relational emotion work refers to the work that is done in trying to help others understand or express their emotions and can include raising issues that need to be discussed, waiting to raise issues until a suitable time has arisen or creating such a situation. This focus on the importance of emotion work being performed on the self by men managing their own 'internal' emotion work will be returned to in Theme 3. At this point however it is necessary to consider the gendering of emotion as complex and an area of sociological investigation that must avoid essentialising men as 'unemotional' while women perform emotion work on their behalf. This area of gender and emotion also relates directly to power, as described throughout this chapter. One promising new way this is understood is through the notion of 'emotional capital'.

Reay (2004) suggests that Bourdieu's concept of capitals can be extended to the realm of emotions, which she suggests is a specifically gendered capital. Nowotny (1981) coined the term 'emotional capital' and recognised a difference between emotional and other capitals, as it is characteristic of the private rather than public sphere. Nowotny (1981, p.148) states that emotional capital constitutes "knowledge, contacts and relations as well as access to emotionally valued skills and assets, which hold within any social network characterised at least partly by affective ties". I connect the notion of 'emotionally valued skills' directly to emotional reflexivity,

and the skills required to perform this. This theme will explore the ways these skills are gendered – or understood in gendered ways whereby emotional reflexivity refers to the processes of using emotional skills on the self, in relation to others and an imagined view of others. In this case emotion work is the practical application of these same skills on either the self (internal) or on others (relational) to support or manage emotion. Emotional capital is the dividend received as an outcome of performing relational emotion work both as described by Hochschild (1983) when she says "As a matter of tradition, emotion management has been better understood and more often used by women as one of the offerings they trade for economic support" (p.20). However emotional capital differs to other forms of capital suggested by Bourdieu as it is confined to the context in which it was created, i.e. the couple relationship. Emotional capital is thus limited in its social recognition beyond a couple relationship, limiting its value outside of that context.

Duncombe and Marsden (1995) discuss their idea of 'emotional power' (p.158) when saying that men withholding emotional validation from women represents their male power, suggesting that how much a resource is desired affects its value. In this understanding of power men have greater power as they have the resource which women want. When contrasting this with the concept of emotional capital which is central to this theme, the key difference is the value placed on emotional skills. As mentioned by Duncombe and Marsden (1995), women's emotional skills were not valued by the men in their research; if anything emotionality was invisible to these men – describing this as the 'problem with no name' (p.165). The movement from the perspective described here and the research undertaken in this thesis is the value placed on emotional openness and skills – specifically by men. The implications for this on ideals of masculinity will now be discussed.

### 2.3.3 Theme 3 – Opposing Ideals of Masculine Emotion

The main body of literature which has been written about masculinity and emotion is now dated (Cohen, 1990; Craib, 1994). Cohen (1990) suggests that stereotypes of men not being as emotional as women are limited, and not based on psychological

fact, suggesting that men experience emotion as often as women, but *express* emotion less as suggested by the work of Simon and Nath (2004). In looking for empirical evidence in the area of male emotional expression, the work of Simon and Nath (2004) is relevant. When looking more closely the results also show the presence of support for a structural theory of emotions on the level of embodied emotional experiences as:

> According to Kemper, structural factors such as individual's social position vis-à-vis others – rather than cultural derived emotion norms – influence their emotional responses to social situations. Kemper argues that status and power are two fundamental dimensions of social relationships that elicit specific emotions during social interaction when relational power and status are maintained or changed.(p.1139)

Simon and Nath (2004) found evidence to support Kemper's hypothesis that social position influences emotional responses – highlighting the importance of status and power within emotional expression. That supports my argument that emotion is directly related to power.

Cohen (1990) suggests men express emotion less than women because emotional expression is shameful, or at least negative emotions such as misery, fear or worry are as they show men up for not being in control when they ought to be at all times, to the extent that some men can't label what they feel. This is a point which is explored in this thesis: the embodied experience of emotions for men, and how this is understood by the participants in this research. Craib (1994, p.87) takes a more theoretical approach to male emotionality, stating that men express emotion less than women because emotional expression is intimately linked with hierarchy, with emotional control being a sign of superiority, something he has recognised since his childhood and young adulthood:

> The expression of emotion, in fact, seems to be intimately linked with hierarchy; the more hierarchical a social structure, the more important it seems to be to suppress the expression of emotion, in action and in talk, and in fact the absence of such expression was taken, certainly during my childhood and young adulthood, as a mark of social superiority.

This quote directly relates how male emotionality is connected with male (or gendered) power. For an individual with a traditional masculine emotional habitus to claim an identity as a member of the privileged gender group, they must put on a credible manhood act. In competitive, hierarchical societies, especially those that are classically patriarchal, this means signifying a capacity to exert control over one's self, the environment and others. Emotional control is therefore highly valued and a sign of superiority over women.

The nature of men being discouraged from being emotional can be understood through the theoretical ideas of Bourdieu (2001, p.50) when he stresses the ways symbolic domination, in this case of men over women, is exerted without consciousness or perception so that male privilege traps all men in a duty to assert their 'manliness' in all circumstances. This manliness impacts on their ability to express emotion, especially negative emotions, highlighting the ways gender differences are "implied, explained or demonstrated all the time" (p.57). The gendering of emotional expression is understood through 'bodily hexis' (p.64) which reveals what is most true about oneself, through calling on discourses of nature, such as men being unemotional while women are emotional. This rationalised knowledge leads to moral qualities being associated with the body, hiding the fact that what is at play is in fact a language of social identity which has been naturalised. Processes of bodily training which reinforce naturalised morally based social identities suggest, for example, women are better than men at identifying non-verbal emotion signals and decoding their content (2001, p.31). This reinforces the nature of gendered emotional habitus as being experienced as natural or unproblematic, although I will argue this 'naturalness' is more difficult for men due to the rise in prominence of the 'it's good to talk' therapeutic discourse (Brownlie, 2014). Brownlie (2014, p.13) discusses the popularity of the therapeutic culture, noting how "Berlant (2004, p.11) suggests that a culturally dominant culture is one seen as 'common sense', and sociological accounts have come to understand the therapeutic in these terms." Through a focus on the self or a cultural system (Illouz, 2007), as defined in relation to the rise of self-help books, the therapeutic culture emphasises how it is 'good to talk' (Brownlie, 2014).

Victor Seidler (1991, 1997, 2007) is a well-known masculinity scholar who has written widely from a theoretical perspective on masculinity, particularly in reference to its relationship with feminism. A foundation for all of his work is the premise that western rationalist thought has detached emotion from reason, and in so doing limited the scope of masculinity so that men are socialised to regulate their expression of emotion and desires. He states that from a young age boys are given the message that there is something wrong with being emotional, as this is feminine or weak, so men harden up, saying:

> It is easy to feel that if we can survive on our own, so others should be able to do so too. Often as men we withdraw into ourselves. If we are not available to ourselves emotionally as men it is difficult to be available in our relationships. Sometimes we feel that we can only be ourselves and exist as individuals in our own right if we do not get sucked into a relationship. Often we feel uncomfortable, especially as heterosexual men, with the emotional demands that our partners increasingly make. (1997, p.172)

Admitting to having emotional needs makes men feel vulnerable, so that men establish a distance from their emotions, hiding them away to avoid feeling shameful in their expression (1997, p.155).

The connection between male un-emotionality and symbolic domination frames the expression of emotions as a marker of power, related to certain social groups. This is reinforced by Burkitt who says:

> Because of the regulatory function of moral practices and the emotional feelings that are their products, the entire emotional habitus of a social group is linked to the power and status structure of society, which involves the domination and subordination of certain class, gender and racial groups. (Burkitt, 1997 p.50)

This supports the point made by Duncombe and Marsden (1995, p.165) who highlighted the link between gender, equality and male emotional distance in relation to their own research when they said:

> We would argue therefore that any consideration of changes towards greater equality between the sexes must take account of how heterosexual masculine identity has traditionally been

> bound up with maintaining emotional distance as a defence
> against intimacy.

However, due to their lack of open male participants this was essentially a 'parting shot' highlighting the need for research in this area rather than an area of exploration in their research.

It is necessary to consider a possible theoretical framework within which to explore my idea of 'opposing ideals of masculine emotion'. In order to do this it is important first of all to recognise the dominant theory of hegemonic masculinity which has been the main conceptual tool used in CSM for decades. As outlined earlier in this chapter this concept relates to the idealised concept of masculinity: related to power, authority, aggression and technology, hegemonic masculinity is constructed in relation to women and to subordinated masculinities (Connell, 1987). Seidler's (2007) critique of the work of Connell relates to the topic of emotions. Seidler (2007) states that through characterising men's emotions as 'subjective' and 'personal' while describing women's oppression as 'structural', Connell asserts an overly generalised distinction between the two. Seidler (2007) suggests that through this definition men's emotions are not considered to be sources of knowledge due to the inherent rationalism within the concept of hegemonic masculinity, which limits the scope to explore how a "dominant white-European masculinity has alone been able to take its reason for granted" (p.9).

## 2.4 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the areas of research that relate to the focus of this thesis, corresponding to chapters 4-6 which will build on this literature to discuss the findings of this thesis. This review has included discussion of the three key concepts which provide the theoretical focus of this research: gender, emotion and gendered power. These concepts have been defined so that it is clear how they are being utilised and understood in this thesis. In the key concepts section I argue that gender relates to cultural practices and is performed in order to present a 'convincing performance' of femininity or masculinity (Goffman, 1977). From this symbolic interactionist perspective gender is seen to be both flexible and involve a degree of

agency in regards to how performances are constructed. This understanding of gender is expanded on in my discussion of masculinity as needing to maintain a focus on power as a central focus in studying gender (and masculinity in particular) as this is often missing (Hearn, 2004). The discussion of hegemonic masculinity sets up this concept in order for it to be drawn upon in the findings chapters, including the concept of 'patriarchal dividend' (Connell, 1995). The notion that performances of masculinity that follow hegemonic norms lead to a pay-out of gendered power due to the 'right to command' is a key aspect of the argument that will be presented throughout this thesis. What must be retained in this consideration is that it is not only women who are subordinated through the valuing of hegemonic masculinity, but also men who perform non-hegemonic masculinities (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). The discussion of power presented here has acknowledged the role of the habitus in facilitating the impact of cultural values upon social action (Bourdieu, 1990). The relationship between the habitus and reflexivity is considered (Adams, 2006) in order to provide a theoretical underpinning to the ways these can potentially occur in conjunction. The third and final key concept of emotion has also been discussed in this chapter centrally in reference to Burkitt's (2014) emphasis on emotions occurring in social relations. This understanding of emotion works well with symbolic interactionist approach being adopted throughout this thesis as it accommodates the ways in which power operates at a micro level through social interactions, but also expectations of social interaction. These three concepts fi together to provide a framework upon which to explore the three themes I have developed to explore the findings from this research.

Following on from these three concepts there has been a discussion of the 'bigger picture' of previous research into the topic of gender equality, within the field of sociology. This included a review of how ideas of social change have been integral to researching and theorising changes in gender, with social change continuing to be a key part of the bigger picture around this thesis, despite this not being the empirical focus of the research. Moving on to consider the body of work that has included emotional aspects of gender equality, this chapter has described the ways both qualitative and quantitative research have approached this area of couple

relationships. I included work on appreciation in perceptions of fairness, an area of knowledge to which this thesis will directly contribute, and finished by looking at the three themes which will flow through this thesis in order to illustrate how specific theories and research findings have influenced the ways the themes have been constructed.

# Chapter 3 – Methods and Methodology

As a feminist I believe it is desirable to utilise feminist methodologies because of their emphasis on social change and their consideration of gender in a continuously reflexive way (Fonow and Cook, 2005). I have employed a feminist epistemology throughout this research, which has informed every aspect of how I have thought about, designed and conducted the research.

> Feminists engage both the theory and practice of research—
> beginning with the formulation of the research question and
> ending with the reporting of research findings. Feminist
> research encompasses the full range of knowledge building
> that includes epistemology, methodology, and method.
> (Hesse Biber, 2007, p.3)

This definition of feminist research acknowledges that an epistemology is a theory of knowledge, concerned with what counts as legitimate knowledge and what can be known. Skeggs (1994, p.77) claims that "feminist research begins from the premise that the nature of reality in western society is unequal and hierarchical", thus feminist research is based in both political as well as academic concerns (Letherby, 2003). Feminist research acknowledges the "'messiness' of the research process and considers the detail of doing research and the relationship between this and the knowledge produced" (Letherby, 2003, p.6). Through being reflexive and open about what feminist researchers do, and the relationship between this and what is known, we seek to make clear the background to the claims we are making. Included in the aim to be open is the need to locate oneself within the research process and writing up to make it clear that the production of knowledge is a dialectic loaded in favour of the researcher (Stanley and Wise, 1993). Feminist epistemology is concerned with the role of the researcher in knowledge production, with a fundamental link between "listening to what people have to say about their lives and identifying patterns and relationships which expose the operations of power and oppression" (Scott, 1998b, p.5). The focus of this research, as outlined in the introduction, has moved from sexual communication to emotional participation in couple relationships, but has maintained a focus on gendered power, in line with the feminist approach outlined above.

All of the individuals who have given their time and energy to take part in this research are considered to be *participants* and very much involved in my project of trying to understand how gender is reproduced or resisted in couple relationships. Rapport is considered to be an extremely important aspect of feminist research (Wolf, 1996) as it is a means of reducing the inherently unbalanced power relationship between researcher and researched (Jenkins, 1995). I acknowledge that I as the researcher am in a position of power in that I set the agenda and have the skills in conducting the research. I tried throughout fieldwork to 'equalize' my relationships with participants (Stanley and Wise, 1993) from my design of the instruments used through to my manner in interviewing. The desire to minimise power dynamics between myself as researcher and my participants has also led to decisions around how best to represent the voices of these men and women who took part in this research. While being aware that making people feel more powerful does not necessarily change the objective nature of material circumstances (Millen, 1997), I also found that the research relationships I had with my participants were fluid and varied greatly. The expectations and knowledge brought into the telephone and face-to-face interviews differed between participants, leading to an awareness on my part that I did not have to do as much 'equalizing' in some interviews as others. What remained consistent however was my desire to represent the voices of all participants in a way that makes it clear that I am presenting many subjective accounts, not one objective account (Stanley and Wise, 1993).

This chapter will begin by considering the research design chosen, then discuss the survey and telephone interview data collection phases, followed by reflections on the face-to-face interviews conducted.

## 3.1 – Research Design

The research design of this thesis can be described as comparative as it aims to "seek explanations for similarities and differences or to gain a greater awareness and a deeper understanding of social reality" (Bryman, 2006, p.58). The comparison being

studied here is between men and women, allowing the differences and similarities to act as springboards for theoretical reflections on the contrasting findings (Bryman, 2006). External validity or generalisability cannot be claimed for this research design as it cannot be applied more generally to other cases; rather this research seeks to provide an intensive examination of emotional participation which will lead to theoretical analysis. This design can therefore be described as having an inductive relationship between theory and research, as although theory guided the choice of research questions tested in the survey, the results were used to frame the subsequent qualitative data collection methods which then led to theoretical analysis. Triangulation:

> implies that the results of an investigation employing a method associated with one research strategy are cross-checked against the results of using a method associated with the other research strategy. (Bryman, 2006, p.611)

Whether planned or unplanned, when a triangulation exercise is undertaken, confidence in the findings deriving from a one research strategy can be enhanced by using more than one way to measure a concept. Through focusing on the same area of communication between couples, informed by previous literature on power dynamics within couple relationships, triangulation was successful between the findings from all three methods.

## 3.2 Methods of Data Collection

Three methods of data collection were utilised in this research: an online survey, telephone interviews and face-to-face interviews. This sequence of methods was chosen so as to acquire a wide range of attitudes from a large sample, then to be guided by the findings from this method in designing the instruments for the next stages. The benefit of this was that findings from previous literature from the 1980s and 1990s could be tested in order to see whether these accurately reflected the attitudes of my survey sample. Given the specificity of face-to-face interviewing, and my hypothesis that the previous research findings were dated, I wanted direction as to which topics to focus on in the interviews conducted. In this way the quantitative

survey was the preliminary research method, while the qualitative method of interviewing was the principle data-gathering tool (Morgan, 1998). The survey was employed in order to test for gender differences within responses to statements relating to certain areas of interest, identified from my research questions; these gender differences then determined the focus for the telephone and face-to-face interviews. This can be described as an 'initiation' model (Greene et al, 1989, p.259) as it "Seeks to discover paradoxes and contradictions … from one method within the results from another method". I argue that my choice of conducting three stages of data collection, all of which feed into one another, has been successful in developing a flexible mixed method.

The first method of data collection was an online survey of 1,081 participants which asked several sets of attitudinal questions related to the topics of conflict, sexual communication and emotions in couple relationships. The statements in the survey all referred to findings from previous personal relationship research on power dynamics. The survey data was analysed using SPSS to look for differences by gender for each statement within the survey. This analysis suggested that the set of statements with the area of greatest gender differences related to emotion; the frequency of experiencing emotions, the frequency of expressing emotions and attitudes towards a partner's emotions. The survey was followed by 43 telephone interviews with participants from the survey who had stated that they would like to take part in the next stage of this research. This list of approximately 100 survey participants entered their email addresses and were sent an email asking if they would be happy for me to call them to ask some quick questions regarding the survey. From this list 43 telephone interviews were organised and conducted over the summer of 2010. This was the maximum number of interviews that could be achieved within the time constraints of this phase of the PhD. They were asked questions relating to the statement 'I tend to give in to my partner's sexual needs' and 'I tend to give in to my partner's emotional needs'. These short interviews of approximately fifteen minutes provided both an opportunity to make personal contact with participants, and a chance to ask participants about two specific statements in

the survey which threw up puzzling results. The telephone interviews then became the sampling frame for the in-depth face-to-face interviews.

## 3.3 Online Survey

The first stage of data collection for this research was a CASI (Computer-Assisted Self Interview) quantitative survey conducted online using the SurveyMonkey (www.surveymonkey.com) website as a host for the survey. The impact of the web on survey data collection is worth serious attention as the use of web-based surveys in research has become increasingly popular (Schonlau, Fricker and Elliott, 2001; Stanton, 1998). Many organisations and researchers have found that internet surveys provide data and feedback at faster speeds (Thompson et al, 2003), at reduced costs (Sheehan and McMillan, 1999) and with fewer data errors (Bachmann, Elfrink and Vanazza, 1996). These advantages have made conducting internet survey research more attractive than traditional methods (e.g. paper and pencil, interview focus groups, etc.) (Uriell and Dudley, 2009). For that reason an online survey was chosen as the first method of data collection as it can collect a large volume of data with minimal financial cost within a short time frame. Additionally, given the sensitive nature of the topic, online methods have been found to increase accuracy of responses (Couper, 2000, Tourangeau et al, 1997) and reduced social desirability distortion (Tourangeau and Smith, 1996; Uriell and Dudley, 2009).

### 3.3.1 Survey Design

This first part of the survey comprises statements from a mixture of literature sources. Research has shown that it is important that the first question of a survey is "short, simple and if possible fun for respondents" (Sue and Ritter, 2007 p.62), and my first statement was chosen for this reason. In this initial section, statements proceed from general statements such as the first 'Good communication about sex improves a relationship', to statements more specifically related to the relationship being discussed. While this statement is a general one created by the author, most statements in this section relate to research by Benjamin (1998) into emotion and negotiation in marital conversations. In Benjamin's research (1998) the idea of

discussing sexual issues (e.g. who raises the subject, whether discussion is necessary or should be ignored) is considered to be related to power within marriages, linked to the concept of 'emotion work'. Through interviewing middle-class women aged between 35 and 50 years, Benjamin (1998) concluded that women are either silenced into 'limited negotiability' in marital conversations and do not raise issues, or they are able to negotiate what they want from within their relationship.

The following section of the survey is entitled the 'relationship section' wherein the first question is related to the communication of sexual desire. This topic is related to research conducted by Duncombe and Marsden (1996) when discussing change in longer-term relationships, they observed that couples tend to:

> develop informal strategies and routines – restricting sex to particular nights, or giving coded messages like wearing sexy nighties … which indicated and regulated sexual availability (and incidentally avoided the need for women to openly show desire) (p.227)

This area of the online survey was designed to test again for gender differences in ways of communicating sexual desire in order to reflect on the existence and nature of 'a missing discourse of desire' (Welles, 2005, p. 34).

The next set of statements related to communicating in sexual relationships more generally. This section is based on research conducted by Benjamin and Sullivan (1999) into relational resources and possibilities of change in marital relationships. Specific statements regarding whether participants communicate with their partner and how easily they do this are related to the concept of 'relational resources'. These are specific inter-personal skills which facilitate individuals being able to communicate what they feel or want in a relationship. This research, conducted with a female-only sample, concluded that the presence of these skills accurately predicted whether individuals could successfully challenge boundaries regulating their marital communication. This section of the survey tested this theory and looked once again for age or gender differences in the presence of 'relational resources'.

The final set of statements within this section related to conflict within relationships and is based on research by Komter (1989) into 'hidden power in marriage'. These

statements asked participants about issues such as ways of avoiding conflict, getting angry with one's partner, or who starts the majority of arguments in their relationship. By asking opinions on these statements this section revealed whether the picture painted by Komter in 1989 of men in heterosexual relationships being the more 'powerful' actors is still true. The next section of the online survey was entitled 'discussing feelings' and included one set of statements and two 'emotion grids'.

The first section of 'discussing feelings' was a set of statements written in part to provide a context for the proceeding emotion grids which asked participants to rate how easy or difficult they found it to express certain feelings or emotions in general life and how easy or difficult they think their partner found it to express these feelings to them. The content of the statements and idea behind the grids is based on ideas from the book *Masculine Domination* by Bourdieu (2001) which discusses how emotions contribute to 'symbolic force'. This idea relates directly to embodiment through the idea that "symbolic force is a form of power that is exerted on bodies directly, and as if by magic, without any physical constraint" (p.38), so that bodies are trained to experience the world in a certain way according to their social position within that world. This section was directly related to testing previous claims that emotionality is a gendered experience.

The final section of the survey was entitled 'discussing sexual feelings' and includes two sets of statements related to differing pieces of research. The first set of statements uses the scale 'very difficult, slightly difficult, no opinion, easy, very easy' to rate how difficult participants find it to talk about specific sexual issues such as unequal sex drive or issues related to orgasm. This specific set of issues was adopted from research by Allen (2003) who conducted research in New Zealand into how young people negotiate around sex. The final set of statements in the survey related to orgasm, specifically how important this is to participants and the issue of faking orgasms. This list of topics reflects the focus of the first stage of data collection – on sexual communication as can be seen in the survey design in Appendix C.

### 3.3.2 Survey Sampling

In recruiting for the online survey, pass-along sampling was used to recruit an original email list of 107 people obtained from emailing a list of contacts known to me, asking them to send a confirmation email stating their age, gender and region of Scotland in which they reside to confirm that they would like to take part in this survey. This list was compiled and entered into the survey distributor function of SurveyMonkey, the online web-based survey tool used to host the survey being discussed. The collation of this list enabled this survey distributor to be used as, for legal reasons, unsolicited emails could not be sent by SurveyMonkey. This original email list were sent a series of emails via SurveyMonkey including a pre-notification, stating that the survey would be live in two days, on 8th December 2009, and an invitation to take part in the survey, including a personalised web link to enter the survey on 10th December 2009. All participants were then sent a follow-up 'thank you' email after completing the survey to thank them for their participation, containing a link to send to anyone they thought may be interested in taking part in this research. Statements like "We would be particularly grateful if you could forward this link to friends living outside of the Edinburgh region" or "We currently have 70% female responses so if you could forward this to any male friends that would be very helpful" were used. These messages were used to try to address sampling bias which was appearing in the survey in the early stages. A prize draw to win either a crate of champagne or £100 voucher for a major department store served as an incentive to participants to both take part and forward the survey details to friends.

Pass-along sampling led to a total of 532 completed surveys over three weeks of the festive period leading up to 4th January 2010. Following this date, the number of completed surveys froze and appeared to have reached its climax. The sample of the survey at that point demonstrated a large bias towards participants in the Edinburgh region and towards younger respondents under the age of 25. At this point advertising via the leading social networking site in the UK, Facebook, was employed to target respondents outside Edinburgh and over the age of 25 years to take part in this survey. The ability to target people registered to this social

networking site using only certain criteria meant that these adverts were highly effective in reaching their target population Adverts within Facebook can be targeted on a range of information contained in Facebook profiles including: age (in years) of user – indicating maximum, minimum ages or specific ages; gender of user; home town of user, or residence within 10, 25 or 50 miles of that location; relationship status of user, i.e. single, in relationship, engaged or married. These adverts appeared on the right-hand side of the screen to potential participants when viewing any information via their Facebook profile. The advert used for this research was presented as follows: "Scottish Sexual Attitudes Survey 2010" was the title, the University of Edinburgh logo was the image used to indicate the authenticity of this study, with the text "All participants can enter a prize draw to win either a crate of champagne or £100 voucher. Join in now!" Pass-along sampling was also used in conjunction with the Facebook adverts through the use of follow-up emails thanking all participants for taking part and asking them to forward the survey weblink to anyone they thought may take part in the survey. This helped to maximise the cost effectiveness of advertising via Facebook. The use of Facebook adverts resulted in the full sample being obtained, as broken down in the table below.

| Breakdown of surveys completed | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Total** | | 1080 | 100% |
| | | | |
| **Gender** | Female | 556 | 51.5% |
| | Male | 524 | 48.5% |
| **Region of Scotland** | | | |
| Ayrshire and Arran | | 23 | 2.1% |
| Borders | | 13 | 1.2% |
| Dumfries and | | 7 | 0.6% |
| Fife | | 74 | 6.9% |
| Forth Valley | | 56 | 5.2% |
| Grampian | | 65 | 6.0% |
| Glasgow | | 200 | 18.5% |
| Highland | | 35 | 3.2% |
| Lanarkshire | | 59 | 5.5% |
| Lothian | | 356 | 33.0% |
| Orkney | | 1 | 0.1% |
| Shetland | | 2 | 0.2% |
| Tayside | | 113 | 10.5% |
| Western Isles | | 14 | 1.3% |
| Not in Scotland | | 62 | 5.7% |
| **Age** | 20-24 | 125 | 11.6% |
| | 25-30 | 197 | 18.2% |
| | 31-35 | 176 | 16.3% |
| | 36-40 | 146 | 13.5% |
| | 41-45 | 151 | 14.0% |
| | 46-50 | 131 | 12.1% |
| Over 50 years | | 154 | 14.3% |

Table 1 – Final breakdown of survey sample

As has been shown above, the combined use of social network website advertising and pass-along sampling led to a sample of 1,080 respondents being recruited to take part in this research over a period of eight weeks at a minimal financial cost. For the

purposes of this survey, which was attempting to explore these combined methods and achieve an approximately representative sample, these methods were successful, although there remains a clear bias towards the region of Lothian, which includes Edinburgh, my city of residence and home town. There is also a sampling bias towards people with degree level and postgraduate qualification (60% of total sample) compared to the population of Scotland (21% of 16–64 year olds have degree level or above (2010, Annual Population Survey)). A scale of social class was developed combining qualification and occupation data to grade participants into the standard list Social Class based on Occupation which demonstrated a bias towards white-collar workers, who were over represented in the sample. Due to a lack of class difference within the results of this sample, social class has not been focused on in reporting the results from the survey.

## 3.6 Ethical Considerations

Level 2 ethical approval was obtained from the Director of the Graduate School in the School of Social and Political Science before commencement of the survey. As this research was classed as 'sex research' there were several areas of ethical concern to be fully considered. In order to explore these fully I have broken this down into concerns for participants and ethical concerns for the researcher.

All stages of research were designed to take into account the main ethical concerns identified through the relevant literature (Bryman, 2006; Israel and Hay, 2006; Maynard, 1994). Firstly, informed consent was obtained through participants being provided with an in-depth explanation of the purpose of the research and all possible uses of the research data provided. For the survey this was done through the use of my profile on the university website which had a 'frequently asked questions' webpage including details of the research and my contact details. Secondly, the acquisition of honest data within sex research is an ethical concern; for this reason validity methods were used within the CASI instrument in the form of corroborating questions. Thirdly, confidentiality is a major ethical consideration in sex research (Thompson et. al., 2003, Uriell and Dudley, 2009). Data security has been highlighted as the main concern for participants, broken down into two explicit concerns: firstly that the researcher does

not know the identity of participants and secondly that people other than the researcher will not be able to gain access to information once it has been collected (Fox et. al., 2003). The survey did not record names or identifying information in order to ensure anonymity, however some participants did enter their email addresses to be contacted for future research. These email addresses were stripped from the survey data immediately after this being downloaded into SPSS to ensure these could not be used to identify participants. During telephone interviews I did ask for names of participants so that I could stay in contact with them, but these details were stored separately from the rest of the telephone interview data and audio files were destroyed after transcription. Through identifying the voices of the telephone participants I was able to identify those people who had taken part in both telephone and face to face interviews and ensure they had the same pseudonym for each transcript. During the face-to-face interviews all participants were asked to choose a pseudonym, and these have been used in this report. All audio files and transcripts have been stored on password-protected computers since the time of interviewing. All identifying features have been removed from interview extracts that have been used in the next three chapters to ensure participants cannot be identified from these extracts.

### 3.3.3 Survey Results

The survey results are examined looking for differences in the means by gender in response to specific statements. Statistical significance is not calculated as the survey did not use a random sample and so any such measure would not be meaningful. This means that no generalisations to the wider population are inferred from this data, due to the non-random sample; however, substantively pertinent observations are made and compared to the evidence reported in the main body of qualitative findings. To do this, clustered bar charts are used in the findings chapters to visually present the means of the different statements by gender. The error bars in the bar charts are the standard errors from the sample itself. Eight statements are presented in the findings chapters, which indicate substantively important differences by gender, meaning that the quantitative data from these respondents supports and reinforces the substantive story of the qualitative findings. These eight statements were originally measured using a five-point Likert scale; however the middle measure of 'No Opinion' was

removed as it was not meaningful to the scale. This leaves four responses: 1=
Strongly Agree, 2= Agree, 3= Disagree, 4= Strongly Disagree. The bar charts for
these eight statements will be presented in the findings chapters.

| Statement Wording | N - Female | N - Male | N - Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Worrying about splitting up from my partner sometimes stops me saying negative things about them or our relationship | 534 | 475 | 1009 |
| I try my best to avoid conflict in my sexual relationship | 482 | 453 | 935 |
| I talk to my partner about things that are annoying me with my relationship | 534 | 473 | 1007 |
| I often get angry with my partner | 515 | 463 | 978 |
| I feel guilty if I upset my partner | 512 | 483 | 995 |
| I start the majority of arguments in my relationship | 425 | 369 | 794 |
| I tend to give in to my partner's emotional needs | 482 | 440 | 922 |
| I find it easy to disagree with my partner's view or opinion | 500 | 493 | 942 |

Table 2– Survey Statements with Difference in Means

The wording of these statements and the basis of these in relevant research literature
will be discussed in more detail in the findings chapters; this chart serves simply to
show the options for and number of responses to the specific statements broken down
by gender.

## 3.4 Telephone Interviews

The telephone interviews provided a crucial means of establishing personal contact
with participants from the survey, which I considered to be a priority in order to
maintain the interest of my participants. Thus the 103 emails provided through the

survey were contacted and asked for their phone numbers and of these approximately 60 replied with their phone numbers. Of these I managed to make contact and schedule a telephone interview with 43 of these participants who were spoken to over May and June 2010. However of these 43 only 24 were transcribed due to problems with the recording equipment used. The content of the telephone interviews included questions regarding who started conflict within their relationship and understandings of two statements which provided puzzling results which were "I tend to give in to my partner's sexual needs" and "I tend to give in to my partner's emotional needs". Both of these had strong gender differences which contradicted the literature they were testing. Previous literature suggested that women were more likely to say they 'give in' to their partner's sexual or emotional needs (Komter, 1989) while this research found they were *less* likely than men to give in: this will be discussed in more detail in Chapters 4 and 5.

The telephone interviews asked participants about how they understood the idea of 'giving in' and yielded discussion around why they had answered the statement in the way they had and how they understood 'giving in' within the context of their relationships. The results of these telephone interviews highlighted hugely divergent attitudes to power in couple relationships, and to whether 'giving in' to one's partner is necessary in managing a cohabiting couple relationship, or rather whether this represents a 'giving away' of power. Additionally the relevance of the division of labour in the household was frequently discussed in reference to how arguments arose and were resolved in couples, leading to this being a core area of exploration in the face-to-face interviews.

Overall the telephone interview method of data collection was influential in understanding the emergent focus of this research. These interviews highlighted the interconnectedness of discussions of emotions, power and the division of labour from the participants to whom I spoke. During these telephone interviews I explained to all 43 participants that I was heavily pregnant and would be going on a period of a year's maternity leave from the research. I explained that once I returned from maternity leave I would re-contact them to ascertain whether they might be interested in taking part in a face-to-face interview, to which all participants replied they would

potentially be interested. These telephone interviews were recorded and analysed using NVivo to look for themes. After returning from maternity leave I undertook a period of reading literature on the new area of focus – emotions. Then in the summer of 2012 I re-contacted all of the 43 telephone interview participants and tried to schedule face-to-face interviews, resulting in 31 interviews conducted all over Scotland. The telephone interviews were highly successful in maintaining interest in the research from the survey respondents as 33 of the 43 were subsequently interviewed for the third and final method of data collection: the face-to-face interviews.

## 3.5 In-depth Interviews: Reflections and Analysis

In total 33 interviews were conducted for this PhD research, however one was not recorded due to a technical issue with the recording equipment, and a second was unable to be transcribed due to very loud background music. The remaining 31 interviews have a good spread according to age, gender and class as can be seen from Table 3 below. A category of class as 'transitional' has been used in this breakdown, in order to accommodate many participants who felt uncomfortable being classed as 'middle class' based on their current educational attainment and professional status, as they were brought up in working-class households, by working-class parents. While a good spread across class backgrounds was achieved in both the survey and interview methods of data collection, class was not analysed as a key axis of difference within this research due to the focus on gender differences. While I acknowledge that class and gender are inextricably linked in relation to power (Connell, 1987), the lack of findings on class difference within the survey results led to this not being a focus of analysis in the face-to-face interviews.

| | Female | | | Male | | | Totals |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Working Class** | **Transitional** | **Middle Class** | **Working Class** | **Transitional** | **Middle Class** | |
| **20's** | | | 1 | | | | **1** |
| **30's** | 1 | | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | **8** |
| **40's** | 1 | 1 | | 1 | 3 | 1 | **7** |
| **50's** | 2 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | **10** |
| **60's** | 1 | 2 | | | | 1 | **4** |
| **70's** | | | | | 1 | | **1** |
| **Totals** | **5** | **6** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **5** | **31** |

Table 3 – Breakdown of interviews by age, gender and class background

Within these thirty-one individual interviews, six couples were interviewed, so that twelve individuals indicated that I had or was going to interview their partner. Four participants identified as homosexual, two of whom made up one of the couples where both partners were interviewed. The remaining twenty-seven identified themselves as heterosexual. A decision was made to include participants without restrictions from the online survey, as previous qualitative research (Duncombe and Marsden, 1993, 1995; Knudson-Martin, 1998; Benjamin, 1998; Komter, 1989; Hochschild, 1990; Thompson, 1991; Kawamura et al, 2010) has focused on married couples or individuals, which I believe is limiting. Given the central focus of gendered power within couple relationships, there was no requirement to limit the data collection to only married, heterosexual people, nor people who were in a relationship. All of the participants from the survey onwards had experiences of

couple relationships, therefore my sample was not limited by these factors.

Of the thirty-one, many were in partnerships following the break-down of a long-term marriage and several were single at the time of interviewing. This reflected not only the self-selected sample of survey participants who had maintained contact over the two years in between taking part in the survey and being interviewed, but it also reflected my desire to recruit openly, and not based on current relationship status. Therefore anyone who wanted to be interviewed was interviewed, whether they were single or not, as I felt that limiting this to only include people in a relationship at the time of interview or survey would be limiting to the experiences discussed in the interviews. All interviews lasted between 60 to 120 minutes while most lasted roughly 90 minutes, as this was the suggested interview length in email contact with participants. The sample was taken from across Scotland, and included Scottish, English, Middle Eastern, Italian and Portuguese participants. All of the interview participants chose pseudonyms for themselves to be used when anonymising their interview transcript and in reporting on the content of their interviews. This explains some of the unusual names which are used in the forthcoming chapters. Confidentiality has been maintained by ensuring all audio recordings are stored on a password-protected computer while anonymity has been ensured through changing all names within the interview transcripts, and omitting any location or other identifying details when writing up this thesis.

### 3.5.1 Content of Interview

The interview schedule was designed to cover the main topics of housework, equality, negotiation, demonstrating love and emotional participation in the home as can be seen in the interview topic guide in appendix B. These topics were chosen as they are the central issues discussed in literature regarding gendered power and emotion in couple relationships. The importance of 'housework' as a topic can be seen in the large body of research looking at divisions of labour in the household which is directly related to the concept of gender equality (Ciabattari, 2001; Coletrane, 2000; Greenstein, 1996; Kawamura et al, 2010). I decided to ask about how participants understood the idea of equality within their relationships as within the telephone interviews it became apparent that individuals had plural

understandings of what 'giving in' to their partners meant. I wanted to ascertain whether there were differences in how equality was conceptualised and whether this was gendered, specifically relating to the exploration of equality as being directly related to gendered power. As equality is one of the ways to measure the balance of power within a relationship, the inclusion of housework and equality as topics to be discussed was required in order to inform my exploration of how gendered power is reproduced or resisted in couple relationships – and also to ascertain my participants' gender ideology, following from the work of Hochschild (1990) looking at the relationship between housework and gender ideology. The idea of negotiation is important when researching gendered power within couple relationships (Benjamin, 1998, Benjamin and Sullivan, 1999) and was discussed during the telephone interviews. Leading on from the telephone interviews I wanted to ask more about the emotional aspects of negotiating in the face-to-face interviews.

The topic of demonstrating love was included, as the focus of the survey had been sexual attitudes and I wanted to maintain consistency for the participants between the survey and interview. However this made up a very short part of the schedule due to the change in my focus, and was not raised by participants very often. This section of the topic guide was the one least explored in interviews. The topic of emotional participation provided the main focus of the interview, as indicated by the longer section in the topic guide dedicated to this. This focus is in line with the central aim of exploring the ways emotional participation reproduces or resists gendered power in couple relationships. The combination of these five topics covered all of the ideas I wanted to consider within interviews, however given my use of an autobiographical question, and encouragement of participants to talk without my asking questions, the interview guide was used primarily for me to check that in each interview we had covered the same range of topics, but not necessarily in the same order or same depth. On reflection the choice of topics was ideal for answering the research questions that have guided this project, and I believe this is due to the choice of methods used. By this I mean the combination of using a preliminary survey to look for gender differences across a wider list of topics, followed by telephone interviews in which it was indicated that the emotional aspect of couple relationships is indeed

highly gendered and directly related, at least for women, to divisions of labour as will be discussed in Chapter 6.

Interview participants were first asked to tell me about their family background and then their relationship history. Instructions were given that I would not interrupt, just listen, and that they could go into as much detail as they liked up to approximately 20 minutes. This method was chosen to allow participants to get into a flow of talking at the beginning of the interview in order to foster the idea that the content of the interview was determined largely by them, and that I would prefer not to have a question and answer style, but rather a conversation dominated by them. The resulting content from the interviews is therefore variable, with topics being covered in very different depth by each participant depending on what they felt was relevant to their life at the time of interviewing. While specific topics were raised after my initial question to cover the main points on the topic guide, effort was made to do this in a flowing way as much as possible, so that questions related back to points made earlier in the interview by the participant. The variance in how this method of interviewing was received was notable.

Most participants spoke for approximately ten minutes about their family background and their relationship history, then stopped, expecting more direction, keen to ensure they were talking 'on topic'. Once reassurance was given that they were indeed on topic, I asked a follow-up question to guide the interview onto the topic guide, beginning with questions related to domestic divisions of labour. This process was repeated every time a participant appeared to stop talking as they had exhausted the topic being discussed. However, there were some interviews in which there was a sense of expectation that I would provide much more structure, with two interviewees in particular looking down at my printed topic guide in front of me, keen to know they were working their way through the list of questions in front of me. I asked considerably more questions in these interviews and probed more, but essentially the participants did not seem to feel as comfortable 'telling a story' about their lives. Interestingly these interviews resulted in the lowest amount of self-exploration, I felt, and therefore felt like the least 'successful' interviews (Birch and

Millar, 2000). Equally, there were two interviews which stand out particularly as the initial narrative-style question led to a series of connected stories which required no reference to the topic guide at all, and which felt like very intimate sharing on the part of the participant. The resulting stories from all of the interviews as a whole, as would be expected, are therefore of differing lengths and depths, and portray varying levels of theorising on the part of the participant (McCormack, 2004).

Emotional participation is a concept which is central to this thesis, including an exploration of what this might mean to the participants in this research. None of the participants had heard this term before, which was one of the strengths of using it as a central idea during interviews as I could ask what this could mean *to them.* Through defining emotional participation themselves, participants presented a discussion of what this might mean, i.e. the parameters of the idea, as well as whether they have experienced emotional participation. Minimal guidance was given during a few of the interviews as to what 'emotional participation' might mean, specifically to ensure all participants spoke about both *receiving* and *giving* as aspects of participation.

### 3.5.2 The Interview Experience

The contact and information given in organising the interview, the topic and question choices, the interview setting and timing all impact on the interview content before the interview has even begun. The interview data itself has been constructed in response to the interviewer, therefore the interactional context of the interview is relevant to the resulting stories being examined. In an effort to reflect on where I 'fit in' to the research findings, all questions, comments and non-verbal utterances by myself during the interview are included in the detailed transcription of the chosen key stories. This idea relies on Reissman's (2002) belief, drawing on Goffman (1959), that the process of constructing a narrative in the interview setting is a performance, on the part of participants, of presenting a preferred version of themselves rather than a 'true' version of their experiences. As the 'audience' I as the interviewer therefore have an active role in constructing these presentations of self

and a level of reflection on this role is necessary to explore how this could impact on the stories being collated and analysed.

I would describe the style of interviewing in this research as collaborative as this reflects the idea that I as researcher am very much present in the interview process and content. While this presence has in some ways been minimised, such as the efforts made to encourage extensive talk by participants through using an autobiographical question at the beginning of the interview, instead of demonstrating a questions and answers format, my presence is unavoidable. Norrick (2005) discusses some of the ways in which audiences provide feedback to the narrator about the acceptability and relevance of their story, which include (not) interrupting, body language such as facing the narrator and nodding, making appreciative noises such as 'mmm', and laughter. Evidence of all of these devices can be found throughout the interview data, especially laughter and the use of self-disclosure, to encourage rapport and the continuance of discussion of a topic which appears to be shutting down.

One very important factor in this style of interviewing is related to the sensitive nature of the topic being discussed. The interview contains highly personal questions about topics which would not normally be discussed with a stranger, and definitely not in such depth, or in many cases topics that had not been discussed with anyone previously. Several participants remarked that they hadn't even thought about some of the issues being discussed, never mind discussed them before. My resulting role as 'interviewer' in this context therefore switches between listener (while demonstrating active listening through eye contact and non-verbal cues), collaborator (in making appreciative noises, laughing or self-disclosing) and a more active role which could be described as 'prober' (when asking for clarification of a point or leaving silences hanging to elicit more information). Good interviewing is related to how one can utilise these skills (Mason, 1996). However all of these aspects of the role are contextualized by my experience as a researcher including my own emotional reactions to what was being said, including empathy, support and at times upset. Therefore I too was managing my own emotional presentation during the interviews,

which at one point broke down when in response to a male participant who cried, I too shed tears. Or at another point in an interview with a female who was in tears twice during the interview when remembering her relationship with her ex-partner. This participant, Anna, who will be presented in Chapter 4, was recalling difficult memories and I felt protective towards her throughout the interview as she appeared to me quite vulnerable and sad. In these situations I was aware of not wanting to 'holiday on people's misery' (McRobbie 1982, p.5) through participants getting upset by the interview process, after which I would leave them with the consequences. This exemplified very clearly my responsibility to avoid harm, and effectively protect her emotionally from asking questions which could have upset her even more. As a result this was the only interview in which the recording equipment was turned off while she was upset, and I checked more than once that she was certain she would like to continue. In this instance, when we did continue with the interview, I moved the topic under discussion away from her ex-partner to her current partner. At this point Anna's mood very clearly shifted from sadness and upset to other emotions and feelings and there were no more tears in the interview. Overall I feel I managed this interview as carefully as I could, minimising distress caused without stopping Anna from telling me stories she felt were important. However I was aware that I didn't want vulnerability on the part of the participant to lead to them 'giving away' more (both substantively or emotionally) than they felt comfortable, either during the time of interview or later (Finch, 1984). The balance required to ascertain at which points to push a participant to give more detail, through whichever device chosen, and when to facilitate them shutting down a topic in the hope that they will organically come back to it is a fine one, and one which I have found little literature directly addressing. Essentially the choice of whether to use non-verbal cues, laughter, silence or self-disclosure is one reliant on instincts within the moment of the interview itself. However, there are competing theories about the appropriateness of using this interview style (Reinharz and Chase, 2003; Abell et al, 2006).

Self-disclosure is described as when an interviewer shares ideas, attitudes or experiences on matters relevant to the interview topic in order to encourage a respondent to be 'more forthcoming' (Reinharz and Chase, 2003, p.79). However, while advocates of less structured techniques suggest this can be a useful strategy in encouraging rapport, especially in relation to sensitive topics (Abell et al, 2006), or in managing unequal power relations within an interview context (Kvale, 1996), much literature discussing interview techniques discourages this level of personal investment in the interview itself. That said, self-disclosure is felt to have been useful within this research, when used sparingly, to entice further disclosure and reassurance to participants when discussing delicate, or potentially 'frowned upon' topics. An example of this can be seen in the Biffer interview when he has been talking for close to forty minutes, but has only briefly mentioned his son while talking about his daughters at length. I sensed that he was hesitant to talk about him. So when I asked about his son directly for the first time I tried to show a level of understanding by self-disclosing. This was done due to my sensing that he felt nervous about his son, that perhaps he wasn't sure how his portrayal of his family thus far would be affected by this new 'character in the story', and I was curious as to why he had been missing so far, and wanted to reassure him that I wouldn't judge him negatively:

> Fiona: How old is Amy?
>
> Biffer: 21.
>
> Fiona: How old is Robert?
>
> Biffer: He's 14. He's quite an angry young man, but he has been since he was very, very young.
>
> Fiona: **My brother's like that.**
>
> Biffer: Yes he used to bite himself when he was playing games, PlayStation stuff, bite marks on his hands. I took him to the doctor to see about it, because I was really worried that I had somehow emotionally affected him in some way, but he's very frustrated with life; it's a shame. He thinks he's stupid, he believes that he's not got any brain capacity. He's a

> lot more intelligent than he gives himself credit for but he
> refused point blank to learn how to read and write when he
> was young. I don't know if it was something to do with the
> teachers or something to do with me. (my emphasis)

As can be seen from Biffer's comments that he blames himself for his son's slowness to read, his son is clearly a sensitive topic for him and one he finds difficult to talk about, perhaps because he feels bad and responsible for his son's difficulties. The self-disclosure here is short but has been deliberately used to reassure Biffer that (to some extent) I understand, and that my family isn't perfect either. I feel that this self-disclosure was warranted and made Biffer feel more secure in the interview process, an environment quite alien to him, and encouraged his going into depth about his feelings throughout the interview, resulting in the longest interview at almost two hours long. However, the style of interviewing employed by myself was not the only means by which I impacted the way I was perceived in the interview; I would argue that my characteristics, as would any interviewer's, also played a part in this.

Several characteristics could potentially have impacted on the interview data collected, however two main ones will be discussed here – these being my gender and my being between seven and eight months pregnant while interviewing. Given the topic of this research, my gender appeared at times to have a strong impact on the way participants both perceived me, and how they perceived my interest in the topic of couple relationships – especially their expectations around my perspective on feminist issues such as the domestic division of labour which featured in the interview topic guide. This can be seen for example in the interview with Geoffrey when he is talking about how his wife has now started working full time and this has made home life much more stressful:

> The problem is that you're going to get into areas where you
> come out with what you would consider to be a priority,
> okay? **I suppose if I was to defend myself** I would say when
> you come back from work you don't really feel like doing
> that much, especially with commuting and so on. (my
> emphasis)

His use of the concept of him defending himself draws upon his assumption that he *needs* to defend himself, arguably from me, as I would take the position that he

should be doing more around the house now that his wife is also working full time. Despite the fact that I had at no time implied my personal feelings on this, by the very nature of me being a female researcher looking at couple relationships and asking questions about their division of labour in the home, he has categorised me as having a certain opinion regarding his contribution to household tasks.

In a very general way women and men reacted quite differently to my research topic of couple relationships, with women appearing to talk to me in a well-established, more routine way, despite us being strangers, in what often seemed like a conversation between friends. On the other hand, in general, with male participants more effort was required to establish a sense of 'normality' in discussing very personal subjects. One aspect of this seems to be related to the disclosure of emotions and especially any discussion of embodied experiences of emotions which men largely struggled to articulate with ease. This is something that is discussed in detail in Chapter 5, but from a methodological perspective was an issue that impacted upon the power dynamic within the interview itself (Kvale, 1996). I asked male participants to talk about their emotional feelings, including where they felt these, what they felt like, how they reacted to these feelings and what they thought about these feelings. These questions were most often met with pauses and a period of reflection which clearly involved a high level of engagement on the part of the men in this research. In several interviews male participants explicitly stated that thinking about *how* they experience their emotions was hard work and something they had not done before.

Polkinghorne (1995) has argued that narrative stories become less 'tellable' when in opposition to the dominant discourse, and I would argue that this idea can be related to the ease with which women discussed their emotions, and difficulty men had in discussing theirs. This is not to say that all women found it easy, and all men difficult, or that there was a clear-cut relationship between how participants actually do 'emotional participation' in their relationships and the gender of participants, as there was not, but rather there was more hesitation about discussing these things from the male participants, at least initially. However, I suspect that my status as a female interviewer facilitated this discussion happening in the way it did, and made it

easier for the male participants to feel comfortable in discussing their feelings after some warming up, at times in more detail than they ever had before. This suspicion has been supported by research conducted with male prisoners, where the researchers have noted that the male prisoners were more likely to discuss emotions with female prison staff, but also more likely to discuss emotions with female researchers rather than male ones (Padfield & Proctor, 1996; Liebling, 2004).

At a theoretical level I would agree with Ezzy (2010, p.163) that all interviews:

> are emotional and embodied performances and that good interviewing is facilitated by a reflexive awareness of, and engagement with, the emotional, embodied, and performed dimensions of the interview.

I agree that the trust portrayed by some male participants in discussing their emotions in this research, despite finding this challenging and tiring, was quite profound, and testament to the high level of rapport established. The impact of the other main characteristic discussed here of my being (very) pregnant seems to have been varied, but falls into some patterns including women with older children giving me advice; men with children joking about the difficulties of parenthood; and people without children explaining why they don't have children. This in itself is interesting as it shows how cultural assumptions come to affect how the participants constructed their presentation of self to me. An example of this can be seen in the interview with Marlene, a woman in her late forties who doesn't have any children, who I didn't ask about children, but who nevertheless gave quite a long explanation of her feelings on children, which I felt would not have been supplied had I not been so visibly pregnant:

> Because neither of us wanted children, but we have friends and relatives with small children and they make a lot more mess than dogs, and mostly they are a lot less sociable of an evening. Small children make a lot of noise all the time. I mean, I just do not understand how parents do it, I don't, I can't get my head round how they don't kill them, because I mean, well I seriously think that I might end up damaging small children if I was left alone with them for any length of time. Just because they get sort of tired and emotional and don't respond to any kind of pleasantness or logic, oh no. Whereas dogs are a little more reliable and actually if a dog is

> really, really stressing you, you put them in the kitchen and
> you close the door and you walk away for an hour or two;
> you can't do that with kids.

This talk about children was all said with a smile, in a humorous way, and felt like a story which had been told many times; it also felt to me like she was explaining herself in such a way as to be validating my choice to have a child. Her potentially socially less acceptable choice, to not have children, was being presented to me in a way that made it clear she was trying to appeal to me to approve of her decision in return. While this particular example wasn't explicitly relevant to the way this participant discussed the main issues of gender, power and emotions, it provides an example of the fact that my characteristics affected how I was being perceived within the interview setting and that this impacted on what was therefore said throughout. Thus a level of awareness of how I contributed to the interview data collected was present in the analysis of the interview data.

### 3.5.3 Analysing the Interview Data

I agree with a relativist perspective that there is no 'objective truth' to be discovered through this research, but rather insight gained into how participants understand their social world in line with Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber (1998) who write:

> We do not advocate total relativism that treats all narratives
> as texts of fiction. On the other hand, we do not take
> narratives at face value, as complete and accurate
> representations of reality. We believe that stories are usually
> constructed around a core of facts or life events, yet allow a
> wide periphery for freedom of individuality and creativity in
> selection, addition to, emphasis on, and interpretation of these
> 'remembered facts'. (p.8)

The intention within the qualitative part of this research design was not to generalise to the whole population of couples in Scotland, as this is impossible given the sample size and the process of selecting the sample (Ritchie et al, 2003), but to explore meanings ascribed by the participants to their lives. The idea of 'uncovering' aspects of the stories being told is particularly pertinent to this research looking at the pervasive, complex and often hidden concepts of power, gender and emotions within couple relationships. As highlighted by Silverman (2001, p.96) 'widespread cultural

assumptions' underlie any story being told, including within an interview setting, and it is these assumptions which shine light primarily on the concept of gender and how this is understood (and I would argue constructed) differently by participants. Through keeping the interview content together in the form of stories the context, flow and rhythm which are unique to each participant has not been lost so that combining this with content analysis has enabled a level of comparison between participants.

The combined use of thematic analysis and narrative analysis was chosen to analyse the face-to-face interview data collected in this research. The appeal of a narrative approach is its treatment of social research as always plural, relative and subjective (Lieblich et al, 1998), while being situationally and temporally constructed. This combination of narrative analysis and a thematic comparison of stories, following McCormack's (2004) 'storying stories' facilitated both a deep understanding of the personal stories being told, as well as highlighting points at which these stories could be compared with each other in a thematic way. This approach therefore is both categorical and holistic (Lieblich et al, 1998), as these methods fed into each other throughout analysis and writing up.

While continuing to conduct interviews across Scotland, the transcription of the interviews began and was outsourced to a university-approved transcription service. Once the transcripts were received electronically I read over each one to check the transcription while listening to the interview to ensure each was accurate, making any amendments as I went along. After this initial listening to the transcripts, I then listened to the interview recording once again and made a note of where I felt the 'stories' contained within the interview were beginning and ending, in the process naming each story and using part of the participants' words to round it off with a concluding 'summing up' statement. These stories then became the central unit of analysis for the subsequent thematic analysis.

In the NVivo programme I uploaded the set of stories for each participant, then went through these coding the text according to an index of themes which had been compiled based on the literature reviewed up to this point. This index was compiled

after going back to re-read key texts, specifically looking for issues regarding men in couple relationships (Duncombe and Marsden, 1993, 1995, Seidler, 2006, Holmes, 2010) including the following themes: worries, barriers to participation, emotional communication content, communication style and emotional reflexivity. Once this process had been completed the stories which best related to each theme were collated and printed off to be considered further. Each of the lists of stories were read and notes made on thoughts generated from them. To aid this process I paid particular attention to similarities and differences between stories and participants within a particular theme, looking for ways that stories on a particular topic varied across participants in order to consider how these could be compared to one another.

In the process of reading and listening to the interview data, over several months, it became apparent that certain key themes were emerging, related to the male differences in expressing emotions, and the differences between male and female embodied emotional experiences. These points of comparison went on to frame a subsequent re-coding of the notes made on the stories which spoke directly to these aspects of the data, leading to a collection of notes made about the related points of difference and similarity between participants. These notes, along with the other set, were then coded again looking for specific points of agreement or disagreement. At this point the outline of the thesis – the breakdown of the main findings and argument of the thesis as a whole – was clarified, so that each chapter template contained notes on what was happening in the stories presented in the interview setting and how these related to the main finding being discussed in each findings chapter section. The use of stories was employed as it presented an opportunity to divide the hours of interview data into manageable sized pieces without losing the context of points being made. Following on from ideas of narrative analysis, I felt the maintaining of the context was important when analysing the interview data.

## 3.7 Methodological Limitations

I believe the research design and mixed methods employed in this research have provided a rich set of data to explore how emotional participation interacts with gendered power; however there are limitations to this data. Beginning with the online survey, this would have benefitted from a sample of more individuals without degree-level qualifications. Education was used as a key indicator in the scale used to allocate class to participants, so had this been more evenly spread it is reasonable to predict that class differences may have become more apparent. In the telephone interviews time constrained the number of interviews that were conducted, with 43 obtained, but the target for this stage of data collection had been 100. Problems with the recording equipment I used meant that of the 43 telephone interviews conducted only 24 were transcribed. The face-to-face interviews were generally very successful, however there were a few in which the autobiographical question did not succeed in putting participants at ease. In these interviews it would potentially have been beneficial to have had other instruments to hand, such as vignettes to stimulate discussion. Ultimately the main limitation of the methods used in this research was the length of time between conducting the survey and the face-to-face interviews. This was due to my having two separate year 'breaks' of maternity leave leading to the loss of several telephone interview participants when conducting the face-to-face interviews almost two years later.

## 3.8 Conclusion

The methods employed in this thesis were chosen to facilitate an in-depth consideration of the theoretical focus of gendered power in couple relationships, while the specific empirical focus has changed over the course of this doctoral research. The decisions made throughout have been made in line with both methodological rigour and a feminist epistemology in mind. This epistemology has had an effect on many aspects of this research in terms of the topic chosen, given the focus on gendered power and how this is reproduced. But also in smaller ways such as in making a deliberate choice to engage all participants as exactly that – *participants*, and not subjects. So although the topic of investigation has moved from

sexual communication to emotional aspects of couple relationships, the approach and intention behind this research has not changed. I feel the shift in topic has taken place for sound reasons, led by the data to a topic that has proved to be a very rich area for investigation. The combined use of survey data, short telephone interviews and face-to-face interviews has provided both broad and rich data on couple relationships, leading to unique interview data being collected which has been useful in considering the theoretical questions this thesis is talking to. I feel one of the strengths of this approach has been both a testing of previous literature which led to a topic of investigation that participants highly engaged with. A second strength of this approach has been the excellent rapport established in interviews, which I believe is attributable to participants having been involved in the research for over two years before the time of interviewing. Hopefully the chapters which follow will do justice to the data collected and the effort made by all participants to engage with this research.

# Chapter 4 – Female Accounts of Emotional Participation in Couple Relationships

It has largely been female voices – both researchers and participants – that have drawn attention to the need to examine emotional aspects of couple relationships. This includes the already discussed work of Duncombe and Marsden (1993, 1995) and Brannen and Moss (1991) which calls for more attention to be paid to how emotion and equality interact within the private sphere, along with the more recent body of quantitative research conducted in the United States which highlights the importance of feeling appreciated to considering relationships to be equal (Kawamura et al, 2010; Thompson, 1991; Minnotte et al, 2007). This body of literature highlights the importance of emotional aspects of couple relationships in both relationship satisfaction and assessments of equality. This chapter will argue that the picture of women craving emotional closeness, not receiving this and having little agency within this dynamic has changed. The majority of female voices presented here have agency within their relationships, and over half of them have the emotional closeness they want. So that while the women in this research have emotional skills and continue to perform the relational emotion work in their relationships, they do not feel exploited over this. Instead I will argue that the performance of emotion work leads to a dividend of emotional capital, as long as women are appreciated for the work they do.

Appreciation, as discussed in previous research (Hawkins, 1995; Thompson, 1991; Kawamura et al, 2010; Erickson, 2005) is crucial to women describing a sense of fairness within their couple relationships. This chapter will contribute to this body of research by suggesting that it is emotional participation that leads to a sense of feeling appreciated, while also considering what happens when emotional participation breaks down. The women in this research are similar to the women interviewed in previous research as they want emotional closeness with their partners, but differ in that they have relational agency in their relationships which facilitates them achieving emotional participation.  Central to this discussion is acknowledgement that there has been a shift in how acceptable it is for women to

expect emotional closeness within their heterosexual relationships. This in itself is not discussed by the women, but is an important backdrop to the argument that is being presented here – that while women are still responsible for the emotional aspects of their couple relationships, the feminine gendered emotional habitus is recognised as being skilled and there is a value in this, as long as this value is acknowledged.

## 4.1 – Women Have Agency

Central to this chapter is the assertion that the women who took part in this research have agency in their couple relationships, and use this to assert their desire for emotional closeness within their couple relationships. This was demonstrated in responses to several statements from the survey, designed to test findings from previous research, yielding surprising findings. All of these statements were testing the research findings from Benjamin's (1998) work on negotiation in marital conversations. She concluded that women often avoid conflict and do not disagree with their partner due to the silencing of women in the marital conversation. She went on to say that women who did not demonstrate a high level of ability to negotiate were less likely to start arguments or be angry with their partners for fear this will damage their marriages, leading to a hypothesis that the statements testing these findings would find a similar pattern in my survey sample.

The statements with results indicating gender differences are in Table 4, which lists the statements used in the survey. The response options were 1= Strongly Agree, 2= Agree, 4= Disagree, 5= Strongly Disagree.

| Statement Wording | N - Female | N - Total |
|---|---|---|
| Worrying about splitting up from my partner sometimes stops me saying negative things about them or our relationship | 534 | 1009 |
| I try my best to avoid conflict in my sexual relationship | 482 | 935 |
| I talk to my partner about things that are annoying me with my relationship | 534 | 1007 |
| I often get angry with my partner | 515 | 978 |
| I feel guilty if I upset my partner | 512 | 995 |
| I start the majority of arguments in my relationship | 425 | 794 |
| I tend to give in to my partner's emotional needs | 482 | 922 |
| I find it easy to disagree with my partner's view or opinion | 500 | 942 |

Table 4 – Survey Statements with Difference in Means – Women

These clustered bar charts give the means of the different statements by gender. The error bars in the graphs are standard errors from the sample itself. These differences in the mean suggest substantive and important differences by gender worthy of further investigation using qualitative means.
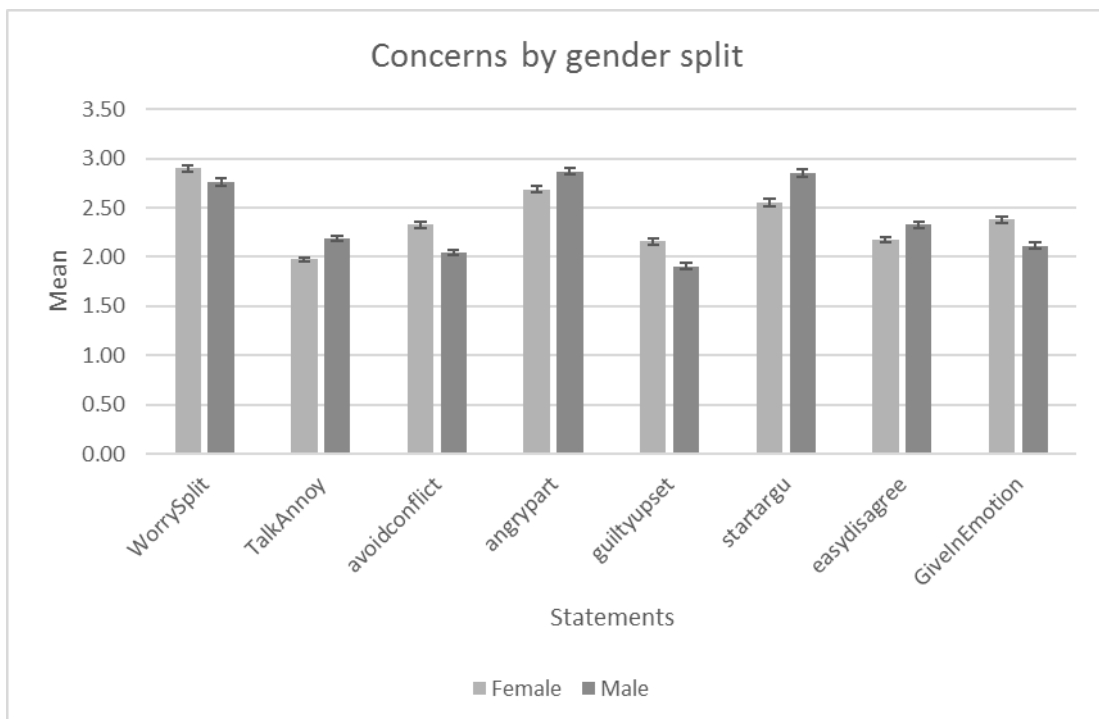


Chart 1 – Concerns by Gender Split                    Source: Online Survey

The next chart is rescaled to see the differences more clearly.
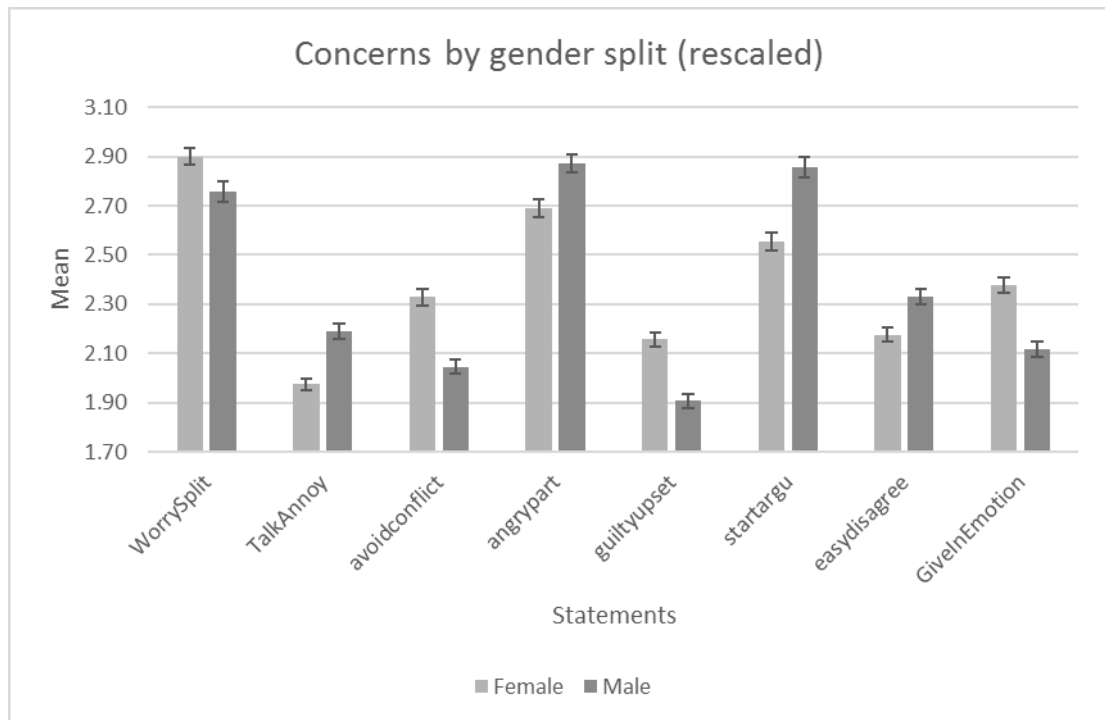


Chart 2 – Concerns by Gender Split (rescaled)          Source: Online Survey

As can be seen from Chart 2, in which the higher answers relate to 'strongly disagree' or 'disagree' responses, women were more likely to disagree to the following statements:

- 'Worrying about splitting up from my partner sometimes stops me saying negative things about them or our relationship'
- 'I try my best to avoid conflict in my sexual relationship'
- 'I feel guilty if I upset my partner'
- 'I tend to give in to my partner's emotional needs'

While they were more likely to agree to the following statements:

- 'I talk to my partner about things that are annoying me with my relationship'
- 'I often get angry with my partner'
- 'I start the majority of arguments in my relationship'
- 'I find it easy to disagree with my partner's view or opinion'

Here the gendered response I was expecting was not present. Instead the results showed the opposite gendered response, suggesting that the women surveyed had more agency in their relationships than those in the research conducted by Benjamin (1998). Through not giving in to their partner's emotional needs, not feeling guilty if they upset their partner and not trying to avoid conflict, the overall picture of the women who took part in my online survey is of them not being afraid to say how they are feeling. This is compounded by their being more likely (than the men in this survey) to get angry with their partner, find it easy to disagree with them, start arguments and talk about things that are annoying them. Agency here refers to a sense of 'power within' described by Kabeer (1999). The way in which agency can be seen in these statements is in relation to an ability to be self-determined and value their own desires. These desires relate to having open communication – a central finding of this research, in line with previous research (Benjamin, 1998; Duncombe and Marsden, 1993, 1995; Mansfield and Collard, 1988). There is, of course, response bias in my online survey: it is possible that the women who self-selected to participate in the survey are more assertive, articulate and educated than women in the wider population. As this bias is not presented in the qualitative study, this observation based on the quantitative data will be explored further in due course.

## 4.2 – Women's Emotional Skills

A majority of the women interviewed – thirteen of fifteen – were highly skilled in the emotional traits that make up a traditional feminine emotional habitus. These skills include an awareness of how they are feeling, an ability to describe how they are feeling and a high level of emotional reflexivity enabling them to reflect on their emotional lives. This was manifest in the accounts of almost all of the women interviewed demonstrating a high awareness of their emotions. Through focusing on various aspects of their emotional lives, mainly in reference to their couple relationships, the majority of female participants painted a picture of emotions being an integral aspect of day-to-day life. An example of this is Becky who talks about the process of making-up after falling out with her lesbian partner, highlighting their

efforts to avoid further arguments; she displays a high level of awareness around her emotions:

> Because we are sensitive and we are critical of ourselves. So as much as we might feel very self-righteous or appear really self-righteous at the time, we are both kind of like, 'oh my God, I've done something really horrible', I shouldn't, without being too proud to say it when you're upset, you want to clear the air. You want things to be okay.

The emotional reflexivity displayed here implies not only an awareness of one's own emotions but of the emotions of one's partner, so that Becky is making an effort to understand and alter her social environment (Holmes, 2010). I interpret this as evidence of a gendered mastery of emotions on the part of women, who incorporate their complex emotional lives into their day-to-day experiences seamlessly. The women who were interviewed all spoke of being aware of their partner's and their own emotions, something that was not present in the interviews with men in the same way. There was a definite sense of how unquestioned a high level of emotional awareness was for the women interviewed. Given the comparative nature of this research, it is noteworthy that the emotional reflexivity presented in the women's interviews was made more obvious when I read all of the interview transcripts looking for examples of discussing partners' emotions. I believe my lack of awareness of this gendered difference in emotional reflexivity was due in large part to my being female and entering into the discussion in the interviews with my own gendered ways of communicating – therefore women talked fluently about how they or their partner was feeling, while men did not. This gender difference was invisible to me. What was more apparent was when this gendered binary was not present.

One participant whose husband of over 20 years works away spoke about how she experienced the connection between physical and emotional intimacy within their relationship. Here Jean is describing the process through which she reconnected to her husband after he has been away for 6 months:

> Jean - I think the physical intimacy in whatever form it takes can support the emotional closeness and yes, when we talk on the phone sometimes I come off the phone and feel quite emotional and miss that closeness and the physical and

emotional seem to come together. I think one supports the other. Does the emotional support physical? Yes I think probably they support each other. It's interesting when you're talking about this process of reconnecting when you're both in the same physical space again because essentially the emotional process might not change in that sort of physical separateness that physical intimacy does. I think the emotional one does to some extent as well.

Fiona: Really?

Jean - Yes because I always feel very emotionally, what's the word, not short changed, emotionally compromised isn't the right word either, I'm trying to find the right word here. Perhaps emotionally bereft a little bit, that's a strong word, it's not as strong as that, but that kind of feeling of loss when he's not here and if I've just come off the phone with him and I think that's really nice, but oh yes I haven't got that emotional connection for another week until I see him again, or until I speak to him again. So I do think the two go hand in hand a lot of the time. Although I don't think, perhaps now that we're getting older, physical intimacy isn't so important as it used to be, it's still there and it's still nice and it supports the emotional one, but it's not as important as it used to be.

This interview extract highlights the importance of emotional closeness to Jean and how much she values this aspect of her relationship, which is not easy due to her husband being away for most of the year. Despite her feeling something akin to 'emotionally short changed' or 'bereft', Jean has choices regarding the situation she is in. Later in her interview she talks about how despite missing her partner greatly when he's working away, she wouldn't change the situation as it makes him happy to do the job he's doing. And she would rather he was doing this for another couple of years and was satisfied with his professional achievements than deny him that chance. Jean is therefore performing internal emotion work through managing her loneliness and sadness as well as doing the relational emotion work of checking in with her husband and supporting their two (grown-up) children when he isn't around. These demonstrations of emotion work are reliant on the emotional skills of knowing how one is feeling and knowing how one's partner is feeling as well as confidence in being able to speak about one's feelings. This confidence I see as agency in Jean. Jean demonstrates a traditional feminine emotional habitus through having a high level of emotional awareness and reflexivity. The nature of what I am calling a

traditional feminine emotional habitus becomes clearer when looking at examples of when some of the skills required are not manifested as seamlessly as they are for the majority of the women interviewed in this research.

## 4.3 – Not All Women Find Emotion Easy

Three of the fifteen women in my research discussed different ways they have difficulties in expressing their emotions. These were Marlene, Rose and Anna who will be presented in the 'internal emotion work' section. These three women describe three different aspects of emotional interaction which together highlight how the skills necessary for a traditional feminine emotional habitus are not automatically available to women, but require work even though this work is usually done at a level below consciousness. The ways in which these three women articulated the difficulties they have with their emotions will now be discussed in detail. While gender differences are the focus of this research due to the comparative design, it is also crucial to look at the ways these three women highlight the plurality of experiences of emotional participation for women.

The first emotional skill I have identified as being central to emotional participation is the ability to interpret how others feel, of recognising the social signals from others and being able to understand these, described by Marlene when talking about her husband:

> I have to use him as an emotional reference point because I'm
> not very good at sometimes working out what other people
> mean or what they will take from what I'm saying. It's
> having sufficient trust, I suppose it exposes your frailties if
> you are having to ask these kind of referencing questions, and
> it's not something I would do with anyone else, to say
> 'excuse me, I'm socially inept, can you tell me what I should
> be thinking here?'. I tend to get into emotional difficulties,
> appear paranoid and lose friends if I don't have him to tell me
> I am being stupid.

The importance of being able to interpret the complex nuances of emotions in others is highlighted here by Marlene, and despite being the only woman to find this difficult, she is not the only *person* as more male respondents described similar

difficulties. Marlene therefore serves as a reminder that while there are some apparently gendered patterns in relation to emotional habitus appearing from this data, these are not absolute, but rather more accurately understood as reflecting gender as a spectrum. This spectrum includes a range of emotional skills with some positions occupied by more women and some by more men. However men and women can be found across the spectrum, as in this case where Marlene seems to be at the less skilled end while her partner, by her own description, appears to be at the more skilled end.

The role of interpreting the emotions of others, as highlighted by Marlene, is central to emotional participation in any relationship as emotions are essentially communicative (Burkitt, 1997), meaning an inability to understand what people around you are experiencing makes social interactions difficult. While Marlene is talking here about her social ineptitude in general, she highlights a crucial aspect of emotion: in order to participate in any relationship on an emotional level, it is vital to be able to interpret emotional signals, which in itself requires a level of knowledge about how emotions operate in interaction. Being able to interpret the emotions of others is also vital to the process of emotional reflexivity (Holmes, 2010). In the case of Marlene, her difficulties in understanding emotional signals from others has brought her closer to her husband, so that their relationship appears to be very strong and loving, in part because she trusts him to be her 'emotional reference point'. Her weakness in ability to understand emotional signals is bolstered by her partner's higher level of emotional awareness. Her weakness and his strength in this relationship could be seen to be giving him emotional capital. He can support her through her social ineptitude (as she puts it) so that she doesn't 'get paranoid and lose friends' and she values these skills and acknowledges that through him having these skills she can maintain friendships she otherwise might lose. This emotional skill Marlene is lacking is social, rather than individual or internal, however this is not the case for Rose.

In contrast to Marlene, Rose has no difficulties knowing how others around her are feeling, but rather struggles to articulate her own feelings, especially negative ones, as described in the following extract:

> It's very hard for me to express what I'm feeling to other people ... I think about things, and there's a dialogue in my mind, but it's very hard to put it, you know, to say it to someone else. It's like that with everyone. I really know what I'm feeling, it's just to express that to someone else, to say that to someone's face that I'm mad, actually, that's something very difficult for me to say … I think, it's about hurting other people's feelings, even though I'm really mad at them, saying that to them, I think, I might be hurting them, so, it's, that's why I prefer to keep it to myself.

Rose edits her emotional communication and keeps her emotions to herself in a way that no other women spoke about. Rose goes on to describe how she feels during arguments with her partner, using the expression 'it's like a thunderstorm of emotions', highlighting how she feels 'bombarded by his emotions'. She paints a picture of herself as someone struggling to articulate herself during confrontation, preferring to have time to digest what has been said and respond calmly. However, the distinction here between the social nature of Marlene's difficulties and individual nature of Rose's is hard to maintain.

For Rose the process of editing the expression of her emotions makes her feel less exposed and more in control of her emotional communication, especially with her partner; it enables her to take her time to respond, as she finds it difficult to reply immediately. The ability to process emotional information is part of the emotional skill set required to be able to fully engage in emotional participation in couple relationships. For Rose confrontation or arguments make her feel bombarded and flustered, meaning that she struggles to articulate her feelings or thoughts easily. Her 'thunderstorm of emotions' relates to her own emotions – her embodied experience of these, which gets overloaded by external stimuli. And it is the external stimuli to which she is reacting that makes her reactions social. She knows how she feels, but struggles to process it, or to know how to formulate a response, especially one which won't upset anyone. The weight of expectations of others, as Burkitt suggests (2014),

lies heavily on Rose – her deep sense of not wanting to upset others leads to her doing internal emotion work in order to avoid upsetting her partner by saying something hurtful. But her internal emotion work is also used to enable herself to formulate and articulate how she is feeling through taking time to choose how she expresses herself. Rose exhibits a traditional feminine emotional habitus as this is characterised by the ability to emotionally participate in day-to-day life, which she does. This includes being responsible for the relational emotional work in her home, as discussed later in the interview, particularly regarding managing her partner's emotional reactions to their young son. Her difficulty in expressing herself emotionally questions her traditional feminine emotional habitus through placing her in the middle of the spectrum of emotional skill. Rose is the only woman to describe the process of being overwhelmed, however several men reported a similar experience during confrontation with their partners, highlighting how it is possible to have some emotional skills, but not necessarily others.

In the case of Rose, she is emotionally aware of how her partner is feeling. She is also reflexive about these emotions so she does have the necessary skills of a traditional feminine emotional habitus, but she struggles to express herself sometimes. It can be seen that the cases of Marlene and Rose raise questions about the natural or innate nature of female emotionality, supporting the claim being made here that the performance required to be an 'emotional woman', while experienced as unproblematic for the majority of women discussed here, requires many skills and much effort. This combination of skills and effort is particularly gendered, as will be argued throughout this thesis, but that does not mean it is automatic or easy.

## 4.4 - Women Responsible for Emotional Aspects of Relationship

In all but one of the fifteen female telephone interviews, women were considered to be explicitly responsibly for the emotional well-being of their couple relationships. This responsibility appears to be crucial to how heterosexual couple relationships function, in that women have the role of providing emotional support to their partners or of doing the relational emotion work. This role includes identifying any

issues which they feel are making their partner unhappy, such as participant 20[1], when she says in response to a question regarding who raises issues in her relationship: "It would normally be me, I would generally tend to raise the issues. Even if the issue was my partner's issue it would generally be me that would identify that there was a problem and raise it." This level of responsibility, such that the emotional well-being of their partner is included in their remit as a wife/partner or girlfriend, is striking. It reflects the deep-rooted way in which women feel that it is their 'job' to perform emotion work, as suggested by Erickson (2005) when she found that women consistently do more emotion work in their relationships regardless of how traditionally 'feminine' they were in other aspects of their lives.

The gender difference in responses to the statement 'I start the majority of arguments in our relationships', to which women were more likely to agree, is a demonstration of how women do relational emotion work, through starting arguments and talking about things that annoy them in their relationships. Although raising issues could also be seen as a way of asking for recognition of one's own feelings, in this extract participant 20 is doing so on behalf of her partner as well as herself. This can be seen as agency on the part of participant 20 – she is taking control of her discontent and raising issues when she feels it's necessary, specifically relational agency as her partner must be involved in this conversation for it to be emotional participation. This raising of issues is also relational emotional work as this is also done on behalf of her partner so that she is acting out the role of emotional care giver, which in itself is highly gendered. Through performing the role of emotional care giver participant 20 highlights her traditional feminine emotional habitus and also how she can gain emotional capital through taking responsibility for her relationship – as long as the emotion work she is doing is appreciated by her partner.

Other ways in which women assume responsibility for their relationships include proactively pre-empting life stage changes and 'getting their house in order' before

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1 – Participant numbers have been used if someone took part in the telephone interviews but not face to face interviews

their relationship suffers. An example of this is participant 16 when she says that she recently realised that her children would be leaving the house in the near future, and her relationship was going to need to change to accommodate the greater amount of time she would be spending with her husband, without the constant distraction of children. In reference to her anticipating this big life change and feeling it necessary to make changes, she says "the degree to which you are a, oh well, let life happen to me, [type of person] versus actually, I'll take life by the short and curlies and make it happen, the way I want it, kind of thing" is crucial in maintaining a healthy relationship. She highlights the relationship of a friend of hers, in contrast to this deliberate approach of her own, to show how this effort on her part, and the agreement of her husband, has led to them being happier than they could have been without her having taken responsibility for their relationship's future happiness:

> There came a point at which, in both relationships, on reflection, we didn't see it at the time, but in both the relationships, both of the women went, mmm, I kind of want something more than just this day-to-day living, I want to be closer on a deeper level, I want to think about life, and where we want to go, and all the rest of it, and my husband slowly, slowly went, yeah, yeah, okay, good point, and her husband went, no, I'm quite happy just going to work every day, leave me alone, what's to think about, we're lucky, aren't we, we've got a house and a child, and her marriage is a marriage in name only now, and mine, well, not to say we don't have problems, we do, but I feel we're still walking hand in hand in some way, or other … Certainly, the time we went to Relate, things were bad enough that I said we need to go to Relate, but in my heart, I didn't think he'd go, and the fact that he went at all gave me a new respect for him. That in itself helped, whereas the friend whose marriage is a marriage in name only, that is actually the biggest issue is, that he didn't care enough, he wouldn't put the work into it, and she lost respect for him, because he wouldn't work on it ... I mean listening, it is a big deal, it's so clichéd, but it is a big deal. It's hard to listen if you've got a quiet one, like me, because getting him to talk, in the first place, is quite difficult, but you learn over time, in a long relationship, when they're more likely to talk, than other times, and when to shut up, and all the rest of it, and I think, yeah, that's probably the biggest key, I would say, is listening, and if you've got a quiet one, finding the way to make them speak, so there's something to listen to.

This quote highlights once again that the *responsibility* for emotional communication lies firmly in the female role in this couple, mainly because if she didn't take responsibility for the relational emotion work required, in her opinion, it wouldn't take place at all. It also repeats the point that what is going on here is work, as it required planning, time and effort to open up these lines of communication. And while her partner also was doing emotion work, this was internal, while hers was both internal and relational. Participant 16 here demonstrates a high level of emotional skill which leads to her doing the relational emotion work in her relationship which is central to how emotional participation works. The centrality of listening is described by participant 16 – both her being listened to by her partner, but also acknowledging the importance of her making time to listen to her partner. She says specifically it is important for her to know when to talk, when to shut up, 'all the rest of it', listing the constituted skills she uses when doing relational emotion work. But there is also acknowledgement of the knowledge she has about how best to communicate with her partner – as she says you 'learn over time' how best to do relational emotion work. It is the combination of knowledge and relational emotion work that facilitates a high level of emotional participation on the part of women. What drives them to do this work is their traditional feminine emotional habitus that has been socialised to be emotionally skilled and to value being emotionally expressive as well as craving to have this emotional expression reciprocated by their partners.

## 4.5 – Performing 'Internal Emotion Work'

A central aspect of being emotional, and presenting a situationally appropriate display of emotions, is the requirement to perform emotion work on the self in order to abide by the 'feeling rules' in any given situation (Hochschild, 1983). The constraint of abiding by feeling rules is exemplified by Anna when she tries to control her emotions within her day-to-day life, and minimise their expression in her current relationship. However it is crucial to understand emotions within the social circumstances in which they arise. This is particularly relevant for Anna, a participant who found the interview process very emotional in itself. This was due to

her circumstances of currently being without a stable committed partner, despite wanting to be in a long-term relationship. Anna reflected on her attitude towards her emotions in terms of being single and her experience of previous relationships. Anna demonstrated a unique attitude towards her emotions from the women interviewed in that she was the only woman who described needing to control her emotions. Due to her having been very badly hurt in her previous serious relationship, Anna tried hard to minimise her negative emotions over-spilling into her day-to-day life; something she was still working on more than three years after that relationship ended. In this extract Anna talks about feeling upset regarding her ex-partner leaving her:

> I have to control these emotions because, you know, because they are strong, so strong emotions and I can be very emotional, I have to cut it off, I have to draw the line some place or I would be an absolute mess … I do get my days when I am hurt, I can be upset, but a long time ago that used to come out in a rage, I would explode and I would be hysterical over it, but I think age and experience does that to you. It strengthens you. 'Don't be ridiculous you're a 50 year old woman, get a grip.' I always say that to myself, 'get a grip'.

Anna is surface acting as she tries to alter how she outwardly appears, to tame her emotions and make them more socially acceptable, but it could also be said that she is trying to get towards deep acting (Hochschild, 1983). Throughout her interview she describes situations and ways in which she has come to realise how strong she is. Towards the end of the interview Anna reveals that her belief in her inner strength comes from her ability to maintain her emotions on a more even keel than previously; she no longer breaks down in public nor has suicidal thoughts, and for her this is due to her subduing her negative emotions. This practice of doing internal emotion work on herself leaves Anna feeling 'emotionally closed off', which is similar to the 'hollow men' discussed in Duncombe and Marsden (1998). On the spectrum of emotional skills Anna displays awareness of her own emotion and of others and a reflexivity over her emotions so that she can be described as highly skilled. But she seems to be trying to change her traditional feminine emotional habitus by not being *as* emotional as she previously was.

It transpired throughout the interview that Anna has stifled her negative feelings regarding her previous partner in order to minimise her emotional needs with her current partner, who is married to someone else. This emotional editing is to make her closer to her partner by not overwhelming him with her emotions, leading to her feeling more alone. Anna can be described in this context as lacking in relational agency – as she does not raise issues that annoy her nor say how she is feeling within this extra-marital relationship. This strategy to minimise her own pain and sadness in relation both to the breakdown of her previous relationship, and her current partner's inability to commit to her, gives Anna a sense of inner strength. But in fact the surface acting she is performing is exactly that – only on the surface, as Anna admits still feeling upset and unacknowledged much of the time. This example from Anna is important as it highlights the complex ways in which emotion work is done on the self to bring one's emotions into line with more socially acceptable feeling rules. Her emotion work is at times successful in leading Anna to 'deep acting' so that she feels stronger now than when her partner left her several years ago, when her emotions were so raw she was suicidal and very depressed. The surface acting aspect of her emotion work on herself enables her to hide the true extent of the emotions she has within her current relationship, however these continue to bubble up just beneath the surface and overflow into her day-to-day life. This leaves her exasperated at why she experiences such strength of emotions, characterising these as negative and in need of further control.

Anna is the only participant who demonstrates a lack of agency in her relationship, as while she is *choosing* to be less emotional in her life, she is doing this to fit into an emotional display that is more in line with the expectations of her ex-partner Malcolm who she was with for three years and still misses:

> Woman tend to, we can drag things on, we do drag things out and I used to be terrible for just going in the huff and walking out storming, banging the door in the house and getting away from it and having a rage through and coming back, but I felt Malcolm taught me how to control that, to stop that, probably not until he left me and I've said that to him when we speak, we have a good chat about things when he comes in for post

> and stuff and stuff to do with the flat, and we'll have a chat
> about things and I go 'you taught me how to do that, not to
> linger on things' and I say that and he'll go, 'do you feel
> you've changed that way?' I go, 'oh yes I've changed that
> way'. I don't see things, I'm not as emotional as I was when
> he felt I brought emotion into everyday things and he had a
> knack of, if there was a big problem, if something that
> happened like we had a burst pipe or that, he would say 'it's
> all right calm down' and I would be, 'oh look at this, it has
> ruined that, what are we going to do about that?' I'm not as
> bad about that now and it's funny because I've gone the way
> he was.

> It was black or white or not at all with Malcolm there was no
> middle ground and I found it sometimes hard to put my point
> across and make it sound intelligent, because he was an
> intelligent man, he was very good at everything, but the
> controlling side of him was he wouldn't accept failure in life.

> I was just a push over, I was too soft, I should have been
> more harder and said 'you're not going to do this, you're not
> going to, you know,' but I'm not like that, you can't change
> your character, you have to be yourself and that's probably
> why there were little niggly problems like that, his power, my
> soft side, I was very emotional, he wasn't, he didn't do
> emotion, he could see the best in a bad scenario, I tended to
> get emotional about it. That was a drawback. Yes he found
> that difficult to handle though my emotion, sometimes he
> said he had to just bite his tongue and go away and be on his
> own, he couldn't cope with it.

Anna now believes that the force of her emotions is too much for her current partner,
so she performs internal emotion work in order to maintain the relationship. It is
relevant to consider the reason she wants to be less emotional – to fit into the ideas of
a man, specifically her ex-partner Malcolm. Given the focus on the reasons emotion
work is being performed on the self, it's important to remember that for Anna her
internal emotion work stems from a desire to be less exposed and upset in her day-to-
day life but also from a desire to not overwhelm her married boyfriend. Anna is
lacking in agency in her current relationship and is performing internal emotion work
in trying to deep act that she is accepting of the lack of emotional participation she
has. Emotion work in this context – i.e. internal, or on the self – is a theme which

will be returned to when examining male accounts of emotion within couple relationships, as this was found to be commonplace among the men in this research. However I would argue that Anna has a traditional feminine emotional habitus which she is trying to manage, with mixed success.

This section of this chapter has focused on personal experiences of emotion, reporting that while the majority of women in this research did not find their emotional lives difficult, and most women found communicating their emotions unproblematic, this was not the case for all women. Instead three women have been described to highlight areas of emotional skills which are difficult for them, in the process highlighting the nuanced and multi-faceted nature of emotional skills and how individuals can be located at points on the spectrum of emotional skills that contradicts the highly gendered pattern of this spectrum. I am demonstrating that the belief that women experience emotion without problem is limited and overly simplistic, so that while most of the women interviewed in this research demonstrate a traditional feminine emotional habitus, this is not the case for all of the women. Rather they highlight how a traditional feminine emotional habitus can be maintained despite difficulties with specific emotional skills.

## 4.6 – Feeling Appreciated = Men Making an Effort

A consistent narrative emerging from the female accounts within interviews was of women being emotionally skilled, performing relational emotion work while being responsible for the emotional aspects of her relationships and also emphasising the importance of feeling appreciated for doing this work. An overwhelming volume of the female interviews focused on talking about their (all but one) male partners rather than themselves, in stark contrast to the male interviews in which men talked about themselves. Knudson-Martin et al (1998) refer to women focusing on men within their relationships, highlighting how this reinforces male power. Through concerning themselves primarily with how men are in their couple relationships, women effectively prioritise male experience over their own. Through de-prioritising and

focusing their energy on the well-being of their male partners, women effectively reproduce the way men's feelings are more important than their own. Predominantly women talked about the factors that made them feel their partner was *trying* to participate emotionally in their relationship. This sense of effort being made by men to hear and acknowledge the women interviewed was central to the majority of female interviews. But what was considered as evidence of this effort, and therefore feeling appreciated, differed between interviews.

When initially asked during the interview whether she felt her partner participated emotionally in their relationship, Salome responded that he did not. However after further discussion around how they communicate, and crucially how he makes her feel, approximately 30 minutes later, she concluded that in fact he does participate emotionally, and in several ways. What became apparent was that when initially asked if she felt her partner participated emotionally in their relationship she had said 'no' as he didn't say 'I love you', she felt he was not participating emotionally. However, he did confide in her when he was upset, she felt she could talk to him about anything, and although he wasn't 'gushy', he showed his affection for her in different ways, as highlighted in this extract:

> Thinking about it, he does, but it's not on the gushy, sort of, over the top, you know, he's never brought me a bunch of flowers, or anything like that, or ... but on the other hand he buys really good presents. I was banging on to him about I'd always wanted a Meccano set when I was a kid, and the boys got Meccano and I didn't, so, last year for my birthday he gave me a set of Meccano, which is really sweet. That's lovely, you know, so, he does things like that, but he wouldn't ... and I suppose that's more honest than people that bring you a bunch of flowers, and a box of chocolates, and don't mean it, yeah. He's a lovely man.

Salome talking of the presents her partner buys her and what this means to her shows the plural ways women can feel appreciated, although these, as in the case of Salome, aren't always obvious, even to them. So that in her interpretation of their relationship he does things that demonstrate his affection, like making plans with her, making her feel wanted and reassuring her that they have a future together. For Salome these are all things her ex-husband didn't do. Compared to her ex-husband, who was a serial

cheater, her current partner isn't 'gushy' (as her ex-partner told her he loved her every day), but will book holidays with her, something her ex-husband wouldn't do due to the diary complications of leading a double life. In this way, Salome's initial description of her current partner as not emotionally participating in their relationship may reflect the parameters she had from her much longer previous relationship with her ex-husband. So that when she considered in more depth the ways her current relationship operates, and makes her feel, it became apparent to her that her partner does participate, more than her husband ever did, despite his being reluctant to actually say 'I love you'. The gift of a Meccano set demonstrated to Salome that her partner listened to her and made an effort to get her a personal gift that would make her happy. This gift is a symbol for her of how her partner cares for her and is making an effort to show he cares for her and wants to make her happy. The symbolic nature of this gift points to how emotional participation is not predicated on purely 'disclosure' as discussed by Jamieson (1998). The sense of feeling appreciated can come from a Meccano set.

The importance of participants' previous relationships was high when analysing their perceptions of emotional participation, particularly for the women interviewed who had previously been in long-term relationships. Individual expectations around what constitutes emotional participation, and how this was defined by women, were determined by previous relationship experiences. Frequent references were made to ex-partners' behaviour in comparison to current relationships, used as a way of assessing whether partners are better or worse. Expectations are framed in this way so that women who have had a long-term ex-partner who was not emotionally engaged in their relationship stressed how important this now was to them. Women who felt their current partner was not participating emotionally with them referred to previous partners who did, listing the things previous partners did or how they made them feel in contrast to their current relationships. A central aspect of determining whether individuals are emotionally participating in their relationships seems to be how much *effort* is being made to do this.

Within the interviews conducted with women there were many examples given of how the women felt appreciated, all of which differed in *what* was done, but were similar in the sentiment that they felt loved. These included June, who described a time when her partner had surprised her with how attentive he was to her:

> Fiona: How would you describe emotional participation within your relationship or what you need?
>
> June: I'm quite tactile, so I like lots of hugs, just a spontaneous hug, a cuddle, an arm round you, a wee kiss, but then I'm like that even with the girls, I kiss and cuddle the girls every day, every day. I kiss and cuddle my friends, so I'm quite tactile that way. I think it's awfully nice when you're told that 'I love you' and things like that, but I think it's also nice when things are noticed and done, because somebody has just thought about you, I think is quite nice. I've had a really sore shoulder and I've been having physio on it, that's where I was today when you arrived, she had said to put a hot water bottle on the back of my shoulder and lie on it and like the past two nights without me even knowing, when I've been going to get ready for bed, Ali has gone and turned the bed down and arranged my pillows and made the hot water bottle and had it lying there, so the bed was just ready for me to go in and lie on and that kind of thing means a lot, that he's thought about it, thought I'll get the bed ready for her and get her hot water bottle and that's just all ready for her to just go in, so that kind of thing.

Often this appreciation, as in the case of June, is demonstrated through acknowledging the needs, or desires – whether spoken or unspoken – of the women. For some of the women, however, this appreciation is more specifically related to a willingness to engage in an open emotional dialogue.

Grace is one of the most articulate women on the value of open communication within her current relationship, and reflects in depth on how she feels her current partner demonstrates a willingness to engage in the emotional side of their relationship, in a way her ex-husband never did. She is explicit in what this means to her, and how it leads to her valuing her current partnership more because of it, as shown in this extract when talking about her partner's emotional openness:

> So I found it attractive initially and I value it now because I think it gives him insight and an ability to reflect, and a

> willingness to … what I found attractive about it was the
> bravery that goes with that. I think it's very hard to examine
> these things. I think men are particularly bad about it … So I
> value it hugely. I don't have to push. Whereas it wouldn't
> have mattered how much I'd had to push my husband he
> wouldn't have gone to that self-examination.

Grace here describes a particular aspect of her partner making an effort in their relationship – a willingness to reflect and self-examine, which requires bravery. She goes on later in the interview to connect this to other aspects of her relationships including her ability to discuss anything with her current partner, and his really listening to her. Grace draws a comparison with her ex-husband, saying that 'not talking isn't the same as listening' which she felt he used to do when she was talking about important issues. For Grace the connection between trying to engage emotionally on the part of her current partner is part of a wider effort made by him to be actively engaged in their relationship, and her well-being. They are in an equal exchange of sharing and being attentive to that sharing, so that by listening to her and telling her how he is feeling, as well as listening to how she is feeling, they have a very positive relationship. Grace wants to be the person he talks to: she has a desire to be the person he opens up to and shares his thoughts with, and can be vulnerable with. This, I argue, is an aspect of a traditional feminine gendered habitus – the desire to be caring – as this is central to a traditionally feminine identity, which will be discussed in more detail in the discussion chapter. The socialisation of women to be nurturing is a fundamental aspect of being feminine. Grace wants her emotional openness to be reciprocated by her partner. For her this openness is an important aspect of her attraction to her partner as she sees him as being brave for examining himself.

For Grace that is the strength of her current relationship – that she is with a person who is emotionally open with her, and given the lack of emotional closeness in her previous marriage, she values it all the more highly now that she has it. Here we can see how Grace's agency is relational in that she can now co-construct a relationship that facilitates her being happy about who she is in her relationship. She draws a comparison between her current relationship and her marriage when she talks about how she was previously in control of the marriage and didn't necessarily want to be:

> My husband used to say about me that I was intolerant. I
> think that's probably true. That was a feature of being
> controlling. And I don't … it's not the … but it's actually it's
> more that I don't … I mean one of the reasons that I left that
> marriage was I didn't like myself in it and I like myself now.
> But that goes back to what I said earlier which was that he
> didn't like the intolerance but he wanted me to be all the
> other things, you know, to do all the work and to run about
> and manage everything. The line between management and
> control are actually quite … it's quite a short line, quite a
> blurred line as well. So he wanted … on one level he wanted
> me to be in control of all of that and I couldn't find a way of
> doing that without being controlling. And I didn't like being
> controlling. I didn't want the burden of all the work. There
> were other things I wanted to do with my life. And he didn't
> see a problem with the way things were.

She feels appreciated and supported through her emotion work being reciprocated so that she no longer is all of the things she didn't like about herself in that relationship, listed by Grace as "Dictatorial, mean, obsessive, intractable." Grace has moved from a relationship in which her partner could be described as having a traditional masculine emotional habitus, to being in a relationships with a man who does not. This is demonstrated through her partner's ability *and desire* to be emotionally engaged and reflexive, which has opened up a space in which she does not have to be responsible for the relationship as she was in her marriage.

Her agency is facilitated through her relationship – she has the ability to be able to negotiate her identity within this relationship that she didn't have in her previous relationship. This agency then leads to reflection on how her partner has an element of control in how much space she has within their relationship to *not* manage everything. Through no longer having to be in control of a whole relationship, and household, she can 'like herself' again. Grace here highlights the complex ways relational emotion work is demanding on the person doing it – particularly when, as with Grace's ex-husband, this emotion work is not appreciated. Now that Grace does feel appreciated she has the required relational agency to not take charge. The value of feeling appreciated can be seen for Grace to be high, suggesting the complex ways emotional participation is important to women. Being responsible for anything is work – and over time in a long relationship this work can become arduous, even

when it reinforces one's gender identity. What was missing in her marriage was appreciation and reciprocation for her emotion work, which she now has and is much happier as a result.

It is necessary to be clear that while all of the women emphasised the importance of their partner making an effort to emotionally engage with them in their relationship, this does not mean that they feel their partners *are*. Of the fifteen women interviewed there are five who, like Amanda, feel their partner is *trying* to communicate. Amanda feels he struggles to understand her emotions – although he always makes time to genuinely listen to her. This can be seen from the following extract where she is reflecting on her moving into his home recently and her rearranging his house:

> Oh I think I can tell him everything. I think he doesn't do the same. I start more to talk more about things, about problems and I would like him to do it more, instead it seems always that he waits for me to talk about problems. Then when I start that he is quite open and sincere and talking it through, but it seems that I'm the one always to start … It would be nice if he would do it more, because you think he doesn't really want to talk about it, and sometimes you think, well does he care enough or is it me who's caring? It makes you a little doubtful … I mean Caracticus is somebody open, if you want to talk to him he talks to you, he tries to express himself. I can see that he tries to understand me.

Amanda wants her partner to raise issues with her rather than this being her role, echoing the voices of women in showing how it is almost always women who are responsible for raising issues within couple relationships and doing the relational emotion work in the process. Amanda here wants her partner (Caracticus, who will appear in the next chapter) to raise issues rather than this being her job. This would mean to her that he too wants to talk about things within their relationship, reassuring her that he cares about their relationship.

The connection between making an effort and feeling appreciated is clear: Amanda still believes Caracticus tries to emotionally participate in other ways such as being open and talking about things once she has raised them. Amanda in this interview was very happy in her relationship, despite these doubts about his interest in raising issues, highlighting again her prioritising of his making an effort. She too reflects on

how Caracticus compares to her previous fiancé who didn't talk to her about anything sensitive and got confrontational with her when she tried to start conversations about how she was feeling, or issues within their relationship. Amanda's expectations of her partner making an effort were quite low, so to her the fact that Caracticus was *trying* to connect with her is enough to be happy in this relationship. This reinforces the argument being made here, as well as in the body of previous research (Kawamura et al, 2010; Thompson, 1991; Minnotte et al, 2007), that feeling recognised and listened to are central to being happy in a relationship, despite this being emotionally unequal. This emotional inequality can be seen here with Amanda whereby she is responsible for the emotional aspects of her relationship and performing the relational emotional work, but is still happy in her relationship. As has been discussed in this section, feeling appreciated is contingent upon feeling that one's partner is making an effort to listen and engage emotionally. There are myriad factors which can impact upon perceived levels of this within couple relationships, both in terms of what is considered to be part of making an effort, as highlighted by Salome, and in terms of whether a partner is actually participating, as highlighted by Grace and Amanda. In this way emotionally unequal relationships are still considered to be happy relationships, demonstrating the key importance of men making an effort within the emotional elements of their couple relationships. When considering these findings within the context of the body of previous research on the importance of appreciation to perceptions of fairness (Kawamura et al, 2010; Thompson, 1991; Hawkins et al, 1995), they become part of the story being constructed here. I am contributing to this body of quantitative research by exploring in depth the ways appreciation is understood by both women and men, and in the process highlighting the importance of not just having emotional participation, but feeling like a partner is making an effort to emotionally participate. The key element of feeling appreciated then is feeling listened to, although as demonstrated by Salome, this can be through unexpected means.

## 4.7 – Emotional Skills lead to Emotional Capital (when appreciated)

So far this chapter has argued that all of the women interviewed in the research have the emotional skills required to form a traditional feminine emotional habitus. Emotional capital, as outlined in the literature review, is defined as "emotionally valued assets and skills, love and affection, expenditure of time, attention, care and concern" (Allatt, 1993, p.143), and is an extension of Bourdieu's concept of capital. In this thesis I use this concept to articulate the specific, contextual type of power that can be gained through performing relational emotion work – when it is appreciated. In doing so I am moving away from an understanding of emotional capital as related to other forms of capital as it does not retain value outside of a relationship context. I am not arguing that in the context of couple relationships emotional capital will lead to economic capital, as some research does. Rather I am suggesting that when relational emotion work is appreciated, the skills being used are valued – leading to a value of the work. Emotional capital is gained in return for this work as a form of payment which is central to feeling appreciated.

Feeling appreciated is contingent on a recognition of the effort being made to do the relational emotional work, and this recognition takes the form of emotional participation, or an effort being made by the less skilled partner to emotionally engage in their relationship. An example of someone who obtains emotional capital within her relationships is Betty, who is one of six women who has been *happily* married for over 20 years. When describing the way her relationship works she says the following:

> I will be aware of body language, the way people speak, so I will be much more aware of that than Brian and he knows that. So he will always say, 'what do you think, you're much better at dealing with that' and I will maybe go in and have chats with folk and see. But he is always the first person I phone or first person I talk to … He's much more practical, you see he would sort of say, he would ask difficult questions of me and I need to take a step back, and where I might react to something much more emotionally, he'll make me think 'well maybe not, maybe I've just overreacted' and so he would be first port of call, even when I'm annoyed with him.

> So yes, I think again it's like a complement, we are
> complementary to each other, because he will see a bigger
> picture that maybe I can't see.

Betty describes here how she is more, in her words, 'emotionally intelligent' than her husband, but that this resource is used by her husband at times too while she uses his ability to be more removed or 'practical' about things. This refers to the popular discourse around possessing emotional intelligence and using this to understand her own behaviour and relationship dynamics. In this way she presents them as working together as a team, leading to a strong sense of closeness and a high level of emotional participation. This description of how dynamics work within relationships was common among female interviewees. Women who express a high level of emotional participation in their relationships were, in general, very articulate about the ways their relationships worked, often describing, like Betty, the ways in which they complemented their partner. This split of roles with one member of a couple being more practical, and one more emotional, was found in all interviews, and was largely gendered, so that in most cases it was women who reported being more emotionally oriented or skilled, and men generally being more removed. However, this was not the case in all interviews, as seen from looking at Marlene earlier in this chapter who uses her husband as an 'emotional reference point'.

Susie feels she has emotional participation in her relationship, but her partner struggles to communicate his negative emotions to her. Susie could be described as straddling the boundary between having a high or low level of emotional participation. She feels that compared to previous relationships she currently has a high level but also feels her current partner struggles to open up to her about negative emotions. This is made clear when she says whether she has emotional participation in her relationship:

> I'm much easier to say how I'm feeling and I'm much more
> comfortable with saying how I'm feeling, whereas he does
> find it a lot more difficult to say how he's feeling and that's
> been something that's been with us from the very beginning
> and he is getting better at sort of saying how he is feeling and
> I don't know if it's a bad thing or just him … I mean I think
> with my second relationship we probably talked quite a lot,
> but not with any other relationship. I think this one is the only

> one I have ever talked about my future or my innermost
> feelings with, because I have felt more comfortable and, you
> know when it's right and when you can talk about that and
> you know when your relationship is stable enough to do those
> things. So yes this relationship is very different.

Here the boundary between when emotional participation is present or not is blurred: Susie feels she can share her innermost thoughts, but at the same time she struggles to get her partner to open up about his feelings, which later in the interview she says leads to her making quite a lot of effort on her part. She does go on to say that her partner is emotionally supportive and if she gets upset over little things he knows when to cheer her up, and when to let her be. Susie therefore feels he does participate emotionally in this relationship, in the ways he can, and that he cares about her, which she values above everything else. However, Susie also feels quite responsible in facilitating her partner talking about how he is feeling. She talks about how it's her role to probe her partner when he is clearly down about something, being careful to choose the right moment, in order to make it easier for him to say how he is feeling. Susie sees this as part of her role as his partner, and best friend, stating that she would do this with any best friend, reinforcing the suggestion, also made in previous research (Minnotte et al, 2007) that women see relational emotion work, or providing emotional support as an intrinsic aspect of doing gender. What can also be noticed from Susie's interview extract is the way she characterises their emotional participation. For Susie, there is an emphasis on talking about her innermost feelings and her relationship needing to feel stable to do that. This echoes the point made by participant 16, that there is a level of knowledge required in emotional participation. She has needed to feel like her relationship was stable before she could be completely open. This knowledge about oneself and a partner is also present when she says she talks about choosing the right moment to ask her partner about his emotions later in her interview, demonstrating that she does the relational emotion work in her relationship, and very much sees this as a central part of her role in a couple relationship.

The gendered nature of who is doing relational emotion work changes the value of emotional capital. This is based on the assertion that women have less power than

men in society (Connell, 1987). Through exercising their relational agency women gain emotional capital through being valued for raising issues, discussing feelings and encouraging self-reflection. All of these actions are aspects of relationship communication previous research describes as problematic and emblematic of an unequal balance of power (Duncombe and Marsden, 1993, 1995, 1998; Benjamin, 1998; Komter, 1989). When women are valued for doing relational emotion work they are encouraged to say how they feel and made to feel this is important through being listened to. This is the opposite of being silenced (Benjamin, 1998) or feeling their partners are emotionally absent (Duncombe and Marsden, 1993, 1995; Mansfield and Collard, 1988). But this agency is relational as it is only possible through the goodwill of their partners. Should women do relational work and it is not appreciated, they would not gain emotional capital. Therefore it is men who have the power to facilitate women gaining emotional capital, which is itself closely tied to relational agency.

When looking at the stories for the group of women who describe their partners as not participating emotionally in their relationships, all of these women stress how much they crave to have emotional closeness, frequently describing this as being able to communicate openly with their partner. For all of these women it is the breaking down of, or inability ever to establish, effective communication, which has led to their relationships being unhappy. One of the women most explicit on this point is Christine who talks about her current situation whereby she is very unhappy in her marriage, but still loves her husband and finds her day-to-day life depressing and stressful. Christine describes herself as being very unhappy in her relationship at present; the 'whirlwind, lustful, romantic person' having gone, and leaving in his place a grumpy old man. She no longer feels a connection with him in an emotional sense, and relates this to a combination of factors: him not listening to her, him not taking an interest in her, and his lack of making an effort in repairing their relationship. This is clear from the following interview extract:

> I think, well I have talked about this business of not listening.
> There's a dismissiveness about him at times and I don't
> understand. So I think, but we both kind of walled ourselves

> to some extent … I don't think he understands how to change
> things for the better, despite me I think giving easy hints and
> clues, like it's simple, it's not rocket science, Paul, could you
> please just try a little harder to be interested in my day. He
> very much loves me, but to my mind he doesn't demonstrate
> it, and I say this to him all the time. Why don't you tell me
> how you're feeling? He doesn't express his emotions.

This expression used by Christine of them having 'walled' themselves in was used by several participants, male and female, to describe their emotional state. This was described as a defensive mechanism to protect emotions from being further hurt by a partner. Christine elaborates on this by explaining she feels rejected and disrespected by her husband when he doesn't listen to her, and wants him to open up to her about how he is feeling so she can understand him again. She described in detail how her partner won't talk about how he is feeling with her, despite her asking him, saying that he doesn't want to talk about it. This frustrates Christine, as she feels the only way they can resolve their issues is through discussing what is upsetting them individually, and she cannot have that dialogue on her own. Christine shows here that despite her unhappiness in this relationship, she still wants to do the relational emotion work she sees as necessary in this relationship. Christine is one of the three of the fifteen women interviewed who seems similar to the women described in the research by Duncombe and Marsden (1993, 1995), in which the emotional experiences described by the women are very similar with women feeling lonely, exasperated and very unhappy about the division of labour in their household – a point which will be returned to in Chapter 6.

The lack of appreciation Christine feels for the relational emotion work she is doing is clear to see: instead of developing relational agency she is exasperated and frustrated. She cannot gain emotional capital in this dynamic as her partner is not giving this to her. The fact that her partner neither tells her how he is feeling, nor has a dialogue with her, leaves her without options. She cannot 'fix' the relationship without his participation and, much like participant 16's friend, she is left feeling like her partner doesn't care about their relationship.

## 4.8 Conclusions

Through looking at the accounts of the women who took part in this research it is possible to claim that there is evidence of these women having agency within their relationships, demonstrated through them feeling confident in raising issues within their relationships. While there are similarities in the accounts presented here of women who want and highly value emotional closeness with their partners, there is also a point of departure as many of the women – well over half – talk about how they have this. I argue that it is the presence of agency within the accounts of these women that is the central change that has happened over the last twenty years, partly due to progression in gender ideology to more egalitarian views, especially amongst women (Barnett and Rivers, 2002), but also through the increased value placed on being emotional, so that more men are *trying* to be emotionally open. The women presented here value this trying and attribute it to feeling appreciated, so that when there is a lack of effort being made by partners women feel unloved, as discussed by Christine. How this goes on to impact on perceptions of fairness in the division of labour will be considered in Chapter 6.

What can be seen from this chapter is that despite an increase in agency, women are still mostly demonstrating evidence of traditionally feminine emotional habitus, characterised as emotionally skilled and caring. This habitus compels women to be emotionally responsible for their relationships and perform relational emotion work which, if appreciated, gives them emotional capital in their relationships. The extent to which this emotional capital can be seen to be resisting or reproducing gendered power will be further discussed in Chapters 6 and 7. This supports my claim that when one person is responsible for the majority of the relational emotion work it is their partner who has the ability to allocate, or not, emotional capital. When it is women doing the relational emotion work this emotional capital reinforces the traditional feminine emotional habitus, serving to validate performances of femininity. I believe emotional capital for women then serves to strengthen traditional feminine emotional habitus (plural) and reinforce the 'hypnotic power' these have. Therefore women doing relational emotional work is a demonstration of

symbolic violence as compelling and rewarding, but actually serving the needs of men as much as themselves. A discussion of how this relates to gendered power will be suggested in the discussion/conclusion Chapter 7. But it is possible to claim that the connection between feeling listened to, taking responsibility for relationships and doing relational emotion work are all tied together in the concept of emotional participation. Women want emotional participation and are prepared to do the work to achieve this, but ultimately whether they get it depends on their partner – most of whom are men. What has been largely missing from previous research in this area is an exploration of perceptions and experiences of emotional participation for men, which this thesis will now move on to address.

# Chapter 5 – Male Accounts of Emotional Participation in Couple Relationships

This chapter will look at the ways in which men experience their emotions within couple relationships and will demonstrate that a traditional masculine emotional habitus is greatly different to the picture of traditional female emotional habitus presented in the last chapter. The constraining effect of traditional (hegemonic) ideals of male emotionality constrain and frame male emotionality, leading to men being less emotionally skilled than women. At the same time the pressure on men, from the cultural discourse around it being 'good to talk' (Brownlie, 2014), leads to men wanting to be more emotionally engaged in their intimate relationships. This thesis describes these contrasting ideas as the 'conflicting ideals of masculine emotion'. The discussion of a traditional masculine emotional habitus will suggest the value of being emotional, and emotionally skilled, has changed for men since research conducted in the 1980s and early 1990s (Duncombe and Marsden, 1993, 1995, 1997; Mansfield and Collard, 1988). I attribute this change to the combined effect of shifts in gender ideology and the influence of the therapeutic discourse (Brownlie, 2014). The increase in the influence of the therapeutic discourse around the importance of emotional openness has led to women being validated in their desire for emotional closeness, as seen in the previous chapter, so that they can accrue emotional capital by doing relational emotion work. This chapter will argue that men are generally less emotionally skilled than women, which facilitates a sense of vulnerability in relation to their emotional experiences, which for some men extends to them being unable to articulate which emotions they are experiencing. Therefore the majority of the emotion work (most) men are doing is on themselves, or internal emotion work as described by Craib (1995), rather than relational. The extent to which the men in this research can be described as having been impacted by the therapeutic discourse will be discussed, including how men are constrained by their traditional masculine emotional habitus, while also largely trying to be more emotionally engaged in their couple relationships – with varying degrees of success. This chapter will present a picture of male emotionality that is more complex and

detailed than previous research in this area (Duncombe and Marsden, 1993, 1995; Seidler, 1997; Hochschild,1990).

## 5.1 Men are Lacking in Emotional Skills and Confidence

From looking at the results to the survey statements it is possible to make assertions on what this means for the men in this research in exactly the same way as in the last chapter. As outlined before, these eight statements have results that indicate gender differences are present. The response options were 1= Strongly Agree, 2= Agree, 4= Disagree, 5= Strongly Disagree.

| Statement Wording | N - Male | N - Total |
|---|---|---|
| Worrying about splitting up from my partner sometimes stops me saying negative things about them or our relationship | 475 | 1009 |
| I try my best to avoid conflict in my sexual relationship | 453 | 935 |
| I talk to my partner about things that are annoying me with my relationship | 473 | 1007 |
| I often get angry with my partner | 463 | 978 |
| I feel guilty if I upset my partner | 483 | 995 |
| I start the majority of arguments in my relationship | 369 | 794 |
| I tend to give in to my partner's emotional needs | 440 | 922 |
| I find it easy to disagree with my partner's view or opinion | 493 | 942 |

Table 5 – Survey Statements with Difference in Means - Men

These clustered bar charts give the means of the different statements by gender. The error bars in the graphs are standard errors from the sample itself. These differences in the mean indicate substantive and important differences by gender.
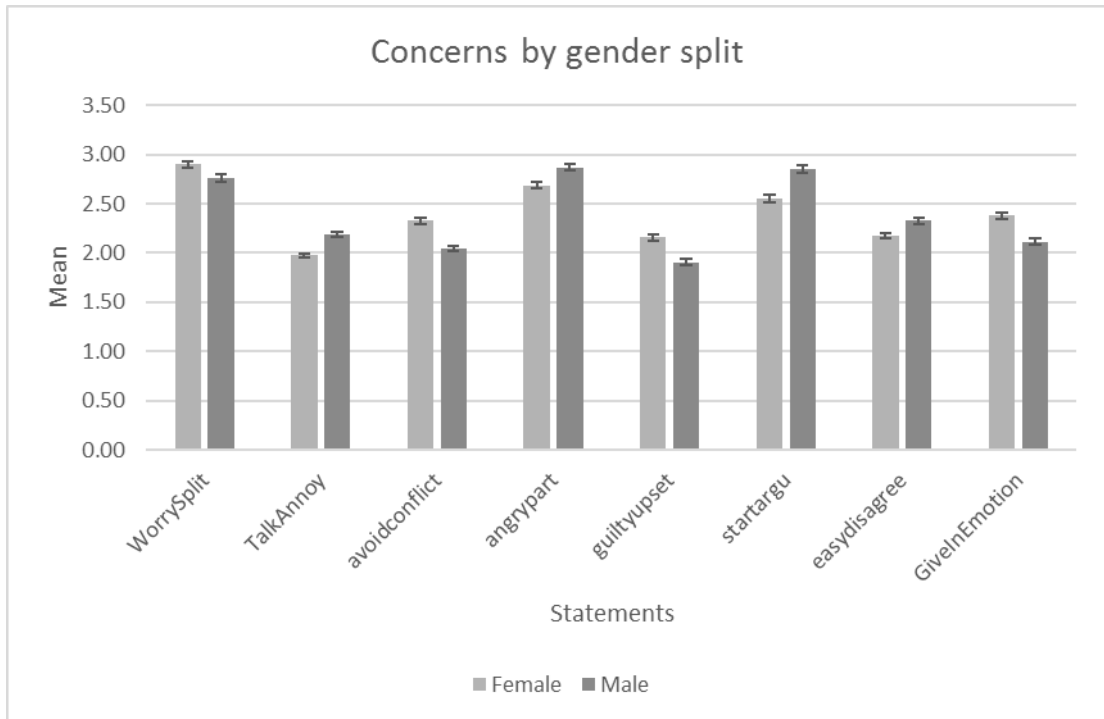
Chart 3 – Concerns by Gender Split                    Source: Online Survey

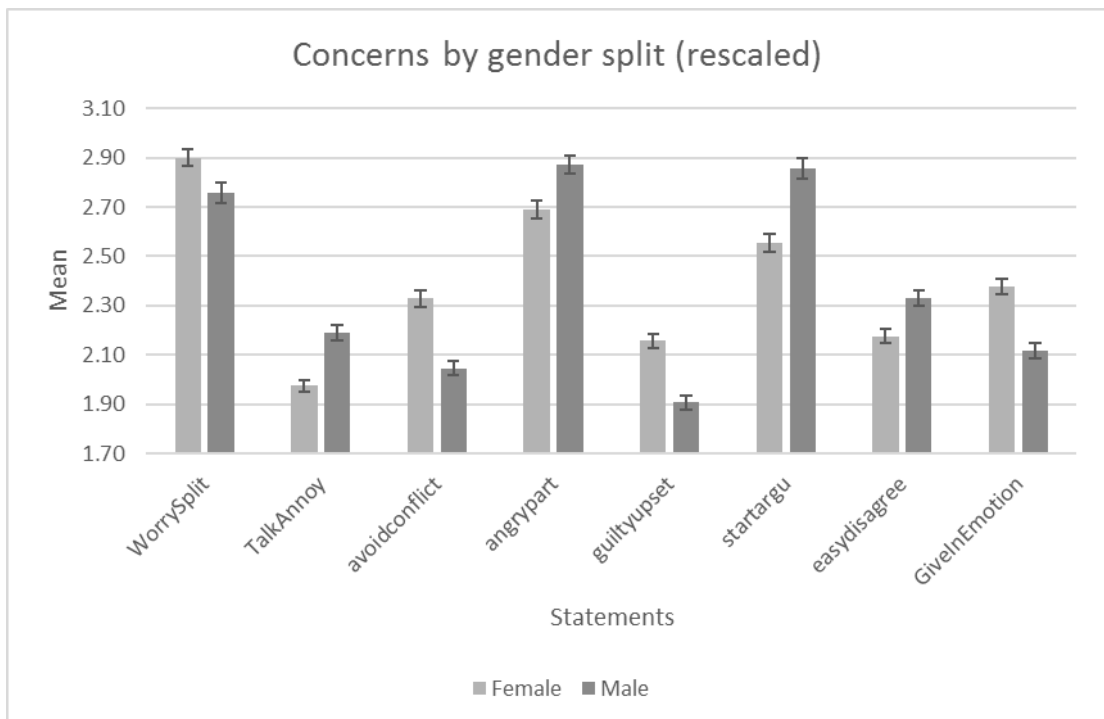The next chart is rescaled to see the differences more clearly.



Chart 4 – Concerns by Gender Split (rescaled)            Source: Online Survey

As can be seen from Chart 2, in which the higher answers relate to 'strongly disagree' or 'disagree' responses, men were more likely to *disagree* to the following statements:

- 'I talk to my partner about things that are annoying me with my relationship'
- 'I often get angry with my partner'
- 'I start the majority of arguments in my relationship'
- 'I find it easy to disagree with my partner's view or opinion'

With exactly the mirror image of women, as expected as this is based on a direct comparison by gender, men were more likely to *agree* to the following statements:

- 'Worrying about splitting up from my partner sometimes stops me saying negative things about them or our relationship'
- 'I try my best to avoid conflict in my sexual relationship'
- 'I feel guilty if I upset my partner'
- 'I tend to give in to my partner's emotional needs'

The results from these statements paint a picture of men who are less emotionally skilled and confident than women. They are more likely to worry about saying negative things, feel guilty about upsetting their partners or tend to give in to their partner's emotional needs. While these results cannot be tested for statistical significance, they do support the qualitative findings presented in the rest of this chapter in suggesting that men are less emotionally equipped within couple relationships, however one exception to this is Jack.

Jack, who was happily married at the time of interview, is one of two men within the sample of this research who actively pursues opportunities with his partner to talk about their emotions, often despite her resistance, as can be seen from the following interview extract when asked about whether he finds emotional participation easy:

> I think it comes fairly easy, I'm probably more the one that keeps on about it ... I've probably been more of a bit of a

> pain in terms of, we've got to keep this going, whereas Julie, I think, is a bit more relaxed and chilled out than me ... It's more than that; it's intimacy. I don't know why I'm like that, and I am, I'm a bit of a pain about it because I can go on about it and say, "No, we've got to keep this going." I think, actually, it's been a good thing because my slightly high maintenance side has kept that ... She's, kind of, grown since she's been with me. She's realised that she can be quite distant, and I think, before she was in a long-term relationship with me, she'd never really realised. I'm very conscious of the fact that I'm quite high maintenance, but I think of it as being emotionally intelligent.

Jack relates this emotional intelligence to him being feminine as can be seen from this extract from his telephone interview:

> Jack: I am probably … it's funny, my wife and I think it's quite interesting that probably I have more of the personality traits that you might usually ascribe to a woman! And my wife is probably more like the man, in that she just kind of lets things get on and kind of … if there's a problem she might not be the one that actually wants to discuss it, whereas I will.

> Fiona: That's really interesting. Because yeah, from everybody I've spoken to so far, it's normally the other way round.

> Jack: Well yes, yeah. And we're quite aware of this. And I think that's probably just my personality, well and it's hers. She's very kind of … she's very laid back to the point that I want to talk about things sometimes and she just wouldn't … she'll just let it go. So yeah, it's almost like the opposite sometimes. And that's not just talking about arguments, so that's just talking about worries or anything like that. I think probably my wife would let us leave things, because that's just the person she is. And she would just, but maybe not, but she's probably more low maintenance and I'm more high maintenance, probably put it that way. I can … I want things sorted and dealt with and so we can move on.

This direct assertion of his femininity draws attention to the ways in which Jack is aware of gender ideologies prescribing how emotions should be expressed by men as essentially binary – being either an 'emotional woman' or 'unemotional man'. For Jack his emotional skills are more easily accommodated within his self-perception, arguably because he has the ability to alter his perception of how he performs masculinity to incorporate his 'emotional intelligence', as he calls it, because of his

success in other areas of performing hegemonic masculinity such as in having a wife and children. In this way Jack can accomplish a successful performance of masculinity overall despite being 'feminine' in his emotional communication.

Jack can be described as at the emotionally skilled end of the spectrum discussed in the last chapter, and while he describes his wife as being less emotional – or 'quite distant' as he puts it – it is impossible to know whether she is emotionally skilled but does not do the relational emotion work. From this interview extract it is possible to suggest that Jack is receiving emotional capital from doing the relational emotion work in his relationship as his partner appears to appreciate his doing this. So he must therefore be receiving emotional capital for this work, but does this emotional capital have the same value for Jack (as a man) as it does for the women in the last chapter? I don't think it can due to the different qualities that are valued as 'masculine'. As a man Jack already has more power at a global level than his wife, as outlined in Chapter 2, and given that his gendered emotional habitus is not reinforced by his gaining emotional capital, it does not have the same value to him. Instead Jack can be described (along with Marlene) as having an alternative gendered emotional habitus as he lacks a sense of vulnerability which all the other men (with one exception – Michael) described as part of their emotional participation in couple relationships.

Jack can be seen to be different to almost all of the other men in this research in having an alternative emotional gendered emotional habitus, demonstrated through him having no difficulties expressing his emotions with his partner, and his seeking a sense of comfort and closeness from her through being able to talk to her about how he is feeling. Whether this is due solely to his broader concept of masculinity was not explored in the interview, but would provide an interesting site of further study. What is clear however is that he has responsibility for the relational emotion work within his couple relationship, similar to almost all of the women in this research, and this doesn't threaten his performance of masculinity. I would argue that Jack is very much transgressing the boundary of traditional masculinity by easily accommodating what he refers to as 'being feminine'. Jack here reminds me of

Marlene, who is similar to Jack in that they both have alternative gendered emotional habitus. This is testament, once again, to the plural nature of gendered emotion and the need to recognise the description of men as unemotional and women as emotional as being overly simplistic. It also confirms the need to consider the space in between the boundaries of traditional masculinity and femininity – the gender neutral space which Jack and Marlene occupy in terms of emotional habitus.

## 5.2 – Feeling Vulnerable

Central to the emotional skill set outlined in the last chapter, as necessary to participate emotionally within couple relationships is the ability to express emotions. Underlying almost all of the male accounts in this research is the presence of vulnerability in relation to experiences of emotions. Seidler refers to his personal experiences of this when he says:

> Acknowledging that we have emotional needs is to admit to a vulnerability that can be scary. This is why it is often so hard for men to allow themselves to be looked after in heterosexual relationships. We do not want to risk our control, and this is what we do when we make ourselves vulnerable. (1997, p.176)

Men's vulnerability looms large in their own sense of how they emotionally participate within their couple relationships. What becomes clear is that a fear of emotional vulnerability is pervasive across different aspects of couple relationships, experienced differently between men. Chaser has a traditional masculine emotional habitus in that he has a sense of vulnerability which constrains his ability to be emotionally open. Yet despite this he is comfortable in expressing his emotions within his couple relationships, as discussed in the following extract:

> Chaser: I'm very much, maybe to the point of over stating, Laura said I was very expressive emotionally and others have said that too, once I open that door I'm very much … Even expressing myself emotionally is to show you if I'm into you and I want to be with you. I'm very expressive. Surprisingly sometimes, I suppose, the other side of this coin, it has come as a surprise to people that I can be like that, but sometimes it comes as a surprise to me if they don't spot it, if you know what I mean, if they don't see it … but I think the emotional

> intensity of me is only when I kind of know you're sexually
> open with me, if you know what I mean. I could be quite
> easily hurt if that somehow is used against me.
>
> Fiona: If what is used against you?
>
> Chaser: The fact that I'm emotionally open.

Chaser articulates a central aspect of the exchange that is taking place within emotional intimacy in heterosexual relationships. He is prepared to be emotionally open but aware that it can be used against him as this is predicated on a sexual attraction. He will be emotionally intense if he is 'into' someone. The connection between sexual attraction and emotion is not something that has been explored in this thesis as it was not often discussed in interviews. Chaser's comment here echoes that of Grace in the last chapter, who said she found her partner's emotional openness attractive due to the bravery he demonstrated in doing self-examination. Here too Chaser states the connection between attraction and emotional openness. The way this element of attraction is understood in couple relationships would be an interesting area for future research. Here I am focusing on the way Chaser understands his emotional openness, which he says has led to him being single, as seen from the next interview extract:

> On reflection, I can see that there was this thing about me that
> was probably quite revealing in terms of my vulnerability. I
> like to think a lot of good things about me, in fact I think I'm
> the bees knees, but that's a contradiction though because
> other times I don't have that and I have this feeling of self-
> worth most when I'm not in a relationship, but the
> contradiction is that as soon as I enter into a relationship, and
> I've spoken to other men about this and we've shared this,
> aye there's a need to be in a relationship but when you're in it
> there is an anxiety there that wasn't there before.

Chaser describes himself as emotionally open on one hand, yet on the other he feels vulnerable when he is in a relationship, and his emotional openness is exposed.

The connection between emotional openness and vulnerability is made clear here by Chaser, in his concern that his openness could be used against him. He went on in this interview to talk about how an ex-partner had done this by 'blowing hot and

cold' with him, so that he thought he could connect to them on a deeper level than their previous partners, but ended up hurt and anxious after this didn't happen. Chaser therefore protects himself from feeling vulnerable by not being in a relationship, thus avoiding emotional exposure altogether. This exposure would leave him open to being rejected or his emotional openness not being reciprocated. Chaser discussed two ex-partners who had been unpredictable and made him feel unloved at times. Chaser seems to be acknowledging a desire to have emotional closeness, but the risk of being hurt leads to him feeling vulnerable, so he chooses to be single. This could be interpreted as an extreme strategy, but for Chaser, who is very happy as a single man, it gives him the freedom to avoid being emotionally hurt. But there is a clash between his identity as an emotional man and his continued sense of vulnerability, and I argue that it is Chaser's traditional masculine emotional habitus that leads to his sense of vulnerability. This sense of weakness is directly against the central tenets of being manly – which are to be strong and in control. His habitus is reinforcing a sense of discomfort at being emotionally open and this manifests in a feeling of vulnerability. Vulnerability here then is the sanction for Chaser going against his traditional masculine emotional habitus and being emotionally expressive. He is caught within the clash of masculine ideals of emotion, through wanting to be emotionally open with someone to whom he is sexually attracted, but experiencing an anxiety when he is in a relationship, concerned about the possibility that his openness might not be reciprocated and he will be hurt. He is therefore performing internal emotion work on himself in that he is constraining his desire to have companionship, something he says in his interview he misses, in order to protect his vulnerable, emotionally open, self.

The personal account of masculinity provided by Seidler (1997, p.172) reflects the sentiment expressed by Chaser of how relationships can lead to negative emotions very clearly when he says:

> We [men] often learn to hide our vulnerability because we
> interpret this as a sign of weakness that gives others grounds
> to reject us. So it is that we harden up. We close our hearts
> for we no longer want to feel vulnerable. It is a risk that we

> cannot take… Often we want relationships because we do not
> want to feel isolated and lonely, but at the same time it is too
> scary to face what might be involved in giving and receiving
> love and support … Often as men we withdraw into
> ourselves. Sometimes we feel that we can only be ourselves
> and exist as individuals in our own right if we do not get
> sucked into a relationship.

The point made by Bourdieu (2001) that the trap of male privilege has negative impacts on men as well as women can arguably be seen to apply to Chaser. He wants to be in a happy relationship, but it is too precarious and threatening to his sense of well-being to be vulnerable with a partner. This demonstrates one of the ways the clash of masculine ideals of emotion impacts on men. For Chaser the therapeutic discourse was not referred to, as in he did not talk about wanting to be more emotionally expressive – he already sees himself as having this skill. But he chooses not to use this skill – an option that is available to him as emotional openness is not a key part of his traditional masculine emotional habitus, in contrast to a traditional feminine emotional habitus. Chaser can choose to be single and avoid feeling vulnerable in a way that does not threaten his performance of masculinity.

## 5.3 – Knowing What You're Feeling

Within the groups of men interviewed for this research, some were articulate about their emotional experiences and embodiment, showing little difficulty in knowing how they are feeling, and being able to label these feelings. However, five did not find this process of identifying and labelling emotions easy, and this chapter now explores the difficulties some men experience in knowing how to categorise their feelings. Seidler (1991, p.37) presented this idea and relates it to socialising processes which deter men from expressing emotions:

> We were brought up as men to kill our feelings – at an early
> age, so that we could survive as men. Often this means that as
> men we do not know what we feel. We do not have the words
> to express what is happening to us, nor a sense of how our
> emotional and personal lives have been disorganised. We do
> not want to face the pain and hurt that has accumulated.

Seidler characterises what I describe as a traditional masculine emotional habitus, however this does not capture the nuanced and complex ways men experience their emotionality. Only five of the sixteen men interviewed discussed the difficulty in expressing their emotions, although many referred to being taught at an early age to 'kill their feelings'. The fact that eleven of the sixteen men interviewed did not have difficulties expressing their emotions, or didn't discuss this in their interviews, points to the differences between Seidler's (1997) work and my own. The picture of male vulnerability in relation to their emotional experiences was more nuanced. Difficulty in identifying emotions is best articulated by Davie, who is currently in a relationship, but on a break due to difficulties communicating with his partner. Davie discussed his emotional experiences in detail during the interview, taking his time to articulate how he understands his feelings in various scenarios he has encountered with his current partner. He reflected several times that this was the first time he had thought his way through how he experienced his feelings, despite having been trained as a counsellor and having had counselling himself. Davie is therefore interested in his improvement in communicating emotionally, and expressed a desire to be more comfortable with his feelings, especially within the context of his couple relationship. This desire can be related directly to the therapeutic discourse (Brownlie, 2014) supported by his training as a counsellor. In the following interview extract, Davie is reflecting on how he struggles to identify his emotions, particularly in stressful or confrontational situations:

> I think I can express myself, but I think what I do is I almost
> get theorised, so I can describe how I'm feeling in relation to,
> I don't know, like something I have read, but actually what is
> at the root of it, I think I probably often don't know. When I
> was doing the counsellor training the facilitator kind of
> turned on me and sort of said 'this might be really
> uncomfortable for you, but I want you to tell us your
> experience of school', because she knew there has been quite
> a lot of problems in school and she kept saying 'how did that
> make you feel?' I was really upset by it. I just wished she
> would shut up, I felt like squirmy, I just wanted to get out, I
> hated it, really hated it. A lot of it was anger. No I didn't like
> it at all, it made me feel really uncomfortable and I wanted to
> get out ... It was a whole sort of jumble, even in my head now
> I'm thinking was it fear, was it anger, what was it?

Here we can see how Davie struggles to separate different emotions; he can't label them and finds this experience difficult – 'squirmy', 'really uncomfortable', he 'really hated it' – so as he later states in his interview, he avoids experiencing these negative emotions. Instead he theorises how he is feeling and covers up his lack of emotional understanding of his own feelings. Davie could be described as having a traditional masculine emotional habitus. He is, despite his desire to be emotionally open, lacking in the emotional skills required to express how he is feeling.

For Davie emotions are threatening, and directly challenge his performance of masculinity, as can be seen from the following interview extract in which he talks about how he feels close to his partner despite not sharing his emotions with her when talking about a recent incident when he was rattled by attending a job interview that did not go well:

> Fiona: Did you talk about that with Melanie, about how it felt at the job interview?
>
> Davie: Yes, I said I felt a bit nervous but I didn't get into it. I think, I don't know, I think sometimes with things like that this is interesting, a lot of things I don't often go into any great depth. I think a lot of people, I feel that a lot of people is kind of quite capable and strong and reliable, so these sort of things ... so if I said yes, I felt nervous, it would be like you wouldn't really know what to do with that. I almost feel like I have painted myself into a corner. No I did say, because I can talk to my Nan about things. I said to my Nan that I felt nervous, and she is one of these people who does give you advice, but I think because it's your Nan that's allowed.
>
> Fiona: Of course it is allowed, they can do anything they want.
>
> Davie: Do you know I wouldn't say that I avoid talking about it but it would have to be on my terms and a short conversation about it. I felt nervous, oh are you all right now? Yes.
>
> Fiona: That short?
>
> Davie: Yes. A sentence.
>
> Fiona: That's what I was trying to get out of you there when I said is there anybody, are you in a relationship that you can remember in which, say something really bad did happen,

> something terrible happened as a kid, and you are genuinely shaken, would you speak to your Nan about that?
>
> Davie: No.
>
> Fiona: Because you wouldn't want to upset her?
>
> Davie: Yes.
>
> Fiona: Is that what it is about, is it about controlling your emotions?
>
> Davie: That's interesting, I think it is probably about not wanting to put a burden on anyone. I will deal with it myself, you don't have to worry about it, it is fine.
>
> Fiona: So you wouldn't talk to anybody?
>
> Davie: I would probably speak to Melanie about it ... this is all jumbled up, I would speak to Melanie about it. If I was really upset about something that had happened then I would speak to her, but it does have to be on my terms, finished when I want it to finish and not go on and on and on.
>
> Fiona: What is that about, that not going on and on thing?
>
> Davie: I suppose it is a bit being in control, sort of staying in control of it.
>
> Fiona: What is the fear; what would be bad about it going on and on?
>
> Davie: I don't know, I wonder if I would end up feeling exposed or I can't even cope with this or helpless, a bit pathetic, vulnerable, that would be vulnerable if I sort of said too much or it went too deeply that sort of thing would end up feeling quite vulnerable myself.

Through his training in counselling Davie has developed a desire to be more emotionally expressive, as he discusses in this final interview extract when he is talking about his partner being very emotional:

> Davie: She is actually really quite, she will defend the fact that it was okay for her to be emotional. Yes I never thought about that actually, she does defend that and I think probably I quite admire that sort of thing. I probably want to be able to do that too. I suppose that's interesting, I don't think that's something you just start doing, obviously I would have to learn how to do that and I don't think you can learn how to do that just by being around someone who does it, I don't know if it is as simple as that.

> Fiona: Do you say that in a kind of like abstract 'I would like to be more demonstrative', because it sounds like actually you find it really quite difficult?

> Davie: Do you know I need to sort of think would it make me happier if I was more … I was going to say I don't know if it would make me more unhappy, but I suppose it would actually depend on how you actually feel, if there is no connector to it.

> Fiona: Before this conversation is it something that has occurred to you before?

> Davie: I don't know, I think, well I mean I might think I'm not disconnected from these sort of things but I do mindfulness meditation, I don't know if you know it, actually I found that very good for all sort of things but it does sort of acknowledge things. I don't know, I suppose I have this image if we are both like that it would just be like toddlers trying to fly a plane or something, it would be madness, so I don't know, but I suppose on the other hand I'm not saying I'm as happy as I'm ever going to be. It seems like quite a bit sort of it ... it does feel quite abstract in a sense of will be, I suppose, a sort of life changer thing to undertake and how would you do it? I don't know.

In this description he uses the analogy of 'two toddlers flying a plane' to describe how his relationship would function if both he and his partner were emotionally fluent and shared everything they felt. This analogy is telling, as it reveals one of the two underlying reasons for Davie as to why emotions should be controlled: because they are juvenile and childish, reflecting the point made by Seidler (1991), that men are taught from a young age to 'kill their feelings'.

To express feelings is for Davie to be like a young child. This highlights the ways a hierarchy is present within emotional expression, so that emotional control is a sign of strength and emotional expression is a sign of weakness, as suggested in the work of Cohen (1990), Craib (1994) and Bourdieu (2001) presented in Chapter 2. Male emotional control therefore directly relates to gendered power as men are required to be strong, if performing a successful masculinity, while women are emotionally expressive and therefore weak. The way Davie speaks about the 'two toddlers flying a plane' also implies a sense of danger – that no one would be in control, therefore the plane would crash – be that representative of their relationship being the plane, or

himself. Either interpretation highlights how for Davie there is a deep-rooted requirement to not be emotionally expressive, as this is dangerous – connecting once again to the sense of vulnerability and weakness that is pervasive in almost all of the male accounts of emotional experiences. Davie attempts to make himself feel better, in control, safe and avoid feeling 'all that deep, raw stuff' as he puts it, which in turn removes the threat to his traditional masculine emotional habitus. There is the threat of not being manly, which despite his investment in the therapeutic discourse, he finds potentially harmful to his performance of masculinity. Davie can be seen as being in the middle of the clash of ideals of masculine emotion, while finding the prospect intimidating. The clash here impacts on Davie's account of his relationship when he says in the first interview extract 'this is all jumbled up'. He knows his account of how he sees his emotional participation is a contradiction and despite wanting to have a coherent account of his emotional life, he acknowledges that this is not easy. Davie is torn between the values of his traditional masculine emotional habitus and his desire to be more emotionally open. But ultimately it is the 'hypnotic power' of his traditional masculine habitus that 'wins'. Davie reveals why when he discusses the childish nature of being very emotional, perhaps because he isn't confident in the rest of his performance of masculinity, or perhaps because of the strength of the values of his traditional masculine emotional habitus.

The process of defending the self in order to minimise the impact of negative emotions was discussed beautifully by a participant who has undergone extensive self-awareness training for several years, including training to be a counsellor. Once again here we can see the direct influence of the therapeutic discourse in encouraging emotional openness in Felix through his references to counselling. Felix is one of three men who described having done a significant amount of work on themselves to improve their emotional awareness, confirming Lupton's (1998) conclusion that men are increasingly showing a desire to be more emotionally open. However, Felix is a unique case within this research as the only man who has had a dramatic change within his emotionality, talking at length about his journey from being the type of man who struggled with his emotions, to now feeling very competent within this

area. Felix is currently married, but has undergone a significant period of change psychologically and especially emotionally due to his ex-wife insisting he went to counselling. The relationship subsequently broke down and the 'new Felix' met his current partner. Here he reflects on the ways his emotionality has changed since the counselling began:

> I mean for me it's transformed; I'm such a different man from who I was to my poor first wife, who never saw that side of me, well I never saw that side of me … It started with my first wife trying to constantly make contact with me and struggling and trying to read my mind and becoming increasingly frustrated with my pleasant, companionable, but emotionally unavailable self. So she kind of demanded that I go to therapy and I absolutely loved it and thought, oh my God there's this other world, who knew that! I guess it was really difficult for her to kind of meet the new me, because of the temptation to pull back and see the old me … Essentially they are two different people tied together by a strange history. So Felix fifteen years ago was quite semi-detached and divorced from the rest of the world in many ways, emotionally. I'm much more upsettable, because the old me was much more brittle, much more limited in his tools and in the world he lived, so he constantly lived in a defended place, so being more undefended now, yes, has its downsides, but not really. It feels like a 3D world, so, vulnerable, but also immensely much more resourced to cope and kind of not really frame it as vulnerability, because that kind of implies weakness and stuff and actually frame it instead as something like openness or acceptance and it's like, I'm upset, well okay, feel upset. You don't have to do anything with upsetness. Before, I would have taken myself away or if it actually got through into my real self then that would be profoundly upsetting and I would probably ruminate on it over and over again and would be quite rattled by it. Before I had no language, I had no sense of my body holding emotion.

Here Felix describes before and after, reflecting on his journey from living in an 'emotionally defended place', where he was brittle and could be profoundly upset by negative emotions if they pierced his armour. But now he is able to accept the vulnerable feelings which come along with negative emotions, as he says in the extract above, and re-define these as 'upsetness', which is acceptable to experience and does not need to be 'dealt with'.

The description from Felix of the difference he has experienced between his two selves is enlightening for this research. It provides a first-hand account of the process of overcoming deeply socialised, embodied reactions to negative emotions and feelings maintained by traditional masculine emotional habitus (plural). His account also highlights the way that vulnerability is pervasive for men. So that even after becoming emotionally 'transformed', he still has feelings of vulnerability. Felix can be described, along with Jack and Michael (who will be discussed in the next chapter), as having an alternative gendered emotional habitus. He is very emotionally aware and he is emotionally reflexive. He has accommodated his emotionality within his performance of masculinity and therefore transgressed the binary nature of traditional gender ideology in relation to emotion. He has changed his emotional habitus so that it is no longer traditionally masculine, and despite the continued experiences of vulnerability has resolved the conflicting ideals of masculine emotion, having been convinced by the therapeutic discourse (Brownlie, 2014). As such Felix is the only man in this research who has accommodated the values of the therapeutic discourse into his day-to-day life. He demonstrates that it is possible to move from one end of the spectrum of emotional skill to the other, although this has taken a lot of work. Felix has learnt how to identify his own emotions and express these so that he has a very high level of emotional participation in his current relationship, which he values very highly.

## 5.4 – Internal Emotion Work to Control Emotional Expression

Cohen (1990) states that there is a need for men to present a competent, successful self, which is undermined by feelings of misery, fear or worry, leading to these feelings being repressed. In that sense emotional control is a fundamental part of performing masculinity – or at least the control of emotion that could be perceived as related to weakness such as fear, anxiety or sadness. Conversely, other emotions such as happiness are allowable and not threatening to a performance of masculinity (Hearn, 1993).This control is exemplified by three men in this research, who together highlight some of the ways control is conceptualised and exercised. This emotional

control is understood as internal emotion work performed in order to bring emotional experience in line with the appropriate 'feeling rules' (Hochschild, 1983) applicable to men performing a traditional masculinity.

Biffer is very open emotionally, and values his ability to express himself emotionally with his family, saying that this is vital to maintaining his positive mental health. However, there is one emotion he struggles with: anger. Biffer deals with his anger by leaving any situation which enrages him; he prides himself on this ability to control his temper, as can be seen from the following extract, where he is talking about how he communicates with his wife:

> I do think it's important to discuss your emotions, hiding
> your emotions is a crazy thing to do, it's like having a bag of
> explosives, if you don't open it up and get rid of them they're
> going to blow up in your face at some stage … I think I
> annoy her when we fall out, because the first thing I do, I
> walk out the door, I don't get involved in arguments … I
> know I've got a really violent temper, I know it lies there and
> I don't ever go near it because I hate the thing. It does
> happen, I do get angry sometimes, but I tend to just get out
> the house and go up to the hills or somewhere, kick a few
> branches around … I have never ever lifted my hands to her
> … I nearly killed a guy once and I don't ever want that to
> come into my family home. I don't want that person who I
> become, I don't like who he is, so I tend to keep him at a
> great distance and when I get angry I get out, I get out the
> door.

Biffer finds his anger very difficult, he 'hates the thing', describing it as an independent entity, separate to himself in some ways. This is related to painful childhood memories of his father being violent towards his mother, which Biffer fears – he does not want to be like his father who left the family home when he was young. Rather than considering his outbursts of anger as part of his performance of masculinity, for Biffer his anger threatens his self-perception, contradicting the view of Hearn (1993) who stated that anger is one of a few emotions it is acceptable for men to display.

For Biffer anger is unwelcome, and upsetting. However, unlike the repression of emotion described by Cohen (1990), Biffer believes in the importance of expressing emotions, so that he deliberately 'takes it out' on inanimate objects, rather than the cause of his anger which is usually his wife. When listening to the interview recording of Biffer describing this process, there is a real sense of pride in his voice, a sense of achievement or mastery that he can contain this powerful, difficult emotion characterised by his expression of a 'powder keg' denoting the power held within his anger. It is clearly a very intense experience for Biffer and something he feels he needs to control. In this way he is performing internal emotion work, but for the direct benefit of his partner and children. The ability to control his anger gives him a sense of strength which reinforces his self-perception as a good, fair, family man and means that those experiences of anger do not threaten his performance of masculinity. Instead, his pride at never having hurt his family, despite his violent temper, reinforces for Biffer the way he is a 'modern man' in being emotionally expressive, while still retaining control over his more volatile temper and experiences of anger. He can protect his family from himself, and the pain he felt as a child at the hand of his own dad's temper, so that his motive for control is primarily about protection. He seeks to protect those around him who he loves most, who would be most hurt by his violent temper, either physically, or emotionally, and in exerting this control he strengthens his performance of masculinity. Biffer has a traditional masculine emotional habitus, as there is still a sense of vulnerability and a need for control, but he is also emotionally skilled. He is therefore at the middle of the emotionally skilled spectrum, as while he can express his emotion with his partner and family, he still has a sense of vulnerability in relation to his anger and feels the need to control it.

In contrast to Biffer, the second man who does internal emotion work through controlling his emotions is George. George uses control to protect himself rather than to protect others from his negative emotions. George is in his early thirties and is currently single, having only had one romantic partner. This previous relationship devastated George, and combined with a lifetime of battling depression, it has left

him feeling emotionally vulnerable and afraid of 'being hurt again', as can be seen from this interview extract where George is talking about his ex-partner, and the ways he now controls his emotions to avoid the pain of rejection:

> It was just the happiest that I'd ever been; once I'd broke up with her it was like I was staring into the abyss again … I've always been afraid of losing control, because when I was a child I was completely out of control, you know, my health was taking a downturn, I was being operated on … I felt safe with her, I felt comfortable, I felt like she wouldn't hurt me, you know, and then she did, and it's like the one time that I, like, let me guard down, look what happened, so, obviously, I'm scared to let it down again, aren't I? When it ended, it hurt like nothing I've ever known, and I've known plenty of physical pain. I actually, became mentally ill after; I actually did have an emotional breakdown … I don't like looking at the emotions, because I can't cope with it.

George refers throughout the interview to his desire to be in a relationship again, but keeps coming back to this idea of control, and losing control of his emotions, which is scary for him. This is understandable after his experiencing an emotional breakdown following on from the end of his relationship with his ex-partner. For George emotional control is central to his being able to protect himself, and ultimately the fear of losing control is more powerful and influential on his actions than his desire to be in a supportive, loving relationship. He knows he is vulnerable, and fears that vulnerability, so controls his negative emotions by suppressing them and avoiding feeling them.

For George his traditional masculine emotional habitus is compelling as the possibility of being emotionally open is highly risky. He lacks the emotional skills of being aware of – and able to regulate – his emotions. The power George obtains through 'being manly' and unemotional is outweighed by his sense of loneliness, but he doesn't have the necessary skills to be more emotionally reflexive. He is afraid of his intense emotions and the binary of emotional women versus unemotional men has led to George feeling constrained. He 'felt safe' and comfortable with his ex-partner, a result of emotional participation in that relationship, but when emotional participation was removed, at the end of his relationship, he struggled to cope emotionally.

When comparing George with Anna (from Chapter 4) the influence of gender on their accounts becomes clearer. Anna was left feeling suicidal after the breakdown of her relationship and is now in a relationship with a married man in which she does internal emotional work to minimise her emotional expression. The difference between these two is in the sense of vulnerability described by George. Anna went on to minimise her emotional expression and do internal emotion work to achieve her current state of not being as upset over the end of her relationship. But she didn't feel vulnerable as a result of being emotionally exposed and currently craves the emotional participation she feels she deserves from a partner – so much so that it is the lack of this emotional closeness that saddens her more than the breakdown of her previous relationship. Because she is a woman, Anna has been socialised into a traditional *feminine* emotional habitus which is predicated on the importance of being emotional and caring. George has been socialised as a man into a traditional masculine emotional habitus and therefore is *not* required to be emotionally open. The influence of his traditional masculine emotional habitus is leading George to react so strongly to his break-up as he 'shouldn't' feel vulnerable. Conversely it is part of being a woman to be vulnerable – including emotionally vulnerable. This point will be returned to in Chapter 7.

The final example of emotional control is provided by Caracticus, whose control seems to be deeper than Biffer or George, as he controls his embodied experience of emotions including extreme feelings such as grief. Caracticus, who used to be in the armed forces, is in his late thirties and is in a relatively new relationship with Amanda (who was presented in the last chapter). Throughout his interview Caracticus was very engaged and clearly working hard to articulate himself, despite being a very quiet man, as can be seen from the presence of my questions within the following extract. Here Caracticus talks about a time when he deliberately controlled his feelings of grief for a period of months, to wait for an appropriate time to express this while single and serving in the army in Northern Ireland.

> Fiona: What about when you were younger, in your 20s, can you remember were you more emotionally demonstrative then?

> Caracticus: No, I would only show emotions in really private quiet times or with really close friends. I was in the army, in Northern Ireland. So I knew, well I knew one man who was blown up but never expressed anything about that except with my closest friend, a civilian, a few months afterwards.
>
> Fiona: What's the kind of etiquette around emotions then in the forces?
>
> Caracticus: Well I wasn't aware of an etiquette, just felt like I had to keep it under wraps. Well I felt, like I didn't know this guy well enough.
>
> Fiona: To be the one that got upset?
>
> Caracticus: Yes. He wasn't in my unit, he was an officer of the different unit and it came to the bit where I was working, I was in the intelligence section and just moved in and he asked me to show him round and I said, well do you not want to wait for the sergeant, like my superior and he'll show you round? No, no, you can show me round. So I explained to him what we did and then a week later he had been blown up. He told me about his wife and kids and that kind of thing, for an officer just what a great guy … But I held it off for months, it was when I came home on leave, I went camping with my friends, and I told my friend about it.
>
> Fiona: Because I don't know, I don't even know if you know, whether there is something you're deliberately constraining or whether emotions are just not that strong and therefore not something that you need to verbalise?
>
> Caracticus: No it can be very strong like with that instance then. I really sat on the emotions then, I buried them, I felt like a weakness showing things, until I was with a totally secure friend. Yes I was even still nervous about showing my feelings then.
>
> Fiona: What's the fear?
>
> Caracticus: (Pause) I don't know – about strength, strength of character, yes just being seen as being weak.

This interview extract shows how for Caracticus his emotional control was performed to fit in with social norms around the appropriate expression of grief. This example, for me, highlights the depth of emotional control which takes place for some men in experiencing their emotions. The weakness he talks about is directly related to a performance of masculinity; it is relevant that he says 'seen as' weak. It is this perception of how others see us that Burkitt (2014) talks about in terms of emotion. Our expectations of how others will perceive us frames how we 'do' emotion ourselves. I believe it is at this point of imagining the 'other' who will see

Caracticus as weak that he engages with ideals of masculine emotionality and cultural values impact on how emotion is expressed. In this way his impression of these ideals comes from his personal experiences of learning how men 'should' behave in terms of their emotionality and the context of him being in the army appears relevant. It is the perception of the expectations of others in relation to one's emotional displays that makes emotions socially contingent, but also that enables the influence of cultural values through the habitus.

Caracticus was very upset by the death of an officer on his base, but waited a period of months to express this and 'let it out', demonstrating significant strength of will and internal emotion work in repressing the associated negative feelings. The environment where he felt safe enough to express his sadness and shed tears was contingent on there being a 'totally secure friend' as well as there not being anyone else around who would question his right to be upset – to Caracticus this right was related to him not being close enough to the officer who was killed. Even when he was with his friend he was still 'nervous about showing his feelings' in case he was considered to be weak, or have a weak character. This is despite Caracticus stating during the interview that he would like to be more emotionally expressive, but he often can't handle his emotions as they overwhelm him, sounding familiar to Rose who was presented in the last chapter. Having severed the connection between his embodied emotional response to stimuli from his awareness of this experience of his emotions, Caracticus emotionally cut off in many ways, struggling to articulate his feelings, or even know what he was feeling. It is the pervasive influence of perceptions of the reaction of others that leads to the suppressing of embodied emotion through the policing effect of the habitus. In this way Caraticus' traditional masculine emotional habitus constrains his emotional expression and his experience of emotion through his feeling compelled to do internal emotion work or risk being seen as weak. The central importance of being seen as weak is directly related to being vulnerable – i.e. being seen as weak is damaging to a successful performance of masculinity. Feeling vulnerable is the social sanction for risking being seen as weak. The expectations of others judging men as weak leads to a sense of vulnerability which in turn leads to emotional control and internal emotion work.

## 5.5 – Emotion Work to Emotionally Participate

So far this chapter has looked at the ways men in this research have done internal emotion work to manage their experiences of conflicting ideals of masculine emotion. It will now consider the complex ways in which some men are doing this emotion work in order to facilitate emotional participation with their partner. Mitt is currently in a relationship of five years, which started very soon after him losing his wife of over 20 years after a long battle with cancer. Internal emotion work can be seen in this extract from Mitt's interview in which he is discussing why, after five years with his current partner, he still refers to her as his 'friend':

> So I spent quite a lot of time in co-counselling at university, becoming more aware of my emotions than your average Joe, and it's been very useful. I found it useful for me and, as I say, being more aware of my emotions than I would otherwise have been ... So I was looking for female companionship within weeks, months of my wife's death … But we don't know quite what term to use and she doesn't know what to use either, so she refers to me as her gentleman caller. So that's why I hesitate to use words like partner; there is no clear definitions to these words, but that's where the hesitation comes from … I mean living apart means it's possible to have boundaries that you couldn't have if you were living together ... I think it's just the thought of the commitment itself is uncomfortable, I mean getting married, you know, there's a reason when you're talking about 'getting into bed' with somebody, is an opening up, everything is stripped bare and you're making yourself open and vulnerable in a particular kind of way and I think that's what marriage requires for it to work … And I don't think there's any shells or armour or holding back, we are literally in bed, but I think that this unwillingness to take it any further is a kind of armour that I've got …

Here we can see that Mitt considers himself to be more emotionally aware than 'the average Joe', being able to clearly articulate his feelings towards commitment with his current partner. Yet he describes a type of armour which he has put up to keep himself safe, presumably from the experience of being too close – which he intimated later in the interview is too painful as it would potentially lead to his

having to repeat the process of nursing his dying wife for several years. This armour protects him from getting too close or caring too much, and this is a very deliberate strategy on Mitt's part. Mitt goes on to describe how he will never be able to replace the relationship he had with his wife, and he doesn't want to be that vulnerable again in any other relationship. It is dissimilar to George who is too scared of being hurt again to get into a relationship, or from Davie who finds the notion of operating on an emotional level too difficult to entertain. Mitt is emotionally aware, and values the closeness he has with his current 'friend', but he has boundaries for this closeness, highlighting how complex is the nature of wanting to emotionally participate in couple relationships. Within the female interviews there was no sense of this holding back from the women, which suggests the gendered nature of wanting to participate emotionally in couple relationships. While for women this is a straightforward, apparently commonsensical desire to be emotionally close to their partner, for men this is much more complex due to all of the points that have been made in this chapter, and this gendered difference reinforces the gender binary of traditionally gendered emotional habitus (plural).

Mitt goes on in his interview to describe how he does internal emotion work to sustain his relationship while also maintaining the boundaries of his relationship. This is difficult as his partner wants to be 'completely together', which he doesn't want. But equally he doesn't want to upset his 'friend'. Mitt here demonstrates a traditional masculine emotional habitus as he is able to communicate openly about his feelings, but he still discusses a sense of vulnerability associated with being emotionally open in his current relationship. He is at the skilled end of the spectrum but still constrained by a sense of not wanting to be emotionally exposed to the pain of having a partner again and he isn't prepared to consider that. Vulnerability is, once again, perceived by Mitt to be caused by a different circumstance to the other men presented in this chapter. But the pervasive sense of emotional openness making him vulnerable is the same, strengthening the findings from the men in this research that make emotionality tied to a sense of vulnerability. In terms of the clash of ideals of masculine emotion Mitt has been influenced by the therapeutic discourse through his

undergoing a process of therapy at university which has made him more emotionally aware than 'the average Joe'. But at the same time he doesn't want to be emotionally exposed, despite being in a happy five-year relationship. For Mitt the ability to choose not to be completely emotionally available to his partner is available in a way that was not discussed by the women in this research. The way this choice relates to gendered power will be discussed in Chapter 7.

## 5.6 Conclusions

The story for men in relation to emotional participation is less well known or documented than for women. As previously mentioned, Duncombe and Marsden (1995) made no apologies as to the lack of male voices in their research, due to lack of male disclosure during interviewing. What has been shown in this thesis is that for most of the men interviewed in this project (or all but one), emotional experiences lead to a pervasive sense of vulnerability. This vulnerability is experienced as constraining and leads to a high level of control being used through internal emotion work. This vulnerability and control has been mentioned by several masculinity writers (Seidler, 1991; Cohen, 1990; Craib, 1995) (none of whom have conducted empirical research into this area). Most of the men in this research claim to want to be emotionally open, but most of them find this difficult as their emotional experiences make them feel vulnerable, which clashes with their performance of masculinity.

How men 'do' their emotions and how much they are constrained by their traditional masculine emotional habitus depends on many factors. What remains constant for all but two of the men however is a sense of vulnerability. This vulnerability leads to a suppressing of negative emotional experiences as they are uncomfortable and unpleasant and therefore need to be controlled in order to protect others, as in the case of Biffer, or to protect the self as for Davie, Caracticus, George, Chaser and Mitt. This emotional control maps directly onto performances of emotion, as the 'unemotional man' is a central aspect of performing a hegemonic masculinity. There is also evidence of more emotionally open forms of masculinity from men such as

Davie, Biffer, Mitt and Felix who consider themselves to be emotionally open in their relationships. Expectations around how to successfully perform masculinity, and obtain the privilege that comes with this successful performance, are largely framed around the need to control emotion. Emotion in this context is considered to be connected to weakness (as described by Caracticus) and to childishness (as asserted by Davie), both in direct contradiction with the central hegemonic masculine qualities of mastery, control and strength. However, the stories presented in this thesis suggest that this is not the whole picture. It's not that simple. Most of the men in this research *do* feel constrained by their masculinity to not be emotional, but they also described a desire to be emotionally open, or to be more emotionally open than they were at the time of interview, which suggests the impact on intention, if not action, of the therapeutic discourse (Brownlie, 2014).

The prevalence of men performing internal emotion work in relation to their emotionally participating in their relationships is high. Here it is clear to see the constraining effect of hegemonic ideas of masculinity which constrain emotional expression and thus affect the relational practice of emotional participation within couple relationships. Emotional participation is an aspect of their relationships that all of the men in this research valued, or said they valued. The discourse around how men 'should' be more emotional has therefore affected these men, some of whom have made efforts to be more emotional (such as the extreme example of Felix), while some are trying (such as Caracticus) and others seem quite confused by how they might go about this (such as Davie). This chapter demonstrates therefore that the gender differences reported in the work of Duncombe and Marsden (1993, 1995) is still visible, but the men are open to talking about their experiences and there is a genuine desire with almost all participants to improve their emotional awareness and involvement in their own lives, as well as in their couple relationships.

# Chapter 6 – The Nexus Point of Heterosexual Couple Relationships – Understanding Gender at Work

This thesis has explored experiences of emotional participation but is limited in its scope and generalisability due to the small size and self-selected nature of the interview sample. There are also loose ends running throughout this thesis which would benefit from further consideration, such as how emotional capital is exchanged between partners and whether this could potentially have value outside of a couple relationship. Or there could be more theoretical consideration of how relational agency is co-constructed and is itself often gendered within couple relationships. Should I have the opportunity to take this research forward in the future I would like to explore further the ways sexual attraction and emotional communication interact in relationships. I would also like to do more work on the ways gender ideologies come to change among cohorts and the sources of influence in this process of social change.

In this chapter I will seek to combine the accounts of men and women from the last two chapters. As the primary focus of this thesis is how gendered power operates in couple relationships, it is crucial to consider what happens when male and female accounts of emotional participation in couple relationships come together. This chapter will therefore begin by looking at the ways in which women take responsibility for the emotional aspects of couple relationships. I will argue that this can lead to the allocation of emotional capital, but will also consider the responsibility of having that emotional capital in not crushing one's partner. This chapter will also consider what happens when 'emotion work' doesn't work, and will look at how heterosexuality and agency interact with gendered emotional habitus to compound the gender binary of emotional women and unemotional men. The third and final section of this chapter will look at appreciation and the division of labour in order to examine how it is possible for love to exist in unequal relationships.

## 6.1 – Raising Issues as Relational Emotion Work

The main area discussed in the telephone interviews was around the survey statement 'I try my best to avoid conflict in my relationship', which threw up varied results, differentiated by gender. The telephone interviews were used as a way to explore these differences in a qualitative manner, although clearly constrained by the lack of face-to-face contact and time to explore this topic in great depth. A central claim made by most of the women in these interviews was that their partner was 'laid back' and thus women raised issues in their relationship, otherwise they would not be raised or resolved. This is exemplified by participant number 25 when she says of her partner:

> he's quite a lot more laid back than me anyway, sometimes about things that are an issue to me that need a resolution [laughter], but generally sometimes I think he just doesn't even see them as a problem in the first place.

As discussed in Chapter 4 and supported by the survey statement result, women tend to raise 'issues' in their relationships. What is considered to be an issue is not discussed in detail, however it is clear reading the transcripts that 'issues' refer to a wide range of things that are concerning women from the future of their relationships (as with participant 16) to an unequal division of labour (Christine). Jack also raises the issues in his relationship and cites this as to do with maintaining intimacy through insisting they talk and spend time together without being focused on their children. Common across all of these accounts is a picture of one partner who is 'laid back'. In these cases it appears to be part of the role of the partner who raises the issue, and therefore is doing the relational emotion work, to decide what needs to be raised and what does not. However, we can see how the definition of partners as 'laid back' encapsulates the reason why a majority of women do the relational emotion work as many men do not perceive these 'issues' in the first place, and therefore do not see the need for these to be raised. Given relational emotion work requires energy, knowledge and time, it seems that partners who do not do this work have an advantageous position. By not seeing the requirements for this work they do not need to do it. But what has changed is that the 'laid back' partners in this research are described as being willing, for the

most part, to engage in emotional participation through discussing issues. The reasons for this shift will be discussed in Chapter 7, including how this shift interacts with gendered power.

An extra dimension to the nature of 'laid back' partners is the need, perceived by many women, to express their negative emotions as this appears to be a requirement of relationships wherein women must air their grievances in order to offload them rather than bottle them up. This is exemplified by participant number 6 when she says:

> Just our personalities, my husband's very laid back, quite a quiet person, he absolutely hates conflict, now so do I, but he really, if I'm honest, if I'm comfortable in a relationship like I am with him, I like a good blow-out from time to time and then things, you know, I like to get it out my system and then I move on very quickly.

Here we see the expression of the requirement of 'blowing off steam' which was repeated by several women in reference to the need for conflict in their relationship. One of those participants who echoes this sentiment is number 28 when she says, in reference to arguing with her husband:

> You know yourself what the actual issue is, and you know that your partner knows what the actual issue is, you still have emotions and somehow have to get out, and so you have to somehow go through the motion, and so, and I think because we both know that, although we never really talked about it, but to give each other the space to go through the motion.

She credits her partner here with knowing that this process or 'motion' needs to be exercised, and their relationship is better for it as they are able to communicate through expressing their negative emotions without necessarily discussing them. The importance of knowledge about one's partner is apparent here, and a central aspect of emotional participation. Letting off steam is part of communicating, whether this happens through intense conversations (as for Grace), or through having an emotional blow out (as for participant 6).

Emotions are seen to be social and embodied throughout these accounts supporting Burkitt's (2014) definition. However Burkitt says that emotions are not "expressions of something constrained inside a single person" (1997, p40). The blow-out described

by participant 6 can then be seen as a social event through Burkitt's definition of emotion – instigated by her relationship and then manifest in the 'blow-out' itself which is relational as she needs this to be heard in order for it to have meaning. A blow-out with no-one listening would not have the same cathartic power of getting things out of one's system. It is crucial to recognise here the relational nature of this interaction. It is through the co-constructed interaction of discussing 'issues' that couples reconcile their differences. The performance of relational emotion work is led by one individual in the majority of accounts within this research. The interaction of discussing issues is a joint project, however, emotional capital for the person doing the relational emotion work is only accrued when this is appreciated. Emotional capital is not transferrable from within the context of a relationship as it is not socially recognised as having any value outside of that relationship.

Relationship satisfaction could be described as the end point of emotion work; all of the work being put into relationships, and the self, is aimed at having, or feeling like you are working towards, a happy couple relationship. The centrality of emotional participation to women being happy with their relationships was clearly demonstrated throughout this research, in line with previous research from 20 years ago (Mansfield and Collard, 1988; Duncombe and Marsden, 1993, 1995). Listening and being listened to is *central* to descriptions of how relationship satisfaction is achieved. Participant 20 reflects on her previous relationship in order to highlight how she quantifies the difference between that relationship and her current situation:

> 20: I had a previous partner, it was a ten-year relationship, and his form of dealing with conflict was complete shutdown and no dialogue at all so that became incredibly problematic then because I talk things through when I'm thinking them through.

> Fiona: Do you think that perhaps contributed to the breakdown in that relationship?

> 20: Yeah, definitely. I think in the end I kind of had enough. My husband, he's much more masculine than I am and he's much more apolitical than I am and he's much less empathetic and emotional but he's communicative so that helps. Whereas my previous partner just didn't say bugger all basically.

> Fiona: I think it's a bit strained, isn't it, if you feel like you're not being heard and things aren't really being resolved?
>
> 20: Yeah, especially when you start thinking to the resolution part of it. I think you don't feel there's any resolution and the resolutions are only ever contingent and they're only ever temporary. But the actual resolution process and feeling like you're in a partnership with somebody does involve having a dialogue. If you're in a dialogue with someone who doesn't say anything, you've got nowhere to go with that, have you really, you're just talking to yourself.

The importance of having an open dialogue is expressed here, and is all the more precious due to not having had this in her previous relationship.

The relational element is crucial here – if there is no dialogue 'you're just talking to yourself', as participant 20 succinctly puts it. When female participant in my research, and previous research, talk about wanting to feel appreciated and acknowledged, this sense of being listened to, as suggested in Chapter 4, is central. Feeling listened to was largely missing from the accounts of women interviewed 20 years ago, a marked difference to the majority of the women interviewed for this research.

The multiple ways in which open communication improves a relationship were acknowledged in different ways by different women, including participant 13:

> I would say it's probably the first relationship I've been happy and comfortable doing that, because I used to be, 'Okay, I'll just … you win' and I would back down. But I think in this one I'm much more, 'This is my point of view' and we talk about it that way. And sort of come to a conclusion about an issue … I think to be comfortable in your relationship you have to know that you can sit down and talk things through and you're not going to always agree on things. And that's good.

Participant 13 here alludes to how in a previous relationship she 'backed down' when discussing issues, which seems like a shift in agency for her between these relationships as she can now raise issues and feels 'comfortable in her relationship' to maintain her own point of view. The nature of agency being relational is once again demonstrated here through the difference in her ability to communicate between

relationships. So that for participant 13 being able to sit down and talk and know they aren't going to agree is a 'good thing'.

Other women described raising issues in their relationship as being necessary, or else it simply wouldn't get done. However, the way this process is described by participant 17 changed within the telephone interview as she first attempted to characterise the lack of conflict in her relationship as being a mutual 'childishness', but later reveals that in fact it is her partner who effectively ensures she raises issues as he will not. She initially describes the resolution of an issue as follows:

> And we won't sit ... we usually sit on the couch and watch telly and stuff but I'll maybe sit on the other couch, so nothing's actually really said, it's all quite subtle; it's a bit childish, but it's never actually said, 'Oh, there's a problem,' but then eventually maybe after two days or something like that, something will be said and the air gets cleared. Not in an argument kind of sense but just the air will get cleared and then it's all back to normal again … So I know that if I probably tried to clear the air or start an argument I would get nowhere.

However, this joint responsibility for raising issues is presented differently a few minutes later when she admits that although she dislikes conflict, she effectively has no choice but to raise issues within her household as her partner will not:

> I'm living with my partner now, and he doesna really argue.
> And I don't really like to argue either, to be honest with you,
> I'd rather sit down and talk it through … Brendan tends to go
> in a huff a wee bit sometimes and I'll just leave him to go in a
> huff and then after a couple of days, then it'll get brought up
> because I'll be fed up with the atmosphere in the background,
> sort of thing.

So we can see that in fact, it's her partner's reluctance to raise issues within her relationship – rather than her desire to – that means she feels compelled to. If an issue has arisen she sees it as needing to be resolved and from her account this appears to be her job. This difficulty felt by participant 17 of her partner Brendan not speaking to her about issues that are bothering him is a recurring theme in the telephone interview data. As was seen in Chapter 4, women are generally more confident in raising issues and talking about things that are annoying them in their relationship, and they therefore do the relational emotion work of raising issues in their relationships. The process of

raising issues, as can be seen for participant 17, is not necessarily 'easy' for the person doing this work, but it appears to be their responsibility, and this responsibility – with some noted exceptions – is largely gendered. In raising issues within a relationship individuals demonstrate agency in their ability to deal with the issues they want to resolve, albeit this agency is relational.

It can also be argued that while women raise the majority of issues within their couple relationships, many of the heterosexual women in my research highly value their male partner's view on problems they are experiencing, echoing Betty in Chapter 4. The binary of 'emotional women' and 'unemotional men' and their complementarity is supported in these accounts, which also highlight the way different skill sets are valued as well as the emotional skills talked about in this thesis. Support is often provided in a way that is highly gendered with several participants stating that men tend to think issues through internally rather than needing to discuss things with their partner. The gendered nature of the modes of communicating has been researched (Cameron, 2007) and is not the focus of this thesis. But the complementarity of the apparent exchange here of different skills is relevant. One explicit example of this is participant 25 when she says:

> I was offered a new job last week and I asked if I could think about it overnight and discuss it with my husband and, well I wanted to discuss it with my current line manager as well. And so I was kind of going all through this and I kind of wanted to talk it through and everything. And his, and he never said this, but his attitude very much was 'why haven't you made this decision already? It's not that hard a decision.' And it wasn't that hard a decision, but I had to go through a process and make sure that I was making the right decision. And I think I do that out loud and he does that in his head.

This function performed by her husband to effectively act as a sounding board enables her to feel confident in making big decisions. Relational agency can be seen here as participant 25 feels more confident in her decision making due to the support she has received from her husband. This support is also relational emotion work as it is being done on behalf of one's partner, or for the benefit of the relationship itself. What is interesting to note is that this form of (mostly) men doing the relational emotion work

of listening, being a sounding board for their partners, was not discussed by any of the men interviewed, but was mentioned in many of the female interviews. Participant 6 refers to a similar process in which her partner supports her in more explicit language:

> He doesn't get caught up in things very easily, you know, I mean I do, I just, sometimes simple things I can, you know, it can make me very stressed and, you know, and everything, but he won't, he's very sensible [laughing]. So I think he works through things in his head, and puts things very clear, you know, he's very clear on things, and, he's actually a very good source of support for me in terms of if I'm feeling, you know, a bit sort of no confident about something, or, you know, he really can lay it out as it is for me and he can really make me see things very clear, which I tend not to do for myself.

This gendered support was prevalent within this research, reinforcing the 'women do emotional support' and 'men do practical support' binary that directly relates to traditionally gendered emotional habitus. The key factor that is gendered here is the skill set that is being used, how these skills are valued in themselves appears to be central to a sense of reciprocity in these accounts. However there is an emotional element to the practical support being given as this support requires a level of emotional reflexivity in knowing how one's partner is feeling about the issue being discussed. Again it is only through women feeling heard and listened to when they discuss issues with their partner that emotional participation is possible. If a partner does not consider the issue to be important, that support is not provided, confirming the relational nature of the agency being utilised in these interactions.

While it is clear from reading the telephone interview scripts that all of the women feel responsible for their home sphere, including children, house and their couple relationship, this is not the case in the male interviews. Instead what is found is evidence that some men consider home to be a sanctuary for them at the end of the day after work, while for others, especially those with children, the home can be a considerable source of stress. Participant 30 highlights how his traditional home arrangement of him working while his wife looks after their children during the week leads to different priorities, and his are not necessarily focused around their relationship:

> Yeah, she's in the environment, or it might even be if there's, because she often works at weekends, and stuff, there's maybe more pressure when she's not working for us to say 'well let's do this, or plan that, or the other', so something like that she's more likely to raise and be thinking about it whereas I just, I don't think about it, I don't, when I get home it's like 'oh right I'm home at last'.

However, what needs to be clarified is that while the men interviewed did not discuss or imply that they felt responsible for the home sphere, this does not mean that they do not participate in the tasks that are required to keep this ticking over. Participant 27 makes this clear when discussing how he feels after coming home and trying to organise his sons:

> We've got a kid of nine and a kid at two and a bit, so we had a break in between and it's hard … it's not hard, I don't mean that, but it is hard work having kids, you know, and it's … it's, well you don't get any time to yourself really, you know. So it can be … I mean tonight I came in and I was okay but by the time I had finished trying to get my boys sorted and this and that I had got myself a bit wound up, you know. But I just sat and ate my dinner and I'm quite calm again, you know.

The relevance of this participation in the household chores must be taken into account when considering changes seen since the research conducted 20 years ago. Research does show that men do considerably more domestic labour than 20 years ago (Sullivan, 2010). The relationship between housework and the responsibility for the home sphere is not straightforward. This is highlighted in this interview extract, where participant 27 states his wife does the majority of the childcare and housework, while he still sees himself as very much involved in the household tasks. As mentioned in Chapter 2 there is a large body of work looking at changes in the division of labour and men's increased participation in fatherhood (Lewis and Lamb, 2007). However this thesis is concerned more with the way emotional participation is potentially changing.

It is important to consider how men feel about raising issues about their relationships. Here some of the male accounts from telephone interviews are presented. Participant 18 provides insight when discussing his inability to raise issues which were bothering him in his previous relationship:

> Fiona: Did you ever raise issues that annoyed you or did you just not mention them?
>
> 18: I tended to not mention them.
>
> Fiona: And then what happens over the ... do you just forget about it? Or do you just learn to just live with it?
>
> 18: I'd just brush it under the carpet.
>
> Fiona: Does that work, though?
>
> 18: Not really.
>
> Fiona: No. I'm just trying to imagine what would be the end result for that?
>
> 18: She would tend to get more and more annoyed.
>
> Fiona: Yes.
>
> 18: Which is [pause] the other person gets annoyed because she's just not really getting what they need, if you see what I mean? They try and bring up an issue and it's just not really getting it.
>
> Fiona: Yes. That's really interesting. So for you personally, how does that feel, when does the uncomfortableness start? Does it start when things ... just something annoys you, or does it start more at the point where it's actually going to be discussed? Or if things get heated, or ...?
>
> 18: It's more I have trouble actually saying what I'm feeling, if you see what I mean? I have trouble vocalising ... trouble getting my feelings communicated out, so that gets frustrating.

Participant 18 describes a connection here between his not raising issues that annoy him and a frustration that he has trouble vocalising his own feelings, resulting in his ex-partner getting annoyed with him as he avoids raising issues. The way some men lack emotional skills is directly related to their ability to raise issues here, reinforcing my claim that the distance between partners on the spectrum of emotional skills leads to the need for the more skilled partner to do relational emotion work to facilitate open communication. Relational emotion work then is done by a partner who has the necessary skills to do this work, and in the case of participant 18 this is his partner – but this doesn't mean he can automatically return this communication. Having not spoken to participant 18's partner it is impossible to comment but his approach to raising issues could be perceived as him being 'laid back'.

By looking at participant 10 we can see that not being emotionally fluent is confirmed as being problematic for men, when emotional skills are lacking they suffer in relationships. In this case participant 10 lacks the emotional skill of being able to communicate his feeling, in a similar account to Rose (see Chapter 4):

> Fiona: So it would be interesting to get your take on whether you felt that if there was something that was big enough, whether you would actually raise an issue with your partner.
>
> 10: I would suppress it pretty much. If I thought I could get away with raising it in a quiet way without it escalating into shouting and that kind of thing, I'd be okay.
>
> Fiona: How would you describe why you'd rather not raise things?
>
> 10: Well if it becomes anything other than calm and considered then my mind goes blank. I can't think of my argument then. I'm just totally defensive. In the moment it's a lot for me about not being able to think straight. Like recently I've done internet dating and that kind of thing. And discussing things with women, and in an email it's really easy. I can sit back and look at the problem and then write it all out and speak my mind.
>
> Fiona: But there's something about that face to face?
>
> 10: Yes, it becomes more awkward.

This quote highlights the experience of struggling to communicate with one's partner through describing the embodied experience of his mind going blank. The lack of male emotional participation in couple relationships has been characterised in previous research as a deliberate withholding of emotional communication by men (Duncombe and Marsden, 1993). However, this is clearly not the whole picture as shown in the last chapter, highlighting the centrality of vulnerability as a social sanction within a traditional masculine emotional habitus. This thesis has highlighted the ways a lack of emotional skills on the part of many men leads to their struggling to emotionally participate in their relationships. And while this is not the case for all men, for the men who are at the less skilled end of the spectrum this does have implications for their relationships. But there is also a gendered way in which women are more likely to be responsible for the emotional aspects of their relationships and this is understood in different ways by the men in this research.

Participant 30 attempts to explain the reason his partner raises conflict more than he does. However, in the case of doing so after suggesting several reasons for this regarding his wife's nature, he reflects that in fact it is due to their traditional household arrangements of his wife being a full-time mum during the week while he works outside the home, reflecting the traditional gender nature of relational emotional work.

> 30: Ah well, actually my wife raises terminal issues more than I do. In fact definitely. I don't know, but of course although she raises them, it depends what you mean because they can come in the context of how I've been worrying about other things and this is just one more thing, it's like an additional.

> Fiona: Sure. Yeah.

> 30: And sometimes in the course of the discussion it might come back to some ... a problem in the relationship, or a problem with something I've done, or haven't done, or whatever ... Well I'm certainly not afraid to raise issues of that type, or, yeah, standard things that would bother me, maybe she just is more impatient or gets there more quickly and I might be more inclined to let things go for a bit longer.

> Fiona: Sure.

> 30: Or ignore them. Maybe she's more frustrated in what she's trying to do with, but that implies that I'm sort of getting everything I want, which isn't really the case, but I'm, I don't know, it could be circumstances, you know, the thing is in the house though it's probably less of a priority for me, because I work full time which means I'm there less.

Here participant 30 provides several reasons for his wife raising the issues in their relationship and also highlights the plurality of the term 'issues'. Participant 30 lists several types of issues starting with 'terminal', as in very serious, to something he's done or hasn't done, here referring to the house. He has highlighted how issues within his relationship often relate to the division of labour in their house – something he feels is less of a priority for him as he works full time. Here he acknowledges that the raising of issues is less of his responsibility but this was not something he had given much thought to before talking about it on the phone with me. His lack of thought about this reinforces the nature of women being responsible for the home sphere largely because it's their job, so much so that this has been something he hasn't even given much thought to before the telephone interview. Again having not spoken to his partner it is

impossible to say, but participant 30 could also be characterised as being 'laid back' due to him not raising issues in his relationship as he 'lets things go' more than his partner.

Another reason for men preferring not to raise issues in their relationships is suggested by Chaser in his telephone interview when he described his desire to not make his partner unhappy. Given how Chaser presented himself in the last chapter as emotionally skilled, it is interesting to hear his account of his most recent relationship at the time of the telephone interview. The telephone interview was conducted two years before the face–to-face interview, so he is referring here to a relationship in which he felt very lucky to be with his younger, very attractive partner:

> Chaser: My own personal take on that is if there's conflict arising or potentially, I would wish to diminish it quite quickly. So much so that I might actually, I might actually compromise more than was necessary. I'm saying that with a kind of reflective attitude, I suppose. I might compromise more than is actually necessary.
>
> Fiona: To avoid conflict?
>
> Chaser: To keep the peace, yeah.
>
> Fiona: Yeah. And why do you think that is? Do you not enjoy the feeling of it, do you just think it's a waste of time, or ...?
>
> Chaser: I suppose in the, well in the most recent experience is what I'd refer to, I'd probably put a high value on the person that I was in a relationship with, so much so that there was a bit of people pleasing going on.

This is a very different explanation to the others suggested so far as it implies that, unlike many other men who lack emotional fluency, Chaser is able to raise issues, but stops himself in order to maintain his relationship with someone he regards very highly. This could be construed as him performing internal emotion work to maintain the relationship and actually sounds similar to the behaviour described as characterising women in marriages over 20 years ago (Komter, 1989) reinforcing the findings for statements 'I try to avoid conflict in my sexual relationship' and 'I feel guilty if I upset my partner'. This parallel withholding of negative thoughts or feelings

to avoid conflict is distinctive within the analysed telephone interviews but resonates with Ali from the face–to-face interviews.

Ali, at the time of interview, was very happily married and had been for over twenty years. Ali's approach to expressing his emotions is best described as 'edited', in that he is careful what emotions he presents to his wife in order to avoid upsetting her, as exemplified from this interview extract:

> Fiona: So did you find it easy to move from the Middle East to here?
>
> Ali: At the beginning it was a bit, I think I never tell about it, I didn't tell her about it because I didn't want her to start worrying about it, so I cope myself and I coped with it anyway … it was a bit difficult, but it was okay, I mean I adapt to it now … But she will tell you I don't cry myself, never, she never seen me cry, but if she got a problem, if she got something she is thinking about sometimes there is issues you sit and talk about it and we talk about it.
>
> Fiona: So would you say that you're not very emotional then?
>
> Ali: Not very, no, I don't think not very emotional.
>
> Fiona: Would that be because you hold things inside?
>
> Ali: I think so, I think so (pause) yes I just hold them, I don't show it.
>
> Fiona: So would you say you think that when it comes to kind of being emotional and emotionally participating in your relationship, would you say that's something you find quite easy?
>
> Ali: Emotion? No I don't think I find it easy.
>
> Fiona: How would you describe it?
>
> Ali: When you talk about issues especially related to me it's not easy. I find it a bit difficult, but it depends on the subject ... I think a relationship in general if I'm not happy with somebody and especially from my side of the family, I don't try to tell, to discuss it in depth with her, just in case it affect her relationship with them and I don't want that, because I know maybe this emotional thing is happening just now and it will change. So if I go and talk about it now I might cause an issue for nothing, so I will put a stop to that and I never talk about it, just in case, that's one of the things anyway.

Here Ali is talking about the internal emotion work he does in choosing not to discuss things that are upsetting him so that he can protect his wife from also getting upset, but also to protect himself from having to deal with her being upset on his behalf. Through containing his upset Ali is also preventing his wife being upset with his wider family. Ali is essentially containing his negative emotions so that he can minimise the impact of any issues in his family. In so doing he is performing internal emotion work for the benefit of others. None of the women in this research described doing this except Anna. Instead the women very much want to be able to voice concerns and upsets they have and be able to raise issues and be heard when doing this. The gendered nature of raising issues has been explored in this section in order to consider the many factors that can impact on whether issues are raised or not. Through looking more closely at the details of raising issues it becomes clear that there are different skills and desires at play in determining whether or not issues are raised. This relational emotion work is highly gendered, as is the sense of who has responsibility for raising issues and how men can be described as 'laid back', but the nature of being 'laid back' is potentially very varied.

## 6.2 – Can't Crush Partner

A vital aspect of the discussion of the responsibility (mostly) women have for the well-being of their relationship is how this is based on a weakness in (mostly) men who are less emotionally skilled than their (mostly) female partners. Through being emotionally skilled and emotionally responsible for relational emotion work, women take on the mantle of setting the agenda and pace for emotional closeness within couples. This means that care must be taken not to 'crush' one's partner. Participant 25 describes how she feels when her husband 'witters on' and why, despite being irritated, she would never communicate this to her partner:

> 25: Like sometimes I feel like I, that sounds really negative, sometimes I'll use the term I guess, you know, from my mum, that my husband is wittering on. Sometimes he witters on about things and I just think, what are you talking about and

> why am I listening to you? But, that's what he does. And sometimes I really have to make an effort …
>
> Fiona: To tune in.
>
> 25: To stop what I'm doing and listening to what he's saying. Even if I have absolutely no interest whatsoever. And I wish sometimes he would kind of [inaudible 17:41] that, like one day we were going down the road. We were on a motorway and he says, I wonder how long and how big a motorway has to be to diversify the populations of something [laughter] and then went into a quite a detailed discussion about, I mean basically it was like his PhD thesis or if he'd get off his bum and do a PhD but sometimes, things like that I just think, what? But I have to really, yeah, tune in to it, because it's not something that I would naturally be curious about I have to say. If it was just about me, then I would say, I might not say because I'm not that kind of person, but if I was being really selfish and I wanted to be nasty I would say, shut up I'm not interested. **But I'm never going to do that because he's my husband and I love him**. And that's not in his make up, but I would say that the action or the process of tuning into that and being a part of that is for his benefit more than it is for mine.

I see this act of tuning in and not saying she is bored as part of her internal emotion work required to be an attentive partner and is also a way in which she demonstrates her emotional capital to herself. She is acting out her caring role towards her partner – something she sees as part of her loving him. This situation appears to reinforce her traditional feminine emotional habitus through her accumulation of emotional capital. She is prepared to do internal emotion work as it avoids upsetting her partner.

A second example of avoiding hurting a partner comes from Michael, who at the time of interviewing had been in a civil partnership for five years, and in this extract is talking about how he has to be careful not to 'crush' his husband emotionally:

> I feel I might have left the impression that he's irresponsible or uncaring, he's not. He will buy one of these cards that are 'to my darling husband' and I'm going 'oh for f*** sake', but what took me a time to realise is that he means that. This is a straight man I'm married to and, when I say that, I'm meaning an emotionally straight man. So how do I, how do I understand that? I have to realise that actually, do you know what, I am in control of this relationship and therefore I have responsibility not to crush somebody and if he means that, in

> that card, then actually maybe I need to shut the f*** up and
> listen to the emotional message that card is saying.

Here Michael sums up how his emotional capital, gained through his being 'in control' of his relationship, gives him a responsibility to be careful not to crush his partner. This reflects the description by Chaser of being able to be 'easily hurt' when he opens up emotionally. Being emotionally open leads to an exposure which makes men exploitable and vulnerable to being hurt. It is interesting to contrast this sense of vulnerability to the women in this research. Christine has 'walled herself off', as has Anna to an extent. In doing so they are protecting themselves from the vulnerability of being rejected emotionally or their emotional participation not being reciprocated. However, women are expected to be vulnerable. Women are expected to be emotionally open and available, therefore they are not made *more* vulnerable through being emotionally open, as they are already 'weak'. They are also required to do the relational emotion work required to maintain couple relationships, leading to a very unequal emotional dynamic in these traditionally gendered relationships.

I argue that (mostly) women receive emotional capital which gives them a sense of power (or control as Michael puts it) within their couple relationships. And this capital is compelling – it incites a feeling of recognition that they are performing their gendered role well, reinforcing their traditional gendered emotional habitus, while reproducing heterosexuality at the same time by not challenging gendered norms around women acting as emotional caretakers for men. But, as has been seen in the last chapter, it is not that straightforward as men are making an effort to be more emotionally open, which in itself detracts from their presentation of manliness, which in turn impacts on their patriarchal dividend. Therefore the emotional capital (mostly) women receive for their relational emotion work is contingent upon their work being appreciated – something previous research has shown (Hawkins, 1995; Thompson, 1991; Kawamura et al, 2010; Erickson, 2005). And this appreciation is manifest in (mostly) men *making an effort* to emotionally participate in their couple relationships and this involves a letting go, to some extent, of their male privilege.

In terms of Michael's partner, Colin's, interview there was very little content on emotional experiences or expression, and in fact this was one of the few interviews which were quantified as being more 'shallow' in its depth of reflection. This goes some way to confirming Michael's feelings that his partner is not very emotionally open or available, or is 'emotionally straight' as Michael puts it.

It is worth noting that within my research all of the participants were heterosexual and referring to heterosexual relationships except Michael, Colin (his partner), David and Becky presented in the last chapter. The analysis of these interviews has highlighted how the spectrum of emotional skills referred to throughout this thesis easily encompasses the stories told by these four participants. And while the subsample of non-heterosexual participants is too small to comment, the inclusion of these stories into the overall arguments of this thesis is important in demonstrating that the operation of the institution of heterosexuality goes on to largely inform the performance of gender, regardless of sexual orientation. What is consistent is the connection between the level of emotional skills and responsibility for couple relationships with these individuals who are highly emotionally skilled and also are responsible for their relationships – unless of course both partners are emotionally skilled and equally invested in the emotional participation of their relationship, as is the case for Grace and Felix in the last two chapters. The ways of understanding these emotionally equal relationships will be discussed in Chapter 7. The opposite to these emotionally equal relationships are the relationships in which 'emotion work doesn't work'.

## 6.3 – When Emotion Work Doesn't Work

So far in this thesis there has been a consideration of how relational emotion work is gendered and done (mostly) by women. What has not been examined is how men feel when their partner stops doing relational emotion work. Geoffrey, who is currently married with two young children, is very unhappy at how his life has turned out. At the time of the interview he felt trapped in suburbia, having sacrificed his

own identity to become a working parent who isn't valued either at work or when he comes home. Geoffrey has been chosen as the example of emotional participation breaking down for men. He has put up emotional walls to his partner, much like Christine in the chapter discussing women. The main difference between these two accounts, however, is the lack of emotional expression Geoffrey makes when describing how he feels in his current relationship and a lack of responsibility to do the relational emotion work necessary to repair their relationship. Instead Geoffrey makes a significant effort to avoid saying that he is upset by his perception of his wife as not really caring about him, which can be viewed as him performing internal emotion work in order to minimise his feelings of sadness and disappointment. This can be seen in the following interview extract, in which Geoffrey is talking about how his wife is aspirational and compares herself to their neighbours in the suburb they live in. As can be seen from this extract, I push him to tell me how he feels about this, as his initial response was that he didn't care, but his face looked hurt and his tone of voice sad:

> Geoffrey: Sometimes it annoys me because I think she transmits her aspirations to the whole family so it's a bit like 'our family's crap' whereas, it's just a family … that's one thing I do not do is I do not compare with other folks' families because I don't care … Like one dad who earns a fortune but he works at home all the time and is always dropping the kids off and picking them up and playing out with them and stuff and it makes me look bad, frankly. On the one hand they've got far more money than us … and more time. What can you do? But it doesn't actually bother me because …
> Fiona: At all?
> Geoffrey: No!
> Fiona: Not even a tiny bit?
> Geoffrey: It only bothers me in the sense of, one of the ways that I think Barbara has tried to motivate me in the past is that kind of trying to appeal to macho pride by sort of saying, 'Oh look at them. He's doing that kind of thing. That's good.' Obviously I understand what she's doing but it doesn't really – for whatever reason – it doesn't … or at least over the years it hasn't really made much impact but then maybe I'm a slower learner and gradually it's kind of, 'Oh yes, maybe I am useless.' You know, so I've got this kind of defence mechanism whereas I just … even if I was useless or

> complacent I'm not going to let it worry me too much … You
> know, if I was to feel resentful for a second I would say,
> 'Things have changed at work.' So you're at work and feeling
> like unloved and told what to do and then you go home and
> feel unloved and told what to do. And it doesn't leave an awful
> lot, you know, so in a way this is a kind of … you just want to
> escape from it.

This emotional closing down can be interpreted as Geoffrey minimising his exposure to his partner's rejection of him, a protection mechanism essentially, so that he is like a turtle who has retreated into its shell, where he is emotionally safer than being emotionally available to his wife who thinks he is useless. He is internalising all of his emotions and keeping them to himself as he doesn't feel loved or heard at home, performing internal emotion work to minimise his hurt, although this does come through in his use of words like 'annoys', 'bother', feeling 'useless' and wanting to escape. On one hand Geoffrey says he doesn't care that his wife thinks he is useless, but on the other he admits to feeling unloved; it is this 'unloved' feeling which is part of the fear in expressing emotions to a partner – it makes you more vulnerable to caring how a partner feels about you, reducing the control one has over emotional experiences in that relationship. Chaser makes this point in relation to being exposed when he is emotionally open, as did Caracticus when talking about being afraid of being seen as weak. The difference here is the switching of perspective – Caracticus was worried he would be seen as weak which made him feel vulnerable. For Geoffrey, he already feels unloved and it hurts. His hurt has been caused by the breakdown of his relationship and his sense that his wife thinks he is useless. He wants to escape from his unhappiness, but doesn't suggest it is his responsibility to actually *do* anything to change the situation.

Within this context it is apparent that the emotional participation in Geoffrey's relationship has become eroded, so that he says later in the interview that he doesn't feel like giving any more as he has already given. So Geoffrey can be seen to be taking control in this situation in possibly the only way available to him, by closing down emotionally from his partner, minimising his emotional participation in that relationship, and in turn minimising the impact of her negative view of him. I would

argue that while Geoffrey may not feel like he has power in this situation, his emotional withdrawal is reducing the scope for emotional participation between him and his wife as she cannot obtain relational agency due to his lack of cooperation. His withdrawal is in itself reminiscent of the men in the work of Duncombe and Marsden (1993) who seemed to relate with great difficulty in their relationships. Essentially Geoffrey is consolidating and preserving the power he has left after his wife has, he feels, rejected him emotionally so that he is now performing the part of an unemotional man. During the process of this interview I was very curious as to how his wife understood their relationship as it seemed that she was also unhappy with their breakdown of emotional communication, as can be seen from this interview extract:

> Fiona: So when you say that your wife would perhaps give this … this disengaged look, is that you thinking that you're disengaged or it something that's been told?
>
> Geoffrey: I think there's some truth in it. Has she said it? I can't remember but I'd say it probably comes up because she probably wants to disengage a lot and does to some extent, or just time out. Disengage was a bit more powerful, it makes me sound totally alienated which isn't the case …
>
> Fiona: No, not at all.
>
> Geoffrey: … I might feel slightly on the edge, I wouldn't want to exaggerate that, but have I been told? It wouldn't be done in those terms. It's probably done more … especially when they were younger than they are now, it probably would have been … and appeal to other examples so other dads would be doing this and other dads would be doing that, you know. But I kind of think, 'Well, that's good for them.' So it would only have been a case of almost nagging and saying, 'Well, you should be doing like this.'
>
> Fiona: How do you feel, because I sense that there's a sort of double-edged thing that you feel like you're doing your best and at the same time seem to be very emotionally aware and maybe feel like if you could you would be doing more activities or whatever?
>
> Geoffrey: Well it might sound self-serving almost, it's a bit like … I can only do what I expect to do or something which is a bit of a circular argument, isn't it, it's like, 'Well, I'll do what I want to do,' and I think the arguments probably come

> about. 'Well, I don't think I need to do more than that because no one did more than that for me.' That might be where it comes from.
>
> Fiona: And do you think … it sounds like your wife perhaps says these things to you and perhaps it's one of those things and is it something that you discuss or perhaps …
>
> Geoffrey: Occasionally discuss but unfortunately it's usually in a slightly argumentative way. You know, it's not, 'Let's sit down and talk about stuff.' That doesn't normally come up like that. As you can imagine it's a kind of plate-spinning exercise … Last week she's finally, after years of resistance, she's hitting the anti-depressants. The doctor's given her a small thing for anxiety. So it's a very real problem but she's always been the sort of person that's resisted that.

Of all the interviews conducted this was the saddest as Geoffrey was aware of the fact that he seemed almost cruel in not supporting his wife more. He gave the impression that he still very much loved her, but as he says here, he felt he couldn't give any more. I believe this is due to his traditionally masculine emotional habitus, as in the belief that it's not his job to do the relational emotion work of raising or resolving their issues because he's a man. And the fact that his wife has (apparently) stopped doing this has led to him feeling 'unloved'. And all of this within a relationship context where his wife is clearly not coping well. Yet despite this he cannot bring himself to 'give' anymore, so instead he has become walled-in emotionally. The description from Geoffrey of how he has come to the point where he is emotionally walled-in sounds very similar to the account from Christine in Chapter 4. If anything their accounts mirror each other as they both have traditional gendered emotional habitus and their emotional participation follows gendered lines. Christine has temporarily stopped emotional participation as her partner doesn't listen to her any more but is willing to continue to push for a dialogue. Geoffrey stopped emotionally participating because nothing he did was ever enough for his stressed wife. The parallels here are striking. Underlying them are certain gendered assumptions about not just who does the relational emotion work, but also how central the household division of labour is to their emotional participation. The central difference here however is the extent to which Geoffrey feels able to say he

will not 'give any more'. Christine is absolutely not saying that – a point which will be returned to in Chapter 7. This chapter will consider how appreciation, and relational emotion work, impact on perceptions of the division of labour in order to tie back the finding of emotional participation in relationships to the wider body of research into equality and divisions of labour.

## 6.4 – Appreciation and the Division of Labour

A central question this thesis is trying to unpack is around how women can claim to be happy in unequal relationships while having agency in these relationships. Part of my answer to this question has already appeared in terms of claiming the centrality of emotional participation to perceptions of equality in line with previous research documenting the importance of appreciation to perceptions of fairness (Thompson, 1991; Kawamura and Brown, 2010). I take this quantitative research one step further by looking in depth at experiences and understandings of emotional participation, to extend the question 'how does appreciation affect perceptions of fairness?'. As has been argued previously in this thesis, appreciation is central to women so that they are prepared to do the relational emotion work required within their relationships to maintain closeness with their partners. This emotional inequality is mirrored in the prevalence of an unequal division of labour, in line with all research using time studies to look at dual-earner couples households (Bianchi et al, 2000; Hook, 2006; Blossfeld and Drobnic, 2001). When looking at all of the women in this research, they can be divided into three groups: firstly the group for whom housework is shared and not a source of conflict; secondly those women whose partners do not perform an equal amount of household duties, but this does not impact on relationship satisfaction, and the third group for whom an uneven distribution of labour is considered to be an expression of a lack of love. Looking at the first group, the situation described by several women in long-term marriages is that over a long period of time, and as family demands have changed, an equilibrium has established itself in regards to the division of labour in the home. June is one of the women who described this type of arrangement. She is very proud of her husband, who she feels

is very progressive for a man of his age (late 50s) as well as his cultural background being from the Middle East. June gives an example of the ways her husband approaches his responsibilities in their household when she had their second child overseas:

> I mean when I had Natalie, she was caesarean, and Ali took six weeks off work to stay with me and with both the girls every night when I was breast feeding, when she woke up, he used to get up and bring her to the bed and I would feed her and he would change her and put her back into the cot; I didn't have to move out my bed.

This very practical sign of love for June was one of many examples of how her husband, in an everyday sense, is very active in household tasks from cleaning to cooking to childcare, and she very much appreciates this. A second female participant, seen in Chapter 4, is Betty who has been married for over twenty years. Here she reflects on the way her division of labour has become more equal over time:

> So it's taken us a long time to sort how the household runs. When the girls and my elder son were at home it was everyone had a job, but now that there is just the three of us at home, life is an awful lot easier, one child compared to four is just a doddle and so again we all have our tasks, but Bill and I are very complementary in the things we do. I help out in the garden and do the things I enjoy, he helps out in the house and does the things he enjoys and it's just been a sort of, I suppose it's like a synergy, what started as quite a sort of stereotypical archetypal way of doing, quite an old-fashioned way of delineation of tasks, has changed because of our jobs, etc, because we both have quite high jobs where we are out and about a lot, I travel a lot, he travels a lot, so there has to be much more give and take than there has ever been before, so I would say it works an awful lot better than it did.

Amongst all of the women who are in long-term marriages, most now with older children, this sharing of household tasks was described as having occurred gradually over time so that now there is almost no conflict over household duties any more, as seen from Betty, and discussed by Marlene:

> Fiona: So would you say then housework is something you just don't talk about then?

> Marlene: Mostly yes, I mean there never seems to be any real
> need to talk about it as much as we need to get done gets
> done. As I say the only time when there is any real discussion
> is if somebody is coming to visit or coming to stay, it's then a
> case of 'James you've got to tidy up the kitchen. I'll do the
> bathroom and living room, you do the kitchen' and that's
> about as discursive as it gets I suppose.

For this group of women there was a sense of habit about who does what in the house and this was not a source of conflict. All six of these women felt very happy in their relationships and had good emotional participation as well as feeling appreciated and loved.

The second group of women for whom the division of labour is uneven, but they are still happy in their relationship, can be exemplified by Susie when she talks about who does the housework in her home:

> Probably the only thing that we disagree on a lot is probably
> housework, that's probably like a main thing … He does
> nothing … He does things when he's asked, like he wouldn't
> come home and think 'oh that needs done' and do it … I
> think it's maybe got to the point now after four years that I've
> kind of accepted it … I wouldn't want to be the person who
> pulls him up for something because it's quite insignificant for
> us in the grand scheme of things, like housework isn't a great
> big deal and he's quite happy to do that if I say to him it's
> really getting to me.

Susie is very happy in her relationship, and feels she is closer to her partner than she has been with anyone else (as seen in Chapter 4) and while she gets annoyed about her partner's lack of participation in chores around the home, this is described as 'insignificant' to her. Ultimately, emotional participation is more important than housework to Susie, and this is echoed by several women, implying that if there is a high level of emotional participation and sense of being appreciated for the relational emotion work they do, the disparity in household duties does not affect relationship satisfaction.

When considering this narrative in relation to the work of Knudson-Martin et al (1998) and Hochschild (1990) who referred to 'myths of equality' it would be possible to argue that these women are choosing to define equality in ways that enable them to overlook the *in*equality in their household division of labour in order to *feel* like they have relationship equality. And it is hard to disagree with this argument. However I suggest that what *is* different between the women in my research and those interviewed 20 years ago is that alongside an unequal division of labour they also consider themselves to be receiving emotional participation from their partners. And this is a highly significant difference as it is a point of difference between these two generations of women being interviewed. The women in my research have agency in voicing annoyances, they (largely) feel listened to and appreciated, so that they are prepared to overlook unequal divisions of labour in light of having emotional closeness with their partner. Doing the household work fits with their gender ideology in the same way as doing relational emotion work: it serves to reinforce their traditional feminine emotional habitus. The difference between these women and those from previous research is that they (largely) have the emotional participation the women from previous research didn't have but craved.

The way responsibility for relationships is gendered also includes issues around the house itself, so that the smooth running of housework and childcare, even if a partner contributes, is ultimately a female responsibility. This can be seen by participant 6 when she says:

> I think he tries [to help in the house], soon afterwards [an argument] he would probably make more of an effort, you know, and then he'll probably slip back into just, 'och it's fine', and he'll plod along, bit of an easy life, you know, sometimes. I do think he makes a conscious effort, or he'll make a conscious effort to try and deal with the issue that's came up, so if I'd been moaning and, oh it's about the kids, you know, and I need a bit more support, or I'm fed up with this house, I clean it and you just come and do this, so he definitely will make a conscious effort to, oh that he should help out a bit more, and things like that, but then things usually slip back into the way they were before, if I'm honest.

This reflection on how conflict is handled within this relationship highlights not only that it is her responsibility to ask for more help when she feels things need to be done, but also that she doesn't want to criticise her partner too heavily for this dynamic. In saying "'I do think he makes a conscious effort" this woman is attempting to give her husband credit for listening to her and hearing her complaints, without then criticising him for 'slipping' back into the way things were before. This is another aspect of internal emotion work, forgiving her partner for 'slipping back' into the way things were before she raised her unhappiness. This effort made by her implies that she feels listened to by her husband, and him trying to change in respect of her complaints is the most important thing in this situation. This change to being more helpful around the house not then being permanent is acceptable because he is prepared to acquiesce when she feels strongly about something.

What is consistent across these accounts of the division of labour is the prevalence, as with previous research (Duncombe and Marsden, 1993; Mansfield and Collard 1988), of female voices. The majority of the men (with the exception of Michael) did not talk about their divisions of labour – this was not something they gave attention to in the interview, which in itself is relevant to unpacking the gendered ways appreciation interacts with perceptions of fairness. Essentially, due to the 'stalled revolution' (Hochschild, 1990), the pervasive unequal divisions of labour are a problem for women and not men. The shift then reported in this thesis is the emotional involvement of men increasing, leading to many women being much happier with this aspect of the relationship is important. Whether the increase in value of emotional participation by men will result in emotional equality is yet to be seen, but how this increase impacts on perceptions of fairness will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

## 6.5 - Defining Equality

Within this research several women felt happy in their relationship, despite an unequal division of labour, including those who formulated a more complex calculation of what 'fair' or 'equal' means. While this could be interpreted as

'intimacy despite inequality' (Jamieson, 1998), this research has found that inequality is hard to define and cannot easily be imposed from outside any relationship. An example of this is Claire, a doctor who is currently not working in order to spend more time with her two young children. She feels that while housework in her relationship has never been equal, there is a sense of equality negotiated through different means, specifically the allocation of free time, as can be seen from this extract:

> I suppose there is a bit of falling out about housework, but not too bad, but I think I get fed up, because even working part time, the housework has generally fallen to me and the cooking and even when we were both working full time, because I'm a better cook … Cooking, cleaning, although we probably shared, he would help me with the preparation … but he will kind of make sure that I'll go and do things that he knows will give me a break … he needs to get home in time so he can come home to either help put the kids to bed or let me go if I want to go out or something ... Yes it's kind of I suppose negotiation, you want to feel that you've each had reasonable time and support.

Claire would like it if her partner did more around the house, which is reasonable, however she is very happy in her relationship and so the performance of housework, while it leads to 'a bit of falling out', doesn't make her unhappy, or feel unloved in her relationship. This supports the finding of previous research that emphasises the importance of appreciation to a sense of fairness; the ability to negotiate is directly tied to her relational agency. Claire has relational agency to raise issues and negotiate as she puts it, which is facilitated by a closeness with her partner.

It is necessary also to consider what happens to perceptions of fairness when appreciation (or emotional participation) is not present. Christine, as already described, was not communicating well with her partner; they have both 'walled themselves in' emotionally, and there are fights over housework regularly, as described in this short extract:

> I despair and I think, well if you really were interested in me and my life and what makes things easier for me, you would never have forgotten to do that … That kind of behaviour does demonstrate an element more of love, I suppose, loving the whole me, holistically, if he genuinely loves me, he will

> accept that I am not winding him up, I am trying to tell him
> that this is really important to me and if he's ignoring that, it
> just adds to my frustration and my irritation, because I
> wonder if it's ever going to change.

Here Christine expresses the way she directly connects the lack of participation in household tasks by her partner and her not feeling loved by him. The physical performance of household tasks carries the weight of expressions of care and love, in lieu of other channels of communication being open. In this way the lack of appreciation or emotional closeness compounds her feeling unloved – paralleling Geoffrey in her language here. Emotional participation leads to appreciation, which leads to relational agency and emotional capital. Without emotional participation it is impossible to tolerate an unequal division of labour and maintain a sense of feeling loved.

Ultimately housework always has to be done, while talking and other means of expressing emotional closeness do not, so housework takes on a symbolic power for some women. This highlights how perceptions of housework change when relationships break down, with women perceiving their partners not doing more around the house as a lack of care or love from them and disregard for their relationship. While housework and an uneven division of labour is mentioned by many of the women as being an issue within their relationship, the presence of emotional participation minimises the impact this imbalance has on their relationship satisfaction. Women who are happy with the effort being made by their partner to understand and listen to them attain some sense of equality through resources other than housework, and did not consider the performance of housework to symbolise their partners' affection or love towards them.

## 6.6 Conclusion

This chapter has considered what happens when comparing the accounts of men and women of emotional participation. It has considered the ways raising issues within relationships can be seen as doing relational emotion work, with this seen as necessary by (mostly) women but not by (most) men. Women encourage men to

discuss issues that arise in their relationship and that are causing friction, including the potential of future problems in their relationship. The weight of this responsibility is seen in the section entitled 'Can't Crush Partner' when considering the ways partners who are more emotionally skilled and confident have to be careful to respect the emotional capital they have. The ways in which relationships suffer when relational emotion work breaks down was also considered in this chapter, recognising men's need to feel supported in lieu of emotional participation. The final section of this chapter addresses the ways appreciation interacts with perceptions of the division of labour, reporting similar results to previous research in finding that women can be happy in their unequal relationships if they feel appreciated. This chapter has extended this finding from quantitative research (Hawkins, 1995; Thompson, 1991; Kawamura et al, 2010; Erickson, 2005) and suggested a causal relationship whereby it is emotional participation that leads to appreciation and happiness in couple relationships. This chapter concludes therefore that the ways in which relational emotion work, emotional capital and feeling appreciated interact with perceptions of fairness, and therefore judgements of equality, are complex but ultimately directly related to traditional gendered emotional habitus. The next chapter will discuss this relationship in more depth and make suggestions as to how the research contributes to understanding gendered power.

# Chapter 7 – Discussion and Conclusion

Emotional participation has been explored throughout this thesis in order to uncover what is required to feel emotionally connected within a couple. This discussion includes a consideration of how gender, power and emotion interact within the context of relationships. Central to this thesis is the claim that emotional participation has changed since the previous body of research was conducted in the 1990s (Duncombe and Marsden, 1993, 1995, Benjamin, 1998). In order to present how emotional participation has changed I will begin by addressing what emotional participation is.

## 7.1 - What is Emotional Participation?

Three central factors have become apparent throughout the last three chapters in defining emotional participation, these are: a sense of feeling listened to and heard; knowledge about how to communicate with one's partner; and a sense of reciprocity of these factors within a relationship. Emotional participation is relational and reciprocal and cannot be achieved through the actions of one member of a couple alone. Several factors intersect, in gendered ways, to either enable or inhibit the presence of emotional participation, the first of these is where on the spectrum of emotional skills individuals are, spanning from highly emotionally skilled to emotionally unskilled. The skills described in the last three chapters are an ability to know and communicate how one is feeling, an ability to perceive and understand how one's partner is feeling and a level of reflexivity to recognise emotional ups and downs (Holmes, 2010). I have argued that this spectrum of emotional skill is largely gendered, with most women at the 'highly skilled' end while most men are nearer the 'unskilled' end, however this is by no means absolute. Many of the men have good emotional skills and are able to identify how they are feeling and how others are feeling, but this is not the case for all men. What has been seen throughout the data presented is that when one member of a couple is more emotionally skilled than the other, there is a desire on their part to cultivate and encourage emotional closeness

within their relationship. This desire leads to a sense of responsibility for the emotional well-being of the relationship, which is also highly gendered within my participants. It is mainly the women presented here who have responsibility for their relationships; a result of this responsibility is the perceived need to do relational emotion work.

'Relational emotion work' is a term I have coined to refer to certain actions that benefit a relationship rather than 'internal emotion work' (Craib, 1995) which is done to bring one's emotional management into line with 'feeling rules' (Hochschild, 1983). Relational emotion work is performed by the member of a couple who is more emotionally skilled in order to develop emotional participation in their relationship. When both partners are equally emotionally skilled there is a balance of emotional participation which is reciprocated. Relational emotion work includes raising 'issues' within a couple relationship (although as discussed in Chapter 6 there are many different types of issue that can be raised) as well as providing emotional support to one's partner. In doing relational emotion work it is key to recognise the way in which this is *work* which requires not only emotional skills, but also an element of *labour* (Connell, 1987) and this labour is also highly gendered within my research findings. The development of the concept of 'relational emotion work' has enabled me to pinpoint the connection between emotional participation (originally coined by Duncombe and Marsden 1993) and emotion work (originally coined by Hochschild, 1983). Emotional participation is relational and can only be achieved if one's partner is reciprocating in listening and engaging emotionally in a relationship, so what comes to be highly valued within emotionally unequal couples is a sense of appreciation.

Appreciation has been discussed in previous research as being a key indicator of whether or not women perceive an unequal division of labour to be fair (Kawamura et al, 2010; Thompson, 1991; Hawkins et al, 1995). I will return to the connection between emotional participation and the division of labour shortly, but first I would like to reflect on why appreciation, or 'mattering' as Kawamura et al (2010) refer to

it, is important within this body of research. The claim they make is that the more women (or wives to be specific):

> *believe they matter to their husbands, the more likely they are to report the division of labour is fair, regardless of the share of housework wives perform, time availability, relative resources, and gender role attitudes. (p.976)*

In the survey conducted by Kawamura et al (2010) they asked questions which are very similar to the questions asked throughout fieldwork for this thesis relating to communication and feeling listened to. What they were unable to comment on, however, is how appreciation or mattering change perceptions of fairness and what are the variables that impact on this sense of appreciation, so that they called for this area of research to be further explored to improve understandings of 'marital well-being' (Kawamura et al, 2010, p.985). This thesis addresses these questions through suggesting the complex way in which appreciation is felt in relationships, and I extend this to consider how a sense of appreciation is central to couples having emotional participation within their relationships. Appreciation refers to a sense of one's partner appreciating the relational emotion work being done, whether through them being open to discussing issues once they have been raised, or through more practical demonstrations of love (such as being given a gift that demonstrates attentive listening such as a long-longed-for Meccano set). What became apparent through looking at the accounts of women was that this sense of being appreciated can be obtained from a partner who struggles to be emotionally open, but is trying to emotionally participate in their relationship. For women the effort being made to *try* to emotionally participate on the part of their partner was sufficient to feel appreciated. I argue this is due to the central importance emotional participation has within couple relationships for women - to feel valued is more important that having an equal division of labour. The connection between the body of previous quantitative research and my thesis is the role emotional participation plays within relationship satisfaction. When this connection is considered in relation to the previous literature on emotional participation in couple relationships, such as Duncombe and Marsden (1993), what is clear is that women still place a very high importance on emotional participation – but what has changed is an

acknowledgement that they *have* this participation. A major claim being made in this thesis is that women have a sense of authority within unequal relationships, central to this are the concepts of emotional capital and relational agency.

Emotional capital is the dividend accrued from doing relational emotion work (if it is appreciated) within a relationship. It is given to emotionally skilled individuals by their less emotionally skilled partner in exchange for the job of being responsible for the well-being of their relationship. The value of having emotional capital is an increase in relational agency which validates one's ability to raise issues, concerns or talk about how one is feeling. It provides more choices to be emotionally open within a relationship, but is only available if one's partner is complicit in giving emotional capital. Through the highly gendered dynamic of men being less emotionally skilled, less likely to be responsible for the well-being of their relationships and not doing the majority of relational emotion work, they do not accrue as much emotional capital as women. But the relational emotion work being done by women must be appreciated by men for their partners to accrue emotional capital and therefore relational agency. Emotional capital is not equal to other forms of capital as it is confined to the context in which it is created. Reflecting on the definition of agency from Chapter 2, it is clear how *relational* agency includes recognition of the role a partner plays in having agency within a couple relationship as:

> *the ability to define one's goals and act upon them. Agency is about more than observable action; it also encompasses the meaning, motivation and purpose which individuals bring to their activity, their sense of agency, or the 'power within'. (Kabeer, 1999, p.438)*

Given that within couple relationships emotional participation occurs *between* partners, there is a process in which one's partner must be at least complicit wanting to be close, as without their involvement emotional participation cannot occur. When looking at the body of previous research which reported that women were unhappy with the emotional aspects of their couple relationships, it becomes clear that they were lacking in relational agency. They were not able to 'define their goals and act upon them' within their relationships, instead they "expressed a deep disappointment in the lack of *emotional* reciprocity in their relationships" (Mansfield and Collard,

1988, p.178). Without reciprocity the accrual of emotional capital or relational agency is impossible, preventing an ability to 'bring about activity' of raising issues or doing relational emotion work, preventing emotional participation being achieved. The difference between the research reported in this thesis and the body of work conducted in the 1980s and 1990s (Duncombe and Marsden, 1993, 1995; Mansfield and Collard, 1988; Komter, 1989; Benjamin, 1998) then is the presence of reciprocity, or appreciation, or a willingness to engage in emotional participation. By gaining emotional capital and having greater relational agency, individuals (mostly women) can achieve authority within their relationships, available at the local level of power (Connell, 1987).

As discussed in Chapter 2, Connell (1987, p.111) says "We must distinguish the *global* or macro-relationship of power, in which women are subordinated to men in the society as a whole, from the *local* or micro-situation in particular households." Using this distinction I argue authority can be gained in emotionally unequal relationships at the local level through achieving emotional participation. This authority can be used to resist heterosexuality through women having more power (in certain circumstances) than men. Heterosexuality "structures and organises understandings of individuals, as well as sexual and familial relationships" (Richardson, 1996, p.3), with one of these understandings being that men are more powerful than women. Within the local 'micro-situation' of a couple relationship, if women can gain authority through gaining emotional capital they are resisting heterosexuality and male power. Male power is supported by hegemonic masculinity which is based on men's superiority over women, bringing "honour, prestige and the right to command" (Connell, 1995, p.82). If women have authority within their couple relationships through gaining emotional capital, they are resisting male power at the local level. Therefore emotional participation leads to a reduction of male power within the local level of couple relationships through women gaining authority and through men becoming emotionally involved in their relationships, or even trying to.

The importance of emotional participation becomes clear when returning to the research question raised at the beginning of this thesis in relation to whether women can have agency or authority within unequal divisions of labour. Previous research referred to women employing 'myths of equality' (Knudson-Martin et al, 1998) to justify the unequal relationships they had, portraying these women as having little agency within these relationships to change them. This picture contrasts starkly with the research findings presented here as many of the women in this research have a strong sense of relational agency, allowing them to raise issues within their relationships and achieve the emotional participation they want with their partners. A central aim of this research has been to consider the paradox expressed by Smart (2007), among others, when she said:

> *if we no longer accept the idea that love is impossible where*
> *there are inequalities, then it becomes important to consider*
> *how these apparently competing forces manage to co-exist.*
> *(p.79)*

In this quote Smart is referring to the body of research in which women report relationship satisfaction despite having unequal divisions of labour in the home. Her question is in part answered by findings from the body of quantitative research in the United States describing the centrality of feeling appreciated (Thompson, 1991, Kawamura and Brown, 2010), a body of knowledge I build on in suggesting the importance of a sense of authority for women in unequal relationships. Many women are prepared to accept an unequal division of labour if they have emotional participation, because they gain a sense of authority and recognition through their role of emotional caretaker. These women have greater relational agency to be used to raise issues and discuss their feelings or probe their partner on their feelings – all parts of the actions necessary to have emotional participation. Thus women can have agency within unequal divisions of labour – and have emotional participation and be happy in these relationships – as long as their partners appreciate the relational emotion work they are doing. When appreciation is not present in a relationship, and relational emotion work is not valued, unequal divisions of labour become more problematic. A failure on the part of men to contribute (to the satisfaction of their

female partner) to the household tasks that need done becomes symbolic of a lack of love and appreciation.

## 7.2 - Gendered Emotional Habitus

Through extending Burkitt's (1997) concept of 'emotional habitus' to include gender I have tried to find an analytical concept that can encapsulate the way gendered 'feeling rules' (Hochschild, 1983) frame much of the emotional participation within couple relationships. The basic argument here is that socialisation from childhood teaches the gender binary belief that women are emotional and men should not be emotional. The result of this socialisation is the existence of two (binary) traditionally gendered emotional habitus (plural) which drive individuals to 'do gender' (West and Zimmerman, 1987) when they 'do emotion'. This has been discussed in detail in the previous three chapters, leading on to a discussion now of how these traditional gendered emotional habitus impact on emotional participation. The central impact of these gendered emotional habitus (plural) is that they make gendered emotional action feel 'natural' through their 'hypnotic power' (Bourdieu, 2001) and police the boundaries of appropriate displays of emotion. The connection between women being more emotionally skilled, and therefore predominantly responsible for the well-being of their relationships, comes from the gendered nature of their emotional habitus. Having been 'trained' from an early age to be empathic and caring, women learn emotional skills in a way men are not encouraged to. Through the hypnotic power of the habitus, women desire emotional closeness and participation within their couple relationships, and receive a sense of accomplishment when they achieve this, reinforcing the authority they receive from being appreciated for their relational emotion work.

Traditional masculine emotional habitus (plural) discourage men from being emotional as emotion is connected to a sense of weakness and vulnerability. As discussed in Chapter 5 the vulnerability men experience in relation to their emotions is a social sanction enforced through the habitus to police men's patriarchal dividend. Hegemonic masculinity dictates that men must be strong and in control, not weak and childlike, in order to obtain a 'patriarchal dividend' at the local level, and to

maintain male power at the global level. When men are emotional they contradict their traditional masculine emotional habitus and feel vulnerable as a result, leading to an effort by many men to control their emotions. Chapter 5 explored the sense of vulnerability experienced by almost all of the men interviewed for this research and presented experiences of this, building on previous work that was not based on empirical findings (Seidler, 1997, 2007; Craib, 1994). In doing so this thesis has suggested that there has been a move away from the emotionally absent men described in previous research (Duncombe and Marsden, 1993, 1995; Mansfield and Collard, 1988) leading to a more complex theoretical understanding of the ways emotional participation can be difficult for men. The gender binary present in traditionally gendered emotional habitus serves to reinforce heterosexuality and male power through maintaining the dichotomy of emotionally in-control men and emotionally skilled women. What has become apparent throughout this thesis however is that there are several participants within this research who do not have traditionally gendered emotional habitus. I have described them as having an alternative emotional habitus, as they do not display the gendered pattern of women being highly emotionally skilled, nor of men feeling vulnerable in relation to their emotionality.

I have suggested in this thesis that there is a 'clash of masculine ideals of emotion' currently taking place within performances of masculinity. As explored in the last two chapters, this suggestion is related to a social change that is apparent in the findings of this research, specifically that men are emotionally participating in their couple relationships more than previous research indicated or are at least *trying* to participate more. The shift from men being unwilling or incapable of 'doing' emotional intimacy (Duncombe and Marsden, 1993) implies a social change in attitudes towards emotional participation. I argue that this social change has led to there being two 'ideals of masculine emotion' – the first is the traditional, or hegemonic, view that men should be unemotional. The second view is that 'it's good to talk' – based on the therapeutic discourse which values emotional openness (Brownlie, 2014). The clash of these two ideals has been discussed in the last two chapters and can be seen in the accounts of men who want to be more emotionally

open in their relationships, but find this difficult due to feelings of vulnerability. What was clear in the last two chapters is that this clash of ideals has impacted men in complex ways, with very few men having remained untouched by either. However, the opening up of a new way to 'do' masculine emotion, instigated through the power of the therapeutic discourse, is due to the new *value* placed on emotion since previous research was undertaken. It is specifically the change in how men value emotionality that has led to the change in their appreciation for the relational emotion work (mostly) women do, and motivated them to *try* to emotionally participate in their couple relationships. So in answering the research question that asked 'have male accounts of emotional participation changed since the body of research conducted in the late 1980s and early 1990s?' the answer has to be yes. Male accounts of emotional participation in my research have changed when compared to previous research (Duncombe and Marsden, 1993, 1995) in that the men desire emotional closeness more than reported in previous research, and as a result the women have more authority in their couple relationships. Men are more emotionally engaged in their couple relationships, or trying to be, and women are happier with the emotional participation they have in their relationships, feeling appreciated and valuing this highly as well as exercising greater relational agency within their relationships.

The connection between gender equality and male emotionality implies that a shift in gender emotional asymmetry will impact on gender equality more widely when they said "gender asymmetry in relation to intimacy and emotion work may be the last and most obstinate manifestation and frontier of gender inequality" (Duncombe and Marsden, 1995, p.150). While at a global level gender inequality will not be reduced through an increase in male emotional participation as the fundamental premise of the binary gender system which gives more power to men is not challenged. I argue that while at the local level an increase in emotional participation gives women more authority, this does not translate into more power at a global level due to the way (predominantly) women are doing the relational emotion work in their relationships. Equally, emotional capital cannot translate from the local level to the global level of power as it is not socially recognised outside of a couple relationship, which limits

the ways gendered power at the global level can be challenged or resisted through the local sphere of couple relationships.

Throughout this thesis I have addressed purely the local level as the research being presented is concerned primarily with the 'micro-situation' of couple relationships, however here I will suggest the relationship between these two levels of power. Referring back to the literature review in Chapter 2 it is necessary to reconsider how power is theorised in order to consider whether the increase in men trying to emotionally participate in their couple relationships can lead to a reduction in male power. Bourdieu (1990) theorises power as emanating from the habitus, which is an internalised, embodied history that renders the cultural basis of practices invisible. The habitus constrains agency through symbolic violence which operates at an unconscious level through embarrassment or inadequacy (or in this research, vulnerability for men) when not behaving in accordance with the cultural values embodied in the habitus. Bourdieu (2001) explains that symbolic violence operates below consciousness and has a 'hypnotic power' (p.42), rendering masculine domination without justification. I understand gendered power to be based in the habitus and reproduced from there, but also able to be reflected upon and changed as discussed in Chapter 2. In this way gendered power operates through individuals being constrained by the cultural knowledge of their habitus, but it is possible to be aware of this in conscious ways when there is a clash of ideas within their cultural knowledge.

The men discussed in this research are aware of their sense of vulnerability, itself the result of symbolic violence experienced through the traditionally gendered habitus, but due to the influence of the therapeutic discourse and changes in gender ideology there is a conscious opening up of ways to be emotional for men. What is not clear however is whether, if men resist the symbolic violence that makes them feel vulnerable, this will change the internalised cultural knowledge that has led to them feeling vulnerable? The answer to this must be yes, as what is happening is a change in the cultural values from those contained within a traditional masculine emotional habitus – i.e. male strength and control over emotion. But what is not clear is

whether a change in these cultural values regarding men's emotionality will change other gendered knowledge within the habitus, and specifically emotional habitus (plural). I argue that it will not, as the increase in men participating emotionally in their couple relationships in fact reinforces the values of traditionally gendered emotional habitus (plural).

The gender binary that underpins heterosexuality stipulates that men and women are different, or even opposite, in their nature, which in the case of emotion has been discussed throughout this thesis. Consideration of what a third *gender neutral* emotional habitus might look like is required in order to move beyond the gendered binary present in emotion. The project of considering this has already begun with some of the participants in this research, suggesting ways heterosexuality can be resisted through emotional participation. This thesis has provided an intimate, contextual study of changing masculinity in the specific context of couple relationships, and an exploration of how perceptions of fairness are impacted by feeling appreciated. Through considering the ways emotional participation is experienced and comparing male and female contributions, an account of how appreciation is achieved within relationships has been suggested. The centrality of the *value* attached to relational emotion work has become apparent as it has provided a space in which emotional skills are valued within couple relationships. There is an increased understanding of the importance of a sense of vulnerability for men, suggesting that for many men being more emotionally open is fraught with difficulty or discomfort. Therefore it seems emotional participation is more available to couples in my research compared to previous research, which leads to a greater power for women at the local level. However a shift in gendered power at the global level would require a clash of *feminine* emotion ideals that deprioritises being responsible for relationships which was not discussed by any of the participants in this research.

Due to the opening up of a new way to 'do' male emotionality, men have a possible way of resisting the symbolic violence that maintains male unemotionality. There is no equivalent for women. Instead women are reinforcing their gendered emotional

habitus through caring for their partners and doing the relational emotion work required to facilitate their partner being more emotionally open. The women presented in this research want to do relational emotion work in order to have emotional closeness with their partners, something all of the women expressed a strong desire for – I argue this is an example of symbolic violence having an 'hypnotic power'. The equivalent resistance to a traditionally gendered emotional habitus for women would be a denouncing of the importance of being caring and being emotionally close to one's partner, refuting one of the central premises of femininity – to be caring and nurturing – which is not an option described by the women in this research. Instead within the context of couple relationships women gain emotional capital and this is experienced as positive. When women perform the relational emotion work involved in raising issues and supporting their partner emotionally, and feel a sense of pride and satisfaction, that is symbolic violence. And when women change their perception of fairness of the division of labour because they feel appreciated, this is through the hypnotic power of the habitus.

In terms of social change the importance of changes in gender ideology is central to considering the nature of emotional participation. One of the changes in gender ideology is seen in the difference between the desire to be emotionally close to their partner as described by the men in my research, and the men in previous research. This reflects the growing trend towards egalitarian gender beliefs (Barnett and Rivers, 2004) as the valuing of the traditionally female domain of emotion by men is testament to a move away from traditional attitudes towards gender. This further reduces the power of male privilege through challenging the unseen, unobtrusive ways power is denied to women when little value is attributed to 'feminine' traits such as being emotional.  Duncombe and Marsden's (1995) conclusion – that women's ability to assert emotional power over men is limited as men do not recognise women's emotional needs – appears to be changing within my participants.

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## Appendix A: Interview Topic Guide

**1.0 Introduction to research**

**2.0 Narrative Question "I would like you to tell me a bit about yourself so that I can ask you the most relevant questions later. You have up to twenty minutes, but you don't have to talk for that long. I won't interrupt, just listen and maybe take some notes. I would like you to tell me a little about your parents' relationship, were they happy? Did they work? Things like that, then to tell me about your relationships, focusing on the most recent or most significant relationship to you."**

**3.0 Present circumstances** (if not covered in narrative question)

Age          Details of household          Relationship status

Own class definition          Length of relationship (if present)

Occupation and parents' occupations

Breakdown of who contributes how much of household income

Details of children (if any) and where they live


**4.0 Life history** (if not covered in narrative question)

Family circumstances (emotional, economic, working or not, stability)


**5.0 Relationship history** (if not covered in narrative question)

Length of relationship(s)

How met / got together

(If not in relationship) Most significant relationship(s) / co-habiting with


**6.0 First question after narrative section**

What would you say are the topics that you disagree with your partner most about?

**7.0 Housework**

Open question: "Thinking about the home sphere, could you please tell me about how (in your previous relationships) you break down the tasks that need to be done in the home?"

Is it something you think about?

If you have to make a decision to prioritise tasks at home or work, which would you prioritise?

What would be your ideal arrangement of dividing up the household tasks?

What would need to change to make this possible?

How does the house being messy make you feel?

Do you ever feel judged by the cleanliness of your home?

Have you cut back on housework?

What do you think the 'eyes of the world' would say about the cleanliness of your home?

Do you feel your efforts in the home get recognised?

Is there a cyclical feeling to how much you or your partner does in the home?

Has this changed over time?

Do you talk about housework at all?

Is it something you think about?

Open question: "Who would you say is 'responsible' for the home, things like remembering important dates, managing day to day tasks, organising meals, things like that?"

Do you feel your partner has the same understanding of who is responsible for the home?

Has this dynamic changed during your relationship?

Do you think certain tasks such as cooking, cleaning, childcare or gardening are preferred by you or your partner?

Do you think your partner would agree?


**8.0 Gender Ideologies and 'Equality'**

Open question: "What do you think of the idea of 'equality' in a couple relationship (is it desirable or possible)?"

What does equality in a relationship mean?

Do you' monitor' your relationship?

What does this monitoring look like?

Do you strive for equality in your relationship?

How do you think other people view your relationship?

Would they say it's equal?

Can you think of any examples of a couple who appear to have got the right balance?

Why do they have the right balance?

How does thinking about that balance make you feel?

Do you think about how you are behaving in your relationship? Can you give me an example?


**9.0 Children**

Open question: "How would you describe the ways in which having children

changes the day to day home life you have?"

Do you see the provision of emotional support and encouragement as part of your role as a parent? Are there things which aren't included in this support?

Has this changed as your children have got older?

How does providing this emotional support make you feel?

Does the provision of this type of support ever cause tension (in your relationship)?

How do you decide who does what for your children within your relationship?

What do you consider the most important chores that need doing?

Why have you chosen these chores specifically?

How do you feel about being a father / mother?


**10.0 Demonstrating love and closeness**

Open question: "Thinking about physical intimacy (by which I mean everything from a smile from your partner, holding hands, cuddles etc.) would you say this is something that's important to how you feel about your relationship?"

Does this physical intimacy ever cause arguments or disagreements?

How do you know your partner loves you?

Is there anything you would like them to do more of?

How might they display their love for you?

Do you think emotional closeness affects sex in your relationship? If so, how would you describe this link?


**11.0 Emotional Participation**

Open question: "Is emotional participation – i.e. being involved emotionally and communicating about how you're feeling – something you do?"

Can you think of any examples of providing or receiving emotional support from your partner?

Do you think you are always aware of this emotional support or is it something you don't really think about?

Do you think your partner would agree with this?

Are there any benefits to providing emotional support?

Are there any drawbacks to providing emotional support?

How does it make you feel to provide emotional support?

How does it feel to receive emotional support?

How does it make you feel to discuss this emotional support?

Do you think it's fair to say that women are more emotional?

What do you think 'emotional' in this context means?

Do you think it's fair to say that there are different expectations of how women and men communicate their emotions?

Do you feel you are skilled in emotional participation in your life in general?

Is it important to you that you feel emotionally close to your partner?

How would you describe this closeness?

What does it feel like?

Is this closeness always a good thing?

Do you feel your partner recognises or understands your emotional care-giving in your relationship?

Do you feel responsible for your partner's emotional well-being?

Do you ever feel grateful towards your partner for things they have done or for who they are? If so, when have you felt that, for what and why?

Do they ever express gratitude to you?

How is this gratitude communicated?

Do you feel your partner is as interested in your relationship as you are? Why do you say that? Can you give me an example of this?

Do you ever feel rejected by your partner? Can you give me an example and talk me through how you felt?

How would you know your partner is unhappy with you about something?

How does that make you feel?

Do you ever feel embarrassed in your relationship?

Previous relationships: Would you say you disengaged from your partner emotionally? What did that feel like? Was it a process?


**12.0 Negotiation in the home**

Open question: "In any couple relationship there are always times when negotiation is required, for example when deciding what to watch on television or whether to go on holiday. Could you tell me how you personally approach these types of negotiation; what's in your mind?"

Do you think you or your partner make more adjustments in your relationship? How is this understood?

Is this communicated?

Do you think that power struggles exist in your relationship?

How easy do you find it to go against your partner's wishes?

Do you feel you are good at negotiating?

What's important to you when negotiating with your partner?

How does this make you feel?

Do you ever censor yourself to avoid upsetting your partner? If so, why? How?

How does this make you feel?

What is the decision making process behind this?

Is there anything you have 'sacrificed' in your relationship?

How would you describe who has power in your relationship?

And how would you describe that power?

Do you see power as different to control over things or responsibility for things?

Are there ever times when you respect your partner less because of things they have or haven't done?

Do you think there is a connection between emotional participation and power in your relationship?


## 13.0 Finishing topic

Thoughts about future; recommendations for anyone else in the same situation.

## 14.0 Reflections on interview process

**Thanks**

# Appendix B: Recruitment and Consent Materials

<u>**Information Sheet**</u>

**Research Project Title:   Exploring the Relationship between Power and Emotions in Couple Relationships**

**Researcher:**  Fiona McQueen, Centre for Research into Families and Relationships and the Department of Sociology, University of Edinburgh

**This form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. Please feel free to ask if you require any additional information about anything mentioned here. Please take the time to read this information sheet carefully. You may contact me at any time to discuss the study by email on [Fiona.mcqueen@ed.ac.uk](mailto:Fiona.mcqueen@ed.ac.uk) or by telephone on 0797 361 7557.**

This interview is being conducted for a study on couple relationships conducted by Fiona McQueen to be used to inform her doctoral research, therefore excerpts from this interview may be printed in the forthcoming thesis document or future publications, without identifying you. This interview will focus on experiences of your intimate relationships including topics such as conflict in your relationships, sexual behaviour and discussing emotions.

This interview will last approximately 90 minutes; the interview will be audio-recorded and later transcribed. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not feel comfortable answering, and you can stop the interview at any time**. The audio-tapes will only be accessed by the researcher**. The answers provided in this research will be kept confidential; the transcripts and audio-tapes will not have your name or any other identifying information on them. All data will be kept on a secure computer that will be password protected. The completed interview schedules, transcriptions, audio-tapes and other research data will be stored in a secure place. No information will be released or printed that would disclose your personal identity.

## Consent Form

**Research Project Title:** Exploring the Relationship between Power and Emotions in Couple Relationships

**Researcher:** Fiona McQueen, Centre for Research into Families and Relationships and the Department of Sociology, University of Edinburgh

I have read and understood the information sheet regarding this research. Any questions I have asked about the study have been answered to my satisfaction. Should I desire to contact professional services to discuss any issues that arises in this interview I can contact the relevant professional services.

I understand that my participation is **completely voluntary** and that my decision to either participate or not will be kept **completely confidential**. I further understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time without explanation and without negative consequences.

I hereby consent to take part in this study.

Date:_____

Name:_____

Signature: _____

# Professional Services Information

**Relationships Scotland** (previously Relate Couple Counselling) **Call: 0845 119 2020**

*"Perhaps you would benefit from relationship counselling. We can help you to work through problems in current relationships, explore the effects of past relationships or look at how to improve and enrich relationships for the future.*

*Counsellors working in local [Relationships Scotland counselling centres](#) offer relationship counselling to people over 16 throughout Scotland. We work with individuals and couples across a wide range of difficulties – from difficult communication to dealing with affairs, from sexual problems to dealing with the end of a relationship."*

**Samaritans**                 **Call: 08457 90 90 90 or email, see website: www.samaratins.org**

*"Samaritans provides confidential emotional support 24/7 to those experiencing despair, distress or suicidal feelings."*

**Scottish Women's Aid**      **Call: 0800 027 1234**

*"Scottish Women's Aid tackles domestic abuse and works to end violence against women."*

**Alcoholics Anonymous**      **Call: 0845 769 7555**

*"Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism."*

**Al-Anon**                  **Call**: 0141 339 8884 (Helpline 10am – 10pm, 365 days a year)

*"**Al-Anon Family Groups** provide support to anyone whose life is, or has been, affected by someone else's drinking, regardless of whether that person is still drinking or not.  For some of our members, the wounds still run deep, even if their loved one may no longer be a part of their lives or have died. We believe alcoholism affects the whole family, not just the drinker. We are an international organisation with over 800 support groups in the UK and Republic of Ireland. Al-Anon is a fellowship of relatives and friends of alcoholics who share their experience in order to solve their common problems."*

# Appendix C: Online survey design