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**THE DISCURSIVE PRODUCTION  
OF  
ROMANTIC REALITIES**

Volume II of II

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A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the  
degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
in  
Psychology

City, University of London  
United Kingdom

March 2018

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**Appendix 1:**  
**Reflexive Account for Language-Dominant**  
**Conceptualisation**

## **Reflexive Account: Establishing the relationship between 'discourse' and 'experience'**

In order to bring together the findings from the FDA with the insights from the IPA, I need to articulate a relationship between 'discourse' and 'experience'.

The focus groups in particular—and the associated demonstration of the power of discourses—strengthened my alignment to a language-dominant conceptualisation. This view proposes that discourse constructs experience (with discursive resources producing particular experiential realities). It is a social constructionist perspective that creates a top down story.

Willig (2017, p.285) offers these additional conceptualisations:

- 1) phenomenological ones which propose that experience pre-exists discourse but that discourse constrains how experience can be talked about;
- 2) positions in between such as one that proposes that discourse shapes experience by providing a context for it.

Since the early days of my PhD I have been inclined towards theorizing my research as essentially social constructionist (see Chapter 4: Enlivened Social Constructionism), with IPA *enlivening*, or adding 'purchase on the experience of being a person...' (Burr, 2015, p.232). However, during the research and analysis of both the IPA and FDA I tried to remain open to theorizing the research differently.

In terms of the alternative conceptualisations, the first option ceased to be convincing earlier in the research process and analysis. As demonstrated in the genealogy, romance is a historically situated social practice. Meanwhile, fellow research students, conducting IPA and FDA on psychosis for example, were surer in adopting a phenomenological perspective; psychotic episodes would arguably pre-date a vocabulary for it.

Conceptualisation 2 above, which could be seen as reflecting a critical realist approach, required more considered deliberation. However, after my experience and analysis of the focus groups, I am convinced that the lived experience of romance is fully mediated by language and social discourse. Below are some impressions from the focus group sessions that help to secure this view:

In the first all-female group, Nicky recognizes that her husband is a good provider, that she has a nice house, nice life—but *is feeling sad* that her marriage has turned into a friendship. Nicky is tearful. Until relatively recently (twentieth century) a husband being a good provider and having a nice life would be something that would be celebrated and help you *feel happy*.

Here I see the significant influence of the ‘romantic love’ discourse as producing (and not merely shaping) these feelings of discontent.

In the focus groups, participants’ take up, and move between, positions which are located in different discourses. When a participant relocated from a dominant to a marginal position, I was struck by how the tone of voice and choice of language also changed. For example, when women moved from a Traditional Receiver position, which is located in the dominant ‘romantic love’ discourse, to the Hard Realist position (a marginal subject position located in the ‘economic’ discourse) they employed more abrasive language and adopted an aggressive voice. It seemed that they were experiencing, from within these marginal positions, the need to defend themselves. Again it seems that the discourses themselves, dominant vs. marginal, are generating an experiential reality.

In the male focus groups, I was surprised by the participants’ frequent use of humour. The recourse to use humour, I discovered had much to do with presenting hegemonic masculinity, and laughter often revealed something about the limits of what was permissible social discourse (for these working-class participants). For example, in the first second all-male focus group Simon associated romance with word *bondage*, when he meant to say *bonding*. His fellow participants erupted in laughter: Simon blushed and corrected himself. Arguably if the discussion and participants were more liberal (friends of Foucault perhaps) he might have legitimately seen bondage as romantic. Then from within a liberal social discourse his experiential reality, even in that focus group room, would have been considerably different.

The focus groups were also remarkable forums in seeing how some people who engage in the exact same relationship behaviours, may experience these practices as romantic—while others, who inhabit other discourses, do not. Some women (and myself) would experience the gesture of a partner buying a favourite chocolate snack—as romantic. And in seeing the gesture as romantic, the receiver might have feelings of warmth and experience an enhanced sense of closeness with their partner. While other women, who draw on competing discourses and/or take up alternative pre-existing positions, receiving the same gesture of a chocolate bar, experience it as “part of the shopping” or “just being normal”.

As a final note, when I reflect back to my IPA of the interviews, I suspect that during these face to face discussions, the discourse that I introduced by way of my questions or conversation, may have affected how some of the participants experienced romance. A male participant who reported that his long-term girlfriend would regularly decry his lack of romance, was enthused and encouraged when I suggested that his relationship behaviours might be viewed by many women as romantic. Looking at this situation,

via a FDA lens, it would appear that the introduction of an alternative discourse had the power to transform an experiential reality, and shape whether a relationship was experienced as romantic—or not.

**Appendix 2:**  
**Reflexivity Log Extract**

## Reflexivity Log Extract

This extract from my reflexivity log is taken midway through the PhD.

Date	Prompt	Idea /Question	Reflection	Emerging Romance Formulation
June 2016	Moving from IPA interviews to FDA focus groups	Moving to a new data set, the focus groups, whereas Matthew and others used an and/or approach, which would use the same data set for IPA and FDA	<p>Reflection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feel like I'm losing the benefit of 6 months of intimacy with the interview data.</li> <li>• Could have been easier to do FDA with the data I'm already super familiar with.</li> <li>• Would have been interesting too.</li> </ul> <p>Aware that when I designed the methodology that I thought doing and/or would be tedious to revisit the same data set! (referenced in Jan, 2015 in this log)</p>	
June 2016	Moving onto the FDA	Feel enthused.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have more energy. Brain feels stimulated to be engaging in a new form of analysis.</li> </ul>	
		Relieved only to have 5 focus groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perhaps feeling drained from the IPA and 12 interviews. That a set of 5 transcripts feels much more 'doable'</li> </ul>	
	Coding FDA style	Approach to FDA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using 6-stages approach because of workshop experience and familiarity. Seems robust.</li> <li>• Might be missing something.</li> </ul> <p>Action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Need to compare it with A-A &amp; W, and Parker</i></li> <li>• <i>Or other approach, or design my own</i></li> </ul>	
June 2016	Creating discourse list. Have amalgamated a	The employment of wider discourses as resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interesting how Matthew draws up to a succinct set of higher discourses – e.g.</li> </ul>	

Date	Prompt	Idea /Question	Reflection	Emerging Romance Formulation
	list of several pages of discourses.	Keep it wide and broad, or tight and succinct?	<p>Attachment/ humanist discourses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vs. Kate Nicholls who peppers her thesis with all manner of discourses.</li> <li>• Other writers e.g. Burns; Willig are also succinct in their reference to wider discourses. Perhaps succinct is needed for an article.</li> <li>• Some seem to overlap</li> </ul> <p>Action: Need to identify where there are relationships and crossovers. Need to pick out the fundamental discourses</p>	
	Creating discourse list	Interrelation of different discourses		
June 2016	Initial FDA coding	Not sure if I'm 'getting it'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feel like I'm fumbling around in the dark.</li> <li>• Revisited workshop notes</li> </ul> <p>Action: Keep reading Design coding protocol to guide consistent &amp; robust approach Send in sample coding ; Call Carla for guidance</p>	
June 2016	Male focus group 1 coding	The process of construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus group is so powerful, clear that they are constructing romance in the room. E.g. asking each other whether housework can be romantic, or giving the missus money rather than buying her a gift, is still romantic.</li> <li>• Seem to be constructing romance as an</li> </ul>	The merit of focus groups to witness the process of construction
June		Is the romance discourse	• Seem to be constructing romance as an	Relationship

Date	Prompt	Idea /Question	Reflection	Emerging Romance Formulation
2016		embedded at times in a broader relationship discourse?	essential part of the relationship discourse. I ask a question on romance they answer about the relationship.	discourse
June 2016		Is a gender discourse related to the discourse of romance?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Romance seems to be constructed vis a vis their masculinity.</li> </ul>	Masculinity discourse
July 2016	Male focus group 1 laughter	I left the audio playing while I was making a cup of tea, and from a distance, it sounded like I was listening to a Sit/Com – the regular bursts of laughter.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is romance kind of funny for men?</li> <li>Is it the soppiness of it which requires a joke for balancing. They were more serious talking about trust, or couples who argue</li> <li>Is it just how man talk?. Would they be like that talking about other things.</li> <li>Is there something about me being in the room, that brought out the humbour?</li> </ul> <p>Action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is <i>humour related to masculinity in recent years?</i></li> <li>Investigation shows it is indeed!</li> </ul>	Function of humour Masculine discourse
July 2016	Male focus group 1 – re-listening to the audio	At the end of this session a participant remarked that my FG was like being down the pub	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Made me feel like the design was successful</li> <li>– I wrote in Jan 2015, that I wanted to the FG to be naturalistic – in that men and women are likely more practiced in discussing romantic issues in same-sex forums (e.g. with their buddies at the pub, or the guys at work etc.)</li> </ul>	Gendered discourse to romance
July	Moving onto the FDA,	Having worked naively for	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Will my results be unique?</li> </ul>	Romance being

Date	Prompt	Idea /Question	Reflection	Emerging Romance Formulation
2016	engaging more intensely with the literature	the IPA, and limited exposure to literature, now I see lots of parallels with my findings and academic resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The concept of the transaction in the relationship is well documented in the literature, for example.</li> </ul>	part of the relationship transaction, as identified in IPA.
July 2016	Moving onto the FDA, engaging more intensely with the literature	Have I been missing a traditional sense of gaining knowledge? Do I construct learning via formal means?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I must construct learning in formal traditional ways, otherwise I wouldn't be doing a PhD!</li> <li>It's energizing to be engaging with the literature again. Adding to my knowledge in a way, so very different from 'bottom-up' IPA.</li> </ul>	

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**Appendix 3:**  
**Juliet Secretary Report**

## **Juliet Secretary Report**

From The Juliet Club, Verona, September 2015.

<b>1) Question Raised to Juliet</b>	<b>Pg. 12</b>
<b>2) Phenomenological Dimension</b>	<b>Pg. 14</b>
<b>3) Discursive Constructions</b>	<b>Pg. 15</b>
<b>4) Personal Reflections</b>	<b>Pg. 20</b>



### **1) Questions Raised to Juliet**

*As a way of introducing the experience, here are some of the questions that I encountered:*

#### **Exploring Love Concepts**

- Should I love deeply? (without contingency)
- What is real love? (from lonely teenager who has been sexually abused by her grandfather and not believed by her mother)
- Does real love exist; given there is so much divorce?
- Is true love just fiction?
- Does life long love exist in today's world of hookups?
- Is love an illusion or reality? Does a true love story exist?

#### **Finding Love**

- Will I find true love?
- How to find a partner? (from autistic man)

- Seeking help to find a suitable husband
- How to be seen? (sense of being invisible)
- How is the best way of meeting a man when you are 38?
- How do you know when you've found the one?
- How will I find and recognize my lifelong love?

### **Keeping Love**

- Tips to help her future marriage be her 'first and only'
- How to stay in love forever (married to husband 4 years)
- How can I be sure that the certainty will stay?

### **Addressing Fears**

- Does the fear of putting yourself out there ever go away?
- Will someone want me?
- How to be open about my bi-polar to potential partners?

### **Difficult Decisions**

- Whether to stay with my boyfriend or move onto a new guy? (who is seeing someone else)
- Should I leave my husband to find myself, or stay with him for the sake of the kids?
- Should I have children with my husband, when I'm not sure we are in love?
- Should I finally try and find happiness? (married 25 years in a loveless relationship, the man she loves has been waiting 14 years)

### **Teenage Love Questions**

- Seeking help getting a hot boy
- When two people make eye contact is it a sign of something?
- How to balance boys and school work?
- How do I know he is going to stay?
- How do I know to wait for him and not to move on?
- Should I leave my boyfriend of 3 years?
- Will I find someone as great as the boy I met at 13? (girl aged 15)

### **Mothers' Concerns**

- Is there something I can do to help my children on their journey to find love?
- What do you suggest for her (son's) soul mate search?



## 2) Phenomenological Dimension

In order to practice identifying the experiential qualities of romantic love (for my current IPA of interviews), before drafting a reply to a letter I would note any text that seemed to reflect hot cognition. I was pleased to observe that this exercise helped me to compose a more empathetic response to the letter writer (*see more in Personal Reflections*).

My summary below speaks to the challenges and psychological distress encountered in the pursuit of the romantic love ideal.

### Hopeful

- Poetic
- Belief/hope in destiny 'it's a sign of something'
- Highly enthusiastic 'We are planning to be marry, I'm very excited'
- Desiring life long love 'really hope'
- Seeking closeness 'Will I see it in their eyes'

### Difficult Journey

- Anticipating a journey 'Their own journey to find love'
- It's a hard slog 'finding it hard'
- Intimidated by the magnitude: '...for your whole life? ...rest of our lives'



- Insistent 'I love him, I know these are strong words'
- Thirsty 'Going through a dry spell'
- Sense of doom and gloom: 'assume the worse will happen'

#### **My Odds are Low**

- Self-destruction 'cut myself down'
- Feeling old 'falling in love later in life' (from 38yr)
- Feeling invisible 'I just want someone to see me'
- Sadness 'will someone want me?'

#### **Locked up in thoughts**

- Distressed and regretful 'Cried many times wishing I have never met him'
- All absorbing 'I've been over and over it in my head so many times'
- Exhausting 'countless times'
- Restless 'Flipping back and forth'
- Trapped 'Locked up in my thoughts'
- Confused 'Honestly I don't know what to think'

### **3) Discursive Constructions**

In order to practice identifying discursive constructions (for my forthcoming FDA of focus groups), before drafting a reply to any letter, I would note obvious discourses. This exercise proved helpful in guiding the style of my response (*see more in Personal Reflections*). The table below shows a compilation of the various constructions that were presented in the letters.

#### **Discursive Object = romantic love**

I focused on discursive constructions; Stage 1 of the 6 FDA Stages as detailed in Willig, (2013). Stage 2 required locating the constructions within wider discourses, which may require more familiarity with accordant literature.

There seemed to be a few competing constructions

1. Romantic love is something that might not exist vs: it is a natural human condition
2. Romantic love is something that is universal vs. it differs by country
3. Romantic love requires communication and talk vs. you don't need to see or talk to them to feel it
4. Romantic love is something that will just happen to you vs. you need to go looking to find it.
5. Romantic love is something that is more likely to happen to you when you're younger vs. it can happen at any age
6. Romantic love with someone is something that will last a lifetime vs. it might not last forever

7. Romantic love with someone is something that requires knowledge/investment in order to last vs. it will last if you have the right person
8. Romantic love is something that can be damaged by a member of the dyad vs. it is resilient if you have the right person
9. Romantic love is something that you should forgo in some circumstances (e.g. children, parents, respectability) vs. you should pursue for personal happiness.

Other observations:

- It seems that it was ‘taken for granted’ that romantic love involved sex.
- There was an assumption that one person couldn’t have romantic love for two persons at the same time. Even for those who were involved in extramarital affairs, E.g. the mistress writes: ‘I am his true love’.

<b>General</b>	
It is something that requires belief	‘I want to believe in romance and allow it to consume me’
It is something that might not be true	‘Is it just in the fiction books’
It is something that is a natural human condition	‘... as natural as sleeping’
It is something that can be all consuming	‘I’m being locked up in my thoughts’
It is something that is universal	
It is something that is different in other countries	‘In my country...’
It is something that is at the forefront of every persons mind	
It is something that people long for	‘I long for a love like yours again’
It is something that makes you part of each other	‘he is my other half’
It is something that might be seen in the eyes of a person who is experiencing it	‘There is something in his eyes’
It is something that might be more meaningful when it happens in a less-ordinary setting	‘It was a great first romance and happened in Europe on a cruise.’
<b>Communication</b>	
It is something that even if you don’t see someone or speak to them, you may still feel about them	
It is something that involves communication and talk.	‘we have spoken a lot’
It is something that can be expressed in words	‘love has become empty words’
It is associated with expressing feelings	‘this guy has expressed more feelings’
It is something that involves buying gifts	
<b>Happiness</b>	
Without it something is wrong	‘it is the one thing missing’ ‘I come carrying the burden of all those who haven’t found their one true love.’
It is something that makes you happy	‘all my friends are happy and in love’
It is something that has a happy ending	‘I thought I had, a couple of years back but it ended badly’
<b>Exposing yourself</b>	

<b>General</b>	
It is something that requires you to share all parts of you – even the bits you don't like.	'see my nooks and crannies'
It is something that requires trust	'it is hard it to know if someone's love for you is real or just a way to use you' 'people lie and have masks' 'it is hard for me to be believe people, I hope one day I can and find true love'
It is something that requires an open heart	'I'm afraid of letting someone in'
It is something that requires letting go	'I'm afraid that I will never allow myself to feel as deeply as you did'
It is something that makes you vulnerable	
<b>Monogamy</b>	
It is something that is not true if they cheat on you.	'Some people claim they love you, but then cheat on you.'
It is something that involves loving just one person at a time	
It is something that can exist when people have other sexual/marital partners	'I am his true love'
It is something that may require you wait for a person to be available	
It is something that should involve monogamy	'I recently slept with someone else. I know that makes me sound terrible.'
<b>Sex</b>	
It is something that involves more than sex	
It is something that should involve sex	'I should also mention that we never have sex anymore.'
It is something that is incompatible with hook-ups and flings	
It is something that when expressed can result in actions – like sex	
<b>Marriage</b>	
It is associated with wanting to be married	'he tells me he wants to marry me'
It is something that may or maynot be present in marriage	
It is something that is associated with marriage	
<b>Finding love</b>	
It is something to be found	'whether I will find true love'
It is something that will just happen	'as natural as sleeping'
It is something that can take a long time to find	
It is something that can involve a journey in order to find it	
It is something that is difficult to find when you are out of dating practice	
It is something that is found through meeting men	
It is something that is easier to find if you are confident	
It is something that requires you to put yourself out there to meet someone	

<b>General</b>	
It is something that is more difficult to find when you are in your 30s or older	
<b>The right person</b>	
It is something that involves finding the right person	'I keep meeting men that are not right for me'
It is something that involves a shared sense of humour	'whenever we told each other jokes we laughed'
It is something that may be more difficult to find if you have high standards	Going through a dry spell because my standards are high
It is something that with an age difference can be a problematic	
It is something that requires them to love the entire person	'to find the man that will love all of me'
It is something that is associated with being accepted unconditionally	
It is something that requires a special connection to a person	'I know that he is different'
It is something that requires physical attraction	'Help me find a hot guy' 'I hate to say it but I don't even find him attractive'
It is something that requires people to have things in common	
It is something that requires deep feelings for a person	
<b>Forever love</b>	
It is something that can happen more than once	'it was a great first romance'
It is something that results in spending the rest of your life with them	'how will I recognize my lifetime love?'
It is something that is desirable if you can make it last	
It is something that may not last forever	
It is something that requires some knowledge to make it last	
It is something that requires knowledge of relationship behaviors	
It is something that can be destroyed by one of the involved people	
It is something that can be compromised by fear	
It is something that invokes a protection instinct - fear for their safety and longevity	
It is something that causes fear of loss - if he leaves	
<b>Love hurts</b>	
It is something that in its pursuit might involve rejection	
It is something that hurts when it doesn't work out	
It is something that could cause a broken heart	
It is something that can be misread resulting it feeling like a fool	
It is something that can be misrepresented just for sex	'love has become empty words, used to get sex'
It is something that, if it doesn't work, could cause you to be unable to provide for yourself	
<b>Is it genuine?</b>	
It is something to question when they hurt you	

<b>General</b>	
It is something that you might misread	'I thought I had, a couple of years back but it ended badly'
It is something to question if you have many doubts	
It is something to question when he doesn't treat you well or make effort	
It is something that might be false	'it is hard it to know if someone's love for you is real or just a way to use you'
<b>Family and Friends</b>	
It is something that you might forgo for the sake of your children	
It is something that mothers desire for their children	
It is something that might cause tension between parents and children if they don't agree	
It is something that parents might feel compelled to comment on.	
It is something that you share with your close friends and family	

### **Fellow Volunteers' Discursive Constructions**

Juliet Secretaries select the letters they wish to reply to. They are asked to represent the spirit of Juliet by offering friendship, compassion and encouragement. Juliet is non-judgmental.

- 'More teen drama' - sense that teenage angst (e.g. dated a boy two weeks and now he is dating my best friend) isn't as important as older people's issues
- 'Not another school assignment' - teachers would get school kids to write letters as homework, requiring that the Juliet Club would need to reply to 30 or so letters. The questions might not be about love, but details of the play or film.
- 'Here's an interesting one' - typically means something, or an issue, that you haven't seen before. Then we would share it for discussion.
- 'I can't do this one, she's terrible' - e.g. a women who might be married and seeing another man. Some volunteers felt that adultery was wrong, but the Juliet club practices 'non-judgment' so someone else would answer.
- 'she should leave her husband and follow her heart', many of the female secretaries were privileging ones heartfelt response. This would be countered by the male secretary 'has she shared her concerns with her marriage with her husband... she should give him a chance', thereby privileging communication and intimacy.
- We could choose the letters we replied to, which meant that you engaged in writing to people that you felt comfortable replying to.

#### 4) Personal Reflections

Prompt	Idea/Question	Reflection
Club guidance: Focus on the question that is posed	Many of the letters were highly emotional, complex and long. Making them seem a bit overwhelming to answer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I liked this guidance as it gave me a clear direction to my reply and helped with my reading of the more emotional letters.</li> </ul>
Writing as therapy	The Juliet Club suggests that just in the writing of a letter to Juliet, the person has potentially already helped themselves: they have organized their thoughts and may have reached there own answer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This made me feel less concerned about giving the 'perfect response'</li> <li>I would also look for the answer that may be revealed in the original letter.</li> </ul>
Hand writing vs. typing  At the Juliet Club all letters that are posted are replied to with a handwritten reply.	Does a hand written response offer something more than an email/typed letter?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I drafted my reply using my laptop, and then transposed this by hand onto the Juliet Club stationery. I discovered that I would tweak this version when it went on paper. I would be more careful – more economical - with my handwritten words. When words come easily via typing does that make us overly verbose, do we miss the craft of expression?</li> <li>I imagine that in today's world of emails, a hand written reply supports the significance of the content.</li> </ul>
Handwriting vs. tying  Some people email the Juliet Club, and these are replied via email. This is less than 5% of all correspondence!	I'm surprised so many people write by hand to Juliet. From their script, for some perhaps it's the only letter they have ever written. Why do they write by hand when they could email?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is there something fairytale like, romantic, about handwriting a letter about love.</li> <li>Or is it the old fashion nature of hand writing, when your writing a letter to Juliet (who lived in the 13<sup>th</sup>Century)</li> </ul>
Volunteer dynamics	One older, more mature volunteer seemed to be less patient with the younger volunteers e.g. university students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clearly age is seen, by some people as an indicator of life experience and thus wisdom</li> </ul>
	Found myself seeking the male volunteer's views more than the other female secretaries.	<p>I must at some level think men will offer a different opinion to mine and that of other females</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>He was more encouraging of giving men a chance.</li> </ul>

Prompt	Idea/Question	Reflection
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I wanted to offer in my letter a rounded view. And used my male colleague as a litmus test.</li> </ul>
	I liked the warmth of the group, sensing that they were all compassionate people to be working at the Club in a volunteering capacity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Perhaps I enjoyed it because they recognized me for my 'expertise'. An ego kick.</li> <li>The compassion and warmth was more than I usually experience in the more formal or business settings that I frequent.</li> </ul>
Tackling the pile of school homework letters	One of the volunteer's noticed several sets of letters from secondary schools that hadn't been answered (as they are not seen as important, urgent or as interesting) – decided that she would tackle them. All letters need to be replied to eventually, so if we don't handle them another volunteer will.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Found myself pitching in and handling a few too. It seemed like the right thing to do.</li> <li>I think it also engendered positive team spirit.</li> </ul>
My letter selections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Found myself seeking out letters from those in established relationships, married etc,</li> </ul>	I felt I had more to offer these writers. Indeed my answers came easily and confidently.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Something or someone I could identify with. For example Australian/New Zealanders/ British.</li> </ul>	I liked how Volunteers could reply to the letters they wanted to. In some way this means that they are more invested in the letter, the sender.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Letters that others would give me, that they felt were right for me.</li> </ul>	I felt honored to be considered by others as good for a certain kind of letter.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mixing it up.</li> </ul>	I also found that after a particularly heavy letter, I might seek out a more light hearted or basic letter that represented an easy reply. It was good to mix it up.
Before I drafted a response, I would note any obvious discursive constructions and phenomenological factors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This was to help me practice my identification of discursive constructions.</li> <li>When I did this pre-draft note taking my reply was more sensitive. In some ways I heard them more clearly.</li> </ul>	I also think that this practice of noting the discursive /phenomenological elements helped to make me less judgmental - created a little distance.
Getting into the swing of it	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I would start by noting the discursive /phenomenon aspects.</li> <li>Identifying the question being asked</li> </ol>	Loved having my pattern. Found myself guiding the new volunteers to approach the letters using steps 2-6 .

Prompt	Idea/Question	Reflection
	<p>3. Checking if the question was already answered in their text</p> <p>4. Have I answered this question before? After the first week there were some repeated questions, e.g. does true love exist? Where I could almost copy my reply from before.</p> <p>5. Would discuss answers or ideas with other volunteers and/or the Juliet Club's director if it was new to me or particularly sensitive.</p> <p>6. I would tend to assess the effort/time the sender had put into the letter (some were less considered than others e.g. written on scraps of paper and dropped by tourists into the box at the Juliet house) and tried to respect the investment of the writer.</p>	<p>This was useful for building my confidence.</p> <p>I was aware of my finite time at the Club and wanting to make a difference in a considered way.</p>
Physical writing conditions	We sat together at one large wooden table – there was an intimacy of working together.	Perhaps I enjoyed it more because of working alone in Dubai.
	Basic conditions – wooden benches, bring your own water, no perks.	Felt almost monastic, which seemed to add to the richness of the experience.
Ending my time at the Juliet Club	I decided to continue with the Juliet Club. I will be one of the Juliet Secretaries who answers the letters that come in via email.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I didn't want it to end.</li> <li>• Found myself seeking mementos (which is strange for me)</li> </ul>
	I would like to return for two weeks to Verona next year.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perhaps in 2016 the interpersonal contact will be even more important as there will be no data collection for my PhD.</li> <li>• The warm environment working with other compassionate persons, in a never-ending tumultuous sea of letters is rather inviting.</li> </ul>

## **Appendix 4: Interview Schedule**

## **Interview Schedule**

Topic Guide for Interviews: Understandings of Romance in Established Relationships

---

<b>Gender:</b>	<b>Age:</b>	
<b>Length of Current Relationship:</b>	<b>Previously Married/ Partnered?</b>	
<b>Children?</b>	<b>Ages</b>	
<b>Occupation?</b>		
<b>Date of Interview</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Pseudonym</b>

---

- a) What made you decide to want to take part in this study?
  - b) Tell me how did you meet your partner?
- 1) So what is romance? or What does the term Romance mean to you?
    - What are your own expectations of romance?
    - What do you believe others expect....
    - And any feelings that result from that
  - 2) Do you think men and women have different expectations of romance in a relationship?
    - What role does X play in romance for you?
  - 3) How do you think your relationship would be different if you had more romance? or less romance?
  - 4) If you were asked to bring something with you (e.g. an item from home) that told me about the romance in your relationship, what might you have chosen?
  - 5) Can you tell me about romance in your relationship over the years?
    - What happens? How do you feel?
  - 6) Can you tell me about a preferably recent experience that was romantic?
    - What happened? How did you feel?
  - 7) What do you think makes an experience or activity with your partner romantic?
    - What is needed for romance?
    - How can you tell that you're having a romantic time?
  - 8) In what ways would your partner describe you as romantic?
    - How has this changed over the course of your relationship?

9) Can you tell me about a recent experience which was less romantic than was expected?

- What happened? How did you feel?
- Are there times when you think it's better *not* to be romantic?

10) How do you think your romantic life would be if you had a different partner?

11) What difficulties, if any, do you have with romance in an established relationship?

- What romance do you want in an established relationship?
- What does it look like? / Can it be managed?

12) How do you see romance in your relationship in the future?

Is there anything more you want to tell me about romance in your relationship?

We are coming to the end of our session together is there anything you want to add or felt you didn't express?

---

Interviewer Reminder to set the scene:

Confidentiality is assured; the content of this interview will be associated with a pseudonym.

There is no right or wrong here, so please just share your honest perspective.

Seeking a deep understanding of your experience with Romance.

Reminder to probe the 'obvious', for example:

What role does x play for you?

What is it about x that is incompatible with romance?

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**Appendix 5:**  
**Angelfish 'How we work'**

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copyright protection reasons**

**Appendix 6:**  
**Social Media Interview Recruitment**

## Social Media Interview Recruitment

### Facebook



A screenshot of a Facebook post from a page named 'Angelfish'. The post is dated 4 March and is public. The text of the post is as follows:

**Angelfish**  
Posted by [redacted] · 4 March · 🌐

Calling males and females in Birmingham aged 35-50!

We are conducting an exciting new study on behalf of City University London into relationships. This study is part of a PhD in Psychology, which is seeking to answer the academic question: How do people in established relationships understand and make sense of their experiences of romance?

You will be required to take part in a 60-90 minute interview in Birmingham on either 16th/17th/18th March and will receive £35 cash for your time.

To save you some time, we invite you to complete a few short eligibility questions online. Should you qualify, one of our team will contact you via telephone to clarify your answers and arrange the next steps.

<http://survey.opinionseeker.co.uk/a/TakeSurvey?id=3171958>

Do you know anyone that might be interested in taking part in this project? For every friend that you refer that successfully takes part in this project, we will give you a £10 Amazon Gift Certificate. Make sure they mention you!

Thanks!

The Angelfish Team

### Twitter



A screenshot of a Twitter tweet from the account 'thisisangelfish'. The tweet is dated Mar 02, 6:30pm and was posted via Hootsuite. The text of the tweet is as follows:

**thisisangelfish**  
Mar 02, 6:30pm via Hootsuite

[@events\\_in\\_brum](#) People aged 35-50 - £35 cash for taking part in 90 min. market research on relationships #Birmingham [bit.ly/1BxXZPD](http://bit.ly/1BxXZPD)

**Appendix 7:**  
**Interview Participant Information Sheet**



**Title of study** *Understandings of Romance in Established Relationships*

Angelfish are recruiting participants on behalf of Sophia Ledingham for the City University research on the subject of understandings of romance in established relationships.

We would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether you would like to take part it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

**What is the purpose of the study?**

Romance is most often associated with the beginning of relationships, whereas this study is looking into romance in *established* relationships. This study is part of a PhD in Psychology, which is seeking to answer the academic question: How do people in established relationships understand and make sense of their experiences of romance?

The interviews will be completed during the spring of 2015 and the PhD is expected to be submitted in 2017.

**Why have I been invited?**

We are looking for heterosexual men and women, aged between 35 and 50 years old, who have been living with their partner, wife or husband for a minimum of 5 years. We are seeking people from the Birmingham area, who have English as their first language. We want to hear the views of people who 'live in the real world', so those who are financially privileged will be excluded. Also those who are educated to university level will also be excluded.

**Do I have to take part?**

Participation in the project is voluntary, and you can choose not to participate in part or all of the project. You can withdraw at any stage of the project without being disadvantaged in any way.

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

**What will happen if I take part?**

You will be asked to read and sign a consent form, and then take part in an interview to discuss romance in your relationship. In the interview, you can expect the following type of questions:

Version 11/10/2014

- What do you think makes an experience or activity with your partner romantic?
- How do you see romance in your relationship in the future?

There will be interviews with a total of 10 persons. Your interview involves just you and the interviewer.

The interview will take between 1-1.5 hours to complete and will take place at The Balmoral Room, Macdonald Burlington Hotel, Burlington Arcade, 126 New Street, Birmingham B2 4JQ

Your interview will be audio recorded to aid the transcription of the discussion.

You will be given an opportunity to ask questions before and after the interview.

**Expenses and Payments**

A payment of £35 will be provided to you after the interview. This is to include travel expenses. It will be paid in cash at the venue.

**What do I have to do?**

It is expected that you actively participate and contribute to the interview and to be genuine in the thoughts and views that you express.

**What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?**

There are no known risks in taking part in this study. It is highly unlikely that the interview method used in this study will have any harmful effects. However, if talking about the issues has made you feel upset, a referral list of Birmingham based counselling and health resources will be made available to you.

**What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

Romantic love is important to the psychology of relationships. This study will further our understanding of couplehood: it could flag taken for granted assumptions; and provide insights into the sensemaking of romantic experience - for those in established relationships. As such it will have benefits for marital/relationship guidance literature or therapy.

**What will happen when the research study stops?**

All information including participant consent forms will be destroyed if the research study is unable to be completed.

**Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?**

All information from the interviews will be treated confidentially by the researcher, in accordance with the strict guidelines set out by the British Psychological Society.

The consent form, which bears your name, will be separated from the rest of the information. Your contribution to the interview will be associated with a pseudonym. This will be an irreversible process as there will be no record

retained of how the pseudonym relates to you. It is then impossible to identify the individual to whom the sample of information relates.

The interview will be audiotaped and then transcribed. The audiotapes will be kept in a locked file, as will the transcripts.

All information will be managed and destroyed in compliance with the Data Protection and Freedom of Information legislation.

**What will happen to the results of the research study?**

The results of the study will be written up as part of a Ph.D. thesis and may also be written up and submitted as a research paper to an academic journal or presented at a conference. As part of our confidentiality policy, you will not be identified in any reporting of this research.

**What will happen if I don't want to carry on with the study?**

You are free to withdraw from the study without an explanation at any time.

**What if there is a problem?**

If you have any problems, concerns or questions about this study, you should ask to speak to a member of the research team. If you remain unhappy and wish to complain formally, you can do this through the University complaints procedure. To complain about the study, you need to phone 020 7040 3040. You can then ask to speak to the Secretary to Senate Research Ethics Committee and inform them that the name of the project is: Understandings of Romance in Established Relationships

You could also write to the Secretary at:  
Anna Ramberg  
Secretary to Senate Research Ethics Committee  
Research Office, E214  
City University London  
Northampton Square  
London  
EC1V 0HB  
Email: [REDACTED]

City University London holds insurance policies which apply to this study. If you feel you have been harmed or injured by taking part in this study you may be eligible to claim compensation. This does not affect your legal rights to seek compensation. If you are harmed due to someone's negligence, then you may have grounds for legal action.

**Who has reviewed the study?**

This study has been approved by the City University London Psychology Department Research Ethics Committee. Ref: PSYCH(R/L) 14/15 100

Version 11/10/2014

**Who is carrying out the research?**

The research is being carried out by Sophia Ledingham as part of her Ph.D. thesis in Psychology. The research is being supervised by Prof. Carla Willig (Professor of Psychology, City University London).

**Further information and contact details**

If you have any questions please email Sophia Ledingham at

[REDACTED]

Or contact her supervisor:

Professor Carla Willig, [REDACTED] Phone 020 7040 8522

D433, Social Sciences Building

City University London

Northampton Square

London, EC1V 0HB

**Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.**

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**Appendix 8:**  
**Interview Consent Form**



Title of Study: *Understandings of Romance in Established Relationships*  
 Ethics approval code: *PSYCH(R/L) 14/15 100*

Please initial box

1.	<p>I agree to take part in the above City University London research project. I have had the project explained to me, and I have read the participant information sheet, which I may keep for my records.</p> <p>I understand this will involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• being interviewed by the researcher</li> <li>• allowing the interview to be audiotaped</li> </ul>	
2.	<p>This information will be held and processed for the following purpose:</p> <p>The audio recording will be used for transcription purposes only.</p> <p>The information, that is transcribed from the audio will be analysed by the researcher for the purpose of analysis. The eventual interpretation of the interview information will contribute to a PhD in Psychology.</p> <p>I understand that any information I provide is confidential, and that no information that could lead to the identification of any individual will be disclosed in any reports on the project, or to any other party. No identifiable personal data will be published. The identifiable data will not be shared with any other organisation.</p>	
3.	<p>I understand that my participation is voluntary, that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that I can withdraw at any stage of the project without being disadvantaged in any way.</p>	
4.	<p>I agree to City University London recording and processing this information about me. I understand that this information will be used only for the purpose(s) set out in this statement and my consent is conditional on the University complying with its duties and obligations under the Data Protection Act 1998.</p>	
5.	<p>I agree to take part in the above study.</p>	

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Name of Participant                      Signature                      Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Name of Researcher                      Signature                      Date

When completed, 1 copy for participant; 1 copy for researcher file.

**Appendix 9:**  
**Focus Group Administration**

## **Focus Group Administration**

Based on Wilkinson (2008)

### **Beginning the Focus Group**

- Attending to participants' comfort (refreshments, toilets, any special needs)
- Signing consent forms
- Completing name badges
- Offering thanks, a welcome and introductions
- Setting ground rules for running the group.
  - be yourself;
  - differing views are welcome – don't feel like you need to agree with everyone;
  - try to include others;
  - voice your views to the group – and not solely your neighbour;
  - and let's aim to have one conversation going at a time.
- Reiterating issues of anonymity and confidentiality
- Outlining procedure (including confirming the finish time)
- Recapping purpose of the study
- Providing an opportunity to ask questions.

### **Ending the Focus Group**

- Giving a further opportunity for questions
- Reiterating thanks
- Reiterating confidentiality
- Providing further information, or possible sources of information (as appropriate)
- Debriefing (as appropriate) – including on an individual basis as necessary
- Checking that participants have had a good experience
- Completing payments
- Offering appropriate farewells.

**Appendix 10:**  
**Focus Group Participant Information Sheet**



**Title of study** *Understandings of Romance in Established Relationships*

Angelfish are recruiting participants on behalf of Sophia Ledingham for the City University research on the subject of understandings of romance in established relationships.

We would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether you would like to take part it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

**What is the purpose of the study?**

Romance is most often associated with the beginning of relationships, whereas this study is looking into romance in *established* relationships. This research is trying to identify the social influences that affect how individuals, who have established relationships, discuss and experience romance. For example, it could be that our talk and our choice of romantic acts and gestures is influenced by the internet, television, newspapers or our neighbours.

This study is part of a PhD in Psychology, which is seeking to answer the academic question: How is romance socially constructed through discourse? The focus groups will be completed during the spring/summer of 2015, and the PhD is expected to be submitted in 2017.

**Why have I been invited?**

We are looking for heterosexual men and women, aged between 30 and 55 years old, who have been living with their partner, wife or husband for a minimum of 5 years. We are seeking people from the Birmingham area, who have English as their first language. We want to hear the views of people who 'live in the real world', so those who are financially privileged will be excluded. Also those who are educated to university level will also be excluded.

**Do I have to take part?**

Participation in the project is voluntary, and you can choose not to participate in part or all of the project. You can withdraw at any stage of the project without being disadvantaged in any way.

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

**What will happen if I take part?**

Version 11/10/2014

You will be asked to read and sign a consent form, and then take part in a focus group to discuss romance in established relationships. In the focus group, you can expect the following type of questions:

- What (acts/gestures) would you describe as romantic?
- Do men/women want different things from romance in a relationship?

There will be between 6 to 8 persons in the focus group, including yourself. The focus group will take 1.5 hours to complete and will take place at QED Studio, 2A Frederick Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 6PB.

In the focus group room, will also be an assistant to the researcher.

The focus group will be video recorded, for the sole purpose of aiding the transcription of the discussion.

You will be given an opportunity to ask questions before and after the focus group.

**Expenses and Payments**

A payment of £40 will be provided to you after the focus group. This is to include travel expenses. It will be paid in cash at the venue.

**What do I have to do?**

It is expected that you actively participate and contribute to the focus group discussion and to be genuine in the thoughts and views that you express. It is asked that you keep confidential the information that is shared by other focus group participants.

**What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?**

There are no known risks in taking part in this study. It is highly unlikely that the interview method used in this study will have any harmful effects. However, if talking about the issues has made you feel upset, a referral list of Birmingham based counselling and health resources will be made available to you.

**What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

Romantic love is important to the psychology of relationships. This study will further our understanding of coupledom: it could flag taken for granted assumptions; and provide insights into the sensemaking of romantic experience - for those in established relationships. As such it will have benefits for marital/relationship guidance literature or therapy.

**What will happen when the research study stops?**

All information including participant consent forms will be destroyed if the research study is unable to be completed.

**Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?**

All information from the focus group will be treated confidentially by the researcher, in accordance with the strict guidelines set out by the British Psychological Society.

The consent form, which bears your name, will be separated from the rest of the information. Your contribution to the discussion will be associated with a pseudonym. This will be an irreversible process as there will be no record retained of how the pseudonym relates to you. It is then impossible to identify the individual to whom the sample of information relates.

The assistant, who will be in the room to help with any difficulties, make notes and operate the audio/video equipment, has signed a confidentiality agreement.

The focus group will be videotaped and then transcribed. The videotapes will be kept in a locked file, as will the transcripts.

All information will be managed and destroyed in compliance with the Data Protection and Freedom of Information legislation.

It should be noted that confidentiality cannot be *completely* guaranteed for information disclosed in the focus group, given the group nature of the discussion.

**What will happen to the results of the research study?**

The results of the study will be written up as part of a PhD thesis and may also be written up and submitted as a research paper to an academic journal or presented at a conference. As part of our confidentiality policy, you will not be identified in any reporting of this research.

**What will happen if I don't want to carry on with the study?**

You are free to withdraw from the study without an explanation at any time.

**What if there is a problem?**

If you have any problems, concerns or questions about this study, you should ask to speak to a member of the research team. If you remain unhappy and wish to complain formally, you can do this through the University complaints procedure. To complain about the study, you need to phone 020 7040 3040. You can then ask to speak to the Secretary to Senate Research Ethics Committee and inform them that the name of the project is: Understandings of Romance in Established Relationships

You could also write to the Secretary at:  
Anna Ramberg  
Secretary to Senate Research Ethics Committee  
Research Office, E214  
City University London  
Northampton Square  
London  
EC1V 0HB  
Email: [REDACTED]

Version 11/10/2014

City University London holds insurance policies which apply to this study. If you feel you have been harmed or injured by taking part in this study you may be eligible to claim compensation. This does not affect your legal rights to seek compensation. If you are harmed due to someone's negligence, then you may have grounds for legal action.

**Who has reviewed the study?**

This study has been approved by City University London Psychology Research Ethics Committee; reference number: *PSYCH(R/L) 14/15 100*.

**Who is carrying out the research?**

The research is being carried out by Sophia Ledingham as part of her Ph.D. thesis in Psychology. The research is being supervised by Professor Carla Willig (Professor of Psychology, City University London).

**Further information and contact details**

If you have any questions please email Sophia Ledingham at

[REDACTED]

Or contact her supervisor:

Professor Carla Willig, [REDACTED] Phone 020 7040 8522  
D433, Social Sciences Building  
City University London  
Northampton Square  
London, EC1V 0HB

**Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.**

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**Appendix 11:**  
**Birmingham Referrals for Counselling and**  
**Health**

## **Birmingham Referrals for Counselling and Health**

**Relate** offers counselling services for every type of relationship nationwide.

In Birmingham their offices are located: 111 Bishopsgate Street, Birmingham, West Midlands  
B15 1ET

**Phone:** 0121 643 1638

**Website:** <http://www.relate.org.uk>

**Hours:** 9:30 am – 9:00 pm

**BACP** British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy register.

This register of therapists offers relationship counselling as well as individual therapy.

**Website:** <http://www.itsgoodtotalk.org.uk/>

**Central Office Phone:** 01455 883300

They will assist to find an accredited therapist who is based in a convenient location for you.

**Hours:** Depends on the therapist.

**Birmingham Counselling and Psychotherapy Clinic** is a well established and respected centre for counselling. It doesn't have waiting lists and offers both relationship therapy as well as personal therapy.

**Website:** <http://www.counselling-direct.co.uk/about-us/>

**Phone:** 0121429 1578

Address of Clinic: 127 and 131 Pottery Road, Warley Woods, Oldbury, B68 9HE

**Hours:** until 9pm, 7 days a week.

### **Birmingham Walk-In NHS Clinic**

No booked appointments available. Walk-ins only

**Location:** Lower Ground Floor, Boots, 66 High Street, Birmingham, B4 7TA

**Website:** <http://www.thepracticegroup.co.uk/surgeries/birmingham-nhs-walk-in-centre>

**Phone:** 0121 255 4500

**Hours:** 8am-6pm weekdays, 9am-5pm Saturday, 11am- 3pm Sunday.

**Appendix 12:  
Confidentiality Agreements**

### RESEARCH ASSISTANT CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

#### [Understandings of Romance in Established Relationships]

I, Linda Steel [name of research assistant], agree to assist Sophia Ledingham [name of primary researcher] with participant support during the Interviews and Focus Groups. Tasks might include: greeting/hosting participants, managing latecomers, checking their personal identities to ensure they are the selected individuals, collecting the consent forms, coordinating with the interview/focus group venue, making incentive payments to the participants and assisting with the moderation of the focus groups (if required). I agree to maintain full confidentiality when performing these tasks.

Specifically, I agree to:

1. keep all research information shared with me confidential by not discussing or sharing the information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) with anyone other than the primary investigator;
2. hold in strictest confidence the identification of any individual that may be revealed during the course of performing the research tasks;
3. not make copies of any raw data in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts), unless specifically requested to do so by the primary investigator;
4. keep all raw data that contains identifying information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) secure while it is in my possession. This includes:
  - keeping all digitized raw data in computer password-protected files and other raw data in a locked file;
  - closing any computer programs and documents of the raw data when temporarily away from the computer;
  - permanently deleting any e-mail communication containing the data; and
  - using closed headphones if transcribing recordings;
5. give, all raw data in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) to the primary investigator when I have completed the research tasks;
6. destroy all research information in any form or format that is not returnable to the primary investigator (e.g., information stored on my computer hard drive) upon completion of the research tasks.

Provide the following contact information for research assistant:

Printed name of research assistant \_\_\_\_\_ Linda Steel \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of research assistant \_\_\_\_\_

Date 2 February 2015

Printed name of primary researcher \_\_\_\_\_ Sophia Ledingham \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of primary researcher \_\_\_\_\_

Date 4 Feb 2015

**RESEARCH ASSISTANT CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT**

**[Understandings of Romance in Established Relationships]**

I, Julie Crosby [name of research assistant], agree to assist Sophia Ledingham [name of primary researcher] with transcription support of the Focus Groups. Tasks include: transcribing inaudible passages where participants have a heavy Birmingham accent; and checking the accuracy of the transcripts provided by Take Note Typing (the contracted service provider) with reference to the audio or video recording. I agree to maintain full confidentiality when performing these tasks.

Specifically, I agree to:

1. keep all research information shared with me confidential by not discussing or sharing the information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) with anyone other than the primary investigator;
2. hold in strictest confidence the identification of any individual that may be revealed during the course of performing the research tasks;
3. not make copies of any raw data in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts), unless specifically requested to do so by the primary investigator;
4. keep all raw data that contains identifying information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) secure while it is in my possession. This includes:
  - keeping all digitized raw data in computer password-protected files and other raw data in a locked file;
  - closing any computer programs and documents of the raw data when temporarily away from the computer;
  - permanently deleting any e-mail communication containing the data; and
  - using closed headphones if transcribing recordings;
5. give, all raw data in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) to the primary investigator when I have completed the research tasks;
6. destroy all research information in any form or format that is not returnable to the primary investigator (e.g., information stored on my computer hard drive) upon completion of the research tasks.

Provide the following contact information for research assistant:

Printed name of research assistant \_\_\_\_\_ Julie Crosby \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of research assistant \_\_\_\_\_ Date July 15, 2016

Printed name of primary researcher \_\_\_\_\_ Sophia Ledingham \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of primary researcher \_\_\_\_\_ Date 15/July 2016

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**Appendix 13:**  
**Focus Group Consent Form**



Title of Study: *Understandings of Romance in Established Relationships*  
 Ethics approval code: PSYCH(R/L) 14/15 100

Please initial box

1.	I agree to take part in the above City University London research project. I have had the project explained to me, and I have read the participant information sheet, which I may keep for my records.  I understand this will involve: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• being in a focus group discussion led by the researcher</li> <li>• allowing the focus group to be videotaped</li> <li>• the researcher's assistant also being in the focus group room.</li> </ul>	
2.	This information will be held and processed for the following purpose:  The video footage will be used for transcription purposes only.  The information, that is transcribed from the video will be analysed by the researcher. The eventual interpretation of the focus group information will contribute to a PhD in Psychology.  I understand that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed for information which I might disclose in the focus group.	
3.	I understand that my participation is voluntary, that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that I can withdraw at any stage of the project without being disadvantaged in any way.	
4.	I agree to City University London recording and processing this information about me. I understand that this information will be used only for the purpose(s) set out in this statement and my consent is conditional on the University complying with its duties and obligations under the Data Protection Act 1998.	
5.	I agree to take part in the above study.	

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Name of Participant                      Signature                                      Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Name of Researcher                      Signature                                      Date

When completed, 1 copy for participant; 1 copy for researcher file.

**Appendix 14:**  
**Transcribers Confidentiality Statement**

## **Transcribers Confidentiality Statement**

Take Note, the transcribers of both interviews and focus groups, make the following statement regarding confidentiality in their terms and conditions.

### **10. Confidentiality**

10a. Take Note undertake to keep all information supplied by you confidential and will not disclose any information to third parties without your consent.

10b. All employees including all typists and proofreaders are required to sign a confidentiality agreement with us. If you would like us to sign a copy of your own we are more than happy to do so upon receipt.

10c. Once services are completed, Take Note will keep document copies for 30 days and these can be requested at any time. All hard and soft copies will then be deleted. If you would like for all material to be deleted immediately on completion, please specify when booking. All audio material is deleted or returned on completion.

<http://www.takenotetyping.com/contact-us/confidentiality-terms-and-conditions/>  
as retrieved on: 5, October, 2015.

**Appendix 15:**  
**University Ethical Approval**



Psychology Research Ethics Committee  
School of Social Sciences  
City University London  
London EC1R 0JD

16 February 2015

Dear Sophia Ledingham,

**Reference:** PSYCH(R/L) 14/15 100

**Project title:** Understandings of romance in established relationships. A study of romantic experience and discourse.

I am writing to confirm that the research proposal detailed above has been granted approval by the City University London Psychology Department Research Ethics Committee.

Period of approval

Approval is valid for a period of three years from the date of this letter. If data collection runs beyond this period you will need to apply for an extension using the Amendments Form.

Project amendments

You will also need to submit an Amendments Form if you want to make any of the following changes to your research:

- (a) Recruit a new category of participants
- (b) Change, or add to, the research method employed
- (c) Collect additional types of data
- (d) Change the researchers involved in the project

Adverse events

You will need to submit an **Adverse Events Form**, copied to the Secretary of the Senate Research Ethics Committee [REDACTED] in the event of any of the following:

- (a) Adverse events
- (b) Breaches of confidentiality
- (c) Safeguarding issues relating to children and vulnerable adults
- (d) Incidents that affect the personal safety of a participant or researcher

Issues (a) and (b) should be reported as soon as possible and no later than 5 days after the event. Issues (c) and (d) should be reported immediately. Where appropriate the researcher should also report adverse events to other relevant institutions such as the police or social services.

Should you have any further queries then please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Kind regards

Erika Suchanova  
Departmental Administrator  
Email: [REDACTED]

Katy Tapper  
Chair  
Email: [REDACTED]

## **Appendix 16: Transcription Conventions**

## **Transcription Conventions**

### **Interviews**

1. The symbol [...] indicates omitted material from a speaker's dialogue.
2. The symbol ... indicates omitted material.
3. The symbol [ ] content in closed brackets, offers extra verbal information.
4. The symbol (?) indicates difficulty deciphering the speech from the audio recording.
5. (Laughter) refers to the laughter of one or more participant.
6. The symbol ( ) content in round brackets, offers content clarifactory information added by the researcher for the reader.
7. (Silence) refers to extended pause
8. A participant's speech is identified by a pseudonym.
9. The researcher's speech is marked in bold.

### **Focus Groups**

1. The symbol [...] indicates omitted material from a speaker's dialogue.
2. The symbol ... indicates omitted material.
3. The symbol [ ] content in closed brackets, offers extra verbal information.
4. The symbol (?) indicates difficulty deciphering the speech from the audio or video.
5. (Laughter) refers to the laughter of one or more participant.
6. (Laughter + time code) refers to the laughter of *more* than one participant that lasts over 2 seconds.
7. The symbol ( ) content in round brackets, offers content clarifactory information added by the researcher for the reader.
8. (Silence + time code) refers to silence that extends beyond 2 seconds.
9. (Talking over each other/overtalking) is where two or more participants are talking at the same time, where this extends beyond two seconds a time code is additionally employed.
10. A participant's speech is identified by a pseudonym.
11. M or F: is used to indicate a male of female participant who could not be identified from the recording.
12. The researcher's speech is marked in bold.

**Appendix 17:**  
**Example of IPA Coding**

Emerging Themes	Interview	Exploratory Comments
<p>Fulfilling expectations Committed to prioritising her</p>	<p><b>SL:</b> Yeah. That's great. Tell me about, what does romance mean to you?</p> <p>P: What does romance, I try to be good, and I try to always think about-, I don't know whether I-, I, she might say that I am. I just say. All I try to do is put her first, and think of her.</p> <p><b>SL:</b> Yeah.</p> <p>P: I think I made a big, umm, mistake, with my first relationship. Umm, did you want me to carry on?</p> <p><b>SL:</b> Yeah, please, carry on.</p> <p>P: Yeah, 'cause I don't know how much I'm going on, you see. Umm, my first relationship, my marriage, right? Er, she went off in the end with somebody.</p> <p><b>SL:</b> Really?</p> <p>P: Her and I had three children. Do you know, when I went out with my pals, and my brother, and all my friends, which I do every, like, probably once a month, once every couple of months, I'd say that I had opportunities that I could have cheated. But I would never do it, because I worship my kids, and I-, I can tell you, like, I mean, it won't go no further than the walls, so, er, the times when I was tempted, I'd go to the toilet, throw water on my face, look in the mirror, and I'd say er, 'No. My kids are too important', and er, I've never done it. [Pause] I look back on that failed relationship, my failed marriage, as, I'm not angry now. That's why I can move on. We weren't best friends. We wasn't even properly</p>	<p>He feels a need to 'be good' in romance. Does this imply there's a 'bad'? (see next passage about mistake in first relationship). Implies that the view of bad or good would come from Grace? I just say '...' suggests this is repeated speech. Who does he says this to? Or is this a self-mantra? A way of keeping on the good path. Repeats 'try' x 3, implies effort - to be romantic.</p> <p>Mistake. First relationship. Peter's experience of romance in his current relationship is mediated by his experience of his first marriage as a 'failure'</p> <p>First wife was unfaithful. Left him for someone else.</p> <p>Is he wanting to assure me of his masculinity? In some way defending/clarifying his cuckolded position.</p> <p>Children given as reason for him staying faithful.</p> <p>Regular experience of being tempted to cheat, and then having to physically remove himself from the situation. Failed repeated x 2 'My failed' - sense of ownership of the failed marriage. Recalls the fury that he felt. Sensemaking that letting go of anger has helped him move on.</p>
<p>Past relationships as learning</p>	<p><b>SL:</b> Yeah, please, carry on.</p> <p>P: Yeah, 'cause I don't know how much I'm going on, you see. Umm, my first relationship, my marriage, right? Er, she went off in the end with somebody.</p> <p><b>SL:</b> Really?</p> <p>P: Her and I had three children. Do you know, when I went out with my pals, and my brother, and all my friends, which I do every, like, probably once a month, once every couple of months, I'd say that I had opportunities that I could have cheated. But I would never do it, because I worship my kids, and I-, I can tell you, like, I mean, it won't go no further than the walls, so, er, the times when I was tempted, I'd go to the toilet, throw water on my face, look in the mirror, and I'd say er, 'No. My kids are too important', and er, I've never done it. [Pause] I look back on that failed relationship, my failed marriage, as, I'm not angry now. That's why I can move on. We weren't best friends. We wasn't even properly</p>	<p>He feels a need to 'be good' in romance. Does this imply there's a 'bad'? (see next passage about mistake in first relationship). Implies that the view of bad or good would come from Grace? I just say '...' suggests this is repeated speech. Who does he says this to? Or is this a self-mantra? A way of keeping on the good path. Repeats 'try' x 3, implies effort - to be romantic.</p> <p>Mistake. First relationship. Peter's experience of romance in his current relationship is mediated by his experience of his first marriage as a 'failure'</p> <p>First wife was unfaithful. Left him for someone else.</p> <p>Is he wanting to assure me of his masculinity? In some way defending/clarifying his cuckolded position.</p> <p>Children given as reason for him staying faithful.</p> <p>Regular experience of being tempted to cheat, and then having to physically remove himself from the situation. Failed repeated x 2 'My failed' - sense of ownership of the failed marriage. Recalls the fury that he felt. Sensemaking that letting go of anger has helped him move on.</p>
<p>Spectre of past relationship</p>	<p><b>SL:</b> Yeah, please, carry on.</p> <p>P: Yeah, 'cause I don't know how much I'm going on, you see. Umm, my first relationship, my marriage, right? Er, she went off in the end with somebody.</p> <p><b>SL:</b> Really?</p> <p>P: Her and I had three children. Do you know, when I went out with my pals, and my brother, and all my friends, which I do every, like, probably once a month, once every couple of months, I'd say that I had opportunities that I could have cheated. But I would never do it, because I worship my kids, and I-, I can tell you, like, I mean, it won't go no further than the walls, so, er, the times when I was tempted, I'd go to the toilet, throw water on my face, look in the mirror, and I'd say er, 'No. My kids are too important', and er, I've never done it. [Pause] I look back on that failed relationship, my failed marriage, as, I'm not angry now. That's why I can move on. We weren't best friends. We wasn't even properly</p>	<p>He feels a need to 'be good' in romance. Does this imply there's a 'bad'? (see next passage about mistake in first relationship). Implies that the view of bad or good would come from Grace? I just say '...' suggests this is repeated speech. Who does he says this to? Or is this a self-mantra? A way of keeping on the good path. Repeats 'try' x 3, implies effort - to be romantic.</p> <p>Mistake. First relationship. Peter's experience of romance in his current relationship is mediated by his experience of his first marriage as a 'failure'</p> <p>First wife was unfaithful. Left him for someone else.</p> <p>Is he wanting to assure me of his masculinity? In some way defending/clarifying his cuckolded position.</p> <p>Children given as reason for him staying faithful.</p> <p>Regular experience of being tempted to cheat, and then having to physically remove himself from the situation. Failed repeated x 2 'My failed' - sense of ownership of the failed marriage. Recalls the fury that he felt. Sensemaking that letting go of anger has helped him move on.</p>
<p>Moral high ground Adultery a risk to children/marriage Need to remain faithful Owning failed relationship Moving on (process)</p>	<p><b>SL:</b> Yeah, please, carry on.</p> <p>P: Yeah, 'cause I don't know how much I'm going on, you see. Umm, my first relationship, my marriage, right? Er, she went off in the end with somebody.</p> <p><b>SL:</b> Really?</p> <p>P: Her and I had three children. Do you know, when I went out with my pals, and my brother, and all my friends, which I do every, like, probably once a month, once every couple of months, I'd say that I had opportunities that I could have cheated. But I would never do it, because I worship my kids, and I-, I can tell you, like, I mean, it won't go no further than the walls, so, er, the times when I was tempted, I'd go to the toilet, throw water on my face, look in the mirror, and I'd say er, 'No. My kids are too important', and er, I've never done it. [Pause] I look back on that failed relationship, my failed marriage, as, I'm not angry now. That's why I can move on. We weren't best friends. We wasn't even properly</p>	<p>He feels a need to 'be good' in romance. Does this imply there's a 'bad'? (see next passage about mistake in first relationship). Implies that the view of bad or good would come from Grace? I just say '...' suggests this is repeated speech. Who does he says this to? Or is this a self-mantra? A way of keeping on the good path. Repeats 'try' x 3, implies effort - to be romantic.</p> <p>Mistake. First relationship. Peter's experience of romance in his current relationship is mediated by his experience of his first marriage as a 'failure'</p> <p>First wife was unfaithful. Left him for someone else.</p> <p>Is he wanting to assure me of his masculinity? In some way defending/clarifying his cuckolded position.</p> <p>Children given as reason for him staying faithful.</p> <p>Regular experience of being tempted to cheat, and then having to physically remove himself from the situation. Failed repeated x 2 'My failed' - sense of ownership of the failed marriage. Recalls the fury that he felt. Sensemaking that letting go of anger has helped him move on.</p>

Emerging Themes	Interview	Exploratory Comments
<p>Past relationships as learning Need to be best friends</p> <p>Doing the 'right thing' Parenting identity vs. partner identity</p>	<p>friends at the, er, at the end. She done the right thing. We wasn't friends. I wouldn't have moved because I worship my kids. I put my kids above her, which, you know, it, it's not gonna make your, er, relationship, your marriage work.</p> <p><b>SL: Yeah.</b></p> <p>P: I was a good father, but I wasn't a good husband.</p>	<p>Best friends mentioned. Repeats <i>we wasn't friends</i>. Being friends is important to him. He would not have left her because of the kids. His big mistake (see before) was putting his kids above his wife.</p>
<p>Parenting identity vs. partner identity Children as tension?</p>	<p><b>SL: Okay.</b></p> <p>P: Er, so I understand. So I can look back, hold my head in the mirror and say, 'Look, I understand what, what she did. You know, I'm not angry about anything.' But I don't wanna make the same mistake, so, as a person who tries to move on, and umm, right the wrongs, my idea of what the, the initial question you asked me.</p>	<p><u>Important sensemaking about his failed relationship. Good is repeated.</u> On earlier page he mentions <i>'I try to be good'</i>. Does he mean being a good husband?</p>
<p>Fear of repeating the same mistake Need to get it right</p>	<p><b>SL: Yeah.</b></p> <p>P: Was I romantic? I don't know whether I'm romantic or not, that's not for me to say. Well, what, what I do say is, I do always try to put her first. I do always try to think about her. I try to think about what she'd want, how things benefit her, how this looks from her angle. That's my idea of romance. I try to think out the box and do some special things. I, I buy special presents. I try to put her, you know, her needs.</p>	<p>Repeats the word <i>understand</i>. Again reinforces his learning/sensemaking</p> <p>Fear of repeating the same mistake. <i>Right the wrongs</i></p>
<p>Romantic self defined by partner Prioritising your partner</p>	<p><b>SL: Yeah.</b></p> <p>P: Yeah, so, umm, do you think, when you look back to your first relationship, would you say-, would you say that there were moments that were romantic?.</p>	<p>Him being romantic is for Grace to say. <u>Is he then conscious of her approval/opinion in a way that he wasn't with his first relationship?</u> <i>Try repeated implying effort/work</i> <i>Put her first</i> repeated from earlier</p>
<p>Expressions of thoughtfulness Fulfilling expectations/needs</p>	<p>I try to think out the box and do some special things. I, I buy special presents. I try to put her, you know, her needs.</p>	<p>His idea of romance is thinking about her, and thinking about what she's thinking. <b>Mentalisation</b> Romantic gestures: gifts, special things. <i>Thinking out the box</i>, Is this being creative, or surprising her?</p>
<p>Relationship stage</p>	<p>P: What would I say? I'd say at the start, yeah, we was quite</p>	<p>Passion is associated with romance (at the start) See's first wife as a negative person. <u>Is positivity</u></p>

Emerging Themes	Interview	Exploratory Comments
Hunger for positive bond	<p>passionate about each other. Umm, [pause] we were quite passionate about each other, and, er, there were romantic, er, times. I'd always, try to, er, she's a very negative person I think. I, I think, it's my feeling that it was-, she was-, she had a negative-, she had a troubled upbringing and a negative outlooks, and she-, I think she wore me down. I, I, if I was defending myself, which I don't have to do, I'd say that she wore me down.</p>	<p><u>needed for romance? Or being able to build him up? (see below)</u></p> <p>Defending himself about the failure of first marriage. She had a troubled upbringing &amp; negative outlook contextualising the difficulty of the relationship. (Yet current partner is described similarly later)</p> <p><i>Defending myself</i></p> <p>'She wore me down' is repeated</p>
Appreciation as validating Positive reinforcement	<p><b>SL:</b> Yeah. 'Cause do you think sometimes to, to do, or to be romantic you need a willing participant, right? You need someone who's-, you, if you do it-,</p>	<p>'Here is he saying that she didn't build him up'</p> <p>Appreciation is important to him. But there's more to it. Seems that below is an account of being belittled. Seems to go with the phrase 'wore me down'</p>
Talking as sharing and trust	<p>P: Yeah, absolutely, yeah. <u>Somebody who can see. 'Do you know, you've gone to this much trouble.'</u> is half the battle, yeah, and they appreciate what you've done. Umm, what could I say about that? Umm, do you know, here's an example. Here's an example. This is something serious from my marriage that I never talked to her about, and I should've, do you know? I talked to her about things, so imagine you start out on this long road together, and I'd talk to her about things, and talked about how I felt, and the good things, like, 'Do you know? It was great today. I didn't do anything at work. We had-, the plant broke down all day and I had a great day.' Imagine how you feel, then, when every time there's an argument it's thrown in your face. 'You do nothing at work. And it's-, that's not once, I mean, that's like I tell her about this, and, yeah, things are easy 'cause of the-, so every time I told her something that I thought was positive, it would be thrown back in my face as, as a bad thing.</p>	<p>Use of word <i>battle</i>? Implies effort, work, war?</p> <p>Sensemaking that he should have talked to first wife about this issue. But didn't.</p> <p><i>Long road together</i> - metaphor for marriage? At the beginning wanted to share himself.</p> <p>Difficult experience of something he shared as a positive is then held against him.</p>
Needs positive attribution, to feel safe, to share/talk.	<p>'Do you know? It was great today. I didn't do anything at work. We had-, the plant broke down all day and I had a great day.' Imagine how you feel, then, when every time there's an argument it's thrown in your face. 'You do nothing at work. And it's-, that's not once, I mean, that's like I tell her about this, and, yeah, things are easy 'cause of the-, so every time I told her something that I thought was positive, it would be thrown back in my face as, as a bad thing.</p>	<p><i>Thrown in your face</i>: metaphor being slapped, hurt, pain, injury.</p>
Negative attribution	<p>'Do you know? It was great today. I didn't do anything at work. We had-, the plant broke down all day and I had a great day.' Imagine how you feel, then, when every time there's an argument it's thrown in your face. 'You do nothing at work. And it's-, that's not once, I mean, that's like I tell her about this, and, yeah, things are easy 'cause of the-, so every time I told her something that I thought was positive, it would be thrown back in my face as, as a bad thing.</p>	<p>repeats 'every time' to emphasise the continuation</p>
A sense of being assaulted by his first wife	<p>'Do you know? It was great today. I didn't do anything at work. We had-, the plant broke down all day and I had a great day.' Imagine how you feel, then, when every time there's an argument it's thrown in your face. 'You do nothing at work. And it's-, that's not once, I mean, that's like I tell her about this, and, yeah, things are easy 'cause of the-, so every time I told her something that I thought was positive, it would be thrown back in my face as, as a bad thing.</p>	<p>His positive dialogue turned, by her, into a negative. 'Threw back in my face' repeated</p>

**Appendix 18:**  
**Example of IPA Repetition of Themes**

## **Example of IPA Repetition of Themes**

This table is specific to Peter's case and lists themes that repeat a minimum of three times.

<b>Emergent theme</b>	<b>Repetition in the analysis</b>
Fulfilling duty/expectations	10
Doing the right thing	9
Empathy towards partner	9
Building each other up	8
Memory creation	8
Prioritising partner	8 (similar to Pleasing women)
Social comparison	8 (related to Sense of luck)
Lucky union	7 (similar to Acknowledging good luck)
Acknowledging good luck	6 (similar to Lucky union)
Children creating tension	6
Confusion	6
Valuing the connection	6
Forgoing others	6
Generating desired response	6
Generating excitement/buzz	6
Making an effort	6
Mentalisation	6
Pleasing women	6 (similar to Prioritising partner)
Positive reinforcement	6 (similar to Appreciation as validating)
Recognises unique aspects of union	6
Fantastic stories	6
Values looking good	6
In awe of his angel	5
Moral high ground	5
Articulating feeling	4 (similar to Heartfelt expression)
Celebrating the couple	4
Heartfelt expression	4
Getting in the zone	4
Life stage	4
Ex-husband as learning	4
Savouring memory	4
Understanding is gender specific	4
Being best friends	4
Appreciation as validating	3
Children as supportive	3
Identity as Partner vs. Parent Identity	3
Partner vulnerability	3
Personal cost	3
Relationships as vulnerable	3

**Appendix 19:**  
**Example of IPA Higher Order Theme**  
**Spreadsheet**

## Example of Higher Order Theme Spreadsheet

Extract of Spreadsheet showing 6 of the 15 higher order themes arranged into columns, containing related emergent themes. Highlighted cells depict emergent themes, which have been placed into more than one column.

Fantastic stories	Pleasing women	In awe of his angel	Being the hero	Trust - being safe	How things should be done
Adding drama	Assumes women desire romance without sex. (Apologises)	Acknowledging good luck	'He's a master'	Act of vulnerability	'say the right things'
Capturing a visual record (photo)	Articulating feeling	Amazed by how they have a great time together	Being envied /admired	Building each other up	Committed to one person
Celebrating the couple	Appreciation as validating	Belief in destiny /magical element	Builds him up	Connection = assurance	Confident with clear 'code'
Cost as limiting factor	talking – emotional intimacy	Delighted to have a sexy partner	Cheering her up	Emotional Intimacy and honesty	Confused about the rules
Creating a sense of occasion	Being thoughtful	Emphasising partner virtues	Confident	Conflict adverse	Confusion
Emotion filled memory	Cheering her up	Expectation that she'll look good.	Deep pleasure of people being in awe of him	Emphasises importance of talk to romance	Doing the 'right thing'
Enduring reminder	Conscious preparation	In awe of his angel	Delighted with sense of mastery	Friendship and happiness are essential	Doing what is right 'put her first'
Desires a beautiful wedding (for Grace?)	Cost as limiting factor	Expressing admiration	Desired response	Friendship key for future (happy ever after)	Employs traditional gesture (on one knee)
Extraordinary situation (holiday abroad)	Does it for her	Finds partner sexually desirable	Empathy towards partner	Gestures as heartfelt expression	Ex-husband stories as learning

**Appendix 20:**  
**Example of IPA Potential Formulations**

## **Example of IPA Potential Formulations**

These formulations are the three options that resulted from the IPA of Peter's interview.

The chosen option needed to reflect Peter's phenomenological experience of romance as well as address the research questions:

- What does 'romance' mean to people in established relationships?
- How do people in established relationships experience 'romance'?

### **Option 1**

#### **Master theme: Being struck by good fortune/ Feeling Lucky**

- Spectre of first marriage
- In awe of his angel
- Trust - being safe
- Connection
- Children as tension

#### **Master theme: Doing it right**

- How things should be done
- Male Identity vs Pleasing women

#### **Master theme: Feeling good about oneself**

- Fantastic stories
- Being the hero
- Being physically desired

#### **Master theme: Managing the happy ever after**

- Pleasing women
- Preserving personal happiness
- Being best friends

### **Option 2**

#### **Master theme: Feeling lucky**

- Being struck by good fortune
- In awe of his angel
- Spectre of first marriage (could go under doing it right or protecting the happy ever after)

#### **Master theme: 'Doing the right thing'**

- Fulfilling duty and expectation (learning from ex- stories)
- How things should be done
- Pleasing women

**Master theme: Being Significant (has a gender quality)**

- Fantastic stories
- Being the hero
- Being physically desired
- Having the connection

**Master theme: Protecting the happy ever after**

- Relationships as vulnerable
- 'Keeping on your toes'
- Emotional Intimacy (being best friends/trust feeling safe)

**Option 3** - *seems to reflect Peter's phenomenology of romance. Selected formulation.*

**Master theme: Feeling lucky**

- Being struck by good fortune (incl. children, time together)
- In awe of his angel
- Spectre of first marriage (could go under doing it right or protecting the happy ever after)

**Master theme: 'Doing the right thing'**

- Lauds the moral highground
- Repelling challenge
- Navigating Male Identity vs. Pleasing Women (could be below in pleasing women)
- How things should be done
- Guided by Past relationships

**Master theme: Pleasing women**

- Prioritising her
- Making her happy
- Navigating emotional and physical intimacy

**Master theme: Being the Significant Male (has a gender quality)**

- Feeling the connection
- Mutual physical desire
- Being the hero
- Fantastic stories

**Master theme: Protecting the happy ever after**

- Fear of failure
- Someone forever
- 'Keeping on your toes'
- Being best friends as future proofing

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**Appendix 21:**  
**Example of IPA Summary Table**

## Example of IPA Summary Table

This example of a master summary table is specific to Peter's IPA.

Master & Sub-themes	Quote/key word	Location
<b>Feeling lucky</b>		
Being struck by good fortune	<p>'how many couples of our age are blessed with, like, every other weekend where we're absolutely free.'</p> <p>'We're absolutely God-blessed. Umm, do you know, we have five children, of very different, like, er, ages. [...] and they all get on'</p> <p>'I could imagine several couples like us who have started off with a great relationship, [...] that has been worn away, over day and the years, with kids that don't get on. And wishes of different-, but no, we've, we're just absolutely blessed.'</p> <p>"This is what, what you mean to me, this is what-, you know, the special things that's happened to us, and how lucky we both are.'</p> <p>'We've been quite lucky, we've been lucky but we've always been lucky.'</p> <p>'she'll look forward to the time with me as special times, how romantic is that?'</p> <p>'we have a great time together and everything and we do, but it-, [pause] people will see that we're out together and 'What a life you two have,' sort of thing.'</p>	<p>Peter: 4</p> <p>Peter: 4</p> <p>Peter: 5</p> <p>Peter: 10</p> <p>Peter: 49</p> <p>Peter: 42</p> <p>Peter: 46</p>
In awe of his angel	<p>'I thought she had a lovely nature about her. She looked, looked lovely and everything, and she had a lovely nature about her.'</p> <p>'I thought she was gorgeous, like, I really did.'</p> <p>'she's the best thing I've ever met and we were just absolutely fantastic. I mean we still are to be fair, but I know that I, er, just the thrill of being with somebody that you're really happy with, really fancy, I really thought she was so beautiful and everything..'</p>	<p>Peter: 2</p> <p>Peter: 2</p> <p>Peter: 40</p>
Spectre of first marriage (could go under doing it right or protecting the happy every after)	<p>'every time I told her something that I thought was positive, it would be threw back in my face as, as a bad thing.'</p> <p>'she had a troubled upbringing and a negative outlook, and she-, I think she wore me down. I, I-, if I was defending myself, which I don't have to do, I'd say that she wore me down.'</p>	<p>Peter: 8</p> <p>Peter: 8</p>
<b>'Doing the right thing'</b>		
Lauds the moral high-	'if you don't think your relationship's important	Peter: 37

Master & Sub-themes	Quote/key word	Location
ground	<p>then you are really losing the plot'</p> <p>'she went off in the end with somebody. [...] Her and I had three children. 'I feel uncomfortable there, because that's somebody's-, that's somebody's, umm, wife, and that's not right. '</p> <p>'her proposal was, 'Er,' her ex-husband. 'Er, yeah, just get married. Let's just get married then,' or something stupid'</p> <p>'They're proper words, and do you know, my mum and my brother, and Grace at the start, used to, umm, buy the card for the words.'</p>	<p>Peter: 6</p> <p>Peter: 18</p> <p>Peter: 10</p>
Repelling challenge	<p>'I do what I do, I do what I feel is important.'</p> <p>'What the hell are you getting married for?' But it's what I wanna do, and I'm very solid about what I wanna do.</p> <p>"the times when I was tempted, I'd go to the toilet, throw water on my face, look in the mirror, and I'd say er, 'No. My kids are too important,'</p>	<p>Peter: 35</p> <p>Peter: 3</p> <p>Peter: 6</p>
Identity frustration: male vs. role in relationship	<p>who's right and-, you know, I feel who's writing these rules, I don't understand.</p> <p>'you're asking that as a naïve woman, you see. I don't think that a man would think, 'What are my romantic expectations?' A man would never think that.'</p>	<p>Peter: 33</p> <p>Peter: 20</p>
How things should be done	<p>if you're gonna do something special, it's got to be-, it's got to be right hasn't it?</p> <p>'we got-, decided to get married. A big expense and everything, and you wonder, you know, are you doing the right thing? But er, no, er, I'm very happy. I'd never want anybody else, and, er, it's the right thing to do. '</p>	<p>Peter: 19</p> <p>Peter: 2</p>
Guided by past relationships	<p>'I made a big, umm, mistake, with my first relationship. [...] she went off in the end with somebody.'</p> <p>'...You know, that's your partner, that's what we all forget. This is everything, this is our rock, this is everything we've got and it's very important to put as much effort into some of the things that you know, you consider important'</p> <p>I put my kids above her, which, you know, it, it, it's not gonna make your, er, relationship, your marriage work. [...] I was a good father, but I wasn't a good husband.'</p>	<p>Peter: 6</p> <p>Peter: 37</p> <p>Peter: 6/7</p>

Master & Sub-themes	Quote/key word	Location
	<p>'I don't wanna make the same mistake, so, as a person who tries to move on, and umm, right the wrongs,...'</p> <p>'we were both with partners who we didn't talk to-, Who weren't our friends.'</p> <p>'She'll tell me about one night where her partner...'</p> <p>'I wanted to make it right for her'</p>	<p>Peter: 7</p> <p>Peter: 28</p> <p>Peter: 29</p> <p>Peter: 19</p>
<b>Pleasing women</b>		
Prioritizing her	<p>'All I try to do is put her first, and think of her.'</p> <p>'I won't go down the friends route and everything. [ ] I want us to go out, and us to be happy.'</p> <p>'I do always try to put her first. I do always try to think about her. I try to think about what she'd want, how things benefit her, how this looks from her angle. That's my idea of romance.'</p> <p>It makes us special because, you know-, and it's just the two of us and You know, I love my kids very much, but it is hard work, but my special time, we do our special weekend for us together</p>	<p>Peter: 5</p> <p>Peter: 20</p> <p>Peter: 7</p> <p>Peter: 42</p>
Making her happy	<p>'I try to keep things romantic and-, because I know it's important to her, but I don't feel it's as important to me.'</p> <p>'you're asking that as a naïve woman, you see. I don't think that a man would think, 'What are my romantic expectations?' A man would never think that.'</p> <p>'I went up and bought her, umm, the platinum, which she always said she wanted, platinum, er, platinum, but it was very expensive.'</p> <p>'when they are feeling down, is for you, er, to one, understand, and two, umm, you know, umm, make them happy.'</p> <p>have a good conversation about things that are important to her. [ ] And things that matter and things that we need to resolve. And things we needed to talk about and she'd be happy.'</p> <p>Her reaction to that is massive. [...] And she'll tell everyone, and, er, she loves my cards, and, you know, that's one of the highlights for her.</p>	<p>Peter: 31</p> <p>Peter: 20</p> <p>Peter: 18</p> <p>Peter: 23</p> <p>Peter: 27</p> <p>Peter: 11</p>
Navigating emotional and physical intimacy	<p>'it doesn't have to be sexual to be perfect.'</p> <p>'They don't have to be romantic. For it to be a romantic night.'</p>	<p>Peter: 28</p> <p>Peter: 28</p>

Master & Sub-themes	Quote/key word	Location
	<p>'we'll have a little drink together before we go out. So that's the time for chatting and speaking to each other.'</p> <p>'if you tried to balance everything and you didn't have that too, that-, [reference to sexy bedroom activity] it would still feel-, it would feel like something was missing but there isn't any of that missing. You know, I think we're both very happy sexually as well'</p>	<p>Peter: 21</p> <p>Peter: 44</p>
<b>Being the Significant Male (has a gender quality)</b>		
Feeling the connection	<p>'just the two of us. Nobody else involved. There doesn't have to be another person in the world..'</p> <p>'you don't have to talk all the time when the connection's right. '</p> <p>'feel the connection from your partner. That everything's right, eye contact, umm, [pause] and just how they look, how they go at ease.'</p> <p>'you can tell when somebody's uptight and not right. And you can tell at the same time when somebody's, er, relaxed, making a connection to you-'</p>	<p>Peter: 22</p> <p>Peter: 22</p> <p>Peter: 25</p> <p>Peter: 25</p>
Mutual physical desire	<p>'I think it's important- to really fancy your partner '</p> <p>'special thing is when you do feel a connection and you talk a bit risqué, and flirty-, And whatever, and that can add a little bit of sexual, sensual spice to things-.</p>	<p>Peter: 33</p> <p>Peter:25</p>
Being the hero (connected to making her happy and generates the fantastic stories).	<p>'I went out and bought her the platinum ring that she always wanted, and hid it in my case, which is dangerous, because you're probably not supposed to do that. Hid it in my case, umm, and was waiting for the special night'</p> <p>I've brought Dec over and everything and everyone was like, 'Wow,'</p> <p>'...from Grace,' now are, 'Our relationship's and this, and I'm so proud of everything you do,'</p> <p>'she'll think that everything's the end, the end of the world sometimes. And, umm, I'll just show her..'</p> <p>That's, that's your-, well, I wouldn't say it's your job 'cause that's not right. Umm, it makes me feel great.</p> <p>'whenever we saw these celebrities when we're out and everything we'd take a picture. Even if we're just in Solihull, two of us dancing and, er, us on a night out. I get-, when I was-, 'Jesus,' 'He's a master,'</p>	<p>Peter: 18</p> <p>Peter: 45</p> <p>Peter: 10</p> <p>Peter: 23</p> <p>Peter: 23</p> <p>Peter: 45</p>

Master & Sub-themes	Quote/key word	Location
	'Glamorous couple,' on that and everything,	
Fantastic stories (closely connected to making her happy/being the hero)	'the story is that she'll-, er she nudged her friend and says, er, 'He's nice.' I had-, you'll laugh now, so, I, I had a tight Lycra top on and she nudged her friend and says, 'He's nice,' and then isn't that funny, in a room, an absolutely packed room full of people. Just sometimes I believe that things are meant to be.'	Peter: 1
	'Ant and Dec were in the restaurant. She adores Ant and Dec, so I followed him into the toilet. I've got to tell you the whole story-,'	Peter: 45
	'So the hotel had its own water park. The food was amazing. Well in anyway, beautiful, and it's just the seven of us on this picture with all of us looking amazing.'	Peter: 13
	'And I went down on my knees. And everyone in the restaurant was looking, and I, umm, proposed to her. [ ] And, er, she cried her eyes out, like, and it was just perfect.'	Peter: 18
	'I wanted her to always have that something special to look back on'	Peter: 19
	'They are amazing memories, it still brings out a tear.'	Peter: 18
<b>Protecting the happy ever after</b>		
Someone forever	'I just want somebody who I'll always be happy with.'	Peter:20
Fear of failure	I'm happy so I don't want things to go wrong.	Peter: 37
'Keeping on your toes'	That would be in the future and things, just because it keeps you on your toes, it keeps you-, it keeps you romantic, it keeps that connection like we've says and that-, it keeps that magic there'	Peter: 38
	'if you don't keep thinking and keep on your toes then things do get boring and everything and I don't want that to happen. '	Peter: 36
Being best friends (having emotional intimacy) as future proofing	'..if you're not friends, you haven't got a-, you haven't-, it's like building a house on sand, there's-, it'll collapse. You're going to end up with nothing in the end.'	Peter: 29
	If you've got things right and you're still best friends then you can conquer and cure anything.	Peter: 44
	'that wears down on a relationship. If you can't talk to the person.'	Peter: 8

**Appendix 22:**  
**IPA Integration Recurrent Themes**

## **IPA Integration Recurrent Themes**

Master themes that were voiced by 75% of participants (9 or more of the 12 participants)

Doing the right thing	9
Protecting the happy ever after	9
Sanctuary from the world	9
Protecting the relationship	9
Keeping on the path	9
Idealised experiences – and the sun was shining	9
Returning to pre-kid life	9
Having something to look forward to	9
Pleasing women	10
Need for affection	10
The massive gesture	10
The child factor	10
Doing it our way	10
Taking responsibility/ making it happen	11
Relationship stage	11
Treating ourselves	11
The smaller gesture 'keeping the plates	11
Treasured Connection	11
Hero/Not her hero	11
Cherishes closeness	11
A sprinkle of sparkle	12
Chivalry	12
Grand gestures not necessary/necessary	12
Male role	12
Assured of solid relationship	12

**Appendix 23:**  
**IPA Integration Draft Summary Table**

## IPA Integration Draft Summary Table

Below I have constructed 6 clusters of themes. These capture the main categories of meaning that I think the participants are using to account for romance in their established relationship.

<b>Master Theme &amp; Sub-themes</b>	<b>Quote</b>	<b>Location</b>
<b>That's how we tick</b>		
<i>We do it our way</i>	<p>The fact that we know each other now, so we know that we don't have to go out and do what the films say, or do what the TV programmes say, we know that doing what we do is romantic.</p> <p>...if he wasn't bothered, he wouldn't do it, you know, and that bothering is our own way of our-, being romantic or showing you care</p> <p>We, we need that time together and we need the intimacy really. That's what makes us tick I suppose.</p> <p>I'm cush with that, like, it's-, that's how we tick.</p> <p>I think it's just about spending time together, and, but then sometimes it does, you know, we both like a drink. And we have a drink after our meal, and next thing you know we, you know, getting drunk and, that's just the way we are really.</p> <p>I just think it's not the, the stereotype romantic couple that we are but we are romantic in our own little ways. And I think fun for us makes, creates romance. It doesn't have to be serious</p> <p>I know my, some of my friends, they have one set day a month where it's just them. They'll go out for a really romantic dinner and, whereas me and my husband, we'd rather just go out and be silly and probably get drunk</p> <p>... that's not to say that you can't have romance any time during a relationship or a long-term relationship or being married as such as we are. But I think it's probably just never been that way</p>	<p>Don 5</p> <p>Hannah 17</p> <p>Lily 11</p> <p>Hannah 20</p> <p>John 3</p> <p>Kelly 18</p> <p>Kelly 4</p> <p>Jackie 18 (unrom.)</p>
<b>Keeping it real</b>	<p>'So, you know, imagining and the reality of it, it's very-, it's very, very different. '</p> <p>...it was just illness focused, his health focused, literally. There was no time and energy for romance, on either side, a, because of him being ill...</p> <p>And it's not the-, I don't know, the fairy-tale book, do you know what I mean?</p> <p>...if you're somewhere and you're down, and you're sad, [pause], it's not going to seem-, to me, it's not going to happen (romance) and you can't, sort of-, you can't force that to happen</p> <p>I think she just expects it 24/7, then she gets really upset all the time because it's not, it's not like off the films is it?</p> <p>'Cause it goes like that, life's like that, it's up and down, isn't it? And you can't always-, can't always do it, for whatever reason.</p> <p>...he's been umm, prepping for an interview for a new job. So I'm probably trying to be like quite playful with him and just messing about really and he's like, 'Can you just leave me alone, I've got to get this</p>	<p>Hannah 21</p> <p>Hannah 23</p> <p>Martyn 12</p> <p>Martyn 12</p> <p>Kelly 15</p> <p>Will 12</p> <p>Kelly 11</p>

Master Theme & Sub-themes	Quote	Location
	<p>done.' 'Cause I knew he's been bothered about it because it's been a long process of what he's going through to get the job</p> <p>...you know, that's life sometimes, isn't it? It's so busy with everything else that you can't always completely, solely dedicate that time to each other</p> <p>I think sometimes you can probably be too wrapped up in each other, you know? You've got to, kind of, be real in the real world, haven't you?</p> <p>...but when it comes to what you, so-call, 'romance'-, That doesn't, sort of, come on the Richter scale. The sort of things that we do between us, that we enjoy.</p>	<p>Hilary 8</p> <p>Hilary 17</p> <p>Jackie 19 (unrom)</p>
<p>Expectation reconciliation</p>	<p>I'm not a big expectation, that I'd expect the world, and that this is not going to happen, or that's going to happen</p> <p>So at the start it wasn't, because I think people's expectations, like you said, the films, and it's all meals out, chocolates, flowers, but now she knows because it's coming from a good place, that it is romantic. So the compromise has been met, and it works.</p> <p>...you almost know the boundaries, so, you know, you've got more of a-, more of an understanding of your partner's, you know, romantic needs.</p> <p>Umm, even just the odd bunch of flowers brought home or I don't really get that to be fair. [ ] No but that would be nice but that's not the be all and end all for me.</p> <p>So I think the balance that we've got is probably-, well it must be right, because we wouldn't still be together really if it wasn't. So I think the balance that we've got, you know, is right.</p> <p>...he use to get me breakfast in bed, and things like that. That didn't last long though, but I wasn't surprised. I wasn't surprised, I thought, 'Hey up, it's too, this ain't going to last too long.'</p> <p>I know, 'cause it's Valentine's Day, that I've got to do a bit more effort and a bit more, say, maybe take her out for dinner, etc., etc. So, her expectation, if I was to give flowers, is that I haven't really thought about it and I've just give flowers [ ] then it looks like that you've not, you've made no effort, doesn't it? So, that could be a bit of a cause for concern.</p> <p>... she wouldn't expect me to do that, and-, unless I'd won the Lottery, and then she'd probably want to be showered with it, but it's not-, do you know what I mean? At the end of the day or the end of the month, we've still got bills to pay, we've still got kids to feed.</p> <p>Yesterday I was lying on the sofa watching the football, and she just got a blanket and just put it on top of me. You know, little things like that. It's just nice and-, Umm, what else? That's about it really. I don't look for things like that really, I'm happy as-, happy as I am really.</p> <p>He's-, as I said, he's not the typical romance, flowers, chocolates and things like that, but there-, it's more gestures that he does and it doesn't have to be he's bought something, it could just be something silly. And that's what I think we both-, as I said we both do with each other.</p>	<p>Hannah 22</p> <p>Don 2</p> <p>Will 3</p> <p>Lily 2</p> <p>Hilary 17</p> <p>Hannah 15</p> <p>Will 3</p> <p>Martyn 7</p> <p>John 12</p> <p>Kelly 11</p>

Master Theme & Sub-themes	Quote	Location
	<p>...she expects to be wined and dined and, she's got this picture in her head of how it should be and she never gets those expectations met by her partner. So I think she sets the bar too high.</p> <p>He's not always the romantic, so when he does something like that he really means it.</p> <p>...his romance and my romance are probably poles apart.</p> <p>I'm forever at different times, saying things to him, you know, 'You should say this,' or 'You should do that,' or something.</p> <p>I just do not know why he isn't like that. And it will not matter what you say, or what you do, it just falls on deaf ears. He thinks-, and you can just say it 'til the cows come home, but it just doesn't happen...</p>	<p>Kelly 15</p> <p>Kelly 2</p> <p>Jackie 6 (unrom.) Jackie 2 (unrom.)</p> <p>Jackie 19 (unrom.)</p>
Relationship behaviours framed as romantic	<p>It's sometimes not the massive gesture, it's just more the small things, that I think that, you know, although it might not look romantic, it's being, sort of thoughtful.</p> <p>I think the fact that she knows-, well, I've seen the window wipers aren't working, I go out and do that. I think the fact that that day I thought about her, that she finds it romantic.</p> <p>...some days, he'll do the washing up for me, or, he'll vacuum, and he knows, and he's, like, he does it 'cause he does bother, 'cause he cares, because he knows that I'm tired, you know</p> <p>I probably cook once a month, but when I do cook that once a month, well, I know that Jane appreciates the fact that I've done that, because it's not something that-, it's not something that I do, if that makes sense.</p> <p>...just doing someone's lunch for the day, for the next day. Putting a note in someone's lunch. Umm, getting their car valeted. Er, I don't know. Organising a-, even organising a babysitter so she can go-, well, organising it so I can look after the kids and she can go out.</p> <p>...it sounds silly when I say it out loud, yeah, just like, I know for a fact that we always take a drink to bed.</p> <p>If he's been out with his friends, just, I know it's probably not romantic to other people, but he'll always come back and bring me my favourite takeaway</p> <p>...that was probably a romantic gesture, because I was just being thoughtful and considerate, knowing that he'd got a stressful day</p> <p>Probably other people would see it as romantic but I don't really see it as such.</p> <p>I don't know whether I class things as romantic though. I don't think what I do, you know, things like that, I don't sit there and think, 'Oh, that's romantic. That's, you know, romantic that he's done that.'</p>	<p>Will 3</p> <p>Don 19</p> <p>Hannah 9</p> <p>Martyn 6</p> <p>Will 8</p> <p>John 7</p> <p>Kelly 3</p> <p>Hilary 10</p> <p>Jackie 14 (unrom.)</p> <p>Elaine 12 (unrom.)</p>
<b>Cherishing togetherness</b>		
Sanctuary (emotional sanctuary)	<p>I think it's the factor of having a good bond, is very, I feel safe.</p> <p>So like, previous relationships, I wouldn't have showed that, my fragile side, because you want that 'me man, you woman' type thing, yeah?</p>	<p>Hannah: 37</p> <p>Kenny 14</p>

Master Theme & Sub-themes	Quote	Location
	<p>...he'll be like, 'Come on over here then, let's have a cuddle. Tell me about it,' sort of, like, petting me, 'Come on, tell me what's wrong, baby.'</p> <p>Yeah, yeah, I like, close the curtains and make it cosy. Just so you shut off from the outside world and-,</p> <p>All the world outside and just do what you like to do together.</p> <p>...just the two of us. Nobody else involved. There doesn't have to be another person in the world,.</p> <p>He's my go-to all the time if ever I need advice or I need a cuddle because I'm upset, it's always him that I need really and it's always been like that.</p> <p>...she'll say, 'Have you had a bad day?' And I'm, like, 'Yes, it's alright, just, you know, a crap day,' and she'll come towards me to give me a cuddle, as if to say, you know, 'Well, you're here now,' [pause] I suppose, and then it makes you think, 'Well, I can forget whatever has happened at work,' or whatever has happened anyway.</p> <p>...when they are feeling down, is for you, er, to one, understand, and two, umm, you know, umm, make them happy.</p> <p>Listening is probably the most important thing sometimes, 'cause I think sometimes you need to just offload things</p>	<p>Hannah: 33</p> <p>Don 6</p> <p>Kelly 3</p> <p>Peter 22</p> <p>Lily 12</p> <p>Martyn 5</p> <p>Peter 23</p> <p>Hilary 9</p>
Affection matters	<p>...it's affection and, like, umm, that being there</p> <p>It's nice that-, you know, hold hands, or link arms, or arm around-, otherwise you're just two people walking down the road. So it's nice, and you do that, and it does make you feel nice.</p> <p>...we're both shattered and it's probably a Friday night and we're just on the settee and cuddle really, yeah. Snuggle into each other, yeah. Not even necessarily kissing, just snuggling, yeah. [ ] Yeah because I felt that I've been close to him, yeah definitely.</p> <p>...we can, can be watching it (telly) and just lying down, snuggling together. When you turn the lights of and just get the little blanket and lie on the sofa. They're little romantic times.</p> <p>...to me, I suppose, romance to a degree, is making somebody-, making sure somebody's aware that you love them. Umm, and there's a number of ways that, you know, you can do that, show that, and, you know, [pause] I suppose, holding hands, cuddle, that's all-, to me, that's all part of it.</p> <p>It's about, like, looking at that other person and showing them, you know, affection and, umm, making them feel special</p> <p>I think that's always been the barrier. Not because he's not romantic, it's affection.</p> <p>I think because we're quite content and we're not, like, a touchy, huggy, you know, we'll have a little hug and a kiss and that and that's, that's nice.</p>	<p>Hannah 20</p> <p>Don 10</p> <p>Lily 9</p> <p>Kelly 14</p> <p>Martyn 5</p> <p>Hilary 9</p> <p>Jackie 16 (unrom.)</p> <p>Elaine 3 (unrom.)</p>
Physical connection	<p>...that sexual time, it does be important, it does.</p> <p>...you got to have a physical attraction obviously. That's the-, I think if you're not attracted to somebody, then it would be really, really hard for</p>	<p>Hannah: 20</p> <p>Don: 10</p>

Master Theme & Sub-themes	Quote	Location
	<p>me personally</p> <p>I mean it would just end up intimate, wouldn't it? You know, as soon we're alone time we do that as well and that just makes you closer I think, for me anyway, yeah.</p> <p>...it's nice to know that he still finds me attractive as well because although we, we're obviously going to age, aren't we? As we get older, it's-, I know it's all about the inner person as well but it's nice to know that he's still attracted to me and me to him, yeah.</p> <p>...when she comes down in, in her-, in her nice clothes and nice dress, and she comes down or whatever, and you're thinking, 'That effort there is for me'. 'That's for me,' and it's like she-, well, she might feel the same. I come down, get your best suit on, do whatever you-, everything's polished, you're gleaming, and they're thinking, 'Yes.'</p> <p>...if you tried to balance everything and you didn't have that too, that-, (reference to sexy bedroom activity) it would still feel-, it would feel like something was missing but there isn't any of that missing. You know, I think we're both very happy sexually as well</p> <p>I think it's important- to really fancy your partner '</p> <p>...it's, we do have sex, don't get me wrong [ ] I suppose you can get a bit staid, can't you, with it, when you've been in a romance-, a role for a long time.</p> <p>So then if he wants sex, I'm, like, 'No because, like-, and then he'll go grumpy and things like that, where I'm quite fine without-, without it but I think men are more needy that way than women are.</p>	<p>Lily 8</p> <p>Lily 14</p> <p>Kenny 16</p> <p>Peter 44</p> <p>Peter 33</p> <p>Jackie 8 (unrom.)</p> <p>Elaine 9 (unrom.)</p>
<b>Relationship Insurance</b>		
Protecting the relationship	<p>...we both take an active approach in, in working at the relationship in romantic ways. Because if we don't, then there might not be a relationship, do you know what I mean?</p> <p>You'd just be two people living in, cohabiting probably, if there weren't that kind of, [pause] kind of (romantic) link, you'd just be two people going to work, coming home, just chatting. And I think you need-, if there weren't that then we wouldn't be together.</p> <p>It's so easy just to lose it really, isn't it? And just end up living together and [pause] running through really.</p> <p>...couldn't imagine life without Colleen. And me thinking about life without Colleen would make me want to cry. Because that's how important a part of life-, well, she is my life.</p> <p>I'm happy so I don't want things to go wrong.</p> <p>...you build your relationship on, special times as, if you keep going, you know, not doing anything together nice and just living and the working and cooking and cleaning-, I think that's where it can fail, relationships.</p> <p>I'd just like to think we'd, we wouldn't go to that boring, mundane, not doing anything, sitting watching telly every night. Yeah. I hope it wouldn't change.</p> <p>I think you have to, because if that starts to fade away, then I think</p>	<p>Will 9</p> <p>Don 3</p> <p>Lily 11</p> <p>Kenny 18</p> <p>Peter 20</p> <p>Kelly 7</p> <p>Kelly 14</p> <p>Hilary 6</p>

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	sometimes a relationship just breaks down really. For us anyway, I think it's an important part of our relationship really,	
Making couple time	<p>You know, when you've got five kids, and you've had a busy schedule, there's not much 'me' time that you get anyway, so, you know, even if that's just a quick half an hour once the kids have gone to bed. Or, you just sit and have a-, even if it's just a quick five-minute cuddle,</p> <p>...prior to the alarm going off, I've already had an alarm call with him, so to speak, our time, you know</p> <p>I think we both accept-, in fact, we do both-, there's a-, to a degree, certain things like that, to find the 'us' time, there's a lot more planning needs to go into it.</p> <p>It's just definitely effort [pause] and taking advantage of the fact when, it sounds awful, but when she (daughter) isn't around, make sure we do spend time together.</p> <p>...making arrangements that you're going out at least once a month, and things like that. At least, umm, 'cause if you don't have that, then it, it just-, it just passes you by, so, yeah, making a concerted effort</p> <p>... you have to start making time for each other.</p> <p>...we used to like sneak into bed and, like, watch telly in bed and just snuggle up in bed when she used to have her afternoon naps. Just things like that, I was like, 'Quick, quick, she's asleep, come on, let's go.</p> <p>I think taking the time out and making them special memories, even if you don't spend any money-, And doing things together. I think that's the most important thing.</p> <p>...we're both very much aware that we still need to make time for each other. You know, and that's very important even with having a busier life than perhaps we had when we first started going out, when there was just the two of us.</p> <p>...my mates say to me, 'Come out, come out,' and I turn them down. She goes, 'Why are you turning them down for?' I says, 'Cause I wanna spend the time with you,' and, and she does the same. Umm, so [pause] even if we just sat in front of the TV watching a film, or watching a series, or a box set, we enjoy, and we think that is romantic.</p> <p>We've got some good friends that, you know, who'll try to come round, you know, just go for date night or they'll phone up, 'We just fancy a curry,' on a Friday night [ ] it's nice sharing things with, like, another couple that's got the same sense of humour and chat. So I can talk to my friend and, you know, they talk and we talk, so yeah.</p> <p>I don't think I'd like somebody too romantic, like, 'We're going out for, you know, just a candlelit dinner for two of us,' and, 'We're doing this, just the two of us.'</p>	<p>Hannah 2</p> <p>Hannah 20</p> <p>Martyn 13</p> <p>Lily 4</p> <p>Will 13</p> <p>Kenny 3</p> <p>Kelly 14</p> <p>Kelly 7</p> <p>Hilary 14</p> <p>Don 5</p> <p>Elaine 6 (unrom.)</p> <p>Elaine 8 (unrom.)</p>
Taking responsibility and making an effort	<p>I might not necessarily cook because I'm not the best cook anyway but I'll probably make the effort in the bedroom department I suppose. I think so. Yeah, for my husband</p> <p>You know, that's your partner, that's what we all forget. This is everything, this is our rock, this is everything we've got and it's very important to put as much effort into some of the things that you know, you consider important'</p>	<p>Lily 9</p> <p>Peter 37</p>

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	I think sometimes it's important to take time to, to set that mood, you know, whether it be a night away, or, or an afternoon together, or whatever that may be. You know, make the effort, because it's, it's very easy-, it's very easy not to make the effort.	Will 7
	If you want them to be happy and that makes them happy, then surely you'd put the effort in to do that but I think a more established, yeah I think you would. Even though you know each other more and you, you understand each other more, I think it's easy to slip out of the romantic side of things.	Lily 15
	...you've always got to-, we'd always have to work, I'd say work at it.	Martyn 14
	But that's down to me and my partner, isn't it? To make sure. And if it isn't, then talk about it to, to make it happen.	Will 9
	I don't think you'll ever be romantic if you don't put effort in.	Kenny 7
	The fact is that you, you probably shaved and showered, and polish your shoes before you go out. Not just putting your shoes on. You put that little bit more effort into it, just makes that other person feel that little bit more special, maybe.	Kenny 16
	...and it was romantic because we both wanted it to be good. I'd put the effort in. She'd put the effort in. She was enjoying it, I was enjoying it	Kenny 6
	...if you don't keep thinking and keep on your toes then things do get boring and everything and I don't want that to happen.	Peter 36
	I think you need to take a step back sometimes and see what you've got. 'Cause sometimes you don't appreciate it, after such a long time. It just becomes part of you and you just go along with it. So I think you do have to make sure you're making it work as well.	Kelly 16
	...we were meant to have a nice night out but he'd been to the football beforehand and he'd got too drunk. So it wasn't what it was meant to be. So I was really annoyed then. 'Cause I'd made the effort and he hadn't.	Kelly 11
	I really don't know what he sees as romance. Umm, [pause, loud exhale] I suppose, to him, it might be if I was to cook him a meal. Because he does most of the cooking, nowadays. [ ] he would like that. Umm, and I haven't done that, I must admit, for a long time.	Jackie 6 (unrom.)
<b>Pleasing her</b>		
Male responsibility/chivalry	I think there's, it's, sort of, one-sided to a certain extent, where, that it's-, society looks at it as if the, the man's meant to, sort of, instigate the majority of it.	Will 2
	I don't know how someone can be romantic to a man where you can be more romantic to a woman. You can buy a woman gifts.	Kenny 11
	...you haven't got to do the big gesture every day, but you've, perhaps, got to do the smaller gestures most days, if that makes sense?	Will 4
	It's-, so it is-, it's getting harder, because you're always trying to think, 'What can I do? What can I do? How can I-, how can I be romantic? What will she like?'	Don 3
	I'd say probably actually he's more romantic than me then because I	Lily 2

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	<p>don't really do anything [laugh]. I've bought him the odd little present or [pause], you know what? I don't, do I? No I'm not very romantic then. [Laugh] I'm really not.</p> <p>I think ladies always-, you know, they like to be treated, and they like to go out for a nice meal, you know, candle lit</p> <p>I'd always pay for the meal when we go out. Umm, [pause] I spoil her on her birthday, always get her flowers, like</p> <p>...you're asking that as a naïve woman, you see. I don't think that a man would think, 'What are my romantic expectations?' A man would never think that.</p> <p>I do always try to put her first. I do always try to think about her. I try to think about what she'd want, how things benefit her, how this looks from her angle. That's my idea of romance.</p> <p>I try to keep things romantic and-, because I know it's important to her, but I don't feel it's as important to me.</p> <p>...he treats us both like princesses together. And it's really nice.</p> <p>Umm, just like him to, sort of, be the one to instigate something or to ask you to go out for a drink or to [pause] have a meal or go to the pictures.</p> <p>I always feel like he should be doing the romance, not me,...</p> <p>They're doing it for you, aren't they, like the little gestures and that? They're making an effort. I sound really selfish now because it's, like, all him making the effort and not me. [Respondent laughs].</p> <p>I don't know whether I'd-, I'm the type of person that would like constant attention all the time, or somebody faffing all over me and fussing. Umm, I don't know whether I'd, I'd like that if-, whether that's romantic or controlling.</p>	<p>John 10</p> <p>John 11</p> <p>Peter 20</p> <p>Peter 7</p> <p>Peter 31</p> <p>Kelly 3</p> <p>Jackie 3 (unrom.)</p> <p>Jackie 2 (unrom.)</p> <p>Elaine 10 (unrom.)</p> <p>Elaine 8 (unrom)</p>
<p><i>The massive gesture</i></p>	<p>Er, what made it romantic? Just the fact that she's, you know-, she's got her dream car.</p> <p>I went out and bought her the platinum ring that she always wanted, and hid it in my case, which is dangerous, because you're probably not supposed to do that. Hid it in my case, umm, and was waiting for the special night</p> <p>He bought me some diamond earrings and left me, like, a little trail to find them and they was, like, tucked in his coat jacket and I thought that was quite thoughtful.</p> <p>I booked us a holiday, I suppose. I, I booked it, and I says, 'Look, this is what we're doing,' and I suppose that, that was probably the latest thing I did. And it was to a place where we, er, where we've never been.</p> <p>I've got her 40<sup>th</sup> coming up pretty soon. So, on a scale of one to ten of romance, you know, I've got to do something pretty spectacular.</p> <p>...if I know that she'll enjoy something, as in I know that she wanted to go on the boat trip down the Thames on the speedboat, and turn round and come back, and then go on to the London Eye, it wasn't cheap, but it was nice to see her face.</p>	<p>John 10</p> <p>Peter 18</p> <p>Lily 12</p> <p>Don 4</p> <p>Will 18</p> <p>Kenny 5</p>

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	<p>Ant and Dec were in the restaurant. She adores Ant and Dec, so I followed him into the toilet. I've got to tell you the whole story-,</p> <p>...we travelled on Christmas Day and my birthday was in the January. So he'd kept the ring all that time and not told me. And, so I, I think that was quite romantic of him.</p> <p>It's not just, just that going shopping. He's done it for a reason-, So we can go out later in the night. He's done that before when it was my birthday and I didn't realise, and he got all my friends to come out and then got a babysitter without me knowing.</p> <p>So after nearly nineteen years of marriage, to go away on our own was quite a big thing really. So it was extra special...</p> <p>...one of the Christmas presents that he did was, umm, a little anagram and, umm, and it spelt out the word 'Oliver', and he took me to go and see Oliver in London. And so that was probably one of my most memorable first dates with him, I suppose.</p> <p>...unless it was something I was choosing, I wouldn't want somebody to go and buy me a piece of jewellery like that, unless, I am a bit funny like that [laughs].</p>	<p>Peter 45</p> <p>Kelly 2</p> <p>Kelly 6</p> <p>Hilary 7</p> <p>Hilary 1</p> <p>Jackie 9 (unrom.)</p>
<p>Surprises/unprompted gestures</p>	<p>You know, the odd bunch of surprise flowers, once in a blue moon, without a reason.</p> <p>I went to Solihull a few weeks ago, and my wife's favourite perfume's Paris, umm, Yves Saint Laurent Paris, and she went shopping, and I just went-, walked round and bought her a little bottle of perfume, and it was like-, no special reason, but it was just nice.</p> <p>...sometimes I'll come home from work and he's run me a bath. That to me I think is really nice because he's obviously thinking about me when I'm not there kind of thing.</p> <p>...she knows that I've been thinking about her, and I think the thought that she knows I've been thinking about her makes it romantic. It's not as if she's left me a note saying, 'Pick up these things,' I've done it.</p> <p>I'll go to the shop and get a thank you card, and just thank her for spending her life with me, and making my life special. And stuff like that, just silly things which are nothing things, but they obviously mean a lot,</p> <p>...when I first had my daughter and it was quite hard, and I'd gone downstairs the one morning and he'd left a little note. And just saying, 'Poppy still loves you,' umm, 'Even though it's been hard,' And left some money for me to go shopping.</p> <p>So it was really, really lovely and a complete surprise. So that made it even more special really.</p> <p>Like, some men are a bit lax, aren't they? You know, you have to prompt them sometimes but, umm, yeah.</p> <p>...you just want something to be from that person. Rather than you instigating it</p>	<p>Hannah 1</p> <p>Kenny 2</p> <p>Lily 2</p> <p>Don 19</p> <p>Kenny 2</p> <p>Kelly 5</p> <p>Hilary 8</p> <p>Lily 2</p> <p>Jackie 19 (unrom)</p>
<p>Response rewards</p>	<p>Her reaction to that is massive. [...] And she'll tell everyone, and, er, she</p>	<p>Peter 11</p>

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	<p>loves my cards, and, you know, that's one of the highlights for her.</p> <p>It's, you just-, you just know from the vibe you're getting and the smile that, that, that means, you know, you're-, well, put it this way, if it's not going well, you know [both laugh], do you know what I mean? So that's the way that I would weigh it up, but it-, you know, you just know, because they're enjoying it, they're laid back, they're chilled out.</p> <p>There are certain things that-, I suppose, that I do, and I know, you know, if I buy flowers, and I know Jane's going to go, 'That's lovely,' and be over the moon with it. And I know then, umm-, [pause] that's my way of showing my affections, I suppose, and, yes, that-, in fact, Jane would say, 'Oh, you're so romantic.'</p> <p>...my joy on the-, on the whole thing was to see her enjoyment.</p> <p>Well, she does enjoy it, (the 1 hr of playing with her hair) and she literally-, it's the highlight of her day she says.</p> <p>...feel the connection from your partner. That everything's right, eye contact, umm, [pause] and just how they look, how they go at ease.</p> <p>And I went down on my knees. And everyone in the restaurant was looking, and I, umm, proposed to her. [ ] And, er, she cried her eyes out, like, and it was just perfect.'</p> <p>I was just amazed; I couldn't believe he'd done it</p> <p>I was going home thinking, 'What a waste of time, waste of money,' really disappointed because-, not disappointed for myself. Not even disappointed about the food, umm, I was more disappointed that she was disappointed in the evening, do you know what I mean</p> <p>... he just knows I'd probably take something back if I didn't like it. So, probably, that way-, and I keep-, I think the children know that a bit as well. So, probably, I am too bolshie</p> <p>...it was quite funny that he had to take it (gift) back and then got the wrong thing and I didn't like it and he had to go back again. I'd go, 'If you'd just listened to me in the first place, then you'd know what I'd want.</p>	<p>Will 6</p> <p>Martyn 5</p> <p>Kenny 12</p> <p>John 14</p> <p>Peter 25</p> <p>Peter 18</p> <p>Kelly 2</p> <p>Kenny 8</p> <p>Jackie 9 (unrom.)</p> <p>Elaine 14 (unrom.)</p>
<p><i>I put pressure on myself/getting it right</i></p>	<p>I suppose if I could make it more romantic, it would be like, going out and especially looking for stuff, just for her. So it probably would be a bit more stressful, maybe. [ ] Finding the right thing. Knowing you're doing the right thing.</p> <p>I look at it probably, there's little pieces to, I don't know, if you say, a jigsaw, and there's lots of little pieces, and sometimes you get one of the pieces in the wrong place.</p> <p>...no point in taking someone out to dinner, and then, you know, not complimenting them. Not, you know, being polite and ignoring them, because then it's-, you're not being affectionate, are you? You're not being affectionate, both to them mentally or physically or-, you're not being able to deliver that if you just sit there, just, sort of, cold, then that, that romance, that, it's lost, isn't it?</p> <p>Only putting pressure on myself, I'm not, not pressured from-, by anyone else, but, it is, like, a big thing though. 'Cause you can-, and you</p>	<p>Don 5</p> <p>Martyn 6</p> <p>Will 17</p> <p>Will 18</p>

<b>Master Theme &amp; Sub-themes</b>	<b>Quote</b>	<b>Location</b>
	<p>don't want to blow it, do you?</p> <p>I put pressure on myself trying to outdo myself, to do nice things.</p> <p>I think it would be a-, the right time to be more romantic as well. Because, you know, it's a start of a celebration, and, you know, I think, not that you have to be romantic, but I think it's the right thing to do.</p> <p>...if you're gonna do something special, it's got to be-, it's got to be right hasn't it?</p> <p>I wanted to make it right for her</p> <p>...he just makes sure that he does everything right and how I like it. I know that sounds really weird-, But he knows, even down to-, because he eats meat, I don't eat meat, he'll cook a vegetarian meal for all of us. He just makes sure that he doesn't do anything that I wouldn't like.</p> <p>But then, sometimes, you just think, 'Haven't you got no more common-, haven't you got common sense to just know what I do and don't like.'</p>	<p>Don 4</p> <p>John 15</p> <p>Peter 19</p> <p>Peter 19</p> <p>Kelly 6</p> <p>Jackie 5 (unrom)</p>
<b>Something to look forward to</b>		
Departing from daily life	<p>I guess you get to a stage where you just realise that you've got to keep on doing things. And probably make more of an effort to do them, because you get bogged down with everyday life.</p> <p>Oh yeah, definitely, because I think you'd-, every Saturday you went to the same pub then [pause] you'd get bored, and I think-, yeah, I think if you get bored, then it doesn't help the romance.</p> <p>We'd probably go out so that we've got just each other's company, kind of thing, we'd go and have a meal. So you're almost forced to sit and talk to each other and catch up then, rather than once you're at home, there's, there's always something to do, isn't there? You know, one of us would be washing the car or putting the washing on, do you know what I mean? Like, the normal mundane things.</p> <p>...to think about doing things more often 'cause you get stuck in the mundane life, day to day and you don't think, 'Oh, let's just stop, let's go and do something.</p> <p>... I think maybe you appreciate the fact that you've got that, umm, time back, and you're not just a full-time parent. Umm, I'm not just somebody that then goes to work, to pay the bills, to come home, do you know what I mean?</p> <p>... we was away from the family. It was just myself and Colleen, it was quality time spent together away from, it's away from other people, but it was time that we spent together, and I think, umm, as adults with children</p> <p>...just make that little, private our time, otherwise he's the same as, you know, we'd be in that same old, stuck in that rut, doing the same old, same old, you know. So, that, to us, is our, you know, our own time</p> <p>'Cause then you'd just be left with the everyday life. And I don't think it would work then 'cause it would be a bit boring. You'd just be getting on, you'd just be doing, plodding along doing the same thing. Which isn't us really.</p>	<p>Will 9</p> <p>Don 12</p> <p>Lily 5</p> <p>Kelly 3</p> <p>Martyn 12</p> <p>Kenny 5</p> <p>Hannah 19</p> <p>Kelly 10</p>

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	<p>I mean we'll probably sit at the table once every three months. So when we sit at the table, that is romantic I suppose.</p> <p>I might, like, light the candles and, umm, and, you know, maybe prepare one of his favourite meals, umm, and, kind of, just set the mood really. We quite often have music on anyway in the house, but I would probably choose, you know, a more, kind of, suitable track to play, umm, in the background</p> <p>Umm, and I suppose, just off the-, you know, just, sometimes, if they would say, like, you know, 'This Saturday shall we go up-, shall we do such and such?' But that just never happens.</p>	<p>John 10</p> <p>Hilary 3</p> <p>Jackie 16 (unrom)</p>
Living the life	<p>...it was nice for that day, was that-, do you know, that little bit of luxury and lavishness. To spend money on yourselves</p> <p>...well, it'll just be-, it'll be me and her for a bit, and then there's, like, the Grand Canyon and all of that, 'cause she wanted to go and see all of that, so there'll be all that on the helicopter and all that</p> <p>We stopped in a suite, and it was just-, if you describe it, what it was like, it was lovely. It was romantic. We had dinner in a library served by waiters in, umm, penguin suits and everything, and it, it was-, how would you describe that day? That, that day was amazing. Went to the spa followed by dinner. And lovely suite, so-, and do you know what I mean?</p> <p>...she had opened like a big gold envelope, and in there was a shopping spree with some money in, like, another envelope. And it was, kind of like, 'Okay, get ready, we're going to-, ' where did we go? Umm, Oxford. Er, we went shopping there, then we stayed over in Oxford, went out for a nice meal in the Malmaison, that's probably a romantic thing. That was really romantic in fact.</p> <p>...whenever we saw these celebrities when we're out and everything we'd take a picture. Even if we're just in Solihull, two of us dancing and, er, us on a night out. I get-, when I was-, 'Jesus,' 'He's a master,' 'Glamorous couple,' on that and everything,</p> <p>So the hotel had its own water park. The food was amazing. Well in anyway, beautiful, and it's just the seven of us on this picture with all of us looking amazing.</p> <p>...he'll pick something and then say, 'I think this really suits you' and then when we get home he's like, 'Come on then, get your dress on, we'll go out tonight.'</p> <p>On my first Mother's Day, he got me a spa day experience and we both went there. [ ] it was my first Mother's Day and he'd made sure that we both enjoyed it. Went for it together so it was just me and him, we got a babysitter.</p> <p>And it ended up being really super special, because when we got to the room there was, like, umm, petals on the bed and there was towels made out in, like, heart shapes.</p> <p>...we went to this little backstreet restaurant, and he had the grapevines, and there was a guy playing a violin and-, [pause] you know, and the wine was lovely, and it just-, it just felt good. It just felt, 'Yeah, this is</p>	<p>Kenny 10</p> <p>Will 19</p> <p>Kenny 6</p> <p>John 11</p> <p>Peter 45</p> <p>Peter 13</p> <p>Kelly 6</p> <p>Kelly 2</p> <p>Hilary 2</p> <p>Don 9</p>

Master Theme & Sub-themes	Quote	Location
<p><i>Something to look forward to</i></p>	<p>nice.</p> <p>It sounds like I want my daughter to leave home but when she's got her own life when she's older, it's like, 'Yeah, we'll go to these places. You know, we'll try different holiday destinations and yeah. We'll go away for weekends,</p> <p>And we hadn't got around to booking anything yet, so I thought, I'm gonna book it, we need something to look forward to, I went ahead and booked it.</p> <p>So, it makes it worthwhile. Well, it just-, I think you need it, because if it just carries on, you know, nothing changes, and it's quite mundane, then it becomes defeated and run down, so I think it needs it from both sides</p> <p>...when you go to a nice restaurant, you have to pay some very nice prices, don't you? But umm, no, I do look forward to it, I do look-, you know, having a laugh, treating ourselves, umm, yeah</p> <p>...she'll look forward to the time with me as special times, how romantic is that?</p> <p>I go to the theatre, I go with my friend to London a lot. Umm, and her husband's probably a little bit like that. So, me and Sheila, we just-, sometimes just go to the shows in London. Or to, umm, the garden shows, that sort of things.</p> <p>If I want to go on holiday, I will do the arranging, and he toddles along [laughs].</p>	<p>Lily 5</p> <p>Don 4</p> <p>Will 9</p> <p>John 22</p> <p>Peter 42</p> <p>Jackie 9 (unrom.)</p> <p>Jackie 6 (unrom.)</p>
<p>Money matters</p>	<p>I suppose the next thing for me, is-, is marriage. Umm, we do speak about it, and we go to weddings, and stuff, and-, [pause] and then you hear about the people splitting up and stuff, and they've spent all that-, she's practical minded as well. And we think like, 'Well hang on, that money's better being spent on this, being spent on that.'</p> <p>I was only working part-time, well I'd be only be working once I'd had the baby and he was only a bus driver back then. So, money was tight for us. It was, like, 'We need to cancel the holiday.'</p> <p>...okay, if I was a millionaire and I'd bought her a pack of Love Hearts, she'd probably call me all the tight-fisted so-and-sos under the sun, but I'm not. So it's all relative,</p> <p>...my credit card bill [both laugh] [...] it would just show my romantic gestures, wouldn't it? You know, flowers, jewellery, nights out. You could have it, like, informative, you could highlight when I've done it. I know I'm being flippant, but, basically, that's-, what I think.</p> <p>Now, the children are a little bit older that-, financially being able to-, in a position where we can do some of these other things. 'Cause, previously, perhaps, we haven't been able to do them because of money.</p> <p>...so we had some money, and it was like, 'Okay, now what shall we do?' and the most unromantic thing to do, 'We'll have an extension put on the house'. So with the money that we was going to get married with, we had an extension put on the house</p> <p>And, you know, buying flowers and taking her out for meals, you know, every week, you know, it's quite expensive, isn't it?</p> <p>...that she doesn't have to flipping pay for it. No but, you know, things</p>	<p>Don 13</p> <p>Lily 16</p> <p>Martyn 7</p> <p>Will 14</p> <p>Will 5</p> <p>Kenny 10</p> <p>John 5</p> <p>John 10</p>

Master Theme & Sub-themes	Quote	Location
	<p>like, she hasn't had to pay for it, so she's got still some money left at the end of the month to go shop in Primark or whatever. And just make sure she's comfortable.</p> <p>...we got-, decided to get married. A big expense and everything, and you wonder, you know, are you doing the right thing?</p> <p>I guess quite special really, because he'd done that, you know, it was something that he'd had to think about and he had to save up his money.</p> <p>You know, I do love jewellery, umm, but he wouldn't mind-, he's never been one to moan or anything like that, if I wanted to buy anything. He's just, is-, it just is that ways. I mean, obviously, I wouldn't go out and spend money we haven't got, ...</p> <p>I think with, with money as well, I think what we do with the money is-, 'cause we need to, so we, sort of, tone it down and little gestures are nicer.</p>	<p>Peter 2</p> <p>Hilary 1</p> <p>Jackie 8 (unrom)</p> <p>Elaine 1 (unrom)</p>
<b>Relationship stage</b>		
Relationship ebb and flow	<p>I would think romance is important. And I see-, I think it's a way of, you know, showing your, your feelings when you meet someone new</p> <p>I suppose, quite romantic at the start 'cause you're trying to-, not impress somebody but you're making an effort, aren't you? But then with kids and life, it drops off. I suppose now it's, it's-, you get your romance back but I suppose it's in a different way from how it was to start with, you know.</p> <p>I think all new relationships are automatically more romantic, aren't they? Because you're still finding out about each other and going off to do things. I think once you start living together and having children, it's a whole different scenario</p> <p>I think in a relationship, after a certain amount of time, I think it does fizzle out</p> <p>You know, that surprise element really and I think that's what you have quite a lot in the early stages of a relationship.</p> <p>I think that's what you have quite a lot in the early stages of a relationship. You know, because it's all new and, you know, you might go somewhere for the first time, or whatever, and so it's that feeling of, 'Oh, this is really nice to feel wanted and to feel loved,'</p> <p>I say we're creatures of habit, but Jane's that end, there's a seat in the middle, and I'm this end, and we'll have feet up and, you know, that's just how we-, you know, we feel comfortable. Umm, but, no, we wouldn't-, no, we wouldn't sit there-, (holding hands) again, years ago, when we were younger, yes, umm, but no, you know, not now.</p> <p>I suppose it probably might have-, when we were together at the beginning, I think you do plan things, you know, like nice underwear and, you know, and-, or romantic things like that but not now, no.</p>	<p>John 11</p> <p>Elaine 13</p> <p>Lily 15</p> <p>John 16</p> <p>Hilary 15</p> <p>Hilary 15</p> <p>Martyn 5</p> <p>Elaine 9 (unrom)</p>
Children challenge	<p>I was just stuck in that box of being a full-time mum at home, kids, nappies, school, cooking, cleaning. The normal, everyday scenario, and it was, like, it got me down.</p> <p>Yes, obviously, some of Jane's affection would then-, or, it goes towards Hailey, so it's taken from me.</p>	<p>Hannah 6</p> <p>Martyn 10</p>

Master Theme & Sub-themes	Quote	Location
	<p>I would say down, and, you know, it does get you down, and, umm, I'm not going to say the word 'depressed', but you can then, sort of, [pause]</p> <p>...it was just, like, probably a wasted few years, do you know what I mean? Where it was kids had took over, house had took over, work had taken over, and we'd forgotten about maybe each other a little bit.</p> <p>I'd say [pause] probably from when our daughter was, I don't know, six or seven because she was one of these children that always used to get into bed with us as well. Well that's that out the window then, isn't it?</p> <p>So it was-, it was a-, it was difficult to, umm-, it was difficult to manage. 'Cause, you'd wanna do all those things, but you just simply couldn't do them. 'Cause, you know, she'd be, like, knackered with the kids, and it was, like, like, really, sort of, knowing that, you know, the kids come first, then.</p> <p>It was pretty much-, you'd just go through the motions. We were just going through the motions.</p> <p>...we'll probably have kids by then. And I think they will take priority and if anything, the romance will probably fizzle out altogether.</p> <p>I think just the time for it to be me and him now because, there's so, we both work. Being parents. We have, we don't have many babysitters so it's always, everything we do is all, as much as we love her, she's always there.</p> <p>...there's a lot of things that can sometimes hinder that special time together. You know, and just general stresses of work and family and children sometimes can, umm, can hinder that.</p> <p>Where, I suppose, now, when the-, when the girls were younger it's harder because you're tired and you're, you're, sort of, tied and it's revolving round them and their needs.</p>	<p>Martyn 12</p> <p>Kenny 12</p> <p>Lily 13</p> <p>Will 13</p> <p>Kenny 11</p> <p>John 16</p> <p>Kelly 3</p> <p>Hilary 16</p> <p>Elaine 3 (unrom)</p>
<p>Role reconciliation: Partner vs. Parent</p>	<p>...you can't continue as a young man on a-, when you've got kids. Like, you can't, I don't wanna say, 'Young, free and single,' 'cause I don't mean that, but that, sort of, mentality of being a bit more frivolous and not having as many as roles and responsibilities</p> <p>I don't know, I think there's a lot less depression, (second child) because you know what your role is, to a degree, you know what, umm-, [pause] yes, you know a lot more about children I suppose, in that instance.</p> <p>I put my kids above her, which, you know, it, it, it's not gonna make your, er, relationship, your marriage work. [...] I was a good father, but I wasn't a good husband.</p> <p>If we're always-, daughter's always been number one for us really and now she's getting so independent it's, like, 'Oh she doesn't need us as much now, right okay then. Let's get a bit of us time back,' and it's nice, yeah.</p> <p>And it's-, I don't know, then it's-, I-, in fact, I don't know, I, I, I can't-, you can't have-, I couldn't have a romantic meal with my kids,</p> <p>Everything's towards them, rather than on us and ourselves. You're, sort of, put to the backburner, your needs and, and what you, you want</p>	<p>Will 13</p> <p>Martyn 13</p> <p>Peter 6</p> <p>Lily 7</p> <p>Martyn 18</p> <p>Elaine 4 (unrom)</p>

<b>Master Theme &amp; Sub-themes</b>	<b>Quote</b>	<b>Location</b>
<p><i>Getting it back</i> Returning to pre-kid behaviours</p>	and what you fancy, you don't get because they come first.	
	...and then you think, 'We loved each other before there was children.'	Kenny 3
	Yeah, just, the intimacy between us both, you know, it was like-, it was like taking a step backwards, to them few years prior	Hannah 15
	I just think maybe we just got used to the parenting thing, coinciding with Hailey getting easier, umm, she'd then get to leave people-, you could leave her with people more comfortably. And I think then, everything comes back together, if that makes sense.	Martyn 12
	...like, actually going out for dinner rather than having dinner at home, or, umm, you know, or doing something that, you know, going to, maybe, a gig, or something. Doing something that, you know, well, that we'd used to do regularly, you know, pre-kids.	Will 5
	So we are going out together and having nice meals out together and time alone really where our daughter's not there. So, I'd say we're getting it back more now than we had before really.	Lily 1
	if you have got a big family and it's manic in your house. And you're both going out to work and, if you're doing that for such a long time, it does happen (lack of romance). It's happened with us, I've seen it happen with other people. I think if you do take a step back, it all comes back though.	Kelly 17
	I think just me and, me and him to go out and do something special together. Anything, or have a little mini break, just me and him. Like we used to do.	Kelly 10
...it made me feel like when we got engaged, you know, that kind of feeling of, like, warmth and, umm, butterflies and excitement and, kind of, those feelings I guess really. You know, going back to those early days when we were first going out together	Hilary 8	

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**Appendix 24:**  
**Focus Group Topic Guide**

## **Topic Guide for Focus Groups**

### Understandings of Romance in Established Relationships

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What words come to mind when I say romance/ romantic love?

- Why do they come to mind?

What does romance look like in an established relationship?

- Does this change over the course of a relationship?
- Do men/women want different things from romance in a relationship?

What (acts/gestures) would you describe as romantic?

- What makes them romantic?
- What makes an activity/experience *not* romantic?
- Are there some romantic activities/gestures that you *wouldn't* want in your relationship? Why is that?

Can romance be a problem?

- If so, when? For whom?

Would you describe yourself as romantic, with your partner?

- If so, why? If not, why not?
- Would your partner describe you as romantic?
- In what ways would she/he say that you're romantic?

*Present the 1 min video clip on romance. (Focus Group Clip.mov)*

Should some bedroom action now and again be more than enough?

Do you think people in an established relationship want a bit more spark?

Are there times when you want to be romantic?

- What might you do?
- Are there times when you think its best *not* to be romantic?
- Has this changed over the length of your relationship?

Do you feel pressure to be romantic on certain days of the year?

Do you know couples who have little/or no romance in their relationship?

- Does it matter? If so, for whom?
- Do you think these couples were always like that?

What challenges, if any, do you think couples face with romance in an established relationship?

- What romance does a person seek in an established relationship?
- 

*Back-up Questions:*

I once heard someone say 'Everyone has romance somewhere in their life, sometimes in their relationship, sometimes elsewhere?' What do you make of that saying?

What makes an experience or activity with your partner romantic?

How would you describe the romantic love in your relationship?

- What distinguishes it from romantic love early in your relationship?
- Why did it change?

*Prompts:*

New subject position: Can you tell me more?

Check romantic investment: How romantic is that?

Point out contradictions - "on the one hand you say it's x but you also say it's y - how does that fit together "

Refer to what people might say or have said - "Some people might say x - do you agree ?"

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**Appendix 25:**  
**Social Media Focus Group Recruitment**

## Social Media Focus Group Recruitment

### Facebook



Angelfish

Published by [redacted] [?] · 25 June at 16:27 · 🌐

Our latest study is looking into understanding romance in relationships!

This study will be a 90 minute face to face interview in Birmingham.

Interviews will take place on 20th/21st/22nd July. You will receive £40 in cash as a thank you for taking part!

Simply click here to apply:

<http://survey.opinionseeker.co.uk/a/TakeSurvey?id=3187205>

Do you know anyone that might be interested in taking part in this project?

For every friend that you refer that successfully takes part in this project, we will give you a £10 Amazon Gift Certificate. Make sure they mention you!

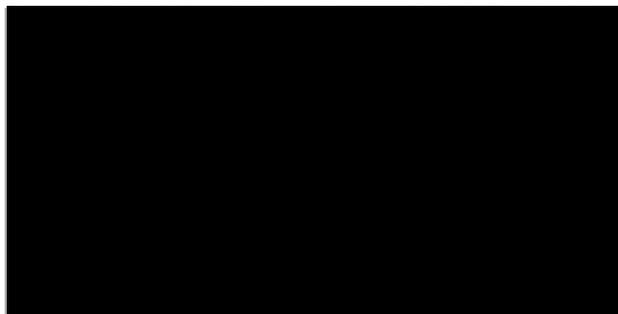


### Twitter



Angelfish @thisisangelfish · Jun 26

Receive £40 for 90 min #MarketResearch on #Relationships in #Birmingham Apply: [bit.ly/1QSSXGg](http://bit.ly/1QSSXGg) #Romance #Love



**Appendix 26:**  
**List of Discourses**

## List of Discourses

This list is broadly organised in terms of relevance to the constructions as presented in the transcripts.

Discourse	Notes/ Extracts	Source
Intimacy discourse	Uses the language of therapy and makes the relationship the object. Rests in part on the demystification of romance: not expecting a marriage to be one long romantic adventure. Demands of partners a closeness that may be unrealistic. Compatible with Religious discourses e.g. some churches require pre-marital counseling.	Shumway (2003); Giddens (1992)
Marital discourse	e.g. constructions of trust formed a prominent part of this discourse.	Willig (1997)
Romantic love discourse	The centrality of love and relationships and necessarily being 'consumed' by love (Nicholls, 2009). Romantic love, weds an emotional woman to an emotionally inexpressive man (Burns, 2002). Romantic love discourse in which love, marriage and monogamy are inextricably linked with one another (Willig, 2008). Kitzinger (1989, cited in Burr, 2015) identifies this as being part of the broader Humanist discourse. Love appears as the emotional cement that strengthens the sexual relationship between men and women. Sex is given freely. Involves caring for their welfare. Love is the foundation for marriage and family life (Burr, 2015).	Multiple
Romeo and Juliet discourse (part of the romantic love)	Constructing a romantic love trajectory of certain death after a partner dies. The strength of this emotional reaction – being Juliet – also works to construct her present relationship as embodying a powerful romantic love.	Nicholls (2009)
Being 'the only one' (part of romantic love)	Exemplifies the importance of monogamy in relationships.	Nicholls (2009)
The One (part of romantic love)	Having the 'right' relationship. Being 'the one' is a powerful explanatory device attached to romantic love narratives, necessarily involving the search for and attainment of the one, usually constructed as Mr Right (Di Mattia 2004; Kamins and MacLeod 2004).	Nicholls (2009)
Have/Hold discourse (similar to love/coupledom, romantic love)	Identified by Hollway (1984) Here the emphasis is on commitment, relationships, sexuality as a sign of romantic involvement, linked to romance and marriage. 'Have/hold' has as its focus 'the Christian ideals associated with monogamy, partnership and family life' (Hollway, 1984: 232). For women, sex is often defined as an indication of love and commitment.  Hollway comments on the evident 'gender-differentiated positions' of the 'Have/hold' discourse, i.e. that women are the 'object' of the 'having and	Nicholls (2009); Sunderland (2004); Hollway (1984)

Discourse	Notes/ Extracts	Source
	<p>holding', men the 'subject'. For men, this may appear to conflict with the 'male sex drive' discourse. Hollway suggests that the contradiction is resolved when they visit it upon women: 'Either women [wife/mistress, virgin/whore, Mary/Eve], or to be both those things' (1984: 232).</p> <p>Multiple traces of a rather different 'have/hold' can be found in many magazines for women.: How to 'get' your man and then 'keep' him. Here, at least in one sense men are the object of the 'having and holding', and women are the subject. It overlaps with 'Compulsory heterosexuality' discourse and may be part of a 'subordinate' or 'lower-order' constitutes what we might call an 'Incomplete Women' discourse-until she meets a Mr Right. (Sunderland, 2004)</p>	
Love/Coupled om (similar to Have/Hold)	In relationships with regular partners, trust and honesty are often depicted as part of the taken-for-granted backdrop (Kippax, 2002).	Nicholls (2009)
Romantic discourse (includes romantic love)	Men are continually represented as the central figure or the 'romantic object' and as such these discourses are seen to constitute the centrality of men's involvement in heterosexual relationships, women carve out their destiny in relation to men (Whelehan, 2000).	Nicholls (2009)
Romantic repertoire	<p>Created by Lawes, 1999. Within this repertoire, marriage is developed as something involving commitment and involvement with the 'right' person. This discourse was seen to work as an explanatory device when participants expressed their beliefs in the permanence and exclusivity of marriage in terms of 'commitment' (Lawes 1998).</p> <p>Parallels can be drawn between Hollway's discussion of the 'Have/Hold' discourse and Lawes' discussion of the 'romantic repertoire', in that both these discourses/repertoires centre issues of commitment, fidelity and permanence in relationships.</p> <p>These discourses represent the notion that issues of sexual/emotional exclusivity are intrinsically bound up with issues of commitment and love in relationships.</p>	Lawes (1999); Nicholls (2009)
The male sex drive	<p>Identified by Hollway, 1984. This discourse is seen as encompassing the idea that men are driven by the biological necessity to seek out (heterosexual) sex, and relies on the more general claim that sex is natural and not mediated socially (Hollway 1984).</p> <p>Kitzinger and Powell (1995) assert that the 'male sex drive' discourse has entered popular culture and has become a powerful stereotype.</p>	Hollway, (1984); Edley & Wetherall, (1995); Nicholls, (2009)
Humour discourse	Highly contested discourse that both reinforces and polices masculinity. Many analysts consider it a	Clarke (2001)

Discourse	Notes/ Extracts	Source
Note may not be seen as a discourse. More likely a rhetorical strategy.	discourse of superiority. By making the enemy small in the use of humor one overcomes them. Alternatively, a joke can be seen as a leveling of hierarchy – triumph of intimacy over formality. Note when humour comes from ruling community (e.g. white male) it serves to reify rather than challenge hierarchy. Also seen as a way for men to deal with intimacy/emotions in a way that protects their masculinity (Mio & Graesser, 1991).	
Realist relationship repertoire	Created by Lawes, 1999. This repertoire is drawn on to dispel notions of permanence and fidelity in relationships, holding both to be unrealistic.	Lawes (1999)
Working at the relationship (similar to economic discourse)	A discourse which constructed the important determinant of relationship as a business-like, rational approach to partnership. Dismisses romantic love as a façade.	Burns (2000)
Staying power	Discussed as a historical discourse, where within previous generations people had more ‘staying power’ and maintained their relationships.	Nicholls (2009)
Attraction (a commonsense discourse)	Attraction may be instantaneous and beyond individual control.	Nicholls (2009)
Romantic idealisation (broader discourse)	Understood as locating themselves in positions of inevitable disappointed and disillusionment (Segal, 1990). Therefore, the practice of rejecting high idealism invites clients to empower themselves and stop unfavourably comparing their relationship to idealised alternatives.	Colahan (2014)
Transactional obligation for needs fulfilment	Colahan (2004) finding from interviews. Partners are represented as beings with innate needs, and their relationship discursively functions as the primary site in which many of these needs are met.	Colahan, (2014)
Transformed intimacy	Disclosing intimacy and egalitarian individualism Draws on the Therapeutic discourse (Burns, 2002). The transformation of intimacy seems to involve a move from romantic discourse to a self-focused discourse of personal choice (Burns, 2000).	Giddens (1992); Burns (2000; 2002); Colahan, (2014)
Intimate confessional	Operates through a governance of intimate communication by mobilising the authority of the confessional (Foucault, 1977; Rose, 1989). e.g. The governance of the intimate confessional subordinates sexual practice to communicative practice, and dissatisfying sex is mainstream psychological accounts which produce sexual satisfaction as an upshot of relationship satisfaction (e.g. Sprecher & Cate, 2004). In this way, developing and maintaining intimacy is promoted as the principle satisfying discursive function of more relationally satisfying intimate communication.	Colahan (2014)
Discourses of Monogamy	Where having an extra-relationship was constructed in such a way as to not undermine participants adherence to and belief in a monogamous ideal.	Nicholls (2009)

Discourse	Notes/ Extracts	Source
	Nicholls describes these discourses as being 'grand discourses'.	
Compulsory heterosexuality	Introduced by Adrienne Rich (1980). 'Compulsory heterosexuality' enables heterosexuality to be normative and thus in effect socially prescriptive. It means that whereas, say, opposite-sex affection in public may be unremarkable, same-sex affection normally entails risks. Discursively, it means that many people, on hearing a woman refer for the first time to a partner, will soon ask about his job. 'Compulsory heterosexuality', together with its associated social practices, can be seen as spawning the 'Gender differences' discourse.	Sunderland, (2004)
Sex-as-signpost	Sex as a marker or signpost to help include or label other behaviours as infidelity.	Nicholls (2009)
Permissive discourse	Identified by Hollway, 1984. Sex is presented as a matter of pleasure, with both men and women seen as having a right to sexual expression. Sex is seen as natural but also as no big deal, enjoyable, but separate from commitment and marriage. 'Permissive' discourse, i.e. the validity of sexual activity outside monogamous marriage.	Hollway, (1984); Edley & Wetherall, (1995); Sunderland (2004)
Gender Differences discourse (produced by heterosexual discourses)	Includes 'Mutual incomprehension of the sexes'. This discourse still maintains essentialist thinking – that women just are like this, men just are like that – in a more general sense. 'Gender differences' has been seen as produced by dominant heterosexuality discourses (Rich, 1980; Hollway, 1984, 1995). However, many new, lower-order 'Gender differences' discourses can be seen as helping to maintain essentialist thinking: for example, Cameron writes that the current discourse on women as good communicators and men as deficient ones does 'the usual ideological work of affirming the existence of fundamental differences between women and men' (Cameron, 2003).  For some people, 'Gender differences' is not an ideological cover-up, but simple 'common sense'. This view points to the strength of the discourse as a particularly recognizable 'way of seeing the world', its popularity resulting in continuing discursive recycling and recontextualization, production and reproduction (Cameron, 1996).	Sunderland (2004)
Loved and lost discourse	This discourse captures the power of love and how relationship experiences (and the ending of relationships) are constructed as necessarily worthwhile learning experiences.	Nicholls (2009)
Pro-monogamy	Sees an extension of issues of companionship and friendship to include a notion of exclusivity in personal relationships. These discourses represent the notion that issues of sexual/emotional exclusivity are intrinsically bound up with issues of commitment and love in relationships.	Nicholls (2009)

Discourse	Notes/ Extracts	Source
Complacency	This discourse of complacency also works to minimise individual accountability for a relationship transgression, “these things just happen”.	Nicholls (2009)
No guarantees	Where an uncertain future is constructed more explicitly.	Nicholls (2009)
Transition	e.g beginning a new relationship while still in a relationship. This constructs the ‘infidelity’ as having purpose, as a transitional event leading to a new relationship.	Nicholls (2009)
Uncontrollable attraction	Attraction here is constructed as taking over ones rationality, “I felt instant no control over my feelings”.	Nicholls (2009)
Pseudo-reciprocal gift discourse	The main premise of the gift discourse is that women are viewed as passive receptacles ‘giving’ themselves to men during sex, or in ‘giving’ sex to male partners and in turn men reciprocate by giving women orgasms. This discourse challenges notions of equality and mutuality because the practice of ‘giving gifts’ is presented as a gendered practice with women giving more gifts than men (Komter, 1996).	Gilfoyle, Wilson & Own (1992); Nicholls (2009)
Heroic-leap of faith relating	Colahan (2014) finding. Presented as the product of a particular relational practice, characterised by support, knowledge and acceptance of each other. A satisfying practice that echoes mainstream research which privileges trust (e.g. Charania & Ickes, 2007) .	Colahan (2014)
Women’s involvement in sex	Necessarily constructing a ‘passive’ position for women within sexual encounters.	Nicholls (2009)
Naiveté	This works to protect the individual from any counter arguments, as they are acknowledging that they may be ‘naïve’ and not fully understand the situation or be naïve in their opinions about fidelity in relationships.	Nicholls (2009)
Discourses of Age	Represents people at various stages of life in different ways. Old age can be associated with loss of personal competences like memory or motor skills. Alternative discourses can paint old age as being associated with serenity and wisdom.	Burr (2015)
Discourse of Individualism	Through the use of terms like personality, attitude, skill, temperament, we are invited to think of human beings as endowed with varying amounts of these qualities, whether inborn or learned.	Burr (2015)
Learning & self-growth	e.g. helps to frame her now past relationship as a worthwhile experience.	Nicholls (2009)
Grounded discourse	That challenged the necessarily inevitable damage caused by infidelity to individuals and their relationship.	Nicholls (2009)
Habit discourse	Likened to continual attempts to break a habit.	Nicholls (2009)
Black and white	e.g. is constructed in terms of monogamy in relationships.	Nicholls (2009)
Commonsense	e.g. “drugs and alcohol” and “chocolate” to ‘ease the pain’ of a relationship break-up. These can be seen as non-threatening, depersonalised discourses.	Nicholls (2009)
Hindsight	to mediate their actions in the past	Nicholls

Discourse	Notes/ Extracts	Source
	common cultural repertoire which will help structure such accounts of past, undesirable, actions.	(2009)
Religious discourse	e.g. a belief in monogamy to an “article of faith” and not grounded in ‘reality’.  The discourses of religion and romance were opposed in 1900, but now they are combined. Most wedding ceremonies are religious for example (Shumway, 2003).	Nicholls (2009); Shumway (2003)
Psychological discourse	A discourse that presupposes the existence of individual subjects with an interior (a psyche) that contains cognitions and emotions. e.g. constructing a distinction between unconscious and conscious behaviours (Nicholls, 2009).	Willig (2012)
Political discourse	e.g. anchored in feminism and the sexual revolution, in terms of discussing “ownership and rights and bodies”.	Nicholls (2009)
Continuum discourse	Works to accommodate and indeed also substantiates considerable change and variance.	Nicholls (2009)
Therapeutic discourse	e.g. baggage.	Nicholls (2009)
Economic	Having noticed that unhappy relationships often endured, researchers turned towards the new paradigm of subjective interactions as pivoting around their perceived costs and benefits.	Burr (2003); Willig & dew Valor (1999); Colahan (2014)
Attachment discourse	Notion of the intimate relationship as a safe haven (e.g. stemming back to Hazan & Shaver, 1987).	Colahan (2014)
Humanist discourse	Constructs satisfaction in terms of transcendence and the realisation of human potential. Humanistic notions of an ontologically innate self, constructed as achieving its true potential through a process of self-actualisation (e.g. Prager & Roberts, 2004). Presents a picture of the human being in which every person has an equal right to happiness and self-fulfilment.	Colahan (2014)
Self-actualisation	Part of the broader liberal humanist discourse. That everyone has a right to self-fulfilment (Kitzinger 1989).	Burr (2015)
Mutual reciprocity	Having a tendency to present satisfying relating in terms of discourses of mutual reciprocity (Braun <i>et al.</i> , 2003) and respect for, and not being too demanding on their partner (rather than on fulfilling their own needs).  An ideal narrative... non-gendered equality (Crawford, 2004).	Braun, Gavey & McPhillips (2003); Colahan (2014); Crawford (2004)
Disclosing intimacy discourses	Maintain a sense of intimate connection and communication with each other (e.g. McCarthy, 2002).	Colahan (2014)
Heightened expectation (linked to	Heightened expectations in terms of ‘correctly’ enacting relational rights and duties (see for example, Hawkes, 1996; Nicholson, 1993; Tunariu & Reavey,	Colahan (2014)

Discourse	Notes/ Extracts	Source
romantic idealization discourses)	2007; Weeks, 2007).	
Fatalism and passivity (part of the realistic repertoire)	Where notions of credit and blame are less applicable.	Lawes (1999)
Inevitable damage	Dominant discourse related to infidelity.	Nicholls (2009)
Technique and work discourse	This discourse similarly constructs women's bodies as the passive receptacle of men's technique and work, whilst men's pleasure is seen as 'natural' and driven, men use their technique to bring women to orgasm.	Nicholls (2009)
Shopping/consumer	This discourse presents a position of 'consumer' choice in terms of picking partners and also in terms of the types of relationships and sex partaken in.	Nicholls (2009)
Genes and luck	Referring to an ultimate lack of control in the face of a genetic predisposition (Crossley, 2002).	Nicholls (2009)
Rebellion	Representing a freedom of spirit and independence and also in contrast to the personal sense of control invoked by the positive mental attitude discourse (Crossley, 2002).	Nicholls (2009)
Not cut and dried	Present variation and ambiguity in terms of relationship transgressions occurring in relationships, further presenting conflict and indecision to complicate issued of blame and accountability for infidelity.	Nicholls (2009)
Vacuum	Constructed as symptomatic of a vacuum in the primary relationship, where infidelity was a means of escapism and avoiding dealing with existing problems.	Nicholls (2009)
Right to know discourse	Constructs a discourse of sexual exclusivity and exclusive "rights" to a persons' body, specifically their "hole(s)". Within the exchange Eve is able to construct a position of 'ownership' of a partners "hole(s)", which confers with it some control and 'management' rights to the partner.	Nicholls (2009)
Impulses	Sexual drives is used to describe sexual contact with ex-partners, participants drawing on "hormones" and their "libido" to account for sexual behaviour that they would perhaps not usually engage in. Such constructions work to naturalise particular behaviours and function to reduce individual accountability.	Nicholls (2009)
On the shelf	Considered a historical discourse.	Nicholls (2009)
Dumping	This discourse constructs ending a relationship as like getting rid of rubbish, so it might be construed as a positive step for the 'dumper' to remove rubbish from their life.	Nicholls (2009)
Cheating	e.g. which is "sleeping around with anyone and everyone" – which is casual and lacking specific purpose.	Nicholls (2009)

**Appendix 27:**  
**FDA Coding Protocol**

## FDA Coding Protocol

<b>Based on Willig's (2008, 2013) 6 Stages</b>	<b>Transcript Coding</b>
<b>Preparatory work: Discursive notes</b>	<b>Column 2</b>
<p>Include images or questions that come to mind.</p> <p>Identify linguistic features of interest.</p> <p>Is the content divisive? What is being constructed?</p>	
<b>Stage 1: Discursive Constructions</b>	<b>Column 2</b>
How is romance constructed in the text?	
Burr, 2015: Discourses offer different visions of what it means to be... 'romantic' for example.	
<b>Stage 2 Wider Discourses</b>	<b>Column 1</b>
Locate the various discursive constructions of 'romantic love' within wider discourses (example given of biomedical discourse).	
Burr, 2015 locating discourses: deciding what kind of picture is being painted by the different discursive constructions.	
<i>Notes from FDA workshop:</i> a discourse includes a lot of constructions, it needs to be fairly big and contain many subject positions.	
<i>Notes from FDA workshop:</i> this can be more easily identified later in the analysis.	
<b>Stage 3 Action Orientation.</b>	<b>Column 3</b>
<p>What is gained (in the room) from constructing the object in this way?</p> <p>What is the consequence?</p>	
How does it relate to other constructions in the surrounding text? Review the discursive context for clues.	
Burr, 2015: What is being done or achieved by these constructions, what effects they have for speakers?	

Based on Willig's (2008, 2013) 6 Stages	Transcript Coding
<i>Notes from FDA workshop: what does the discourse serve?</i> What did the interviewer or fellow participants say that triggered this?	
Stage 4 Positionings	Column 5
What are the subject positions offered by the discursive constructions? (E.g. A construction of a relationship as 'social arrangement' positions partners as dependent on each other, tied to each other via: history, emotions, investments. The subject positions offered is that of responsible social actors.)	
Remember these pre-exist the individual.	
Note from Matthew: What options - 'title'/'name' - are there for people when certain constructions of 'romance' are mobilised? e.g. 'the provider', 'the one and everything'.	
Burr, 2015: They address us as particular kinds of people e.g. old, kind, worker.	
Burr, 2015: Implied position within a particular discourse that may be occupied or taken up by a person, providing a basis for their identity.	
Stage 5 Practice	Column 5
What are the possibilities for action contained within the construction and associated subject position? What can be said and done from within different discourses? (e.g. the Marital discourse, constructs marriage and long term relationship as incompatible with the use of condoms. Or as a responsible social actor, requires that you act responsibly and with consideration)	
Consider the ways in which discursive constructions open up or close down opportunities for action.	
Note from Matthew: What should I do? What shouldn't I do?	
Burr, 2015: Different discourses limit what can be said and done.	

<b>Based on Willig's (2008, 2013) 6 Stages</b>	<b>Transcript Coding</b>
<b>Stage 6 Subjectivity</b> (Arguably the most speculative)	<b>Column 5</b>
What can be felt, thought and experienced from within various subject positions? E.g. From within the position of responsible social actor within the construction of relationship being a social arrangement might come feelings of guilt and regret.	
Burr, 2015: refers to subjectivity as sense of self. Suggests it replaces mainstream terms such as personality or individual.	

**Appendix 28:**  
**FDA Coding Example**

Wider Discourses	Discursive Notes to include constructions, images, is it divisive, linguistic interest	Action: purpose served What is the consequence?	Transcript. Focus Group 1: 8 Males, page 12	Positions: practice and subjectivity
			<b>What does your partner do for you that you find romantic?</b>	
Romantic Love Have/Hold discourse	Constructs masculine romantic pleasure as sexual. 'Son' - is this a power play? A sense of 'keep it clean'. Be careful how much you share (with a female facilitator in the room?)	Elicits humour, male bonding. Interruption sign of asserting dominance. (Coates, 2004)	Greg: My missus likes to-, Chris: Don't go too deep there, son. (Raucous Laughter).	Sexual encounters matter.
	Reiterating sexual innuendo	Building on the humour. Male bonding.	M: It's the smile, you see.	
Intimacy discourse	Relationship is constructed as good if there's talking and disclosure. Draws on the Intimacy discourse. Silence after talking from about them sharing mutual worries. Sign of men not agreeing? (Davis et. al, 1999) Then moves on to booking holidays. Perhaps looking for surer ground.	Oscillating between subject positions 'new man' Best Friend vs. 'hegemonic man' Traditional Romantic. A way of preserving his position in the heteronormative order?	Greg: We've got a really good relationship, we can talk about everything and anything we worry about. (Silence 25.07-25.09) From my point of view, I like to, sort of, book weekends away and that, for her, but she'll do the same for me, you know. Like, the last place I booked for us, was a place in Worcester, like, these log cabins, got jacuzzis in there and all the rest of it, it's quite secluded. So, you know, we're there for a weekend, she thought that was lovely, and romantic, and all the rest of it. The last one she booked for, for me-, for us, was Benidorm. So, you know, we're always-, we've been together a	Best Friend Romantic: can talk about everything; share worries; exchanger of gestures: she books holidays too
Romantic love	Romance is constructed as exchanging couple treats - booking holidays away. Speaks at length, quite proud of these			Traditional Romantic: Booker of

Wider Discourses	Discursive Notes to include constructions, images, is it divisive, linguistic interest	Action: purpose served What is the consequence?	Transcript. Focus Group 1: 8 Males, page 12	Positions: practice and subjectivity
	<p>trips away.</p> <p>Makes a declaration 'I'm not ashamed to say, I love her'. Men constructed as being generally embarrassed to declare romantic feelings.</p>		<p>long time, but we're always doing things like that, for each other. You know, so, I don't expect it, it's just-, she does it more than me, kind of thing, but, you know, I think it's great. I do it for her as well, but, like I said (talking over each other 25.54). Yes, of course, but I enjoy doing it with her. I'm not ashamed to say, I love her, and we do all the things everybody else does, but there is a certain amount of excitement when I'm booking the next one, because I think, 'Oh yes, we'll love that, she'll love that,' but that's to try and please her, but she does the same for me.</p> <p><b>Yeah.</b></p>	<p>weekends, choosing secluded intimate places; Sex matters. He feels excited booking a holiday/surprise.</p>
Romantic love	Constructs a surprise as romantic	Asks direct question asserts his dominance (Coates, 2004)	Chris: Would you do it as a surprise?	Traditional romantic: surprises his woman
Romantic love	<p>Talks about the logistics of it – safer ground than talking about his feelings? Hedge 'You know' repeated x3</p> <p>Constructs women as 'you know what they're like', deploys a gender-differences repertoire.</p> <p>Males are constructed as doing the romantic legwork.</p>	<p>Identifying with the other men. Serves to put him back in the hegemonic male space.</p> <p>Tag question, facilitative/building on conversation.</p>	<p>Greg: No, that's what I do. I don't tell her. (Talking over each other 26.19), two weeks, we're going to so and so. You know, you know, make sure you're free that weekend, because you know what women are like, nights out with their mates and all the rest of it.</p> <p>Rob: But the internet's made that a lot easier, hasn't it?</p>	<p>Traditional romantic: need to check logistics</p> <p>Traditional romantic: need to do research</p>

Wider Discourses	Discursive Notes to include constructions, images, is it divisive, linguistic interest	Action: purpose served What is the consequence?	Transcript. Focus Group 1: 8 Males, page 12	Positions: practice and subjectivity
<p>Romantic love</p> <p>Intimacy</p>	<p>Romance is constructed as special occasion with sex. Lots of laughing. The men are being playful. Reference to Jacuzzi, sexual overtones. (Coates (2007) suggests its a metaphor for ejaculation) Hedge, 'You know' repeated</p> <p>Switches tone in the last sentence - as if sobering up and getting serious.</p>	<p>Humour used to bond with others and broker sex talk? Asserts his hegemonic masculinity with Jacuzzi reference.</p>	<p>Greg: Yes. That's the thing. That's how I found out, like anything. (Talking over each other 26.34-26.38). I'll take the-, I went in too far, but the Jacuzzi was great. (Laughter 26.41-26.43) It was. (Laughter 26.44-26.49) I mean, she loves all that and I love all that, if that answers your question, you know, for me, you know, we're always supporting each other.</p>	<p>Traditional romantic: pleasing her and sexual rewards</p> <p>Best Friend Romantic: supporting each other</p>

## **Appendix 29:**

### **FDA Summary Papers**

<b>FDA Summary Paper: Female Group 1</b>	<b>pg. 130</b>
<b>FDA Summary Paper: Female Group 2</b>	<b>pg. 151</b>
<b>FDA Summary Paper: Male Group 1</b>	<b>pg. 172</b>
<b>FDA Summary Paper: Male Group 2</b>	<b>pg. 190</b>
<b>FDA Summary Paper: Mixed Group</b>	<b>pg. 207</b>

## FDA Summary Paper: Female Group 1

Exploring how women in established relationships construct romance and are positioned by ready-made or a historically given set of discourses. This summary of the FDA seeks to answer three questions:

- 1) What discursive resources are available and drawn on by the group? Pg. 130
- 2) What are the tensions and challenges presented? Pg. 142
- 3) What is the project of the participants in the session? Pg. 146

The project along with tensions and challenges provide a reading as to what the participants in the group are doing with their discursive resources.

### 1) What discursive resources are available and drawn on by the group?

Romance is constructed as caring and relationship warmth; grand gestures and special times; exclusive physical intimacy and affection; as pleasing her; and as a transaction. It would seem that the discursive economy for romance is similar for men and women, however how they make use of these resources varies considerably between them.

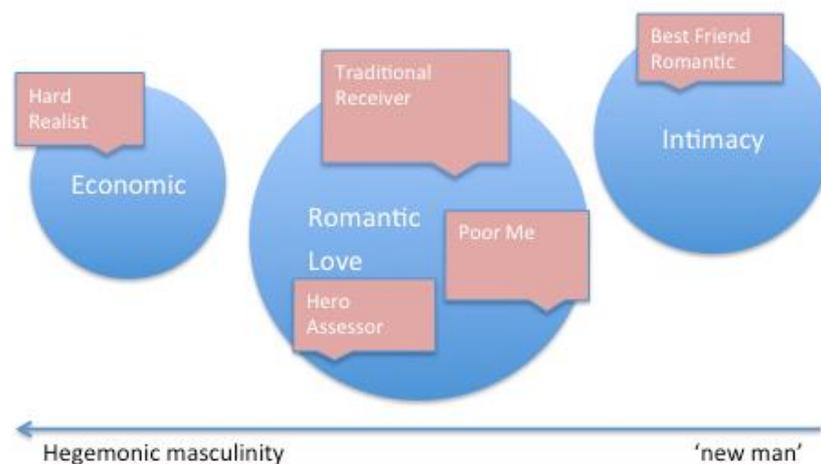


Diagram 1: A map of the available discursive economy of romance, as illustrated by wider discourses and subject positions. The relative size of the discourse and subject positions represent frequently occupied and therefore dominant discourses and positions. Hegemonic masculinity<sup>1</sup> is the term given to a set of gender expectations for males that are culturally privileged.

The men did not make a noticeable distinction from romance being caring, relationship warmth and special times. For the men, I grouped these together as: romance is constructed

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<sup>1</sup> Hegemonic masculinity rejects behaviours perceived as feminine and is largely reflective of a heterosexual, authoritative and macho man – as represented by the masculine ideal 'retributive man'. Hegemonic masculinity it reflects privileged gender expectations and is thus the highest level within the heteronormative hierarchy.

as something that provides relationship warmth and special times. However, for the women there is considerable conflict between romance being constructed as special times (and also representing heroic efforts) versus every day caring. This conflict speaks to a clash in masculine ideals, which I explain more in Section 3, the project of the group. While 'new man' and 'retributive man' are the two dominant masculine images that generally inform male identity (as discussed in FDA Summary Male 1). The knight/hero, which is 'retributive man' taken to an idealized level: a James Bond type - legitimized by television and movies - was used by females to judge men as failing in their romantic efforts.

Below you will find examples of these constructions from the text. It can be seen that these are interrelated, for example 'relationship warmth and caring' and 'special times' can be presented as / mobilized as ways of 'pleasing her'. Also 'pleasing her' and 'physical intimacy' can be seen as different parts of the 'transaction'.

#### Romance is constructed as caring and relationship warmth (Extract 1)

Sharon: But I don't think romance has in terms of both-, you don't have to set aside a massive amount of time with each other to be romantic with one another. I think it can just be a couple of minutes, five minutes, here and there and it just makes you, kind of, I think, feel good about yourself in terms of-,

Julie: Words. Just nice words.

#### Romance is constructed as grand gestures and special times. (Extract 2)

Nicky: I'd like, err, like a surprise weekend (silence 01.03.44-01.33.48). Yeah, so okay I've booked this, I've got a sitter sorted, we're going for this meal, we're going on this train, here's your itinerary, here's your timetable, you know, you've got like, you know-, obviously we've got to get up at seven o'clock tomorrow, and that's it, it's all planned. That's more my thing that is.

#### Romance is constructed as something that involves exclusive physical intimacy (Extract 3)

Nicky: But, yeah, that has a massive-, obviously if somebody upsets you or upsets your children, the last thing you want to do is spend the rest of the night with him being affectionate.

Yeah (x2).

Nicky: Yeah, he just-, you know, and to be honest, I avoid going to bed at the same time just because, I just think, 'Do you know what? You can do one.' You know? It's sad about, like, nineteen years, eighteen years of marriage.

#### Romance is constructed as something that focuses on pleasing her (Extract 4)

Julie: [...] he doesn't have to buy me wine but he does and it's, you know, he does tend to say, 'Do you want any wine?' [spoken in a high pitched voice] And he's-, you know, I wouldn't go, 'Oh, do you want any beer?' (Laughter). We-, you know, it sounds really spiteful but I don't...

#### Romance is constructed as a transaction (Extract 5)

Maggie: I find it quite romantic when he's, like, really nice with George.

**Your son?**

Maggie: I find it-, yeah, really attractive. And, like, that he'll, like, he takes him to football on every Saturday. He makes a big thing about it and takes him for breakfast and things and I think that, because he loves him so much it's like-,

Carol: Yeah. He's a good dad (general agreement).

Maggie: Whether-,

**So what do you find that-, what about that is romantic for you?**

Maggie: I can sit at home and watch telly. (Laughter)

A gendered dimension can be acknowledged at this point, as it is apparent in that these extracts speak to gendered stereotypes. For example, men preferring beer over wine; men wanting sex and going to the football. The heavy draw on dominant 'heterosexual' discourses, which also encompasses gender differences—and clearly informs the 'romantic love' discourse—I have reflected as the group's effort to preserve heteronormative order<sup>2</sup>. We can see a gendered element at the construction level—particularly in respect to romance as pleasing her. Consistently questions of romance are answered by the women in the group as something that the man does for her. Indeed, Edley and Wetherall (1995) write that women are typically represented as supposed to want romance, with men represented as the initiators and women the receivers.

A construction of romance as pleasing her, could invoke an assumption that women are less secure in their relationships and need constant reassurance that they are indeed wanted/loved. As shown later when outlining the subject positions, this places the man in a more powerful position as this reassurance is his to give or to withhold. Yet what also unfolds in the analysis is that some of the women, located in the 'Hero Assessor' position, can mock men and rebuff their attempts to please. It is almost as if they are the princess being courted by a jester, where they are looking to be pleased by a knight in shining amour. In this way, women are constructing their men as failures.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, those women who occupy the 'Hard Realist' position mock romance and belittle all (men and women) who are located in the 'romantic love' or 'intimacy' discourses, from this position they are not constructing their men as failures, but are turning down romance as not for them. See Extract 4 as an example.

By in large, the wider discourses whereby the group's constructions of romance can be located were primarily the 'humanist' discourses that included 'romantic love' and 'intimacy'.

As mentioned in the male focus group summaries, the 'humanist' discourse taps into the humanistic notions of an ontologically innate self, constructed as achieving its true potential

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<sup>2</sup> The central facets of heteronormativity have been identified as alignment to traditional gender roles, being monogamous and having children (Cameron & Kulick, 2003, cited in Coates, 2013). Those who reflect these norms have higher status than others. Heteronormativity forces us to understand that heterosexuality is a cultural construction relying on strictly enforced norms for its continuing dominance. It comes from Queer Theory that investigates and examines how heterosexuality is produced (e.g. Coates, 2013).

<sup>3</sup> Davies and Harré (1999) suggest that in the 'romantic love' discourse there are two major complementary subject positions – the male hero or prince and the female heroine or princess, they note that the male normally has some heroic task to perform.

through a process of self-actualization (Prager & Roberts, 2004, cited in Colahan, 2014). It paints a picture in which everyone has a claim to happiness. Kitzinger (1989, cited in Burr, 2015) identifies 'romantic love' discourses as being part of the broader 'humanist' discourse. The 'romantic love' discourse constructs the centrality of love and coupledness to happiness. It is a discourse in which love, marriage and monogamy are inextricably linked with one another (Willig, 2008).

Like Tina, in Extract 6, the women in the group shared a desire for, and privileging of, romance in a relationship. For example, Annie uses the words *stale, drifted* as she describes her romance-less relationship. While, Julie speaks of a past romance-less relationship as a time *when things aren't going right*.

The popular 'romantic love' discourse has come under scrutiny from scholars: according to Burr (2015) within this discourse, whereby love is the foundation for marriage, sex is given freely and it also involves caring for each other's welfare. Burns (2002) writes that 'romantic love' discourses wed an emotional woman to an emotionally inexpressive man. Indeed in the focus group the female desire for 'retributive man' and dismissal of the more emotionally versed 'new man', within the 'romantic love' discourses is apparent (see Extracts 7, 8, 14, and 15). The mismatch between the characterization of the 'romantic love' discourse (as involving mutual love and care) and the emotionally inexpressive 'retributive man', played out in expressions of discontent. In this group, the women when located in the 'romantic love' discourse would fall into a pattern of moaning about their men; while Sharon who mostly occupied the gender-neutral 'Best Friend Romantic' position, located in the 'intimacy' discourse was exempt. This issue is discussed later in this page.

The 'intimacy' discourse uses the language of therapy and demands of partners an emotional closeness. It continues to assume the marital dyad and monogamy as its norm but unlike 'romantic love' discourses it places a higher value of mutual relatedness in the intimate sphere (Shumway, 2003). While the 'intimacy' discourse does not expect marriage to be a romantic fairy-tale, Shumway (2003) warns that it does demand of partners a closeness that may be unrealistic.

There was also some reference to 'economic' and 'life-stages' discourses. As shown in Extract 6 subject positions and constructions are mediated with reference to these discourses.

#### Extract 6

Tina: [...] I just think the fact that we're together, and we've got children and everything, and obviously he's, he's never been out of work and he pays the bills and all that. I think that's what he thinks is-, he's, obviously he's a good dad and he's a good husband and all that sort of thing but the little things, I think, have got-, sometimes get lost along the way. You know, we've been together, you know, 30 years and you know, I think, err, you know, there isn't the romance there. I mean I would like the odd flowers-, I mean I don't harp on about it, you know

what I mean. Like you said [referencing Nicky], I'm, I'm still happily married but when you think about it, you think, oh yeah, I would like some of those things.

The 'economic' discourse constructs relationship behaviours as hinging on perceived costs and benefits. It draws on social exchange theories, which argue that a trade underpins all social interactions (e.g. Colahan, 2014). In this way, it sees relationships as locations of conscious, rational and economic exchange.

The 'life-stages' discourse, understands human behaviour as passing through taken for granted phases. The plethora of established taxonomies range from childhood models like Piaget's stages to cognitive development to Kubler Ross's stages of grief. In the relationship sphere, for example, it is commonly understood that love moves from an early stage of desire and passionate love to eventually settle on a companionate affection.

### **Discursive variations when compared with the male groups**

The men were reasonably comfortable locating themselves in the 'intimacy' discourse and spoke of listening or a look being romantic. Interestingly, the women were mostly reluctant to construct these behaviours as romantic, as shown in Extracts 7 and 8. I suggest this speaks to their entrenched location in the 'romantic love' discourses. There is also something about the women choosing not to acknowledge these *important* activities as romantic that speaks to their power. They are constructing romance *as going the extra mile* and not *just caring*. In some way, letting-them-off-the-hook from grand gestures or heroic efforts and being easily 'pleased by' men might dilute female power and amplify male privilege.

#### Extract 7

**[... ] yesterday we heard someone say that he find-, they find it romantic to be listened to, you know? (Inaudible 01.12.12) and having someone who really deeply listens to you, and that can be as-, for them, quite romantic. How do you feel about that?**

Carol: I think that's very important, very important, from both sides.

Annie: I don't think it's romantic (talking over each other 01.12.23).

Carol: No, I wouldn't say it's romantic (talking over each other 01.12.25).

**Would any of you find it romantic to be deeply listened to by your partner?**

Tina: Just, I find it caring.

#### Extract 8

**[...] and he said, you know, 'we don't even have to say anything you just, it's a look of, you know, like a deep knowledge of each other that you see. You know, it's a look that I can't have with anybody else.' And he spoke about that being romantic, I mean, what-, do you guys have those things as well or not?**

Tina: No. I mean, you can get a look but I don't think it's romantic, it's a nice feeling-, (laughter). Well, you know, um, that answers that really. It just confirms it that you're close, I don't think it's romantic but again it's just, you know, it just confirms your relationship, in a way.

**Sort of affirmation or-,**

Tina: Yes, yeah, so yes, I suppose you do have certain looks-, well, perhaps it is romantic, I don't know.

Annie: I mean, I think romantic for me is like what you do [gesturing to Carol], you went that extra mile [...]

When compared to the male focus groups the female participants were prone to expression of discontent (as mentioned earlier) - an example is shown in Extract 9. The women were found to be frequently moaning about their partners while the men were by-in-large jolly and content. As an aside, the number of reported incidences<sup>4</sup> of laughter during the female focus group were comparable to the men's, however the laughter was largely skewed to self-laughter added as part of a disclosure (for example, *well I don't get that, but (laughter); Can't be bothered [with sex] anymore (laughter); But again, it's just (laughter). He doesn't, he doesn't notice*) and less oriented towards shared laughter.

Extract 9

Nicky: So, you know, you just think, well (talking over each other 13.33-13.37). You just think, well, what's the point? I mean, I love him desperately. I just want to shake him, and think, you know, 'You're 52, you're old before you time. All you do is say we've got no money, and that you're tired. Well, I'm tired.' You know. And we have got a bit-

Annie: I've got that one.

Nicky: Drives me mad. You know-,

Annie: The thing is, if you don't, you're a long time dead.

Nicky: Yeah.

Annie: So, you know.

Nicky: Well, I always say, sorry, you're a long time growing up, I said for God's sake, Nicky, you're 50 this year. Why don't you grow up? (Laughter).

A straightforward explanation for this expression of disappointment with their male partners, is the asymmetry that still exists in heterosexual relationships. In mainstream research of couples in the United Kingdom (e.g. Dryden 1999, cited in Crawford, 2004) women consistently reported concerns about relationship inequality. Research suggests that when women require or expect equality in the couple dyad, this introduces monitoring which ironically can serve to magnify any small disparity and lead to higher levels of dissatisfaction (e.g. Levinger, 1994). The continuing asymmetry in relationships can be linked to numerous issues, including men's access to material resources - higher salaries - and persistent masculine norms that privileges their status in marriage.

This situation then informs a construction of men as 'owing women something' which leads to women expecting men to engage in 'grand gestures' in order to compensate for women's lower status. So in a way, the 'grand gesture' and 'putting the lady on a pedestal' is actually a way of acknowledging that as a woman she is, in fact, less highly valued in society. Researchers Rugimbana, Donahay, Neal and Polonsky (2002) concur and show that romantic gift-giving

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<sup>4</sup> As a comparison: there were 63 incidences of reported laughter in this female focus group; 85 incidences of laughter in male focus group 1; and 49 incidences in male focus group 2.

rituals that see men buying women luxury items are governed by mutual social power exchanges between the giver and the receiver.

Women, who are typically conceived as having less power than men, 'choose mates on the basis of their social power (as a means of elevating social position), whereas men, as the sex with greater social power, select mates more on the basis of attractiveness' write Burton, Netemeyer and Lichtenstein (1995, p.61). Key to sustaining this exchange in a relationship is some kind of material compensation for being a 'proper wife' and subscribing to dominant norms of femininity<sup>5</sup> <sup>6</sup>. For example, institutionalized in the traditional marriage, reciprocity would see a woman receiving a home, income and security in exchange a husband would expect sex and care (Braun, Gavey & McPhilips, 2003). The construction of women 'giving their bodies' to men after marriage, as a gift exchange, assumes that women do not enjoy sex but give their bodies to men as a kind of gift (see Gilfoyle, Wilson & Brown (1992)). Again, for this they need to be compensated and depending on the asymmetry of power in the relationship, it could involve 'grand gestures'. The practice of gift exchange embeds an obligation to respond positively and give in turn.

In relationships located in the 'intimacy' discourse, gift-giving is approached differently – 'grand gestures' are not valued (See Sharon in Extract 10 and Carol in Extracts 14 & 15) – and it could be that the other's resources and outcomes are to some extent experienced as one's own (e.g. Hyun, Park & Park, 2016). In such relationships there is a more symmetrical balance of power in the relationship, it is gender neutral and accordingly less observant of the heteronormative order.

As mentioned earlier, it was the women located in the 'romantic love' discourse that were bemoaning their men. Intriguingly, Coate's (2013) observes in her extensive database of all-female talk, that peppered alongside marked expressions of discontent are snippets of warm affection for their men. See how Nicky in Extract 9 drops in *I love him desperately* amongst her tale of woe (see also Extract 18). Coates attributes this curious discursive feature as 'women struggling to reconcile their perceptions of men's deficiencies with their unquestioning acceptance of the heteronormative order' (2013, p.549).

As seen in Diagram 1, when compared with the diagrams from the all-male focus group summaries, within the 'intimacy' discourse, men and women both take up the same 'Best Friend Romantic' position. However, there are three positions that women take up in relation

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<sup>5</sup> Coates (2004b) 'Dominant versions of femininity in play today position women as gentle, caring, maternal, attentive to their appearance and above all *nice*' (p.139).

<sup>6</sup> With recent social and political changes, that include the rise of women's financial independence and control over reproduction, has rendered that this traditional gendered transaction is being renegotiated. According to Giddens (1992) who promotes a democratic 'pure' relationship, couples can be constantly negotiating and renegotiating the transaction via numerous exchanges and encounters.

to 'romantic love' discourses, whereas the men in the focus groups took up only one position: the 'Traditional Romantic' position. Could this one central position for men in the 'romantic love' discourse, be seen to constitute the centrality of men's involvement in heterosexual relationships? Men are regularly shown as the central figure and that women carve out their destiny in relation to men (Whelehan, 2000, cited in Nicholls, 2009). Indeed, Hollway (1984, cited in Sunderland, 2004) sees heterosexual relations at the primary site for the reproduction of gender differences and power hierarchy.

### **Subject Position**

The five subject positions that are negotiated by the female participants as constructions of romance are mobilised in the focus group are shown in Diagram 1. I have termed them the 'Best Friend Romantic', the 'Traditional Receiver', the 'Poor Me' the 'Hero Assessor' and the 'Hard Realist'. The 'Traditional Receiver', 'Poor Me' and 'Hero Assessor' are positions which are all located within the 'romantic love' discourses. While the 'Best Friend Romantic' is located in the 'intimacy' discourse and the 'Hard Realist' is found in the 'economic' discourses. See the next pages for tables showing each subject position and detailing their associated speaking rights and practices.

To introduce the subject positions and show the interaction between them see Extract 10 below. It speaks to receiving a gift of flowers as a gesture that they might find romantic.

#### **Extract 10**

Sharon: See, I don't know. I, err, when I was listening to you [referring to the group] about romance and flowers, romance, flowers just doesn't do it for me. That's not my kind of thing, it doesn't, I'm just kind of like, mmm, it's not really. I'd rather, err, him coming in and just saying, 'Thanks for looking after us.'

Annie: I always feel-, yeah, I always feel flowers make me ill.

Sharon: Yeah. Not-, no, I don't-, it doesn't mean. (Talking over each other)

#### **[...] Tina, now what were you saying?**

Tina: No, I was just saying I like flowers, 'cause it's not very often I get them. I think if you were getting them every week then it's nothing is it, but, err, you know, sometimes he remembers on our anniversary and occasionally he'll buy me a bunch. But not really, no.

#### **Okay.**

Tina: I don't get them often. So I'd think that would be really nice. I'd think that he was-,

Carol: Thinking about you.

Tina: (Talking over each other 06.17-06.24). I would like that (laughter).

#### **Has there been occasion in the past where you've found flowers romantic?**

Sharon: Err, I-, no. Err, possibly, no, no, no. I mean, I've had flowers in the past and he does buy me flowers. Err, I just don't find them-, I don't know. Err.

Julie: I'm not a fan personally.

Sharon: No, I'm not, no.

Julie: And if he buys them it's great (general agreement).

Sharon: Yes, it's 'Thanks ever so much.'

Julie: But it's just not-, it doesn't do anything for me, so. You know. And I'll say, 'What you bought me them for?' (Laughter). Probably 'cause I'm-, and then he goes, 'I won't buy them anymore.'

**Yeah. So think you might not get them any-,**

Julie: No. But I'm not fussed 'cause I'm not into flowers. I've told him that.

...

Maggie: [...] I've only had one bunch of flowers in eight years.

**Okay. And you'd like more, would you?**

Maggie: I would like flowers, yeah. I don't get them.

### Best Friend Romantic

In the first part of the extract we can find Sharon speaking from the 'Best Friend Romantic' position and suggesting that words of appreciation are more important to her than flowers. The 'Best Friend Romantic' position draws from the 'intimacy' discourse which privileges talking and communication over traditional romantic gestures. In this way she is challenging 'romantic love' discourses. Yet from the 'Best Friend Romantic' position it is unsettling to witness others openly snub /reject the gesture of being given flowers. Within the 'intimacy' discourse being sensitive to each other's feelings (in this case the flower bearer) is prized.

### Hero Assessor

Annie builds on Sharon's dislike of flowers and takes up the 'Hero Assessor' position. From the 'Hero Assessor' position, gestures can be openly rebuffed; Annie rejects flowers with the comment: *flowers make me ill*. The association to sickness evokes an image of repulsion. Annie's use of this statement has strong emotional loading and it is ambiguous. It is Annie's supporting narrative that there are clues to the position being taken. This response could be seen as the antithesis of 'pleasing her' constructions associated with 'romantic love' discourses. Yet it should be noted that the 'Hero Assessor' is constructing men, or their man, as deficient—and not the 'romantic love' discourses.

### Hard Realist

Julie takes up the position of 'Hard Realist' *I'm not fussed 'cause I'm not into flowers. I've told him that*. Flowers for the 'Hard Realist' could be a metaphor for romance and Julie really means *I'm not into romance*. When occupying the 'Hard Realist' position, women are mocking romance and belittling all (men and women) who are located in the 'romantic love' or 'intimacy' discourses, from this position they are not constructing their men as failures, but are turning down romance as not for them. See also Extract 4.

### Traditional Receiver

Tina speaks exclusively, in Extract 10, from the 'Traditional Receiver' position, which draws on 'romantic love' discourses. Here Tina constructs the gift of flowers as something she welcomes; she recognizes flowers as special because they are not an every day occurrence. In this way, the gesture of flowers is indeed 'pleasing her'.

Poor Me

Maggie occupies the ‘Poor Me’ position in this extract. Unlike the ‘Traditional Receiver’ position which applauds the rarity of gestures (as making them special). Here she moans that she has only received flowers once in eight years. Like the ‘Traditional Receiver’ position, the ‘Poor Me’ position draws from ‘romantic love’ discourses, and puts men in a powerful position of ‘pleasing her’.

Davies and Harré (1999) assert that in speaking from a particular position, the conversant is bringing their history as they see it; that is the discourses and positions they have occupied in the past. Choices between different subject positions will be mediated by the emotional meaning they associate to those positions based on self or other experiences (as well as the degree of moral alignment). The women who speak from the ‘Hero Assessor’ and ‘Hard Realist’ position justify their aggression and resistance to gestures with reference to being failed by romance and/ or men (either current or previous partners). Whereby the men did not observe their romantic or relationship duties for example, in Extract 11, Julie reveals that her ex left her for somebody else; and Annie’s partner failed to take any romantic initiative and *took her for granted* (see Extract 17). The way that speakers from the ‘Hero Assessor’ positions qualify their resistance to gestures with recall to men’s ‘failings’ reflects their location in dominant heterosexual discourses, which privileges men taking the lead, acting responsibly and being worthy providers—and serves to preserve heteronormative order. Unlike the ‘Poor Me’ or the ‘Traditional Receiver’ position which puts men in a powerful position of ‘pleasing her’, the ‘Hero Assessor’ protects themselves from this vulnerability and assumes the position of exacting judge and arbiter. Meanwhile the ‘Hard Realist’ considers themselves as grown up, living in the real world and that romance is for the naïve and foolish (see also Extract 9 *you’re a long time growing up*). Notice how in Extract 11 Julie views herself in the ‘Hard Realist’ position as *harder*. Extract 11

**[...] are there times when you might have been more needy of romance?**

Julie: In my first relationship then-, (Inaudible 47.30)

Julie: Just didn’t bother with that, at all, not bothered with the kids, this one’s completely the opposite. So maybe I probably-,

Tina: Hard touches?

Julie: Yeah, definitely, I mean, you get harder, you do. When things aren’t going right and, and they leave you for somebody else, I didn’t doubt how, how I was, it wasn’t that, but you just, I don’t know.

Interactions and Oscillations

In Extract 10, it can be seen that the focus group participants do not always exclusively occupy specific subject positions. Julie, for example, does not singularly speak from the ‘Hard Realist’ position. When asserting *And if he buys them it’s great*, Julie speaks from the ‘Traditional Receiver’ position, yet this position is only fleetingly held as within seconds she contradicts herself and declares that she rejects flowers. There is also some observable oscillation from

the 'Best Friend Romantic' position to the 'Traditional Receiver' position, with Sharon acknowledging that flowers might possibly be romantic and that she would be gracious in receiving them.

Below are tables that detail the four subject positions, these are based on a systematic exploration of the ways in which the discursive constructions emerged during the focus group.

The Best Friend Romantic (wider discourse: 'intimacy')

<b><i>Rights and Practice</i></b>	<b><i>Implications for Subjectivity</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender neutral</li> <li>• Pleasing both persons</li> <li>• Caring is valued</li> <li>• Creating daily sparkle – small moments of happiness e.g. sending texts</li> <li>• Duty to show you're being thoughtful</li> <li>• Communication is privileged - will switch off phones etc.,</li> <li>• Can always talk problems through</li> <li>• Both partners initiate romantic gestures</li> <li>• To discuss/agree the giving of presents</li> <li>• Prefers spending time with partner vs. friends</li> <li>• Privileges the couple dyad</li> <li>• High focus on emotional intimacy</li> <li>• Privileges feelings</li> <li>• Focused on supporting each other develop their own potential</li> <li>• Romance does not always lead to sex</li> </ul> <p><i>Wrongs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To not communicate/discuss</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being sensitive to each other's feelings</li> <li>• Feeling respected</li> <li>• Sense of gender equity in the relationship</li> </ul>

Traditional Receiver (wider discourse: 'romantic love')

<b><i>Rights and Practice</i></b>	<b><i>Implications for Subjectivity</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pleasing her</li> <li>• To be treated like a lady</li> <li>• Gestures are expressions of ideals and traditions: flowers, holidays, special occasions</li> <li>• Men take the initiative to be romantic</li> <li>• Male way of showing appreciation of you in the relationship</li> <li>• Recognises Valentines day</li> <li>• Good to feel desired/attractive</li> <li>• Unprompted gestures preferred</li> <li>• Privileges the couple dyad: does not include children</li> <li>• It's good practice to show appreciation 'say thanks' for the gesture</li> <li>• It's good practice to not question the motivation</li> <li>• Represents a welcomed departure from daily life: gestures do not happen every day.</li> <li>• It can be practice to have sex after being taken out</li> </ul> <p><i>Wrongs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To expect sex without romance</li> <li>• Staying home isn't romantic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May feel frustrated or disappointed if resources or opportunities are not available e.g. lack of money, energy or time</li> <li>• Men are in control</li> <li>• Source of value in the relationship. If a women isn't complimented – or provided with flowers - they could feel under appreciated.</li> </ul>

<b><i>Rights and Practice</i></b>	<b><i>Implications for Subjectivity</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To give household items as gifts</li> <li>• To assume doing housework is romantic</li> </ul>	

Poor me, he doesn't always please (aligned to 'romantic love')

<b><i>Rights and Practice</i></b>	<b><i>Implications for Subjectivity</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wanting to be treated like a lady (ie. not do the bins/lawns)</li> <li>• Seeking appreciation and compliments</li> <li>• Alert to gestures having reduced over time</li> <li>• Looking for traditional grand gestures</li> <li>• Desiring a willing romantic partner</li> <li>• Might fish for compliments or leave hints for gifts</li> <li>• Aware of their own efforts e.g. looking nice</li> <li>• Might appear needy for attention</li> <li>• Might role model behaviours in the hope they get reciprocated</li> <li>• Engages in upward social comparison – via TV, Facebook</li> </ul> <p><i>Wrongs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not doing your gender role e.g. looking nice or looking after your family</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Male in control</li> <li>• Can feel taken for granted</li> <li>• Can feel isolated ie. missing out</li> <li>• Can feel rejected</li> <li>• Can feel jealous of other people's relationships</li> </ul>

Hero Assessor (aligned to 'romantic love')

<b><i>Rights and Practice</i></b>	<b><i>Implications for Subjectivity</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Treats men/ or man as deficient</li> <li>• Views romance as heroic or idealist gestures</li> <li>• Stays together for reasons other than romance</li> <li>• Right to rebuff gestures</li> <li>• Open dislike of flowers and less significant gestures</li> <li>• May take caring gestures for granted</li> <li>• Questions motivation of token gestures</li> <li>• Privileges others over the couple e.g. children, friends</li> <li>• Deploys relationship stage rhetoric or age discourse to facilitate position</li> <li>• Might result in testing their man, leaving to get attention</li> <li>• Engages in upward social comparison – via TV, Facebook</li> </ul> <p><i>Wrongs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Token gestures</li> <li>• To privilege the caring or small daily gestures of kindness e.g. housework</li> <li>• To privilege affection like hand holding</li> <li>• To initiate romance as a female</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Females are judge of romantic endeavours</li> <li>• Can be seen as 'hard'</li> </ul>

Hard Realist (aligned to 'economic')

<b>Rights and Practice</b>	<b>Implications for Subjectivity</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Patronises those who engage in romance</li> <li>• Views romance as foolish</li> <li>• Can mock romantic activities</li> <li>• Uses assertive language</li> <li>• Rebuffs romantic gestures</li> <li>• Privileges personal space and routines</li> <li>• Relationships serve other purposes than romance</li> <li>• Practicalities prevail over romance</li> <li>• Represents romantic apathy</li> <li>• View romance as a fairy-tale, not real life</li> <li>• Privileges others over the couple e.g. children, friends</li> <li>• Deploys relationship stage rhetoric or age discourse to facilitate position</li> </ul> <p><i>Wrongs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To dote on your husband</li> <li>• To be slushy or engage in PDA</li> <li>• Moaning about a lack of romance</li> <li>• To want affection or physical intimacy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See themselves as 'cynical'</li> <li>• Can be seen as 'hard'</li> <li>• View themselves as mature in years/wise to the world</li> </ul>

**2) What are the tensions and challenges presented?**

Hero Assessor vs. Best Friend Romantic

In Extract 12, we can see that Nicky located in the 'romantic love' discourse, speaking from the position of 'Hero Assessor', and disputing that text messages can be romantic. *When he's waiting for the bus*, she scoffs, thus implying a text sent on route to work could not possibly be romantic. From the 'Hero Assessor' position, grand heroic gestures are valued and warranted as romantic. Her declaration of *I'm out of the loop with this group* speaks to her separation from the 'intimacy' discourse.

Extract 12

**So what is it about the text message in the morning that you find romantic?**

Sharon: Just that he's thinking about me. Just that he's thought about me, woken up, making sure I'm okay, and making sure that everything's alright. Not that I need anything in terms of-

**Yeah.**

Sharon: But just looking forward to-

Carol: That you're on his mind?

Sharon: Yeah, that kind of thing. So that's just-, that he's thinking about me, for me, is romantic. And the fact that-

Nicky: When he's waiting for the bus (laughter).

Carol: I don't think that I-, I don't think I'm a romantic person though.

Nicky: I'm out the loop with this group (laughter).

Poor Me vs. Hero Assessor

Below in Extract 13, is an example of the curious relationship between the 'Poor Me' and 'Hero Assessor' positions. From the 'Poor Me' position Annie references that she *wanted it* (romance) and repeatedly says *he took me for granted*. Annie shares with the group how she woke up her non-romantic partner by going on holiday without him and subsequently he is

now doing his utmost to please her. The use of the puppy metaphor, can be seen as reflective of the 'Hero Assessor' position, references his desperate attempts for her approvals, which she is experiencing as unattractive. Annie is withholding her appreciation or acknowledgement of his gestures as romantic. There is something about him becoming a joke to her. Annie repeated uses the word *annoy*; it is his neediness that annoys her and in this way she is irritated because—he is failing to act like a 'proper' man—'masculinity is meant to involve being confident, dominating and self-sufficient' (Hollway, 1983, p.136). Here we see how women, like Annie, collude in male performance of masculinity.

Extract 13

**So it sounds like err, Annie you've got a little bit more romance back in your relationship since you-, [organised a vacation without him]**

Annie: Yes. To a degree, but it annoys me now.

**Oh, what? Tell me. What-,**

Annie: He annoys me because for so long I wanted it and it was, sort of, like, he took me for granted, he took me for granted. And I think I tried more because this is the second relationship.

**Yeah.**

Annie: Err, that, as I say I just went away and when I came back, I mean, you know, to the point of annoying now. (Laughter)

...

Annie: Like a puppy, 'I've done this for you, I've done that.' You haven't done it for me. You've just done it. And now it's annoying.

...

**So it feels a bit more, like, contrived, maybe? That he's-, or, err-,**

Annie: He's desperate (laughter).

Julie: Over the top. Over the-, yeah. (Laughter)

#### Poor Me vs. Best Friend Romantic.

Given the available discursive resources it might make sense for women to move from a 'Poor Me' position, where men have power, to the 'Best Friend Romantic' position, where the power is equitable. However, there appears to be resistance in making this transition. In Extract 14 Nicky and Julie speak from the 'Poor Me' position, and advocate that if they had more money then there would be more romance—and happiness. See how Nicky and Julie, located in the 'romantic love' discourse, talk over and thereby dismiss the 'intimacy' discourse.

Extract 14

Nicky: I personally think, if you had more money, and I know money is not the-, if you had more money, it would make things a lot easier. You could treat each other, you could do more, but when (talking over each other 01.21.41).

Sharon: Shows affection or a walk in the park, and just holding-,

Nicky: You see, I think, if we had money, we could get the spark back because we could, perhaps-,

No x 2

Carol: No, I don't think (talking over each other 01.21.57).

Julie: Both of them have got money and they are really-, when, how I see them, I'm, I'm, I'm sure I am right. I, I don't think they're covering it up. They're really happy. They're, that couple haven't got any children yet. They're getting married and they go away lots, and they've had

money left. He's had money left to him, and they go away lots together, and it's all-, okay, it's on Facebook occasionally, not loads, but anyway, 'Ooh, we're at the beach,' and it's not, like-, you know, they don't go to Spain or anywhere exotic. It's just local seaside. I, I mean, I think that's nice, but my other half won't do that. Not-, 'Oh, what do you want to go to the beach for?' but I want to. I want to run my dog along the beach with the kids and be-, oh, maybe, you know-, with a little flow-y dress, like you see on the telly. That sort of thing I would like, for me, and then, most of the other friends that we've got, they have got money. Yes, they have got children, two newborns, and they are-, she does all the cooking and she's a-, she's a fantastic mum, a fantastic cook, I mean, she is, and they're-, they're just happy and-,

A further example of the dismissal of the 'intimacy' discourse is shown in Extract 15. Carol drawing from the 'intimacy' discourse and speaking from the 'Best Friend Romantic' position suggests that Nicky who frequently occupies the 'Poor Me' position would find it romantic if her husband showed more support in her endeavours. This suggestion is rejected by Nicky, who firmly discounts the 'intimacy' discourse, which privileges support and friendship with: *I never got married just to have a friendship.*

Extract 15

Carol: Just to take interest in you and what you're doing now, you'd probably see that as a bit of a romantic little side to him, because if he sat down and went, 'Right, Nicky, tell me what you do in your business,' or whatever, you would probably think (inaudible 01.23.56) ready to do that. They just need to take that little bit of interest and just support you, support in what you're doing.

Nicky: Yeah.

Carol: That goes a long way.

Nicky: Mmm.

**So do you think in general for-, that-, in an established relationship, is not having romance in that relationship, is it a problem?**

Yeah (x2).

Julie: I think it depends what you want from the relationship. (Talking over each other 01.24.27).

**So it depends on, on what you're expecting from the relationship.**

Julie: Yeah.

Nicky: I think you've got to have a bit of romance, but I don't think it will last forever (inaudible 01.24.35), unless you just want a friendship. I never got married just to have a friendship, and that's what I've got now.

**Yeah.**

Annie: But I think, again, there is a fine line between romance and-,

Carol: I know, but if you ask a lot of people, the majority of people would say, 'I just want, like, a friendship. It's like a friendship relationship.' I think it does tend to go (talking over each other 01.24.54).

Julie: We think the same on lots of different things and, kind of, almost weird on some stuff, and I don't expect flowers, I don't expect romance. I think it's what you expect out of it, you know?

Annie: I think you expect more caring than romance.

Julie: He is, but I probably don't appreciate it. Because I've been in a relationship before, I don't appreciate it all, but I know he's found it hard [voice is wavering], and he shouldn't be the one to blame. (Silence 01.25.20-01.25.25).

Poor Me vs. Hard Realist

The 'Hard Realist' position was at odds with dominant 'romantic love' discourses and this tension played itself out in the room. In Extract 15 Julie occupies the 'Hard Realist' position, which is located in the 'economic' discourse, from this position romance is considered naïve—and the speaker rejects romance. This moral order is reminiscent of prevailing attitudes of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, at that time individuals could have a say in their choice of spouse, yet it was generally thought that a marriage based on romantic love was foolish, and would inevitably be problematic. Consistent with the tradition of the past, marriage was deemed to serve more practical considerations (Stone, 1977) - as reflected by Julie in Extract 15 when she voices that her relationship expectations do not include romance. She also alludes to an earlier relationship and being positioned in 'Poor Me' (described in Extract 11) as legitimizing her occupation of the 'Hard Realist'. Julie acknowledges her power in this position and that her husband has *found it hard*. The long silence at the end of her admission reflects that this position counters dominant discourses.

The 'Poor Me's' readier oscillation to 'Hero Assessor' or 'Hard Realist' positions (as seen in Extracts 11 and 13) and resistance of the 'Best Friend Romantic' can be seen as commitment to dominant heterosexual discourses and choice to take power. The way that male and/or romantic failings facilitate the 'Hero Assessor' and 'Hard Realist' position, can be read as the 'Poor Me' position seeding these positions. This draws on Foucault's notion that within repressed discourses are seeds that serve to disrupt the dominant views (Foucault 1977). The 'Poor Me' position places the man in a more powerful position as the reassurance of being loved is being withheld. Whereas from the 'Hero Assessor' position women take the role of powerful judge and view men as deficient in their romantic efforts. The 'Hard Realist' extracts herself from romantic love obligations and rejects attempts to 'please'.

There is a degree of alignment in the moral code between the 'Hard Realist' and 'Hero Assessor' positions. Subject positions vary considerably in the language used and the moral judgments made (Davies & Harré, 1999); speakers from the 'Hard Realist' and 'Hero Assessor' position employed assertive language that commanded attention and were quick to make critical judgments *like a puppy, he's desperate, use inflammatory language for God's sake, flowers make me ill, you're a long time dead* and they referred to themselves as *hard, spiteful*. Arguably the contrary tone used by the 'Hard Realist' and 'Hero Assessor' is reflective of their marginalized status.

An example of the forces that marginalize the 'Hard Realist' position is shown in Extract 15a below. Here we see Nicky occupying the 'Hard Realist' position and staying in a relationship for practical and economic reasons. From this position she admits to not being troubled if her husband was unfaithful. Nicky oscillates in location from the 'economic' to the 'romantic love' discourses. The moral code associated with 'romantic love' discourses privileges monogamy

and love as the basis of the relationship, and from this discourse we can see Nicky viewing the 'Hard Realist' position as *sad*, *wrong* and *not healthy*.

Extract 15a

Nicky: If it wasn't for, like, the kids, school and the house, I'd quite easily walk away, which is really sad because one of my friends said, 'Well, you know, if he went off with someone, would you be upset?' And I said, 'I don't think I would.' That's wrong, isn't it?

**Yeah, well, I'm not saying that it's wrong but, I mean-**

Nicky: But it's not-, it's not healthy and then I just think, 'God, if that-, I wouldn't want to leave the house, I wouldn't want to upset the kids, so it's just another day, isn't it?

### 3) Project of the Group

It appears that the project of the eight women in the group was to support each other—while preserving heteronormative order.

The frequent disclosures of discontent<sup>7</sup> were met by the group in a warm and supportive way; the participants in the group showed empathy, interest and encouragement. As an example Nicky's disclosure of her husband being angry and depressed was met with Annie sharing her own story with depression. In general, the participants were keen to help each other and were ready to offer suggestions (see Sharon in Extract 14 and Carol in Extract 15).

Where there was intra-group tension it was around the occupation of the 'Best Friend Romantic' position, which draws from the 'intimacy' discourse. As mentioned throughout this document, the women in the focus group went to great effort to distinguish between romance being constructed as special times (and heroic efforts) versus caring, which represent the wider discourses of 'romantic love' and 'intimacy' respectively. In Extract 16 below we can see Sharon located within the 'intimacy' discourse directly disagree with the 'romantic love' discourse. Then how Annie, speaking from the 'romantic love' discourse, cuts down Sharon. Annie's use of *just* to qualify *caring* suggests some form of order or hierarchy—and that caring must be at the bottom of the ladder. The protracted silences at the end of the extract reflect the debate and resistance to each other's position.

Extract 16

Carol: Does romance-, you can't have that you can keep romance up every day 'cause then it wouldn't be special.

Tina: It wouldn't be romantic, would it?

Carol: No, it wouldn't be romance.

Tina: No.

Sharon: You see, no, now I disagree. I think you can be romantic on a daily basis and it doesn't require half an hour, an hour, I think it's just-,

...

Carol: I think they're caring, like, every day, you know, but, I mean, like I said before it's, where is the line?

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<sup>7</sup> The word *sad* was used repeatedly with reference to their romantic lives.

Julie: Where's the line?

Carol: It's just where is the difference between romance and caring?

Annie: Yeah. I think romance is actually, you know, going out for the night, making a real effort, sort of thing.

Carol: Laughing together and enjoying each other's company.

Annie: Yeah, whereas caring is-, (talking over each other 55.07).

Sharon: I don't think you need to go out and-,

Annie: Yeah, but, to me, what he does for you is just caring.

...

Annie: Yes, yeah, whereas the caring is there all the time. (Silence 56.01-56.05).

Sharon: What you were saying there about, there about romance and you being the centre of attention but surely those little snippets of a cuddle, kiss, a text message or whatever, those are all making you feel really special and that's the romantic element of being in a relationship. (Talking over each other 56.23). (Silence 56.25-56.29).

There was regular pushback from being positioned in the 'intimacy' discourse (as evidenced with the tension towards 'Best Friend Romantic' positions in Extracts 7, 8, 12, 14, 15 and 20) and I believe this is partly because, with its gender-neutral notions, it is the least respectful of heteronormative order—and privileges 'new man' over 'retributive man' or heroic masculine ideals. On this matter, Hollway (1983) writes 'the perception of men as powerful is also promoted by women's desire for 'the other' and subsequent misrepresentation of men as a result of their own vulnerabilities and also their assumptions about gender difference' (p.126).

#### Preserving heteronormative order

The females identified themselves as committed to heteronormative order with frequent references to relationship length, status (married or engaged) and children. Heteronormativity favours monogamy and valuing traditional gender norms - in masculinity the image of 'retributive' man is thereby privileged - and in femininity: showing care and being a good mother is valued (Cameron and Kulick, 2006, cited in Coates, 2013). These feminine attributes, along with subscribing to traditional gender norms, can be considered as markers of being a 'proper wife'. An exemplar of reverence to traditional gender norms can be seen in Extract 14, with Julie voicing: *Yes, they have got children, two newborns, and they are-, she does all the cooking and she's a-, she's a fantastic mum, a fantastic cook, I mean, she is, and they're-, they're just happy and-. Julie even wants to wear a little flow-y dress, like you see on the telly.*

The participants' casual references to everyday life, along with their romantic activities, serve to construct traditional gender roles and in doing so construct and maintain heteronormativity. In Extract 17 Carol can be seen aligning herself with traditional gender roles whereby, she spas while he golfs, and obviously—he pays for the spa and the weekend

away. Carol initially used the *we* pronoun<sup>8</sup> with reference to money, it was changed to *he'd pay for that*. There's a sense of him having the final say, being ultimately in charge. Coates (2004b) observes about everyday talk that: 'gender demarcations are carefully maintained with women colluding in constructing male dominance' (p.196).

Extract 17

Carol: And he enjoys golf so he might just say, 'While I'm playing in that golf tournament, shall we just stop over the night?' or something. So that's what we, we put our money towards that.

**Yeah, and would that be a romantic weekend?**

Carol: Yeah, 'cause we'd go and we'd be spending time, with each other on the night. I might just go and have a spa in the day and then, he, and he'd pay for that, he'd pay for that weekend.

Err, and then we'd have something to eat on the night and it's just quite nice just to be outside of the home and away from that environment.

The effort to sustain heteronormative order was revealed in the way participants disclosed relationship struggles and romantic hardships. These disclosures, as shared from the 'Poor Me' 'Hero Assessor' or 'Hard Realist' positions, could have rocked or challenged their femininity and sense of being a 'proper wife'. Yet these speakers supplement their offerings to the group with proof of conformance to dominant heterosexual discourses—and their 'proper wife' credentials.

Firstly from the 'Poor Me' position in Extract 18, we see Maggie making an uncomfortable admission that her husband *doesn't notice* her. Her laughter reveals her awkwardness. See how she recovers her heteronormative place in speaking from the 'Traditional Receiver' position and applauding her husband taking the lead and booking holidays.

Extract 18

Maggie: But again, it's just (laughter). He doesn't, he doesn't notice.

**Really?**

Maggie: No.

....

Maggie: A little bit, yeah. Err, but he does, he organises holidays and things.

**Okay**

Maggie: I never, I don't even really know where we're-, like, what hotel we're staying in and stuff half the time. He'll just go and do it.

The disclosures that stem from the 'Hero Assessor' and 'Hard Realist' positions, which broadcast their mate's masculine failings and/or reject male attempts to please, are arguably the most disruptive to the participant's place on the heteronormative ladder. The women who speak from this position, can be seen to readily reference their children and relationship length – which serves to prop up their heteronormative position. For example, Julie, who

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<sup>8</sup> As a side note, Coates (2013) points out how it is taken-for-granted that the *we* pronoun signals oneself and partner/spouse; and the use of *he* or *she* can easily be recognised as that partner. This affirms that we are positioned in a discursive economy where heterosexual relationships are key.

frequents the 'Hard Realist' position supplements her disclosures with quick reference to being an attentive mother and in a long relationship, both of which are privileged markers of femininity.

Extract 19

Julie: I have been with him a long time, fifteen years but I think, just, I've got so much going on that there isn't time for us. And, obviously I think it's sad when I say but one day we probably will be together, when we're spending time together. He'll probably drive me mad then (laughter). Who knows? Err, you know, it's just time, it's the little one plays tons of cricket. The older two are-, the one's really never there, he's always out and about. The other one's, 'Can you pick me up? Can you fetch me?'

But it is the 'Best Friend Romantic' position, which is drawn from the gender-blind 'intimacy' discourse, which poses the biggest threat to the heteronormative order. See below in Extract 20 how the 'intimacy' discourse, which advocates supporting each other to fulfill one's potential, has the possibility to disrupt traditional gender norms. The extract shows Sharon representing her husband as a 'new man', who is supportive of her career aspirations, and that she values his readiness to *look after the kids*. The lack of build, followed by silence, from the vociferous participants reflects their resistance to this discourse and observance to heteronormative order.

Extract 20

Sharon: I think consideration as well is a massive, massive thing in terms of being considerate to you were saying about careers and things like this. And being staying at home. My husband does try as much as he possibly can do. He is the breadwinner and I stay home looking after the kids. But he knows that, err, I went to, I went to college and got, err, A levels and there's things that I want to do and he knows that I want to pursue those, so he's, kind of, said, 'Look, go and get a job,' and things like this. 'If that makes you feel better, I can look after the kids.' And it's just that consideration, that-, and that all helps and-,  
Carol: He considers how you feel.  
Sharon: Yeah. (Silence 32.37-32.40).

### Reflections of a Female Researcher

As I initially reacquainted myself with the audio/transcript, and faced the female dialogue of romantic hardships—after listening to the men's upbeat stories—I wanted to be careful that my reading of this difference did not (re)produce gender discourse or sexist assumptions that women are needy, while men are normal.

What I have observed is that the women in the group, located in the 'romantic love' discourses, are defining for themselves what would constitute as satisfactory evidence of romance. They are choosing to be critical or insistent that caring, listening or a look doesn't count—and that flowers are not always enough. They would rather be taken out, whisked away or surprised with a grand gesture.

Is pleasing her—in an idealized James Bond way—necessary for men to preserve their male privilege?

The women who take up the 'Hero Assessor' position are monitoring and criticising their partner's less-than-heroic behaviours. They are presenting from this position, that they are holding men responsible for their actions; these women are making men aware that failure to attend to them—please her—may be costly. Thereby resulting in the women leaving, going on holidays without them, withholding affection and privileging others over their husband.

Rather than women being needy, my reading is that it is may be men who are vulnerable<sup>9</sup>. And that women are colluding in the reproduction of the male 'retributive man' by desiring an idealized James Bond masculine form. Hollway (1983) exposed male vulnerability, in a feminist book on sexual and love politics, and wrote that making political the knowledge that men are vulnerable, gives us a different view of men's displays of masculinity.

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<sup>9</sup> 'Women misrecognise men and women because we too are subject of to (sexist) assumptions which men are produced as 'strong' and women as 'weak' (Hollway, 1983, p. 135.).

## FDA Summary Paper: Female Group 2

Exploring how women in established relationships construct romance and are positioned by ready-made or historically given discourses. This summary of the FDA seeks to answer three questions:

- 1) What discursive resources are available and drawn on by the group? Pg. 151
- 2) What are the tensions and challenges presented? Pg. 163
- 3) What is the project of the participants in the session? Pg. 167

The project along with tensions and challenges provide a reading as to what the participants in the group are doing with their discursive resources.

### 1) What discursive resources are available and drawn on by the group?

It would seem that the discursive economy for romance is similar for men and women, however how they make use of these resources varies considerably between them. The women show more complexity, as shown in the Diagram below, and mobilized five subject positions.

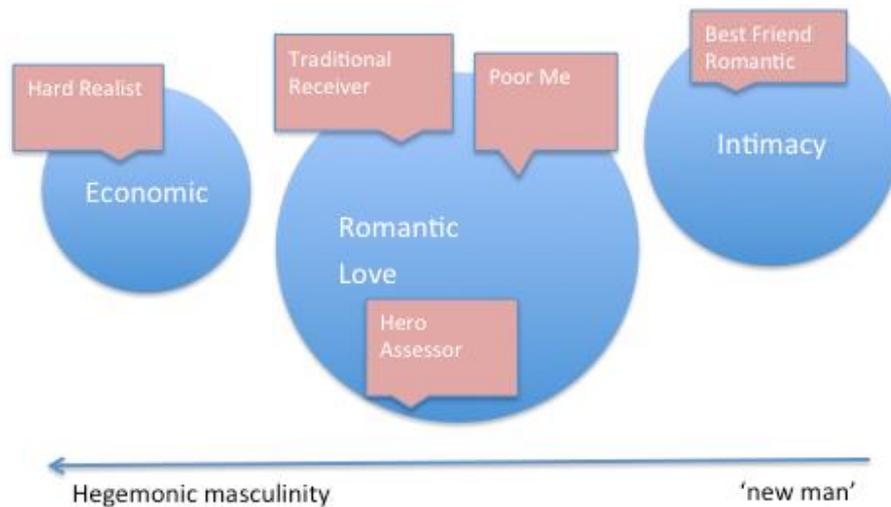


Diagram 1: A map of the available discursive economy of romance, as illustrated by wider discourses and subject positions. The relative size of the discourse and subject positions represent frequently occupied and therefore dominant discourses and positions. Hegemonic masculinity<sup>10</sup> is the term given to a set of gender expectations for males that are culturally privileged.

Romance is constructed as thoughtfulness and relationship warmth; grand gestures, exclusive physical intimacy and affection; as pleasing her; and as a transaction. Some women in this

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<sup>10</sup> Hegemonic masculinity rejects behaviours perceived as feminine and is largely reflective of a heterosexual, authoritative and macho man – as represented by the masculine ideal 'retributive man'. Hegemonic masculinity it reflects privileged gender expectations and is thus the highest level within the heteronormative hierarchy.

group were active in constructing romance as not existing in all established relationships. Like the earlier focus group of women there is considerable conflict between romance being constructed as grand gestures (and also representing heroic efforts) versus every day relationship warmth and thoughtfulness. This conflict speaks to a clash in masculine ideals, which I explain more in Section 3. While the 'new man' and 'retributive man' are the two dominant masculine images that generally inform male identity (as discussed in FDA Male 1 Summary). The knight/hero, which is 'retributive man' taken to an idealized level: a James Bond type - legitimized by television and movies – was used by females to judge men as failing in their romantic efforts.

Below you will find examples of these constructions from the text. It can be seen that these are interrelated, for example 'thoughtfulness and relationship warmth' and 'grand gestures' can be presented as / mobilized as ways of 'pleasing her'. Also 'pleasing her' and 'physical intimacy' can be seen as different parts of the 'transaction'. Furthermore, constructing romance as 'grand gestures' and/or 'physical intimacy' can lead to a construction of romance as 'not existing in many established relationships'.

Romance is constructed as thoughtfulness and relationship warmth (Extract 1)

Cheryl: Well he doesn't do, like the flowers or any of that. I dunno. Sometimes I think it's just, like, the small things, like if he went, like, he went to the gym, and then he came back with two chocolate bars. I didn't ask him to go and get them, but he bought my favourite chocolate bar. And I just sometimes think, you know, lives are so busy, but it's just those-,  
Sonia: That they've actually thought about you.  
Cheryl: Yeah.

Or (Extract 2)

Sonia: Yes. Sometimes we're in competition as to who can get the most kisses [on a text message], but that's only when we're laughing and joking, then I'll say, 'I love you.' He'll say, 'I love you more,' and things like that.

Romance is constructed as grand gestures. (Extract 3)

Trisha: Yes. If he comes home with a Louis Vuitton handbag, that's very romantic.  
**Okay. So, does that mean it has to be expensive then?**  
Trisha: It has to be something that I really like.  
**Okay.**  
Trisha: I really like Chunky Kit Kats, but it's not romantic.  
**So, help me out then. The Louis Vuitton handbag is more expensive and something-,**  
Trisha: Yes. Much more expensive than a Chunky Kit Kat.  
...  
Gloria: He's gone out of his way to get it, hasn't he? It's not on his way home. He's had to go and look for that. He's had to find somewhere that sells it.  
**Yes.**  
Gloria: You know, it's not just on the aisle of the supermarket as he's walking round anyway.  
Trisha: Also it's not, like, 45p is it? Do you know what I mean?

Romance is constructed as something that involves exclusive physical intimacy (Extract 4)

Ruth: I weren't into holding hands, and being slushy in public. I'm not a slushy person anyway, but we went to Dubai, and that was great, because you can't hold hands, and do anything in public, it was great. 'Cause he might have tried that on holiday, to hold my hand, and I'm like, 'Really, don't.'

Or (Extract 5)

**[...] do other people here know couples that have no romance in their relationship? Can you think of people?**

Trisha: Yes. Our best friends are worse than us. They're, like, brother and sister, almost.

**Okay. Is that a problem for them?**

Trisha: When she gets drunk it's a bit of a problem for her, because then she likes to, sort of, moan about the fact that, you know, they've got a daughter and-, which happened very quickly, sort of, just a very casual relationship. So they had this child and they've now made a go of it, but there's no, sort of, sex.

Romance is constructed as something that focuses on pleasing her (Extract 6)

Cheryl: But he's very good, sort of like, birthday and Christmas. Because my birthday and Christmas are very close together, so I never, sort of, tell him what I want, and he's quite good at going away and surprising me with stuff. So, yeah, he is quite thoughtful.

**And so do you find it romantic when you, when he delivers a gift and that he-,**

Cheryl: Yes. He worries that I'm not going to like it, but yeah, he always does quite well, so.

Romance is constructed as a transaction (Extract 7)

Sonia: He sat and watched *Fifty Shades* with me, at home.

Trisha: Well Andy might watch that, in the hope that he might get sex afterwards, if it watched it. But otherwise, oh no.

Romance is constructed as not existing in all established relationships (Extract 8)

Ruth: Just, it doesn't exist in my life. (Laughter). Yeah. Perhaps, I think, youth.

**Youth?**

Ruth: Yeah. Not an old, err, not, no.

**Okay.**

Ruth: Yeah. Youth, young people, romance, you know. Not somebody my age. Yeah, it's just, we just become mundane. We live together, and, what's romance?

Or (Extract 9)

Trisha: Like, and it'd be nice, once in a while, but I don't need love letters left for me round the house. I'd be like, 'Ugh, get rid of it'. Yeah, it's yeah. I mean, it'd be nice, but I do think that you grow up a little bit, and, it's just not there, is it, when you've been with someone a long time?

Ruth: Yeah, no, no.

Trisha: I mean, the odd person it is, and that's lovely. But that is the odd person. It's not the majority of people, I don't think. (Silence 02.44-02.47).

A construction of romance as not existing in a relationship (ref. Extract 8) reveals something towards what romance is suppose to be: an enactment of courtly love by positioning the woman as a princess. While most participants embraced this construction and were actively seeking romance, others were quick to judge such women as delusional; that they did not recognise the reality of their (less than regal) social position. This links to the earlier FDA

Female 1 Summary where the women readily associated having more money with being able to have more romance.

Consistently questions of romance are answered by the women in the group as something that the man does for her. There's heavy use of the 'gender differences' repertoire by the women in the group, (see Extracts 14 and 24 later in this paper) these are drawn from 'heterosexual' discourses and reflect respect of the heteronormative order.

A construction of romance as pleasing her, could invoke an assumption that women are less secure in their relationships and need constant reassurance that they are indeed wanted/loved. As shown later in the 'Poor Me' and 'Traditional Receiver' subject positions, this places the man in a more powerful position as this reassurance is his to give or to withhold. Yet what also unfolds in the analysis is that for some of the women, that they can mock romance and/or men and rebuff their attempts to 'please'. In these actions, the women are claiming power in the relationship. For the women who occupy the 'Hero Assessor' position, like Trisha in Extract 3, it is almost as if they are the princess being courted by a jester offering a Kit Kat, where they are looking to be pleased by a knight in shining amour who presents her with a Louis Vuitton bag<sup>11</sup>. In this way, women are constructing their men as failures. In contrast, when occupying the 'Hard Realist' position, the women are mocking romance and belittling all (men and women) who are located in the 'romantic love' or 'intimacy' discourses, from this position they are not constructing their men as failures, but are turning down romance as not for them. Associated with the views of the 'Hard Realist' and the 'Hero Assessor' that romance is a fool's game, is the harnessing of power from men, and over those women who are invested in romance.

By in large, the wider discourses whereby the group's constructions of romance can be located were primarily the 'humanist' discourses that included 'romantic love', 'economic' and 'intimacy'.

As mentioned in the all-male focus group summaries, the 'humanist' discourse taps into the humanistic notions of an ontologically innate self, constructed as achieving its true potential through a process of self-actualization (Prager & Roberts, 2004, cited in Colahan, 2014). It paints a picture in which everyone has a claim to happiness. Kitzinger (1989, cited in Burr, 2015) identifies 'romantic love' discourses as being part of the broader 'humanist' discourse. The 'romantic love' discourse constructs the centrality of love and coupledness to happiness. It is a discourse in which love, marriage and monogamy are inextricably linked with one another (Willig, 2008).

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<sup>11</sup> Davies and Harré (1999) suggest that in the 'romantic love' discourse there are two major complementary subject positions – the male hero or prince and the female heroine or princess, they note that the male normally has some heroic task to perform.

The majority of the women shared a desire for, and privileging of romance in a relationship. They also discursively linked romance with happiness (see Rita in Extract 10). Trisha, as shown in Extract 10, acknowledges that a bit more spark would be welcomed, but she hedges that romance is not a necessity for a happy relationship; but a nicety. The sentiment *It would be nice* is echoed in Extract 9 and by Cheryl in Extract 26. In this way, romance is constructed as an extra — a nice to have — but not essential or always expected. Romance here melds constructions of ‘pleasing her’, ‘grand gestures’ and/or ‘physical intimacy’ with the knight/hero masculine ideal and thereby romance is ‘not existing in all relationships’. There’s a sense that the fairy tale would be wonderful but not anchored in their daily reality. It is fair to say, that the way the speakers are privileging romance, even as an aspiration, speaks to their location, if only fleeting, in the ‘romantic love’ discourse. Note also Extract 5, Trisha uses the words *are worse than us* as she describes her romance-less best friends, in this way she is recognizing the dominance of ‘romantic love’ discourses.

## Extract 10

Rita: [...] I mean, I know that-, I know through going through a separation, a lot of people have opened up to me since, about they are unhappy, because I’ve been through it, sort of, you know, people start to talk to me.

Trisha: Though it doesn’t mean you’re unhappy if you haven’t got romance, does it?

Rita: Though when they talk about their issues, it tends to be one of the things that they-, they don’t feel loved, they don’t feel this, they don’t feel that- (talking over each other 01.16.20).

Trisha: If it’s a big enough problem. If it means that much to them, then get with someone that gives you those things, but if it doesn’t affect my life. It would be nice. It doesn’t make my life any worse.

Rita: Yes, but for some people it would.

Trisha: Yes, but for some people it would be a problem. Yes. So then they need to change their partner because they’re obviously not going to make them-,

Rita: No.

Trisha: You can’t make someone do something they don’t want to do.

Rita: No. Exactly. Yes.

Ruth goes further than Trisha and indicates that she would be happier without romance, see Extracts 4 and 11. The popular ‘romantic love’ discourse has come under scrutiny from scholars: according to Burr (2015) within this discourse, whereby love is the foundation for marriage, it involves caring for each other’s welfare and sex is given freely. We can see that Ruth has separated herself from sex in Extract 11, and it can be established that she has opted out of the ‘romantic love’ discourse.

## Extract 11

Ruth: I just don’t think about it [sex]. (Laughter). Just don’t like it. Yeah, no.

**So it’s not romantic for you?**

Ruth: No, no. No, not for me. (Silence 41.23-41.25).

...

Rita: Did you have it, if you don’t mind me asking?

Ruth: Yeah

Rita: How long have you been together?

Ruth: About seven years.

Trisha: Oh, so not even that long, really?,

Ruth: No. I've had a previous relationship, I've got three grandchildren. He's got grandchildren. We're just in the real world, you know? We've been there, done it and then the kids are doing it and we're not, you know? (Laughter)

Ruth, and at times Trisha (in Extract 10), occupy the 'Hard Realist' position, which is located in 'economic' discourses. The 'economic' discourse constructs relationship behaviours as hinging on perceived costs and benefits. Trisha can be seen to evaluate the impact of not having romance in her relationship *but if it doesn't affect my life; it doesn't make my life any worse*.

In the late 1950s it became apparent that couples would stay together even when there might not be romantic love motives, or even relationship happiness, and the Interdependence Theory was introduced as a new relationship paradigm<sup>12</sup>. It draws on Social Exchange Theories, which argue that a trade underpins all social interactions (e.g. Colahan, 2014). In this way, it sees relationships as locations of conscious, rational and economic exchange. Notice how Trisha mentions being *in the real world*. You can see in Extract 11, by the initial silence and then intrigue of other participants that the 'Hard Realist' position is at odds with dominant 'romantic love' discourses.

Staying with Extract 11, Rita's question *How long have you been together?* Thus reflecting a taken-for-granted assumption that a spark can go with time. This assumption is located in the 'life-stages' discourse, which was introduced in FDA Male 2 Summary and understands human behaviour as passing through a sequence of phases. In the relationship sphere, for example, it is commonly understood that love moves from an early stage of desire and passionate love to eventually settle on a companionate affection. See how Trisha is surprised to learn that Ruth has only been with her partner for seven years. Ruth attempts to legitimise her position, with respect to these 'life stages' discourses, and references having grown children and grandchildren. It could be read that the 'Hard Realist' subject position is located in the 'life stages' discourse, however it's moral commitment and speaking rights (as shown on the tables on pg. 12), appears to more driven by 'economic' discourses. Possibly the 'Hard Realist' reference to the 'life stages' discourse allows the speaker to preserve her heteronormative position.

More akin to the 'romantic love' discourse, is the 'intimacy' discourse, which uses the language of therapy and demands of partners an emotional closeness. Like the 'romantic love' discourses, it continues to assume the marital dyad and monogamy as its norm but it places a

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<sup>12</sup> The degree of relationship satisfaction and commitment is a product of outcomes, which is additionally shaped by the nature of past relationships and quality of available alternatives.

higher value of mutual relatedness in the intimate sphere (Shumway, 2003). While the 'intimacy' discourse does not expect marriage to be a romantic fairy-tale, Shumway (2003) warns that it does demand of partners a closeness that may be unrealistic.

**Discursive variations when compared with the male groups and female group 1.**

The women in this group largely echoed the discourses of the previous female group. Like the earlier female group, the women were often reluctant to construct every day gestures as romantic. Whereas the men in the focus groups were actively constructing these as romantic. In Extract 12 below, we can see Gloria reflecting this male/female divide with reference to her partner's purchase of flowers and morning kisses on the cheek. She relegates his gesture of the flowers as *part of the shopping*. We can see Gloria speaking from the 'Hero Assessor' position and demoting the morning kiss with her reference to sandwiches. For Gloria and Trisha these gestures do not amount to knightly behavior; these are merely *normal* and *everyday life*.

Extract 12

Gloria: [...] His idea of romance and mine is different. He probably thinks, when he takes the little ones to the supermarket and buys some flowers, that's his romance. I just think it's part of the shopping.

**Okay, so you really don't see that as romantic?**

Gloria: No.

...

Gloria: No, he just thinks, because he buys the normal bunch of flowers that that will be romantic. I think.

**Okay, so, like is it ticking a box, almost?**

Gloria: Yeah.

**Okay. Would you others agree, that that's maybe how men see romance?**

Ruth: Yeah, it's a chore, isn't it?

Gloria: Yeah. And you have a kiss on the cheek because he leaves, with his sandwiches. I think he thinks that's romantic.

**What do you think it is?**

Gloria: I just think it's, it's everyday life, isn't it?

Trisha: Yeah, it's just normal, what you're going to do, what you do.

As mentioned in the FDA Female 1 Summary, that there is also something about the women choosing not to acknowledge these activities as romantic that speaks to their power. They are constructing romance as going the extra mile and not just caring. In some way, letting-them-off-the-hook from grand gestures or heroic efforts and being easily 'pleased by' men might dilute female power and amplify male privilege.

Like the earlier female focus group, when compared to the male focus groups, the women were prone to expressions of discontent. The negative comments about their men would be supplemented with pockets of warm regard. As mentioned before, Coate's (2013) observes in her extensive database of all-female talk, that peppered alongside marked expressions of discontent are snippets of warm affection for their men. See how Trisha in Extract 13 is

unhappy that her sandwiches are getting taken for granted, even though when prompted her husband readily voices his appreciation. Coates attributes this curious discursive feature as 'women struggling to reconcile their perceptions of men's deficiencies with their unquestioning acceptance of the heteronormative order' (2013, p. 549). The last section of the extract shows Trisha's struggle *I'd be, like, a bit lost; It would be selfish*. Alignment to traditional gender roles is prized in the heteronormative order and being nice – and therefore not selfish – is a hallmark of dominant versions of femininity<sup>13</sup>.

Extract 13

Trisha: Yes. Oh, I'm sure he does appreciate it. Things like, I may get up and make a pack lunch every day. Then in the school holidays one of his work people said, 'Oh, had to meet the lady that makes these fantastic sandwiches' and I was just like, I said to Andy, 'I hope you appreciate that I get up every day and do that' and he was like, 'Oh yes, I do,' but he doesn't show it.

**So, do you think that romance is partly then, them expressing appreciation?**

Trisha: Yes.

Sonia: If you make him sandwiches, it's obviously become an expectation that that's what you do and he doesn't even think about it because that's normal.

Trisha: Exactly, he doesn't appreciate the fact that I do get up every day and do those things for him, because it is just-, I do everything for everyone and no one appreciates anything I do because it is the norm.

Sonia: Just stop it and then-,

Trisha: Then I'd be like, because I'm so used to doing everything, I'd be, like, a bit lost. I think, 'How selfish that I'd get up and make my son a pack lunch for school but I wouldn't make him a pack lunch for work.' It would be selfish not to do it if I'm doing one. I may as well do two because that's what you do. (Silence 54.05-54.09).

### **Subject Position**

The five subject positions that are negotiated by the female participants as constructions of romance are mobilized in the focus group are shown on Diagram 1. I have termed them the 'Best Friend Romantic', the 'Traditional Receiver', the 'Poor Me', the 'Hero Assessor' and the 'Hard Realist'. The 'Traditional Receiver', 'Poor Me' and 'Hero Assessor' are positions which are all located within the 'romantic love' discourses, while the 'Best Friend Romantic' is located in the 'intimacy' discourse. As mentioned earlier, the 'Hard Realist' is located in the 'economic discourse. See the next pages for tables showing each subject position and detailing their associated speaking rights and practices.

To introduce the subject positions and show the interaction between them see Extract 14 below. This extract speaks to male and female differences.

Extract 14

Trisha: Men don't want romance.

**What do they want, Trisha?**

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<sup>13</sup> Coates (2004b) 'Dominant versions of femininity in play today position women as gentle, caring, maternal, attentive to their appearance and above all *nice*' (p.139).

Trisha: Um, sex a couple of times a week. Their dinner cooked. And the remote control, , in the fridge.

Ruth: I'd agree with that.

Rita: I don't.

Sonia: Mmm, sometimes, sometimes not.

**What do you think?**

Sonia: Um, with a family, I think, um, it's hard to get romance. So equally, when we do get a chance to have romance, it's on a par, really. It's not really, just that he wants he wants sex and a meal cooked, because we share the cooking, and that sort of thing.

**Yeah.**

Sonia: So I think it's shared.

...

Rita: Yeah, I think, I think women need a lot more, and are a, a lot more needy than men. Although saying that, my, my partner, 'cause it's second, second relationship thing. I've been with him, um, six years now, um, he actually is quite similar. He's still, but our situation's different, because we're, we're lucky enough to have a weekend free every other weekend, where our children are with ex-partners. And we make sure that we make time for each other, on that weekend. So that's our time to go out on a date, to go out and have a few drinks, or whatever, and, sort of, keep that going, I suppose. Keep that spark going. But he's, yeah, he's romantic in his own way. He's very affectionate and very, which I haven't been used to in the past. So, but I get where you're coming from, because that was completely the situation before. So-,

Trisha: But it doesn't mean I'm unhappy with him, but that's not what he (talking over with each other 14.11) but I'm happy with that.

Rita: No (talking over each other 14.12). Yeah, he's quite happy with that.

Trisha: Yeah, yeah.

Rita: He doesn't feel the need to be any more romantic?

Trisha: Oh, he's not romantic in the slightest, and doesn't feel the need to be romantic.

Hard Realist

Trisha starts off the extract from the 'Hard Realist' position, declaring that *men don't want romance*. Speakers from this position can use assertive language that commands attention (as shown in Extract 9, *ugh, get rid of it* with reference to love letters, or Ruth in Extract 4, *'really, don't!'* with reference to hand holding). Arguably the contrary tone used by the 'Hard Realist' is reflective of its position as a counter to dominant discourse. From this position romance is considered foolish and for the naive. This moral order is reminiscent of prevailing attitudes of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, at that time individuals could have a say in their choice of spouse, yet it was generally thought that a marriage based on romantic love was foolish, and would inevitably be problematic. Consistent with the tradition of the past, marriage was deemed to serve more practical considerations (Stone, 1977) - as endorsed by Trisha in Extract 15. You'll notice here Trisha's tone has changed; she is less bolshie. The use of the two tag questions<sup>14</sup>, shows that on this occasion she is looking for consensus from her fellow participants.

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<sup>14</sup> Coates (2004b) 'the main function of tag questions is to check the taken-for-granted-ness of what is being said, to confirm the shared world of the participants' (p.131).

Extract 15

Trisha: We've got a very nice, some would say quite a privileged life. Nice home, nice cars. We both work very, very hard, but all of our friends know that we're a very happy couple, and he met me with an eight year old and a twelve year old, and that takes someone to take on that. That's, you know, in itself, a huge commitment of his love for me, to take on two girls, which, let's face it, I mean, it's not easy is it? Do you know what I mean?

Best Friend Romantic

Sonia speaks from the position of the 'Best Friend Romantic', which is located in the 'intimacy' discourse. Notice how Sonia eludes the 'gender differences' repertoire by suggesting that her and her husband are similar, on a par. *It's not really, just that he wants he wants sex and a meal cooked, because we share the cooking, and that sort of thing.* The 'Best Friend Romantic' position, is more gender-blind than other positions, it values 'new man' masculinity and both partners will be thoughtful about romance.

Traditional Receiver

Rita appears to be oscillating between the 'Traditional Receiver' position and the 'Best Friend Romantic' as she talks about her fortnightly date night. The focus on time together with the use of the *we* pronoun can look like it's spoken from 'Best Friend Position' and the 'intimacy' discourse *we make sure that we make time for each other.* However, her claim that women are more needy of romance than men, is typical of the 'romantic love' discourses which constructs men as having to 'please her'. This construction is also reflected in her question to Trisha *He doesn't feel the need to be any more romantic?*

Poor Me

The 'Poor Me' position is located in the 'romantic love' discourse; which prescribes women as desirous of romantic attention from their men. Unlike the 'Traditional Receivers', speakers from this position are mournful that they are not being romantically pleased by their partners. We can see in Extract 14, how Rita is alluding to being in the 'Poor Me' position in the past and assumes this to be Trisha's position. As mentioned earlier, the 'romantic love' discourses construct the centrality of love and coupledness to happiness. Trisha immediately rejects the 'Poor Me' position and the 'romantic love' discourse by asserting *I'm happy.*

Hero Assessor

Missing from Extract 14 is the 'Hero Assessor' position. Clear examples of this subject position can be found from Gloria in Extract 12 and Trisha in Extract 3 with her Kit Kat vs. Louis Vuitton handbag scenario. The women who occupy the 'Hero Assessor' position are located in the 'romantic love' discourse and are looking to be pleased by their men, however they are insisting on high—or heroic—standards. Unlike speakers from the 'Poor Me' position who bemoan the lack of romantic attention, speakers from the 'Hero Assessor' simply see the man as deficient. As mentioned earlier, it is as if they are the princess being courted by a jester,

where they are looking to be pleased by a knight in shining amour. In this way, women are constructing their men as failures and see them as a joke (see Extract 15).

Extract 15

Trisha: Yeah, I mean I joke about it, because it is actually quite funny, when you, like, look at the things that he does.

Interactions and Oscillations

As seen with Rita in Extract 14 that there can be fluid movement between subject positions. Across the extracts we can see Trisha speaking from the ‘Hard Realist’ the ‘Hero Assessor’ position, and even the ‘Poor Me’ in Extract 13, which she then rejects in Extract 14. Davies and Harré (1999) describes a weaving of positions within and across discourses, as people navigate: the emotional meaning attached to a position, the stories that can be made sense of via specific positions, and the moral order that legitimates the choice.

Below are tables that detail the five subject positions, these are based on a systematic exploration of the ways in which the discursive constructions changed during the focus group.

The Best Friend Romantic (wider discourse: ‘intimacy’)

<b><i>Rights and Practice</i></b>	<b><i>Implications for Subjectivity</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender neutral</li> <li>• Pleasing both persons</li> <li>• Caring is valued</li> <li>• Creating daily sparkle – small moments of happiness e.g. sending texts</li> <li>• Duty to show you’re being thoughtful</li> <li>• Together time is valued</li> <li>• Communication is privileged - will switch off phones etc.,</li> <li>• Use of the <i>we</i> pronoun</li> <li>• Both partners initiate romantic gestures</li> <li>• Privileges the couple dyad</li> <li>• High focus on emotional intimacy</li> <li>• Privileges feelings</li> <li>• Romance does not always lead to sex</li> </ul> <p><i>Wrongs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To privilege social media over your partner</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being sensitive to each other’s feelings</li> <li>• Feeling respected</li> </ul>

Traditional Receiver (wider discourse: ‘romantic love’)

<b><i>Rights and Practice</i></b>	<b><i>Implications for Subjectivity</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pleasing her</li> <li>• To be treated like a lady</li> <li>• Gestures are expressions of ideals and traditions: flowers, holidays, special occasions</li> <li>• Men take the initiative to be romantic</li> <li>• Male way of showing appreciation of you in the relationship</li> <li>• Good to be desired/ and confirmed as attractive</li> <li>• Unprompted gestures preferred</li> <li>• Privileges the couple dyad: does not include children</li> <li>• Represents a welcomed departure from daily life: gestures do not happen every day.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May feel frustrated or disappointed if resources or opportunities are not available e.g. lack of money, energy or time</li> <li>• Men are in control</li> <li>• Source of value in the relationship. If a women isn’t complimented – or provided with flowers - they could feel under appreciated.</li> </ul>

<b>Rights and Practice</b>	<b>Implications for Subjectivity</b>
<p><i>Wrongs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tick box exercise gestures</li> <li>• To give household items as gifts</li> <li>• To live like a brother and sister, no sex</li> <li>• Not to show appreciation</li> </ul>	

Poor me, he doesn't always please (aligned to 'romantic love')

<b>Rights and Practice</b>	<b>Implications for Subjectivity</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wanting to be treated like a lady</li> <li>• Seeking appreciation</li> <li>• Alert to gestures having reduced over time</li> <li>• Looking for traditional gestures</li> <li>• Desiring a willing romantic partner</li> <li>• Can be seeking affection</li> <li>• Might fish for compliments or leave hints for gifts</li> <li>• Aware of last romantic gesture</li> <li>• May moan and express unhappiness</li> <li>• Aware of their own efforts e.g. looking nice</li> <li>• Might appear needy for attention</li> <li>• Engages in upward social comparison</li> </ul> <p><i>Wrongs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not doing your gender role e.g. looking nice or looking after your family</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Male in control</li> <li>• Can feel taken for granted</li> <li>• Can feel isolated ie. missing out</li> <li>• Can feel rejected</li> <li>• Can feel jealous of other people's relationships</li> <li>• May feel undesired</li> </ul>

Hero Assessor (aligned to 'romantic love')

<b>Rights and Practice</b>	<b>Implications for Subjectivity</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Treats men/ or man as deficient</li> <li>• Views romance as heroic or idealist gestures</li> <li>• Right to rebuff gestures</li> <li>• Open dislike of flowers and less significant gestures</li> <li>• Harsh critic of romantic attempts</li> <li>• May joke about men and their gestures</li> <li>• May take caring gestures for granted</li> <li>• Questions motivation of token gestures</li> <li>• Represents romantic apathy</li> <li>• Privileges others over the couple e.g. children, friends</li> <li>• Deploys relationship stage rhetoric or age discourse to facilitate position</li> </ul> <p><i>Wrongs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Token gestures</li> <li>• To privilege the caring or small daily gestures of kindness</li> <li>• To privilege affection like hand holding</li> <li>• To initiate romance as a female</li> <li>• Practical gifts are not welcome</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Females are judge of romantic endeavours</li> <li>• Can be seen as 'hard'</li> </ul>

Hard Realist (aligned to 'economic')

<b>Rights and Practice</b>	<b>Implications for Subjectivity</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Patronises those who engage in romance</li> <li>• Views romance as foolish</li> <li>• Can mock romantic activities</li> <li>• Uses assertive language</li> <li>• Sees reality as black and white, categorical and knowable</li> <li>• Privileges personal space and routines</li> <li>• Relationships serve other purposes than romance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See themselves as 'cynical'</li> <li>• Can be seen as 'hard'</li> <li>• View themselves as mature in years/wise to the world</li> </ul>

<i>Rights and Practice</i>	<i>Implications for Subjectivity</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practicalities prevail over romance</li> <li>• Represents romantic apathy</li> <li>• Suspicious of romantic gesture as being given because are because they want something, self-serving</li> <li>• View romance as a fairy-tale, not real life</li> <li>• Quick to judge Traditional Receivers and Best Friend Romantics</li> <li>• Privileges others over the couple e.g. children, friends</li> <li>• Deploys relationship stage rhetoric or age discourse to facilitate position</li> </ul> <p><i>Wrongs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To dote on your husband</li> <li>• To be slushy or engage in PDA (public display of affection)</li> <li>• To want affection or physical intimacy</li> <li>• Moaning about a lack of romance</li> <li>• To allow for doubts or hesitations</li> </ul>	

## 2) What are the tensions and challenges presented?

It seems that the 'Poor Me' position was narrated as pivotal to many of the women's occupation of subject positions<sup>15</sup>. For example Trisha who frequently speaks from the 'Hard Realist' and the 'Hero Assessor' position, in Extracts 13 and 16 can be found speaking from the 'Poor Me' position, where she is bemoaning a lack of appreciation. At the end of Extract 16 Trisha voices that *Because I don't get it, it doesn't make me want to bother*. The 'Hero Assessor' and 'Hard Realist', which she readily speaks from, licenses not bothering; the moral code of both these positions allow for romantic apathy. In this way Trisha protects herself from the emotional vulnerability of being underappreciated. When choosing between positions, the emotional load that is associated with a position, based on either past occupation or relating to someone in that position, can serve to sanction a choice (Davies & Harré, 1999).

### Extract 16

Sonia: Yes. You see, I don't expect it on Friday and I've already said, 'Oh, we'll have dinner and see if someone will have kids on Friday.' 'Oh yes, shall we go for a nice meal or something?' So, he's sort of, like, reciprocating it, even if I have to suggest it.

Trisha: See, if I had to suggest it, which I would, Andy would go, 'I'm not bothered. Just stay in and get a takeaway if you want.' So, it's just like every other Saturday. So, you give up. I will try and give romance or do nice gestures, but I expect that if I do a nice gesture, to have loads of appreciation shown for it because if Andy did something nice for me, there would be loads of appreciation shown. It's almost like, you know when you've gone and bought them, like, lovely birthday presents, I'd like more than, 'Yes, that's alright.' Do you know what I mean? I'd feel like, if I've gone to all this thought and trouble and booked a table for a meal and there's birthday cake and breakfast in bed and stuff, at least show like you're appreciative. I don't want

<sup>15</sup> An alternative yet sympathetic reading, is that the occupation of the 'Poor Me' subject position, facilitates intimacy within the group. The exchange of vulnerable talk is a hallmark of all-female friendship conversations (Coates, 2004b).

to have to keep saying, 'So, did you like your present?' 'I've already said I like them.' You know? I'd like more appreciation. Because I don't get it, it doesn't make me want to bother, you know?

#### Poor Me vs. Best Friend Romantic Position

We can also see Sonia in Extract 17 referencing the 'Poor Me' position as central for her location in, this time, the 'intimacy' discourse. Notice how she repeats *because I didn't have it for so long*. Here we can see that she's become more grateful of smaller gestures, like a Kit Kat, and does not require the fairytale.

#### Extract 17

Sonia: It doesn't need to be a huge gesture like that for me, because I didn't have it for so long (talking over each other 01.20.01).

Trisha: Well, if he did it properly. A Chunky Kit Kat's not romantic, but, (talking over each other 01.20.05).

Sonia: I got used to it from when we got together and then didn't have it, and it was difficult, but because the romance and the spark seems to have come back again, those little things I appreciate a lot more, I suppose, because I didn't have it for so long.

In Extract 18 below we can see Rita referencing the challenge of being located in the 'intimacy' discourse, which privileges togetherness, with wanting her own space. She describes finding that balance as *hard*. She oscillates between the 'Hero Assessor' position wanting to *push it away, feeling suffocated* and the 'Best Friend Romantic' position. The nature of her recall of the 'Poor Me' position *Well hang on, I've got, kind of, what I always wanted here* sustains her occupation in the 'Best Friend' position. Rita demonstrates the opportunity for agency across subject positions in this extract; Davies and Harré (1999) write that 'the possibility of choice in a situation in which there are contradictory requirements provides people with the possibility of acting agentically' (p.49).

#### Extract 18

Rita: We are very, touchy-feely, and automatically hold hands when we go out.

**So Rita, is there anything you wouldn't want, in terms of a romantic act or gesture?**

Rita: I wouldn't want? (Silence 32.29-32.31) I don't know, because although we are like that, still this dilemma of, like, needing my own space as well, you know. I don't, you know, there have been times when I've said, 'Oh, yeah, bit much for me.' You know, it was probably a bit too much, at first, and that was 'cause I went from one extreme to the other. So I did find it a bit, but the I just thought, 'Well hang on, I've got, kind of, what I always wanted here, and I'm pushing it away.' So, but it's, it's finding that balance, which is, I don't know, hard.

**Yeah, so maybe, if it's too-,**

Rita: Too suffocating, and too, yeah. That, that's not good, 'cause that's not romantic then. It's not.

Underlying Rita's tension is a conflict of masculine ideals: the 'intimacy' discourse merits the 'new man', whereas the 'romantic love' discourses values the 'retributive man', or the idealised heroic version (as discussed in Section 3).

Poor Me vs. Hard Realist

There's evident conflict between 'Poor Me' and the 'Hard Realist' position. See Extract 10 for a discursive display of combat: Rita takes up the 'Poor Me' while Trisha responds from the 'Hard Realist' position. *Though it doesn't mean ...* is met with *Though when they talk...;* then *Yes, but...* is deflected with another *Yes but...*

Meanwhile, in Extract 5, Trisha relays her friend's 'Poor Me' position<sup>16</sup> whereby there is no sex in the relationship. Notice the last two sentences of the extract whereby from the 'Hard Realist' position, Trisha points to the bigger picture *the daughter is loved, they work very well in a family environment* and *they get on* as evidence of her location in the 'economic discourse', which draws on Social Exchange Theories.

Trisha repeatedly uses *sort of* as she shares the story with the group; she is sharing someone's personal information, and recognizing the sensitivity of the material, which contravenes the heteronormative code that privileges sex in a marriage. It can be seen (for example in Extracts 16 and 17) that when people speak from the 'Poor Me' position that hedges like *sort of, you know, I mean, I suppose* are pervasive<sup>17</sup>. In this 'Poor Me' extract we can observe Trisha's tone of voice having softened.

Hard Realist and Hero Assessor

The 'Hard Realist' position was at odds with dominant romantic love discourses and this tension played itself out in the group. However, there was a degree of alignment in the moral code between the 'Hard Realist' and 'Hero Assessor' positions. Subject positions vary considerably in the language used and the moral judgments made (Davies & Harré, 1999); speakers from the 'Hard Realist' and 'Hero Assessor' position employed sarcasm and were quick to make critical judgments, claim superiority and use inflammatory language. For example Ruth speaking from the 'Hard Realist' position condemned public affection like hand holding as *gross*, and Trisha below in the 'Hero Assessor' position views sharing a coke as *rank*. In Extract 19 below we can see Ruth's patronising drink sharers: *I just think, 'Mmm'* (see also Extract 27).

## Extract 19

Ruth: Don't know. Just sitting in a cinema together, and you see people, don't you, drinking out the same cup, and it's all lovely, and just, no. Not for me. I'm drinking mine-

Trisha: Don't, with no-one else's germs on it.

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<sup>16</sup> According to Lagenhove and Harré, 1999 this is an example of third order positioning, whereby the original person presented in the discussion is not present. Third order positioning happens a fair amount throughout the FDA of the focus groups as the men and women frequently talk about conversations they have with their partners and spouses.

<sup>17</sup> Coates (2004b) advises that women use hedges in same-sex talk for several reasons, including: saving face when self-disclosing, to soften a hard line or statement and to encourage discussion.

Ruth: (Laughter). And I suppose that is romantic, isn't it? 'Cause you do see-,  
Trisha: What, drinking out of each other's drinks? That's not romantic, it's rank.  
Ruth: But they do, don't they? People do share, I went out with friends a few weeks ago, and they shared a big, well, Coke thing. I just think, 'Mmm.'  
Trisha: I would just think he's too tight to buy his own. No, I don't share-,  
...  
Ruth: I'm too old for that, I think it's great when you see two 22-year-olds, you know, young, freshly in love, I think that's great. People don't wanna see me kissing somebody and holding hands, it's just always gross.  
Trisha: No, it's, it's alright holding hands. They don't need to be, like, snogging in public and stuff.  
Ruth: Oh, it's just gross.

It can also be seen that being located in these positions is at odds with dominant femininity discourses. In Extract 20 speaking from the 'Hard Realist' position, Ruth appears to recognizing dominant discourses when she describes herself as a *hard-faced cow*. Ruth then launches into a critique of female subservience and closes with a forceful *No it's not*. Speaking from the 'Hard Realist' position, Ruth is challenging, critical and largely intimidating.

Extract 20

Ruth: I suppose so. I just-, I've got no expectation. I never had any expectation. I'm quite grounded. I don't need to be shown love and affection to-, I don't need to be told, 'I'm in love with you' or not. Yes.

**Do you think-, where does that come from? Have you always been like that?**

Ruth: I don't know. I don't know whether it's because I've been previously married and divorced and I'm a hard-faced cow. I don't know. I'm just like that. Yes, I listen to women at work and their husbands are phoning them up at lunchtimes and saying, 'What are you having for dinner, babe?' (Talking over each other 01.09.11) What's the point of that conversation? Or they'll phone up and say, 'Can you book me a doctor's appointment' because I get really like-, 'While he's phoning you, he could be phoning the doctors'. (Talking over each other 01.09.25) So, that's what you do when you love each other. No it's not.

Hero Assessor vs. Best Friend Romantic

Speakers from the 'Hero Assessor' position were ready to judge theirs, and others, experience of romance—as not romantic. As an indication, during the focus group, the assertion *It's not romantic, That's not romantic; That's not romance* was made ten times by Trisha in the 'Hero Assessor' position. The 'Hero Assessor' holds high standards for romance and the gesture must demonstrate some knightly behavior (as discussed earlier). Everyday gestures of care or relationship warmth, like morning kisses on the cheek (Extract 12) are invariably classed as not romantic. Remember the Louis Vuitton handbag being *very romantic* vs. Kit Kat *it's not romantic* in Extract 3. Here in Extract 21 Trish fleetingly occupies the 'Best Friend Romantic' position, but quickly moves to the 'Hero Assessor' position, whereby in evaluating the worthiness of reduced chocolate she mocks her husband.

Extract 21

Trisha: Maybe Andy is romantic, then, because he always comes back from the supermarket with, like chocolate and stuff like that, so.

**And that he knows you like chocolate?**

Trisha: Yeah, yeah, yeah. So, I mean, a lot of the time it might have been reduced, (laughter) but you know, he'll buy the stuff, when he sees the yellow sticker on it, but at least he's thought of, 'Oh I'll feed her cheap tomorrow.' But, you know, at least he has thought-

Easy fodder for the 'Hero Assessor' is 'new man'. There's a sense as if Trisha, in this position, is preying on the participants' stories of nice gestures, ready to gun them down—and their men—as not romantic. Here we can see her dominance and readiness to expose Gloria's partner as a romantic failure. *What do you class as a nice gesture? I'm asking the questions now.* Gloria, in speaking from the 'Traditional Receiver' position, presents her man as 'retributive man' with sufficient knightly considerations, and manages to avoid Trisha's critique. (After this extract, Trisha does not speak for a further two minutes).

Extract 22

Gloria: [...] And he does do nice gestures, but it's just, it's just everyday life, isn't it.

**Yeah.**

Trisha: What do you class as a nice gesture? I'm asking the questions now. (Laughter).

**(Talking over each other 15.36) Yeah that's fine.**

Gloria: Um, Christmas, just before Christmas, he booked us a weekend away, and organised the childcare, which was nice. 'Cause we don't, we don't have a good circle of childcare. Our child's with a childminder in the day. We both work hard, and my mum's really quite old, his parents live far away, so it's hard. That-, that was nice. And, and it was a really lovely gesture, and we went off to another city for the weekend.

### 3) Project of the Group

There was considerable intra-group tension in this focus group. The session was marked by conversational dominance by Trisha, who combined with Ruth, from the 'Hero Assessor' and 'Hard Realist' positions had the project to oust romantic notions. A project of the entire group was to uphold hegemonic masculinity<sup>18</sup>.

#### Conversational Dominance and Ousting Romantic Notions

As can be seen in Trisha's prevalence throughout the extracts, that her voice dominated the focus group; her turn taking amounted to 176 contributions, in comparison Rita made 93, Sonia 72, Ruth 62, Gloria 41 and Cheryl 40<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> Hegemonic masculinity rejects behaviours perceived as feminine and is largely reflective of a heterosexual, authoritative and macho man – as represented by the masculine ideal 'Retributive man'. Hegemonic masculinity is the term given to a set of gender expectations for boys and men that are culturally privileged. In this way, it also reflects the highest level within the heteronormative order.

<sup>19</sup> As an aside, little is written about conversational dominance in all-female talk, more is documented about male dominance in mixed-gender talk (e.g. Coates, 2004b).

Early in the focus group Ruth and Trisha, took centre stage with the 'Hard Realist' and 'Hero Assessor' positions. Lagenhove and Harré (1999) suggest that early seizure of a dominant role in a conversation can force others to take up positions that would not have chosen otherwise. Arguably there may have been more natural occupation of the 'Best Friend Romantic' position. (As seen in Extract 22 - Gloria, when questioned, elected to take up the 'Traditional Receiver' position.)

Extract 23

Ruth: Are we blowing you out the water, now, is it?

**No, no.**

Trisha: Although we're a bit cynical, aren't we?

Cheryl: I think it changes as, say like, when you're first together, it's all, you know, sort of like, the flowers, the chocolates, and everything. And then, I suppose, you know, like when he proposed, that was very romantic, in the way that he, sort of, thought about and did it. But then, sort of like, with other things, it changes. So it's not, sort of like, the, the gestures so often. It's, like, sort of like, working together and being together.

In Extract 23 we can see Ruth asking *are we blowing you out of the water?* Indeed Trisha and Ruth were *blowing* the other participants out of the water.

The statements made from the 'Hero Assessor' and the 'Hard Realist' positions came across as aggressive and as such contravene femininity codes. In Coates (2004a) commentary on changes to traditional assumptions about gender identity, she writes that deviance is being marked by traits that were once the markers of masculinity—like rationality and aggression.

Conversations, in all-female talk, that take the hard line do little to encourage participation (Coates, 2004b). As a result of the harsher style and confrontational manner of the 'Hard Realist' and 'Hero Assessor' positions, many of the participants were hesitant to talk—or spoke with hesitation. Notice how in Extract 23 Cheryl litters her contribution with *you know, sort of like*. These hedges mark vulnerable talk, yet there is an absence of self-disclosure that would be classed sensitive. In this way, I read that Cheryl who typically occupied the 'Traditional Receiver' or 'Best Friend Romantic' position was fearful of reproach. The hesitation to contribute was to such a degree, that I was having to call on participants to make their offering. Cheryl, for example, needed to be called upon several times for her contribution to the conversation (she was actively engaged as I would call upon her based on body language, which would invariably display disagreement). Davies and Harré (1999) write that not contributing to a conversation can, at times, be a sign of anger, oppression or being affronted.

As we can see in Section 2, Tensions and Challenges, the romantic perspectives held from the subject position of 'Best Friend', 'Traditional Receiver' and 'Poor Me' were under fire from the 'Hard Realist' and 'Hero Assessor' positions. The 'Hard Realist' position was mocking romance and belittling all who are located in the 'romantic love' or 'intimacy' discourses. From this

position they are not constructing their men as failures, but are relegating romance as for the naïve—and beneath them. In contrast, the ‘Hero Assessor’ position, located in the ‘romantic love’ discourse, was interrogating the worth of gestures and in doing so upholding an idealized form of hegemonic masculinity.

Upholding Hegemonic Masculinity and the Heteronormative Order

Led by Trisha, who frequently occupied the ‘Hero Assessor’ position, the women in the group were complicit in upholding hegemonic masculinity and constructing male dominance.

In Extract 24 Rita can be seen amplifying her man’s femininity by using a high pitched voice, which results in him becoming something of a joke. Note Trisha’s choice to cite her husband, and deploy strong macho language, to chastise this ‘new man’ behavior. Rita then finds herself almost apologising for her ‘new man’ partner and his love of romantic films – *they have their little moments, don’t they?*

Extract 24

Trisha: Yeah. Men don’t want to go and watch romantic films, they want to go and watch action films.

Sonia: No, he’ll watch romantic films, but he’s quite happy to sit at home and watch them, when the kids have gone to bed, as opposed to going to the cinema.

Rita: Mine’s obsessed with them.

Trisha: He likes romantic films?

Rita: Yeah (spoken in a high pitch voice). It’s like ‘PS I love you’ is his favourite film. (Laughter).

Trisha: Andy’d be like, ‘Get this shit off my TV.’

Yeah (x2).

Rita: (Silence) They have their little moments, don’t they?

We can see Rita’s continued awkwardness in Extract 25 and embarrassment over her partner’s ‘new man’ behaviours. *It makes him sound like a right pansy*; clearly she is conscious of a ‘retributive man’ benchmark. Her fear *you think he’s crazy* suggests his behaviours are at odds with the group’s commitment to heteronormative order.

Extract 25

Rita: [...] He’s, you know, he’s still- it makes him sound like a right pansy. He’s not, he’s not, I promise. He’s just, um, he’s just very affectionate and-

...

Rita: No, to be honest, we were a bit like, yeah, yeah, you know. I don’t know, bit embarrassed now, because you think he’s crazy. (Laughter).

Coates (2004a) observes about everyday talk that: ‘gender demarcations are carefully maintained with women colluding in constructing male dominance’ (p.196). In Extract 26, we can see Gloria also privileging ‘retributive man’; she finds attractive a man that is in charge and takes the governing role—and who decides when to please her. See how Gloria respects her man when he tells her: *‘No, that’s not possible, we’re not doing that’*.

Extract 26

**Yeah. Is there anything else that you wouldn’t want?**

Cheryl: No, I'd say the same. Sort of like, that suffocation, wouldn't want that, but you know, lives are really busy, so it's just, it's nice when it happens and you have that balance.

**Gloria?**

Gloria: Um, (silence 34.29-34.32) I don't know. (Silence 34.34-34.38) Um, dunno. We're quite, I don't know, not over-the-top so I don't know. I couldn't stand someone that was overly, over-the-top, over-romantic, flowers and things, every week. I couldn't, I couldn't stand that. You know, it's nice to have somebody that will sometimes turn around and say, 'No, that's not possible, we're not doing that,' rather than someone that tries to give in to your every need and every gesture.

**So, does that mean that sometimes, the idea of being with the romantic man is someone that wouldn't just be pleasing you?**

Gloria: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, I-, I wouldn't, sort of, like that.

The one woman who vocally criticised male dominance was Ruth in the 'Hard Realist' position, see Extracts 20 and 27. Curiously, we can see that Ruth consistently deployed the 'gender differences' repertoire as shown in Extract 14.

Extract 27

Ruth: Yeah, I've got women at work that, you know, dote on their husband, and their husband is God, and, 'Oh,' and I just think, 'Oh, really?' So

### **Reflections of a female researcher**

Is it arduous being a man? Certainly showing feminine 'new man' behaviors or being overly keen on pleasing her will readily be scorned upon, from the majority of positions. Within the 'romantic love' discourses (and arguably the 'economic' discourse) men risk being seen as a feminine version of 'retributive man' —'new man'—and found undesirable. Hollway (1983) writes 'the perception of men as powerful is also promoted by women's desire for 'the other' and subsequent misrepresentation of men as a result of their own vulnerabilities and also their assumptions about gender difference' (p.126). There appears to be a *fine line*; a tightrope that men need to perform upon, as shown in Extract 27.

Extract 27

Rita: [...] They don't want that man that's going to be on them, and showering them all the time. But I think there's a lot of men that, although they might not be like that, they think that's what a woman wants. So, but there's, I think there's a fine line between, like I said, spontaneity and being romantic now and again, to doing it all the time, and being-,

Sonia: That's not necessarily romantic, then, though, if they're carrying on being like that.

Rita: Yeah, exactly.

Sonia: It becomes an obsession, doesn't it?

Rita: And frustrating.

Mmm (x2).

Trisha: And annoying (inaudible 37.28).

Rita: Annoying.

Trisha: It'd be too much, I think.

The rhetoric of romance can function to legitimise claims of 'gender difference' and sustain the heteronormative order—and it can be enlisted as a source of resistance, as shown by the 'Hard Realist' and 'Hero Assessor'. When Ruth asked *Are we blowing you out the water, now, is*

*it?* (Extract 23). There was an assumption that I am situated in the dominant 'romantic love' discourse and that they, speaking from the 'Hard Realist' and 'Hero Assessor' positions, were violating a pervasive moral code. They are *blowing out of the water* a status quo.

The analysis reveals women countering—yet endorsing—the balance of power in heterosexual relationships. This is in contrast to the 'social construction of quiescence' – injustices being reproduced without any hint of discontent or resistance on the part of the oppressed group (Fine and Gordon, 1989, cited in Crawford, 2004). Indeed, Hollway (1984, cited in Sunderland, 2004) sees heterosexual relations as the primary site for the reproduction of gender differences and power hierarchy.

On a final note, I was struck by the vast difference in the voices from the five identified positions: there were considerable distinctions in the moral judgments made and the language deployed (Davies and Harré, 1999); whether from the critical 'Hero Assessor', the righteous 'Hard Realist' or the self-pitying 'Poor Me'.

## FDA Summary Paper: Male Group 1

Exploring how men in established relationships construct romance and are positioned by ready-made or a historically given set of discourses. This summary of the FDA seeks to answer three questions:

- 1) What discursive resources are available and drawn on by the group? Pg. 172
- 2) What are the tensions and challenges presented? Pg. 181
- 3) What is the project of the participants in the session? Pg. 186

The project along with tensions and challenges provide a reading as to what the participants in the group are doing with their discursive resources.

### 1) What discursive resources are available and drawn on by the group?

The discursive economy – availability of wider discourses and constructions - for romance as exposed by the men in the focus group, is outlined in this section. Diagram 1 maps out the discursive resources and shows that the men mobilized four subject positions the ‘Strategic Romantic’, the ‘Traditional Romantic’ the ‘Bestfriend Romantic’ and the ‘Family Man’. Detailed tables and further explanations of the subject positions can be found later in this paper.

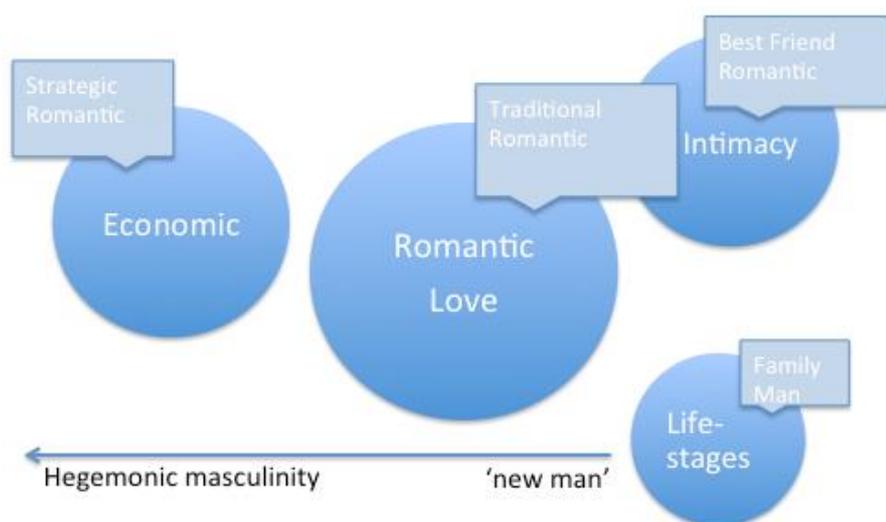


Diagram 1: A map of the available discursive economy of romance, as illustrated by wider discourses and subject positions. The relative size of the discourse and subject positions represent frequently occupied and therefore dominant discourses and positions. Hegemonic masculinity<sup>20</sup> is the term given to a set of gender expectations for boys and men that are culturally privileged.

It can be seen that participants constructed romance in the following ways: relationship

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<sup>20</sup> Hegemonic masculinity rejects behaviours perceived as feminine and is largely reflective of a heterosexual, authoritative and macho man – as represented by the masculine ideal ‘retributive man’. Hegemonic masculinity it reflects privileged gender expectations and is thus the highest level within the heteronormative hierarchy.

warmth and special times; exclusive physical intimacy and affection; as pleasing her; and as a transaction. Below you will find indicative examples from the text. It can be seen that these are interrelated, for example physical intimacy and special times can be presented as / mobilized as ways of 'pleasing her'. Also 'pleasing her' is seen as an essential part of the 'transaction'.

Romance is constructed as something that provides relationship warmth and special times (Extract 1)

**Okay. So it's, sort of, unexpected kindness, really, is it?**

Greg: It's more like showing her I love her, because I do.

Rob: It's enjoying things with your partner, isn't it?

M: Yes (x2).

Rob: The person that you love, or you're with. So, you know, if there's nice things like that, it's nice for both people isn't it? If you're working, and you've got kids, and it's ideal (silence 27.19-27.21) to have a few days away.

Romance is constructed as something that involves exclusive physical intimacy and affection (Extract 2)

M: Well, I haven't got a telly in my bedroom. Never have done, really.

Ian: Well, I've got one. I've got one. Just cuddle up in bed and that's it, just put a film on and chill out<sup>21</sup>.

**Okay. So you find it romantic that, you know-, have that, sort of, cuddle time, watch your, yeah-,**

Rob: Put a note on the door, so the kids don't come in.

Romance is constructed as something that focuses on pleasing her (Extract 3)

**[...] what would make something not romantic?**

Wayne: Maybe something you booked, with, you know, for yourself, selfishly but they have to, kind of, tag along. So, it's something that you've, er, I dunno, you say like, 'I've booked you two tickets for the football.' (Laughter 58.07-58.10) You're gonna love it, you're gonna love it, yeah.

Ian: Just sit there, you'll get used to it. (Laughter)

Wayne: Yeah, you'll get used to it, yeah, I'll buy you a pint. (Laughter) So it's something that you've booked as a pretence to being romantic but it's really something that you want to do yourself, yeah, so, something like that.

Romance is constructed as a transaction (Extract 4)

Brian: [...] you've got to get your Brownie points, haven't you, it's a nice surprise, you know what I mean? (laughter)

**Brownie points? Yes. So it's surprise that'll like-, yeah?**

Brian: Because it might be-, when you've been with someone for a long time, it can get a bit, a bit boring sometimes, you know? So if you just keep it nice and fresh, and, you know, make her, make happy. It makes you have an easier life then (laughter 04.40-04.44).

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<sup>21</sup> Note the comparable reference to the slang term 'Netflix and chill', which operates as a euphemism for sex. According to Wikipedia it is an expression that became popularised in 2015 via social media and has subsequently been found in mainstream media like the Guardian and Daily Mirror (these focus groups took place in July 2015). "Netflix and chill is English language slang term using an invitation to watch Netflix together as a euphemism for sex, either between partners or casually as a booty call." Wikipedia

**Um, do other people feel like this, a bit of brownie points to it?**

Ian: Oh yeah.

M: Oh definitely.

Ian: Always get brownie points (silence 04.52-04.55).

Wayne: It means you might get away with a night out with the guys.

There's an evident gendered dimension in these constructions. Consistently, questions of romance are answered by the group as something that the man does for her. Edley and Wetherall (1995) write that women are typically represented as supposed to want romance, with men represented as the initiators and women the receivers. Indeed, a construction of romance as 'pleasing her', could invoke an assumption that women are less secure in their relationships and need constant reassurance that they are indeed wanted/loved. See Extract 6 for a discussion on gender differences and how women were constructed as *needy*.

By in large, the wider discourses whereby the group's constructions of romance can be located were primarily the 'humanist' discourses that included 'romantic love', 'intimacy' and 'economic' discourses. The 'humanist' discourse taps into the humanistic notions of an ontologically innate self, constructed as achieving its true potential through a process of self-actualization (Prager & Roberts, 2004, cited in Colahan, 2014). It paints a picture in which everyone has a claim to happiness.

Kitzinger (1989, cited in Burr, 2015) identifies 'romantic love' discourses as being part of the broader 'humanist' discourse. The 'romantic love' discourse constructs the centrality of love and coupledness to happiness. It is a discourse in which love, marriage and monogamy are inextricably linked with one another (Willig, 2008). The popular 'romantic love' discourse has come under scrutiny from scholars: according to Burr (2015) within this discourse, whereby love is the foundation for marriage, sex is given freely and it also involves caring for each other's welfare. Burns (2002) writes that 'romantic love' discourses weds an emotional woman to an emotionally inexpressive man.

In contrast the 'intimacy' discourse uses the language of therapy and demands of partners an emotional closeness. It continues to assume the marital dyad and monogamy as its norm but unlike 'romantic love' discourses it places a higher value of mutual relatedness in the intimate sphere (Shumway, 2003). While the 'intimacy' discourse does not expect marriage to be a romantic fairy-tale, Shumway (2003) warns that it does demand of partners a closeness that may be unrealistic.

The 'life-stages' discourse understands human behaviour as passing through taken-for-granted phases. The plethora of established taxonomies range from childhood models like Piaget's stages to cognitive development to Kubler Ross's stages of grief. In the relationship sphere, for example, it is commonly understood that love moves from an early stage of desire and passionate love to eventually settle on a companionate affection.

Meanwhile, the 'economic' discourse constructs relationship behaviours as hinging on perceived costs and benefits. It draws on social exchange theories, which argue that a trade underpins all social interactions (e.g. Colahan, 2014). In this way, it sees relationships as locations of conscious, rational and economic exchange.

Other research exploring relationships has shown that associated talk is drawn from within 'humanist' discourses (e.g. Colahan, 2014). Similarly, the participants in this focus group view themselves as beings with innate needs and the couple dyad serves as a site in which many of these needs are fulfilled. The men in this group reference romantic needs for affection and attention. (Extract 5)

Tommy: 'Course I do. I mean, if you're with someone and even though you haven't got romance, and you're going somewhere else [having an affair], why are you staying with that person?

**Yeah.**

Tommy: Just get on with your life.

...

Greg: If it didn't work, it didn't work. What are you stopping for?

Ian: If it didn't have the romance, just means you're gonna play away.

Greg: Yeah, because-,

Ian: At the end of the day, you're just gonna play away. If someone flatters you, you-, (Talking over each other 01.25.58-01.26.01) and you're not getting it from the relationship you're supposed to get it off, you, you, that's when, well you play away. When you don't get affection off someone, it's the same for a bloke, don't you get affection off a women or get feelings off a woman, eventually, he's gonna play away. Perhaps some will, some probably won't, he'll just stick there and stick it out. Same for a woman, if a woman don't get affection she'll go elsewhere for that affection.

...

Ian: Well that's where you should have give her that affection, then. That's where people go wrong (talking over each other 01.30.25).

Greg: Yeah, no, I, I agree with what you're saying, that's what I'm saying.

Ian: If you show her, you show the affection she wouldn't have to [have an affair].

M: You'd have to take a good portion of the blame for that.

In line with liberal 'humanist' discourses, that everyone has a right to self-fulfillment, the men suggested that if your romantic needs, constructed here as sexual satisfaction, were not being met then you do not need to *stick it out*. You can move on and *get on with your life* or get your needs met outside of the relationship. As seen in Extract 5, a lack of affection in the relationship can permit an affair or divorce when the speaker is positioned within an 'economic' discourse. Whereby if the relationship transaction within a couple dyad *didn't work*, then the person who perceives a lower balance of benefits might legitimately seek to rebalance the trade in some way. The 'economic' discourse does not have the moral commitment to monogamy that the 'romantic love' and 'intimacy' discourses uphold. It's worth noting the word choice: *play away*, *getting it from the relationship you're supposed to get it off*; *blame* reflect pro-monogomy perspectives. In this way, we can see that the men are

oscillating in their discursive location. The historically dominant 'staying power' discourse (e.g. Nicholls, 2009), whereby people valued marriage longevity over personal happiness and would stay in an unsatisfying relationship for the sake of the children, the church or social respectability, was only occasionally evoked during the focus group; here the phraseology *he'll just stick there and stick it out* conjures a weak person, perhaps suggesting that the power in 'staying power' is no more.

To summarise, romance is constructed as crucial to relationship success and personal happiness. This is further acknowledged in the way that non-romantic couples were identified, by the men in the focus group, as couples who argue.

Certainly the discursive resources deployed by the men are quite narrow. An alternative contemporary discourse, that taps into Hollway's (1989) 'permissive' discourse and Giddens's (1992) 'transformed intimacy' discourse, whereby sex is no big deal and thus openly permissible outside of the couple dyad, was introduced but dismissed as *strange* and *not natural* by fellow participants (extract not included).

Much of the talk in the focus group was spent constructing masculinities (more on this later in the document). In some respects this comes as no surprise, as the 'romantic love' discourse, speaks to gender differences, for example: that men are less communicative than women. Sunderland (2004) voices, along with many other researchers (e.g. Hollway, 1989), that the common place 'gender differences' repertoire<sup>22</sup> is drawn from dominant 'heterosexuality' discourses. Indeed, gender is recognised as a central organizing principle to social life (Coates, 2004a). In Extract 6, we can see masculinity being constructed in direct opposition to women in terms of romance. (Extract 6)

Wayne: Yes. It doesn't have to be anything monetary, does it? You know, you don't have to spend money all the time. Sometimes, you know, it is just the, the, the free things in life that you can do that make, make a difference. I think women expect shows of affection, a lot more than we would. We're less needy, I think. Women are a little bit more needy. They need to be reminded a bit more often than we do.

Greg: That's what I was saying, really. It's in a different way.

Wayne: Yes, it's in a different way.

In his analysis of masculine representations, Jonathan Rutherford (1988, cited in Edley & Wetherall, 1997) distinguished 'retributive man' from the 'new man'. The 'retributive man'

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<sup>22</sup> Sunderland (2004) refers to this repertoire as a discourse. Many researchers use the terms repertoire and discourse interchangeably (e.g. Gough, 2001). For the purpose of my research, I have adopted Burr's (2015) view that they are different: discourses are able to contain numerous constructions and offer an array of subject positions, while a repertoire is a way of understanding the linguistic resources that a speaker uses in their constructions. Burr writes that in addition to scale, the difference is to do with personal agency: 'Interpretative repertoires are conceptualized as existing on a smaller scale and are resources for speakers rather than structures that impose a certain kind of subjectivity upon them' (2015, p.188).

can be thought of as traditionally masculine: tough, authoritative and independent. The label ‘new man’ denotes someone who engages with housework, child care and seeks to get in touch with his emotional side (e.g. Whannel, 2005). In many ways the ‘new man’ is a feminized male, indeed the fashion world saw the ‘new man’ as a lucrative market, being more body and fashion conscious. Rutherford suggested that images in the 1980s media reflected tensions between these two dominant male selves. Edley and Wetherall (1997) suggested that the lives of men in the middle classes were more affected by feminism and were therefore more likely to be positioned into the ‘new man’ frame. A review of the talk from the focus group, shows that the working class participants were also navigating ‘new man’ and ‘retributive man’, see the table next. These masculine ideals manifest in the subject positions, and determine what is possible for the men to say and do, as shown in the detailed tables later in this paper.

Male Constructions from the Focus Group:

Retributive man	New man	In between
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• as serving the provider role</li> <li>• as focused on male bravado</li> <li>• as needing sex more than women</li> <li>• as being embarrassed to express affection</li> <li>• as getting into trouble</li> <li>• as preferring male company</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• as not the only breadwinner</li> <li>• as doing housework</li> <li>• as empathizing with women</li> <li>• as being best friends with partner</li> <li>• as listening</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• as thoughtful depending on personality</li> <li>• as trying to meet expectations</li> <li>• as needing attention, that might go to the kids</li> </ul>

There are plural masculinities, for example Whannel (2005) discusses a ‘new lad’ masculinity, that has developed as a reaction to the ‘new man’; he suggests that the ‘new lad’ reclaims traditional working class masculine values, that could be summed up with the expression ‘booze, birds and falling off the dance floor’, with a ‘I should know better, but don’t care’ attitude. Arguably, ‘new lad’ could be seen as ‘retributive man’ acknowledging and rejecting ‘new man’. Given ‘new man’ and ‘retributive man’ could be seen to underpinning other masculinities, for the purpose of this analysis I will limit myself to these as two.

**Subject Positions**

There are four subject positions that are negotiated by the participants as constructions of romance are mobilized in the focus group. I have termed them the ‘Best Friend Romantic’, the ‘Strategic Romantic’, the ‘Traditional Romantic’ and the ‘Family Man’. They reflect positions located within the wider discourses of ‘intimacy’, ‘economic’, ‘romantic love’ and ‘life stages’ respectively. The ‘Best Friend Romantic’ and ‘Family Man’ are closely aligned to ‘new man’, while the ‘Strategic Romantic’ and ‘Traditional Romantic’ can be seen as versions of ‘retributive man’; their analogous speaking rights and obligations/duties are shown later in this paper.

To introduce the subject positions and show the interaction between them see Extract 7. It speaks to shopping as an experience that their partners might find romantic. (Extract 7)

**Are there some things that for you guys you wouldn't find romantic, like, your, that your wife or partner might do and you're thinking, 'What am I doing this for?'**

Jason: No, 'cause I think she knows what I like and what I don't like, she knows I wouldn't wanna go up town, 'round a load of shops all day 'cause she enjoys it, but I'm, she knows, if I was there I'd be like that in five minutes in the shop, 'cause my wife drives me 'round, she'd just know I don't wanna be there but she, she, she could shop up town for hours.

Ian: I'll drop you there, I'll drop you there and see you when you're finished.

**Okay, so you would do a nice gesture?**

Ian: I'd drop her there, like, when he says there, I couldn't go to the shops with her. I've tried it before, I'm not the same, and I'll be sitting, I'll be sweating, I'll be clock-watching and thinking, oh.

Wayne: I can understand that there, so what you'd do, you'd try and turn it into a positive you'd say, well, 'Why don't you go with one of your friends? I'll drop you in, you can have a drink so you don't have to drive and I'll pick you up in three or four hours when you're ready.'

Ian: If you, if they see you there they know you're sulking they know you've got a face like a slapped baby cause you're sitting there going, 'Yeah it's alright, yeah, come on, come on.' And then, it's not fair on them, they're there to enjoy themselves, they like shopping, if they like shopping, to be in the shops looking 'round, it's not fair for a bloke to be sitting there, some blokes like it, some blokes don't.

**Yeah, do any of you guys like it? When you go along?**

No (General agreement)

Ian: You do it at the beginning of a relationship, I think, and then after that, that novelty wears off, of going with them.

Chris: No, we, I do it. I can go in there and walk and talk, and walk and talk, walking around and talking but if I do get bored I'll just go in the car and I'll just wait. I've been in the car waiting for an hour and a half, for like (laughter 01.02.11-01.02.16) no, no to be truthful I always have a book with me. (Laughter 01.02.18-01.02.20) I always have a book, and, so she go 'you're so patient' (laughter) but I'm (? overtalking).

M: Done fifteen chapters while she went out. (Laughter)

Greg: It doesn't bother me, it's all and the reason it doesn't bother me, we're spending time together so, that's just how we are, so, you know. It doesn't bother me.

### Strategic Romantic

The first half of Extract 7, as a result of my question, sees the men located within the 'economic' discourse, which is also highly gendered. From within this 'Strategic Romantic' position the sacrifice of going shopping is keenly felt: *I'll be sitting, I'll be sweating, I'll be clock-watching and thinking, oh*. The continual and growing emphasis on the distress *you've got a face like a slapped baby* suggests an emotional defense, perhaps out of guilt from not being the 'Traditional Romantic' (see Section 2, for a more detailed discussion of the tension between the 'Strategic Romantic' vs. 'Traditional Romantic'). From this 'economic' discourse, in the 'Strategic Romantic' position the men focus on fairness, the word *fair* is repeated, and they reframe their behaviours as a win-win: *I'll drop you in, you can have a drink so you don't have to drive and I'll pick you up*.

### Traditional Romantic

Chris claims the 'Traditional Romantic' position; he shops with his wife as a way of pleasing her and then waits patiently in the car until she returns. As the men in the group laugh at him for waiting for an hour or more, he responds, from the 'Strategic Romantic' position, with reference to taking a book and catching up on his reading. The joke then moves away from him, to his wife. It can also be observed that the 'Traditional Romantic' is invested in impression management, Chris uses the word *truthfully* as a way of explaining his behaviours, and ends by relaying his wife's appreciation: *'you are so patient'*. In the above Extract it is voiced, from the 'Strategic Romantic' position, that the 'Traditional Romantic' is a position that you take up early in the partnership: *You do it at the beginning of a relationship, I think, and then after that, that novelty wears off*. In Section 2, the relationship between the 'Traditional Romantic' and Strategic Romantic' positions will be explored further, where I present that the latter position offers men protection from the emotional vulnerability of being underappreciated.

### Best Friend Romantic

At the end of Extract 7 we see Greg taking up the 'Best Friend Romantic' position: he enjoys spending time shopping with his wife. He repeats *It doesn't bother me* three times, arguably reflecting that this position was at odds with the other men - who are bothered to be shopping - and the dominant discourses in the room. Greg does not fully explain himself, just claiming *that's just how we are*, thus leaving little room for fellow participants to question him. The Best Friend Romantic is aligned to 'new man' whereas the other men are mobilizing (and performing) traditional masculine accounts.

### The Family Man

Missing from Extract 7 is the 'Family Man' subject position. The 'Family Man' is a conscientious relationship actor who helps with housework and takes care of children, he privileges the family over the couple dyad. This draws from a wider 'life-stages' discourse that constructs relationships and marriages that evolve successfully as generally going through phases of development. Various relationship stage taxonomies exist, for example it is widely believed that romantic love is used as a basis for marrying and that overtime it evolves to a more friendship or companionate-love (e.g. Acevedo and Aron, 2009). This construction of relationships can serve to position participants with young children as 'Family Man'. From the 'Family Man' position it is not possible to be romantic; romance is conceived as too difficult to manage when you have children. See Extract 8, as Rob in the 'Family Man' position asserts that children prevent him from being romantic. (Extract 8)

Rob: It's a lot harder when you've got children, and it depends how many children you've got, and if you've got no children then it's a lot easier to arrange things and do-,

Ian: If they're young.

Rob: You can't do spontaneous things if you've got children. If you've got two and three kids-,

Further to this introduction, here is a more detailed portrayal of each subject position. These are based on a systematic exploration of the ways in which the discursive constructions emerged during the focus group.

The Best Friend Romantic (aligned to 'new man'; wider discourse: intimacy)

<b><i>Rights and Practice</i></b>	<b><i>Implications for Subjectivity</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pleasing both persons</li> <li>• Having a laugh together</li> <li>• Having a good chat together</li> <li>• Can always talk problems through</li> <li>• Both partners initiate romantic gestures</li> <li>• Prefers spending time with partner vs. friends</li> <li>• Privileges the couple dyad</li> <li>• Duty to be transparent</li> <li>• High focus on emotional intimacy</li> </ul> <p><i>Wrongs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speaking negatively about your partner</li> <li>• Being one of the lads</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being sensitive to each other's feelings</li> <li>• May have a limited life outside of the relationship</li> <li>• Could be particularly devastated if the relationship breaks down</li> <li>• May feel marginalized from traditional men</li> <li>• May need to prove masculinity in other ways</li> </ul>

The Strategic Romantic (aligned to 'retributive man'; wider discourse: economic)

<b><i>Rights and Practice</i></b>	<b><i>Implications for Subjectivity</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pleasing her for an easy life</li> <li>• Keen sense of the transaction: conscious of costs and reality</li> <li>• Acknowledging Valentine's, and other official occasions, as quick wins</li> <li>• Being one of the lads</li> <li>• Earning brownie points</li> <li>• A means to an end, has a temporal element</li> <li>• Keep out of the 'doghouse' by doing enough</li> <li>• The form of the gesture is open to negotiation</li> <li>• Take the blame if you get it wrong</li> </ul> <p><i>Wrongs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being too sentimental</li> <li>• Forgetting Valentine's or other easy romantic transactions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Romantic gestures can feel like a chore</li> <li>• Less invested in their gestures, so more resilient to rejection or dismissal, 'it's the thought that matters'</li> <li>• Can wrestle with what is enough e.g. asking for a list vs. giving her money</li> <li>• Tends to be defensive, and feel the need to justify the lack of a proper gesture: as 'she's happy anyway'</li> <li>• Sensitive to personal sacrifices</li> </ul>

The Traditional Romantic (aligned to 'retributive man'; wider discourse: romantic love)

<b><i>Rights and Practice</i></b>	<b><i>Implications for Subjectivity</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pleasing her, and in so pleasing himself</li> <li>• To provide hero moments e.g. whisk her off her feet</li> <li>• To be a gentleman, and treat her like a lady</li> <li>• To take romance seriously: active impression management</li> <li>• A way of being, an intrinsic practice of self. Lacks the temporal element found in Strategic Romantic</li> <li>• Gestures are expressions of ideals and traditions: e.g. flowers</li> <li>• High focus on getting the gesture right</li> <li>• Duty to keep the peace</li> <li>• Being aware of her feelings</li> <li>• Need to be emotionally contained</li> </ul> <p><i>Wrongs</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vulnerable to partner feedback as can be highly invested in the gestures</li> <li>• Can feel hurt if gift not fully embraced</li> <li>• May at times feel like a servant</li> <li>• May feel inadequate or anxious if resources or opportunities are not available e.g. lack of money or time</li> </ul>

<i><b>Rights and Practice</b></i>	<i><b>Implications for Subjectivity</b></i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To collect brownie points</li> <li>• To say things that might upset her</li> <li>• Doing housework as a romantic gesture</li> </ul>	

The Family Man (aligned to ‘new man’; wider discourse: life stages)

<i><b>Rights and Practice</b></i>	<i><b>Implications for Subjectivity</b></i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on the family unit</li> <li>• To be hands on with children and help with practical domestic duties</li> <li>• To be sensible</li> <li>• Romance is a luxury that he cannot afford</li> <li>• Temporal element. Until the children are more independent</li> <li>• Being a team member with partner</li> <li>• Need to account for non-family focused actions to partner</li> </ul> <p><i>Wrongs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To privilege the couple dyad over the family</li> <li>• To spend money on lavish romantic gestures</li> <li>• To be spontaneous and take control e.g. book a romantic weekend away</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can feel helpless /powerless</li> <li>• May feel emasculated</li> <li>• May feel bored</li> <li>• May have a satisfying team bond with partner</li> </ul>

## 2) What are the tensions and challenges presented?

### Best Friend vs. Traditional

There is palpable tension between ‘Best Friend Romantic’ and the ‘Traditional Romantic’ position, arguably because of the way they represent a clash of masculinities: the more feminine ‘new man’ and the classic macho ‘retributive man’. In Extract 9 Chris is questioning whether ‘new man’ Greg has a life outside of the relationship, note the reference to fishing, golf all male dominated activities. This is feasibly a way in which Chris is challenging Greg’s masculinity. (Extract 9)

Chris: Can I ask a question, do you do-, have you got hobbies? (Silence 50.44-50.46) Do you go fishing, golf?

Greg: I love to play golf every now and again but not to the extent where I’m out every weekend, just stuff like that, just, like I say, more my thing is Formula 1, to be honest, not just watching it I want to keep up with all what’s happening and stuff like that.

Chris: But you could do that at home.

Greg: Oh, yeah, yeah but I go and play golf and she, she’s been a few times and stuff, the good thing about our relationship is we’re, we’re, we’re good friends as well if you know what I mean? Not just, we’re not just about sex, we’re really good friends, we like-, well, that’s the best way I can describe it we’re really good friends and, you know-,

Ian: friend then it’s not just your partner, it’s, she’s your friend.

Greg: Yeah, but she’s my best friend.

Conversely Greg, from the ‘Best Friend Romantic’ position, is combative with Chris as to why he is not fully transparent with his feelings. (Extract 10)

Greg: (Silence 54.14-54.17) Know what I mean? Do you know what I mean? You're saying you feel that, sometimes, you wouldn't. I don't feel like that, I can talk to her about anything and everything.

Chris: Well that's, I mean, good on you, fair, fair, there's nothing wrong there but I'm just saying the situation, I see, and I-, even with the kids, you know, where I try and just keep them without upset-, upsetting the balance, I don't really like it.

...

Chris: I think, that's kind of romantic in a way, well I could understand her feelings and not say it to affect her.

When men, like Chris, who typically place themselves in the 'romantic love' or 'economic discourses', locate themselves in the 'intimacy' discourse and take up the 'Best Friend Romantic' position, they can make considerable effort to present hegemonic masculinity. See Extract 11 below, whereby Chris is using male humour when describing his act of listening, in this way he is seeking to preserve his heteronormative position. (Extract 11)

Chris: So, she's upset about something, or-, I tend to be sympathetic with her. She may come home and she's stressed by this person. I pay her a lot of attention, I'd listen. I mean, I spend a lot of time listening. We can-, I mean, I've talked to her at night, where I fell asleep, and woke up, and she's still talking. (Laughter 32.41-32.44) I did say I was tired. (Laughter)

#### Best Friend vs. Strategic Romantic

From the 'Best Friend Romantic' position it appears to be difficult to understand the 'Strategic Romantic' position with their laddish ways, male bravado and preference for male company.

(Extract 12)

Greg: Yes, but some of my mates act as if they can't stand the missus. (Talking over each other 35.28).

M: Yes. They want to get out and go out with their friends (talking over each other 35.30).

M: My mate slags her off and-,

Greg: You wouldn't hear me slagging my missus off, you know what I mean?

M: Yes. I know what you mean.

Greg: Some of my friends, it's almost like they can't wait to get away from her.

Yes (general agreement).

(Talking over each other 35.43-35.47).

Greg: I find that strange. I just think, 'Oh, you know-, '

Interestingly, the reverse seems a feasible transition, from the 'Strategic Romantic' position one can claim the 'Best Friend Romantic' position. When doing so, like the 'Traditional Romantic', the men point out gender differences or deploy humour, as shown in Extract 13. Arguably, this reflects the 'Best Friend Romantic's' alignment to 'new man'—and 'retributive man's' resistance to being feminized. Note Ian's inference to the provider role, '*What do you mean, you jacked your job in?*', which is firmly 'retributive man'. This deployment of humour additionally suggests an anxiety about being emotionally exposed. (Extract 13)

Jason: We listen to them, they listen to you, don't they? If you've had a bad day-,

M: They'll be there, 'We're listening to you.'

Jason: So, it works both ways, doesn't it? If you've had a bad day, you come in. They listen to you, they don't just say, 'Oh shut up,' do you know what I mean?

Rob: Sometimes they do.

Tommy: Depends what's on TV. (Laughter)

Ian: 'What do you mean, you jacked your job in? (Laughter 34.28-34.33) You better go back.' (Laughter)

### Traditional vs. Strategic Romantic

There is discernable tension between the 'Strategic Romantic' and the 'Traditional Romantic' position. It would seem that the 'romantic love' discourse that mobilises the 'Traditional Romantic' position is clear and recognizable territory for the 'Strategic Romantic'.

It also appears that the 'Traditional Romantic' position was narrated as pivotal to the men's occupation of the 'Strategic Romantic' position. For example Ian who frequently speaks from the 'Strategic Romantic' position, in Extract 14 can be found referencing the 'Traditional Romantic' position and being invested in finding a gift to please her that was then not appreciated. *Bottom of the wardrobe* could be a metaphor for his rejection. While the use of profanity *What the hell's this?* emphasizes the surprise, like an alarm or a wake up call. See in Extract 14 how Ian argues a strong economic case for giving her money rather than personally choosing a gift. In this way Ian protects himself from the emotional vulnerability of being underappreciated. When choosing between positions, the emotional load that is associated with a position, based on either past occupation or relating to someone in that position, can serve to sanction a choice (Davies & Harré, 1999). The 'Strategic Romantic' position which Ian readily speaks from, licenses not requiring to be personally invested in pleasing her; rather it views romance as a job. It is worth noting that Ian continues for some minutes with this economic defense, perhaps out of recognition of the more dominant 'romantic love' discourses. (Extract 14)

M: It's just as easy, then, just to give them the money.

**Yes. Do other people feel like that?**

M: Yes, I do.

Rob: Just giving (inaudible 18.15).

Ian: She's more happy, then, to go off on her own now, to get what she wants, instead of having to go traipsing around to a shop, where I've bought her something, to exchange it, and then having to go, go somewhere else. So she's quite happy enough to do that.

...

Ian: 'What the hell's this?' Bottom of the wardrobe.

A departure from moral codes of the 'intimacy' and 'romantic love' discourses, can also be experienced via the 'Strategic Romantic' position. The introduction of *collecting brownie points*, in Extract 4, served to distance the discussion from idealistic romantic notions, that came with the 'romantic love' discourse. This distancing can be seen preceding Extract 4,

when the men in the focus group had been describing romantic gestures as flowers, surprises and weekends away.

Exploring moral commitment, I presented the participants with a scenario of a woman who is finding romance with her tennis partner, whilst married to an alcoholic. In Extract 15 Greg is fully located within the 'romantic love' discourse, and troubled by the scenario. He wants for the woman to leave her alcoholic husband and enter a monogamous relationship with the tennis partner, in this way her infidelity will be legitimized. The other men (and I) introduce the 'economic' discourse as a lens for her behaviour, which Greg arguably greets with some disdain. It can be seen that Greg is committed to the moral code of the 'romantic love' discourse which upholds monogamy and love as the basis of marriage (Extract 15)

Greg: And she's unhappy, and, I don't think her husband is (talking over each other 01.27.32-01.27.38). (Laughter)

Chris: I don't think he cares. (Talking over each other 01.27.39-01.27.43). (Laughter)

Greg: If she's never happy then, she's gonna go there, why not just go around with the tennis player?

**'Cause I think, uh-**

M: That's what's, she's got it too good.

Greg: She's got a bit of a good thing with him, isn't it?

**I think she's got it pretty good with, uh-**

Ian: It's like that, they're there for one reason only but then they do, they go and live their own separate lives. He likes his drink and she likes to go off play tennis and do things, or meet people.

Greg: If she's only staying there 'cause she's onto a good thing, there's obviously no romance at all is there?

...

Greg: You know, in your mind does it make it right, what she's doing?

The recognizable moral code of the 'romantic love' discourse (practices and speaking rights as shown in the tables) is up for negotiation when a speaker is located in the 'economic' discourse. In Extract 16, Rob is questioning the legitimacy of ironing as a romantic gesture. From the 'Traditional Romantic' position housework is not a legitimate gesture, yet from a 'Strategic Romantic' position, if you do not already do the housework, then it is romantic (and thereby earns you brownie points). While, Rob's wife rates the ironing over the wine, it seems that Rob might not rate the gesture of ironing. From the 'Traditional Romantic' position the gesture should in some way reflect yourself as a gentleman. See how Rob refers to *A lot of people* and *My wife*, but not himself. It seems that the 'Traditional Romantic' might be somewhat reluctant to being positioned here. (Extract 16)

Rob: Can not romance be shown, as in, doing the housework?

**What do you reckon? It's your opinion.**

Rob: My wife said it, it can be some, some days. A lot of people, you know, do the ironing, instead of getting the wine out.

**Yes. As, like, a treat for them?**

Rob: She rates it, you know, it's the cost of me doing it.

#### Traditional Romantic vs. Family Man

The 'Traditional Romantic' position experiences more conflict with 'Family Man', than 'Family Man' vs. 'Best Friend Romantic' or 'Strategic Romantic'. 'Family Man' like the 'Best Friend Romantic' is aligned to 'new man' and the 'Family Man' also reflects some of the practical realism associated with the 'Strategic Romantic'. 'The Family Man' privileges the family over the couple dyad, and in doing so is at odds with the 'romantic love' discourse. From the 'Traditional Romantic' position a man might feel neglected if children become prioritized over him. (Extract 17)

Chris: Yes. Not to say they don't love each other, not to say that there's not love in the whole family but it's that attention, that, which is, probably is necessary. I know you said, when Wayne said, that bravado of men going to the pub and they feel that she's virtually happier with the kids, you know, that they focus a lot of attention round the kids-, probably more attention round the kids than the man himself will-, (inaudible 47.12)

In Extract 18 we can see tension between 'new man' 'Family Man' position and the more macho 'retributive man' in the 'Traditional Romantic' position. Rob is arguing that with children there is no time for romance. It looks like voices from the 'Traditional Romantic' position are telling Rob to 'man up' and *make the time*. (Extract 18)

Rob: We've got children, so no time for some quality time with the other half, because obviously there's-,

M: Yeah, but you make the time, don't you? You make the time, don't you?

M: Mhmm.

M: Yes, definitely.

Rob: It's a lot harder when you've got children, and it depends how many children you've got, and if you've got no children then it's a lot easier to arrange things and do-,

Ian: If they're young.

Rob: You can't do spontaneous things if you've got children. If you've got two and three kids-,

#### Interactions and Oscillations

The take up of subject positions in the focus group varied from person to person and from moment to moment; one can see oscillations and contradictions as a participant might claim one subject position and then a competing position, like Rob in Extracts 16 and 18. Yet some participants were more consistently, but not exclusively located within a certain discourse like Greg in the 'intimacy' discourse and Chris in the 'romantic love' discourse. However, they too, mobilised competing subject positions as they tussled amongst themselves. In some way, the only clear finding is that while presenting themselves as romantic, masculinity - and with it heteronormative order - needs to be preserved. Davies and Harré (1999) describes a weaving of positions within and across discourses, as people navigate: the emotional meaning attached to a position, the stories that can be made sense of via specific positions, and the moral order that legitimates the choice.

### **3) Project of the Group**

It appears that the project of the men in the session was to primarily sustain masculinity, then to bond and have fun, whilst also behaving themselves in the focus group. As will be shown next, the latter two are enmeshed with the first and serve to sustain heteronormative order.

The concept of the heteronormative hierarchy, derived from the work of Cameron and Kulick (2003, cited in Coates, 2013), suggests that people aligning themselves with heterosexual norms – adopting traditional gender roles, prizing monogamy, and raising children, are privileged and enjoy a higher status than others. Coates (2013) demonstrates that within everyday conversations speakers use a considerable amount of discursive resources to position themselves in the heteronormative space and align themselves within dominant norms of femininity or masculinity. With the masculine norm, akin to ‘retributive man’, typically associated with heterosexuality, toughness, power and competitiveness (e.g. Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman, 2002).

#### Preserving Masculinity

The credibility of a participant’s self was as Edley and Wetherell (1997) found: ‘dependent on some level of proximity to or correspondence with those of the macho men’ pg. 211. See Extract 18 when Rob blames a lack of romantic action on children and how the other men dismiss him. Arguably this reflects Rob’s lower ranking on the heteronormative hierarchy.

Of all the romantic subject positions that the men in the group occupied, it is the ‘Best Friend Romantic’ position that is least aligned to dominant norms of masculinity. In Extract 19 it can be seen that ‘new man’ Greg, who frequently locates himself within the ‘intimacy’ discourse and occupies the ‘Best Friend Romantic’ position, is intent on sharing his sexual prowess.

(Extract 19)

Greg: Yes. That’s the thing. That’s how I found out, like anything. (Talking over each other 26.34-26.38). I’ll take the-, I went in too far, but the Jacuzzi was great. (Laughter 26.41-26.43) It was. (Laughter 26.44-26.49) I mean, she loves all that and I love all that, if that answers your question, you know, for me, you know, we’re always supporting each other.

The *Jacuzzi* has a clear sexual tone. Indeed, Coates (2007) writes that the metaphor of Jacuzzi ‘plays on the fact that the main feature is that water spurts out in an ejaculatory way’ p. 46. Here ‘new man’ Greg is going to efforts to ensure he is seen as masculine. Coates (2004a) says that men, ‘normally choose to present themselves in alignment with the norms of hegemonic masculinity’ pg. 200. In her studies of male friendship groups, she observes that men are careful not to be come across as ‘feminine’. Similarly, Williams (2008) research with working class fathers found that humour was used to divert attention from vulnerability and reinforce their own heterosexuality.

It can be detected in Extracts 11 and 13 that when the 'retributive men' in the focus group located themselves within the more vulnerable 'intimacy' discourse, and talked about the value of listening or being listened to, they did so in a way that confirmed gender differences, and employed humour, arguably in an effort to preserve a masculine stance and sustain heteronormative order.

Here's a straightforward example of how humour helps in preserving a masculine stance. Tommy, who has divulged that he does all the cooking in his household, succeeds in restoring heteronormative order by turning it into a joke that promotes traditional gender roles. (Extract 20)

M: Is that can't cook, or doesn't want to cook?

Tommy: She just can't, she's rubbish, yeah. She can't iron very well either, so I have to iron my own shirts as well. I don't really know what I see in her. (Laughter). There must be something there.

M: It's a good job she don't get a copy of this (laughter 11.14-11.18).

Throughout the focus group the participants constructed men and women as being different, sometimes women were referred to as *difficult, needing more shows of affection and having higher expectations*. The 'gender differences' repertoire, which includes the 'mutual incomprehension of the sexes' rhetoric, are drawn from dominant heterosexuality discourses (Sunderland, 2004). Extract 21 comes after a discussion of the importance of being emotionally supportive of their partners. Here we see the 'gender differences' repertoire combined with humour, serves to distance the conversation from the 'intimacy' discourse. (Extract 21)

Wayne: I think it would take us 5 minutes to let off steam, women-, (laughter)

M: Yeah, that's right. They can take days (laughter 01.22.01-01.22.09).

Wayne: You almost want to say, 'Can you just get to the point?' (Laughter 01.22.10-01.22.13)

**And do you say that?**

No (General agreement) (laughter)

Wayne: You do miss whole swathes of the conversation, you know? In one and out the other, oh was that you? (laughter)

Humour is an important way of doing masculinity, but not the most obvious or significant. Other gender strategies such as clothing choice, hairstyle and body language, have more immediate impact because they confirm others' pre-existing expectations (Kessler and McKenna, 1978, cited in Crawford, 2003). Humour is conceived more generally as a mode of discourse and a strategy for social interaction (e.g. Crawford, 2003). In Extract 21 we can see that the use of humour additionally served to unite the participants as men and provide light relief.

#### Bonding and Having Fun - as Men

Listening to the audio of the male focus group was like listening to a sitcom, with a regular rise and fall of laughter. Coates (2007) describes this kind of talk as play, and argues that playful

talk is all about connecting with each other. She points out that collaboration is at the core of playful talk and this creates solidarity. See Extract 20, that while not all the men might be speaking, they are collaborating through laughter. Coates (2007) details some of the features in playful talk that unites people as overlapping speech, repetition or echoing of other's phrases, laughter and metaphor. All of which can be found readily, and often co-present, in the focus group material (ref: Extracts 5, 8, 13 & 23). For example with recall to Extract 19, the *Jacuzzi* - a metaphor with sexual overtones - was taken up several times in the session and become something of an insider joke:

M: That would just be really wrong, I don't want to go having Jacuzzis at that age. (Laughter 50.27-50.33).

Then later:

Wayne: No, no, bit like in your Jacuzzi while you're still in the log cabin, put your video camera away. (Raucous laughter 58.37-58.41)

And again, at the end of the session:

Chris: (Laughter 01.32.45) can imagine her moving onto the Jacuzzi, a log cabin.

The focus group participants' drive towards male connectivity using humour, concurs with Williams (2008) work which found that for working class males having a laugh with other men offered desired respite from the daily grind. It seems that participants in the focus group were successful to this end, as Wayne quipped at the conclusion of the session: (Extract 22)

Wayne: If you'd have got out a few beers though, could have been like we were down the pub. (Laughter 01.33.23-01.33.25) Few bowls of crisps, you know?

#### Behaving themselves in the Focus Group - Men in the company of a Female researcher

(Extract 23)

Greg: (Talking over each other 01.03.18-01.03.21) Bloody cold ice cubes. (Raucous Laughter 01.03.23-01.03.34)

**So, did you tell her? Did you tell her you don't like the ice cubes?**

M: He couldn't, he was tied up at the time. (Raucous laughter 01.03.41-01.04.05)

M: That's enough. (laughter)

M: Time out. (laughter)

**Okay, do you think romance can be a problem at all?**

Ian: Nah, shouldn't be a problem. (Silence 01.04.19-01.04.21) If you care for a person, romance is, is just there. It's the little things you do, it's not, it's the little things you do with each other or you do things for each other around the place or do something for her.

The form of masculinity-in-action observed in the focus group is moderated for a female audience, therefore me. Accordingly, a project of the men was to regulate their behaviours, as seen in Extract 23, with *That's enough*, and another participant calling *Time out*. This policing successfully works to change the laddish tone of the dialogue and the session continues, for a while, with the men composing themselves and adopting a more serious manner. Jennifer Coates (2004a), who has amassed an extensive database of conversations from men, notes that her male peers (e.g. Brendan Gough and Nigel Edley) witness a more 'macho' and intense

form of hegemonic masculinity. In her years of research, she has not listened to prolonged discussions involving female anatomy or male genitalia for example. She observes that male talk is more macho when in all male company, compared to with a female researcher, and then reduces a macho notch again when in mixed-gender groups. Coates (2004a) speculates as to whether men might censor themselves for the ears of a female, or that they are more dictated to by the dominant norms of masculinity in all-male company.

*Project of the Group Reflection*

Given that masculinity per se was not the specific subject of discussion it's interesting to see how the focus group reflects masculinity-in-action or masculinity as it is 'done'. In this way, this paper could potentially contribute something meaningful to masculinity research. Conversely, the focus group's preoccupation with presenting masculinity could come as no surprise. When Wetherell and Edley (1999) explored male identities, they found that even men who might deride gender expectations, by knitting for example, still explained their difference from other men in terms of their strength and independence—evoking dominant norms of masculinity. Thereby indicating the pervasiveness of the 'heterosexual' discourses. As Gough and Edwards (1998) remark, in their seminal article '*The beer talking*' that one shouldn't 'deny the expectations and even pressures on men towards 'heterosexual' performance in the company of other men' pg. 432.

## FDA Summary Paper: Male Group 2

Exploring how men in established relationships construct romance and are positioned by ready-made or historically given discourses. This summary of the FDA seeks to answer three questions:

- 1) What discursive resources are available and drawn on by the group? Pg. 190
- 2) What are the tensions and challenges presented? Pg. 200
- 3) What is the project of the participants in the session? Pg. 203

The project along with tensions and challenges provide a reading as to what the participants in the group are doing with their discursive resources.

### 1) What discursive resources are available and drawn on by the group?

The discursive resources deployed in this second male group were largely the same as the first male focus group; thereby suggesting that the discourses identified in the first group are rehearsed, recycled and readily reproduced. Romance was constructed with regular draw on the 'humanist' discourse and the associated discourses of: 'romantic love'; 'intimacy'; 'economics' and 'life stages'. See Diagram 1 for a map of male constructions of romance, as seen through the wider discourses, subject positions and hegemonic masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity<sup>23</sup> is the term given to a set of gender expectations for boys and men that are culturally privileged. For details of the rights and practices for each subject position, see the tables later in this paper.

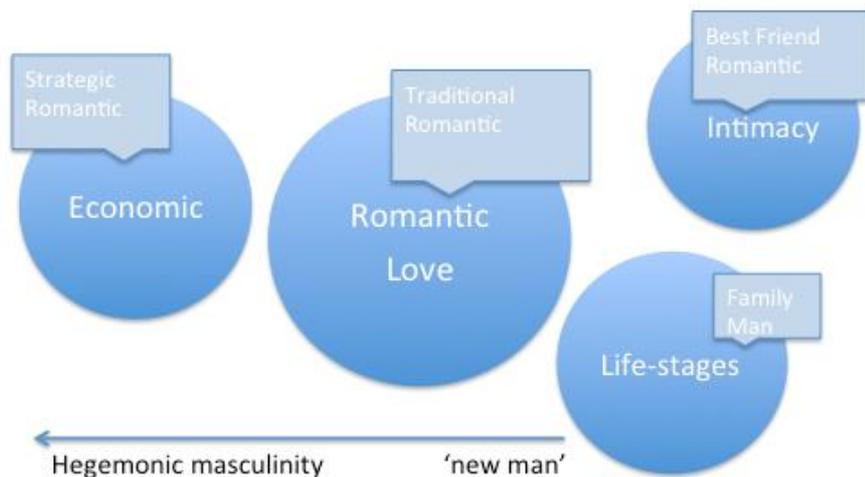


Diagram 1: A map of the available discursive economy of romance, as illustrated by wider discourses and subject positions. The relative size of the discourse and subject positions represent frequently occupied and therefore dominant discourses and positions. Hegemonic

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<sup>23</sup> Hegemonic masculinity rejects behaviours perceived as feminine and is largely reflective of a heterosexual, authoritative and macho man – as represented by the masculine ideal 'retributive man'. Hegemonic masculinity it reflects privileged gender expectations and is thus the highest level within the heteronormative hierarchy.

masculinity increases if the speaker takes up positions further away from the 'intimacy' discourse.

By in large, the wider discourses whereby the group's constructions of romance can be located were primarily the 'humanist' discourses that included 'romantic love', 'intimacy' and 'economic' discourses. The 'humanist' discourse taps into the humanistic notions of an ontologically innate self, constructed as achieving its true potential through a process of self-actualization (Prager & Roberts, 2004, cited in Colahan, 2014). It paints a picture in which everyone has a claim to happiness.

Kitzinger (1989, cited in Burr, 2015) identifies 'romantic love' discourses as being part of the broader 'humanist' discourse. The 'romantic love' discourse constructs the centrality of love and coupledness to happiness. It is a discourse in which love, marriage and monogamy are inextricably linked with one another (Willig, 2008). The popular 'romantic love' discourse has come under scrutiny from scholars: according to Burr (2015) within this discourse, whereby love is the foundation for marriage, sex is given freely and it also involves caring for each other's welfare. Burns (2002) writes that 'romantic love' discourses weds an emotional woman to an emotionally inexpressive man.

In contrast the 'intimacy' discourse uses the language of therapy and demands of partners an emotional closeness. It continues to assume the marital dyad and monogamy as its norm but unlike 'romantic love' discourses it places a higher value of mutual relatedness in the intimate sphere (Shumway, 2003). While the 'intimacy' discourse does not expect marriage to be a romantic fairy-tale, Shumway (2003) warns that it does demand of partners a closeness that may be unrealistic.

The 'life-stages' discourse understands human behaviour as passing through taken-for-granted phases. The plethora of established taxonomies range from childhood models like Piaget's stages to cognitive development to Kubler Ross's stages of grief. In the relationship sphere, for example, it is commonly understood that love moves from an early stage of desire and passionate love to eventually settle on a companionate affection.

Meanwhile, the 'economic' discourse constructs relationship behaviours as hinging on perceived costs and benefits. It draws on social exchange theories, which argue that a trade underpins all social interactions (e.g. Colahan, 2014). In this way, it sees relationships as locations of conscious, rational and economic exchange.

Other research exploring relationships has shown that associated talk is drawn from within 'humanist' discourses (e.g. Colahan, 2014). Similarly, the participants in this focus group view themselves as beings with innate needs and the couple dyad serves as a site in which many of these needs are fulfilled. This is captured in Extract 1, which shows a quote from Eric, who is

linking fulfillment and happiness with being romantic.

**Extract 1**

Eric: Well, when you're both happy, if, if things are good, and you're trying to be romantic, it means that you're feeling good in yourself. You're doing okay. And if they're accepting, your partner, then they're doing okay, which makes life good, and it makes you feel that you're getting somewhere.

Rather than reproduce the constructions of romance from the last focus group in this document, I have recreated the portrayals of each subject position based on the dialogue from this session. This group did shed further light on the subject positions in respect to implications for practice and subjectivity. In addition, I was more aware of wider factors that impact positioning, from a wife's attitude towards her husband crying to supermarkets offering discount flowers.

**Subject Position**

These are based on a systematic exploration of the ways in which the discursive constructions emerged during the focus group.

The Best Friend Romantic (aligned to 'new man'; wider discourse: 'intimacy')

<b><i>Rights and Practice</i></b>	<b><i>Implications for Subjectivity</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pleasing both persons</li> <li>• Having a laugh together</li> <li>• Having a good chat together</li> <li>• Can always talk problems through</li> <li>• Both partners initiate romantic gestures</li> <li>• Prefers spending time with partner vs. friends</li> <li>• Privileges the couple dyad</li> <li>• Duty to be transparent</li> <li>• High focus on emotional intimacy</li> <li>• It is okay to cry</li> <li>• Privileges feelings</li> </ul> <p><i>Wrongs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To not be transparent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being sensitive to each other's feelings</li> <li>• Not embarrassed to disclose feelings or vulnerability e.g. crying</li> </ul>

Facilitating social mechanisms for the 'intimacy' discourse and 'Best Friend Romantic' position, as presented in the focus group:

- Wife legitimizing expressions of emotion
- Relationship stage discourses e.g. companionship
- Modern changes in gender roles

The Strategic Romantic (aligned to 'retributive man'; wider discourse: 'economic')

<b><i>Rights and Practice</i></b>	<b><i>Implications for Subjectivity</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pleasing her for an easy life</li> <li>• Keen sense of the transaction: conscious of costs and reality</li> <li>• Being one of the lads</li> <li>• Earning brownie points</li> <li>• A means to an end, has a temporal element</li> <li>• The form of the gesture is open to negotiation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Romantic gestures can feel like a chore</li> <li>• Less invested in their gestures, so more resilient to rejection or dismissal</li> <li>• Sensitive to personal expense</li> </ul>

<b><i>Rights and Practice</i></b>	<b><i>Implications for Subjectivity</i></b>
<p><i>Wrongs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being too sentimental</li> <li>• Wasting money</li> </ul>	

Facilitating social mechanisms for the ‘economic’ discourse and ‘Strategic Romantic’ position, as presented in the focus group:

- The ‘retributive man’ rhetoric of being sharp e.g. brownie points; getting a bargain
- Gendered past-times: going to the football; out with the girls
- Supermarkets providing low-cost cards and flowers
- Accounting to wife for expenditure

The Traditional Romantic (aligned to ‘retributive man’; wider discourse: ‘romantic love’)

<b><i>Rights and Practice</i></b>	<b><i>Implications for Subjectivity</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pleasing her, and in so pleasing himself</li> <li>• To be a gentleman, and treat her like a lady</li> <li>• To take romance seriously and think through gestures</li> <li>• A way of being, an intrinsic practice of self. Lacks the temporal element found in ‘Strategic Romantic’</li> <li>• Takes the initiative to be romantic</li> <li>• Gestures are expressions of ideals and traditions: prosecco vs. cans of stella</li> <li>• High focus on getting the gesture right</li> <li>• Wants to make her feel wanted and desired</li> <li>• Privileges sex</li> </ul> <p><i>Wrongs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To collect brownie points</li> <li>• To give a token gesture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vulnerable to partner feedback as can be highly invested in the gestures</li> <li>• Can feel hurt if gift not fully embraced</li> <li>• May feel inadequate, frustrated or anxious if resources or opportunities are not available e.g. lack of money, energy or time</li> <li>• Can feel unloved, or underappreciated if gestures are token</li> </ul>

Facilitating social mechanisms for the ‘romantic love’ discourse and ‘Traditional Romantic’ position, as presented in the focus group:

- Access to childcare, in order to privilege the couple dyad
- Extra money in your pocket – pay day
- Feeling happy with life; the sun is shining, it’s your birthday

The Family Man (aligned to ‘new man’; wider discourse: ‘life-stages’)

<b><i>Rights and Practice</i></b>	<b><i>Implications for Subjectivity</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on the family unit</li> <li>• To be hands on with children and help with practical domestic duties</li> <li>• To be sensible</li> <li>• Romance is a luxury that he cannot afford</li> <li>• Temporal element. Until the children are more independent</li> <li>• Being a team member with partner</li> <li>• Need to account for non-family focused actions to partner</li> </ul> <p><i>Wrongs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To privilege the couple dyad over the family</li> <li>• To spend money on lavish romantic gestures</li> <li>• To be spontaneous and take control</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can feel helpless /powerless</li> <li>• May feel emasculated</li> <li>• May feel bored</li> <li>• May have a satisfying team bond with partner</li> <li>• May feel guilty spending time away from the children</li> <li>• Might not know if his wife desires him</li> </ul>

Facilitating social mechanisms for the development discourse and 'Family Man' position as presented in the focus group:

- Partner's privileging of the family over the couple dyad
- A partner's expectation of hands on support with childcare
- The relationship stages discourse
- Changes in gender roles

### **Discursive variations when compared with the first male group**

During the analysis of this second male group there seemed to be more obvious use of the mutual reciprocity repertoire which is drawn from 'economic' discourses. There was also more deployment of the 'life stages' discourse and uptake of 'new man' constructions of masculinity. However, romance was consistently constructed as sex—thereby denoting 'retributive man'. Each of these issues are discussed below.

#### Mutual Reciprocity

Mutual reciprocity is frequently linked to non-gendered equality, whereby partners are represented as autonomous beings with unique needs, which are also collectivized as a part of the couple (Colahan, 2014). Underlying this is a value on autonomy and a democratic relationship. In this way, the mutual reciprocity repertoire reflects liberal 'economic' discourses, based on equity theory and modern day individualism (e.g. Giddens, 1992).

Academics applaud the mutual reciprocity repertoire<sup>24</sup> as a way of challenging the subordination of women in relationships (e.g. Crawford, 2004). Yet feminists remain sceptical of the language of reciprocity, claiming that it can mask relations of asymmetry (Braun, Gavey & McPhillips, 2003), as is potentially the case in Extract 2.

#### Extract 2

**What do you associate with romance? What word comes to mind, Justin?**

Justin: Err, that's a tough one. I think, um, it might sound bizarre, but having a bit of time away from each other.

**You find that romantic?**

M: (Laughter)

Justin: Because she can be, err, you can be too, too, like, you don't have time apart from each other, you can get on each others' tits, basically, can't you?

**Yes.**

Justin: So I think, like, if, um, you kind of, sort of, although you might not, err, enjoy them going out to enjoy themselves without you, you've got to, sort of, let the reins off.

Simon: That's trust, though, isn't it? That's trust, though, isn't it?

Justin: You've got to let them enjoy their time with their friends, or whatever they fancy doing, vice versa, really.

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<sup>24</sup> Many researchers use the terms repertoire and discourse interchangeably (e.g. Gough, 2001) and others reflect them as distinct. For the purpose of my research, I have adopted Burr's (2015) view that they are different: discourses are able to contain numerous constructions and offer an array of subject positions, while a repertoire is a way of understanding the linguistic resources that a speaker uses in their constructions. Burr writes that in addition to scale, the difference is to do with personal agency: 'Interpretative repertoires are conceptualized as existing on a smaller scale and are resources for speakers rather than structures that impose a certain kind of subjectivity upon them' (2015, p.188).

...

Justin: So, um, you hear that, um, some partners won't let their, um, husbands out, and vice versa, and stuff like that. And it's not a healthy um, way of, um, living. 'Cause obviously that person that's not allowed to do what they want, within reason, um, they're bubbling inside, aren't they? They're not happy, if they won't, you know, to be trusted to go and do what they like.

In Extract 2 Justin repeatedly uses the words *vice versa* and *enjoy*. When Justin deploys the language of reciprocity, he claims a position of egalitarian 'new man' with his focus on the other's wants and needs. Yet the latter part of the extract, along with his more 'retributive man' phrases *let the reins off, get on each others' tits*, suggest that it may be his own interests that he is ultimately serving, therefore having a night out with the lads. Faced with this contrary evidence it can be seen that Justin's egalitarian representation of self is strategic. Plumridge, Chetwynd, Reed and Gifford (1997) cautions that the rhetoric of mutuality can be used by men to construct their behavior as morally creditable, while reinforcing traditional gender roles.

The language of reciprocity, drawn from 'economic' discourses, attends to the individual's view of self-and-other's needs, with focus to what they are giving versus receiving. While mutual reciprocity can be viewed as embedded within a democratic relationship (e.g. Giddens, 1992), such constructions exist as a norm within traditional marriages and broader social life according to anthropologists (e.g. Gouldner, 1996, cited in Braun, Gavey & McPhilips, 2003). In this way, reciprocity captures the essence of the romantic transaction and operates in conjunction with the wider discourse of 'romantic love' and discourse of 'intimacy' (ref. IPA theme- watching for equilibrium). In Extract 3 there is reference to an exchange of gestures, here in return for a bath being run, Ryan spends the evening engaging with his wife.

#### Extract 3

Ryan: So it puts you straight into relax mode [wife running a bath for him], and it's because your partner knows you, and she knows what she needs to actually bring you back into the fold, almost.

Simon: And then you feel better, so you feel, you-, you talk to them.

Ryan: Yeah, so you, you give them it back.

Simon: Talk with them, rather than at them.

Ryan: Rather than fall asleep, or, yeah, you actually spend the evening with them.

The transaction in Extract 3 can be seen as a form of gift exchange, a practice that stems from the 'economic' discourse and the reciprocity repertoire (as explored by Gilfoyle, Wilson and Brown (1992) in respect to heterosex; see Extract 24 for an example specific to sex). The practice of gift exchange embeds an obligation to respond positively and give in turn (see also Extract 1). As shown in Extract 3 the gifts exchanged do not need to be the same. For example, institutionalized in the traditional marriage, reciprocity would see a woman receiving a home, income and security in exchange a husband would expect sex and care (Braun *et al.*, 2003). With recent social and political changes, that include the rise of women's financial

independence and control over reproduction, has rendered that this traditional gendered transaction is being renegotiated. According to Giddens (1992) who promotes a democratic 'pure' relationship, couples can be constantly negotiating and renegotiating the transaction via numerous exchanges and encounters.

The gift exchange can be taken literally; in this focus group the giving of presents was constructed as romantic, as per the wider 'romantic love' discourse. When operating within this discourse in the 'Traditional Romantic' subject position, it can be seen (in Extracts 4 and 5) that when the gift is not well received that the giver can feel *dejected* or feel that the gesture has *backfired*. In this way, the response to romantic gestures carries implications for subjectivity. In Extract 4, we see that Justin operating from the subject position 'Strategic Romantic' and argues a strong economic case for giving her money rather than personally choosing a gift. In this way Justin protects himself from emotional (and financial) vulnerability. When choosing between positions, the emotional load that is associated with a position, based on either past occupation or relating to someone in that position, can serve to sanction a choice (Davies & Harré, 1999). Unlike Justin, who moved to the 'Strategic Romantic' position, Simon (in Extract 5) oscillates into the 'Best Friend Romantic' position. Rather than experiencing a rejected gift as a personal failure, Simon in the 'Best Friend Romantic' position and located in the 'intimacy' discourse is able to privilege the *honesty* that he has with his wife. It seems that the emotional liability in the 'Traditional Romantic' position was narrated as pivotal to the men's occupation of the 'Strategic Romantic' position and also the 'Best Friend Romantic'.

Extract 4

Justin: Um, a couple of years back, um, I bought my wife loads of clothes online. And, err, spent probably about £100, £150 on, buy about four or five items. She didn't like one of them. (Laughter) And, err, so I was a bit dejected. Like, um.

**So you haven't done that again.**

Justin: No, no.

Simon: You've learned your lesson. (Laughter)

Justin: Yeah. I never got round to returning them, within, like, the return period. So in the end, I just had, like, these five items that I couldn't return. So it was just a complete waste of money. So ever since, I've just said, 'Look,' if I fancy treating her or something like that, then I'd just give her the money to go shopping. So, it might not sound as romantic, but it gets the job done, at the end of the day, really, so, err, I'm not blowing all that money just for that.

Extract 5

**Ever had things that you've done that have, kind of, backfired?**

Simon: Well I suppose what I said earlier about trying to buy presents but at the same time, (silence 58.34-58.38) because we are honest with each other, if she does turn around and go, 'Oh, it's not really my colour,' or, 'It's not really the style,' I go, 'No problem.' Indirectly it's backfired on me but at the same time it hasn't because-

### Life Stages discourse

Within the focus group there was regular reference to the 'life stages' discourse, which constructs relationships and marriages that evolve successfully as generally going through phases of development. Various relationship stage taxonomies exist, for example it is widely believed that romantic love is used as a basis for marrying and that overtime it evolves to a more friendship or companionate-love (e.g. Acevedo & Aron, 2009). This construction of relationships served to position participants with young children as 'Family Men'. In Extracts 6 and 7 the discourse is used to show empathy and understanding towards fellow participants.

The 'life stages' discourse constructs romance as changing over the duration of the relationship; its taken-for-granted assumptions about the ebbing of romance, given the arrival of children or the maturing of a relationship—licenses romantic apathy. The 'life stages' discourse is powerful as it is able to normalize all manner of behavior, for example the Kübler Ross stages of grief model sanctions anger as a normal part of the grieving process.

Curiously this discourse is being referenced in relation to the 'Best Friend Romantic' and 'Strategic Romantic' positions, which are located in the 'intimacy' and 'economic' discourses. Based on its regular presence in conjunction with these positions I suspect that this 'life-stages' discourse is being used to be polite and to 'save face' of the male participants. Coates (2004b) says that satisfying the face wants of others is achieved by expressing empathy, admiration or approval. The need to 'save face' might speak to the imperative of performing romance from the 'Traditional Romantic' position.

In Extract 7 it can be seen how the discourse of 'life stages' helps to legitimate the 'Best Friend Romantic' position for Simon, who recognizes he has more time to talk and converse with his wife now the children have left home. From the 'Best Friend Romantic' position you do not need to go out to be romantic. Similarly, Ryan in Extract 8, is using a discourse of 'life-stages' to legitimate his location in the 'intimacy' discourse and occupation of the 'Best Friend Romantic' position.

#### Extract 6

Eric: Because mine's okay, again, because of my age, my kids have grown up, so my style's a little bit different. I mean you were saying the same [gesturing towards Ryan], you've got young'uns, young'uns, young'uns [gesturing to Justin, Kevin and Andy]. That's hardcore.

**So when you've got young'uns, you're saying you need to make more of an effort.**

M: You do, yes.

M: You have to find the time.

Ryan: I think it's harder to make the effort. It's not harder to make the effort, but it's harder to find the time, really.

#### Extract 7

Simon: Like-, like you said, there's three of us [fellow participants with grown children], there, that have got children that have, grown up, and left. Then there's a little bit more time to sit and have that meal, you know, you can have that conversation (inaudible 43.44) but where

you're sat in your own dining room. You don't have to go out and have a romantic-, whereas, at the moment, these three [participants with young children] sound like they can't, because they've got children to worry about. Which is a difference, a different situation, again.

Extract 8

Ryan: It starts off as being lust. You know, and then it moves to love. And there is a massive difference between love and lust.

Simon: Yes.

**So what does it look like now?**

Ryan: I, I think it's probably more special now, actually, yes. Um, she's now my best mate. She wasn't my best mate eighteen years ago.

The 'life stages' discourse is additionally employed to legitimize the take up of the 'Strategic Romantic' position. The mini extracts below, show that the value of romantic gestures exchanged as reducing or changing with the relationship stage.

Ryan: Yeah, but then, it's like a single rose at this stage. And, and that's both parties.

Or

Andy: [...] Get-, get the kids up and get them sorted for the first couple of hours, give them a lie-in. You, kind of like, little things like that, with the stage of life we're at, at the moment.

**Yeah, and she'll find that romantic?**

Andy: Yeah.

New Man vs. Retributive Man

Within this discursive economy, there were more revelations expressing 'new man' constructions of masculinity (as compared to the earlier male focus group). In Extract 9 below, Eric is recognizing the changing face and feelings of men in a relationship, while Ryan admits to crying and being held by his wife. Both men can be seen to be located in the discourse of 'intimacy' and speaking from the 'Best Friend Romantic' position.

Extract 9

Eric: [...] we do tend to give as men now-, I think they've changed so much. As long as she's got that smile, I don't care. That's it. And it's always we'll give-, I don't know men changed so much, we seem to have feelings [vocal emphasis on feelings]. (Laughter). It's as if men have got feelings, and I know it might sound a bit girly, yes it probably was when you think of it now. It's cool. Yes, it's good.

**Yes. (Silence 01.13.31-01.13.33) And do you think being romantic with your established relationship that you can express those and you can be quite transparent with your feelings? Does that add to the romance, do you think?**

...

Ryan: Yes, I think it does actually. Transparent is a really good word, and-, but yes, I think it probably makes us both feel much better because we are really open with our feelings, you know. If I want to have a really good blubber about something at some point, she's not going to sit there and say you're a girls blouse or anything, she'll put her arm around me and talk to me and stuff like that. So yes, I think, actually, feelings do make it a lot more special and more romantic. So, yes.

**Possibly-, I mean, I'm just thinking about it, is it because you feel safe with her, you know that there's** (Talking over each other 01.14.47)

Ryan: I'm not sure it's the same kind of thing that is, you know, part of-,

Simon: It's the trust-,

Ryan: It's comfortable.

Justin: It's natural I suppose, so there's no embarrassment.

At the end of Extract 9, it can be seen that fellow focus group participants, Justin and Simon, are validating the 'intimacy' discourse and the 'Best Friend Romantic' position. Eric and Ryan seem to be orienting towards an absent/imagined audience and using disclaimers informed by a 'retributive male' imperative: *I know it might sound a bit girly; she's not going to sit there and say you're a girls blouse*. This indicates that they are aware of, and paying homage to, the dominant 'Heterosexual' discourse that upholds heteronormative order. Indeed, Eric's expressions show signs of needing to self-assure in speaking from this 'new man' position: *I don't care. That's it. It's cool. Yes it's good*. While Ryan's discourse shows signs of having to be adamant: *Yes, I think it does actually. So yes. So yes*.

'Retributive man' is dominant in the focus group as evident by the frequent construction of romance as sex and the use of masculine humour (See also the project of the group: preserving masculinity, later in this document). Below in Extracts 10 and 11 are some examples.

Extract 10

Ryan: [...] Some people don't want to be romantic. Not everybody, even couples that have been together 50 years, might have only been romantic once, but they seem to be happy.

Extract 11

**Are there any romantic gestures that you don't like? [...]**

Eric: Yes, I don't know. I haven't met anything she's-, again I think you get to know that person. If all of a sudden she come out of the darkness and was wearing some mad mask or something, (Laughter), 'I'm a bit scared.' You know, if she says to me, 'Shall we have a bit of fun tonight and try some handcuffs?' and I go, 'Yes, okay, right, hmm, yeah' (Laughter).

Simon: As long we have the keys! (Laughter)

Yet compared to the earlier group there was less explicit drive to establish heteronormative order and an absence of challenge to participants masculinity. Likewise, in this focus group there was considerably less use of the 'gender differences' repertoire, which is drawn from dominant 'heterosexuality' discourses. Even when I pointedly asked about differences between men and women, these participants tended to be gender neutral. Crawford (2004a) describes the construction of essential gender difference as 'reproducing and naturalising the dominant discourse, one of oppression to women' pg. 71. So why might there be these variations in the masculine rhetoric and deployment of discursive resources?

A critical comparison of the two discursive sites, indicate that Focus Group 1 and Focus Group 2 were notably different: in Focus Group 2 there were less manual workers; there were less participants; and they sat closer together. The participants in Focus Group 2 were made up of men who had a fractionally higher social grade; C1/C2 (e.g. sales, trainer, sports coach) whereas the earlier group were C2/D (e.g. labourer, painter, mechanic). It could be feasible that 'retributive male' positions are more readily claimed by manual workers (as seen in Focus

Group 1) and that the 'new man' positions are more accessible to those who are closer to middle-class. Indeed, Shumway (2003) acknowledge that the separate gender spheres of the Victorian age continue to define working class marriages and partnerships. While, Edley and Wetherall (1997) suggest that the lives of men in the middle-classes were more affected by feminism and are therefore more likely to be positioned into the 'new man' frame.

It can be read from Ryan's 'new man' disclosure in Extract 9 *If I want to have a really good blubber about something at some point, she's not going to sit there and say you're a girls blouse*, that his wife is used by him as a way of legitimizing his emotionality. In other words, from within this discourse, women are constructed as the arbiters of what is acceptable emotionality. They are constructed as having the power to give men permission to express emotions.

Another factor that could have facilitated the 'new man' disclosures was the intimacy of a smaller group; in Focus Group 2 there were six participants compared to eight in the earlier session. Bloor (2001) acknowledges that smaller groups can foster greater intimacy between the participants and lay the ground for more revelatory admissions. Furthermore, I reduced the table size for Focus Group 2. As noted in my reflective journal at the time of the facilitation of the focus groups, this was prompted by my wanting to limit the potential for concurrent conversations; an issue in Focus Group 1. Arguably a smaller table size which dictates a physical closeness could further a psychological intimacy.

## **2) What are the tensions and challenges presented?**

### Traditional Romantic vs Best Friend Romantic

In Extract 12 Justin is positioned in the 'Traditional Romantic' and is frustrated that romantic love is not *real life*; the phrase *real life* is repeated three times.

Extract 12

Eric: [...] It is, it's life, life's difficult.

Justin: Just real life, isn't it? You know, you need to discuss bills, and discuss, like, real-life issues. You don't always discuss, like 'Can you do this for tonight,' [romantic activities] you know, 'Let me get upstairs,' or whatever. It's real life. You go and discuss your bills, err, what happened at work today, you know, anything on your mind.

Justin continues from the 'Traditional Romantic' position in Extract 13 and attests to how difficult it is to practice romance when fatigued. And that failing to be romantic, or receptive to others gestures, can cause dejection. The men in the group advocate *communication*, thereby drawing on the 'intimacy' discourse as a way of contending with this situation.

Extract 13

Eric: But that's where it comes down to, like you say, that communication.

...

Justin: Like I say, you know, you might be stressed, a lot of things on your mind, not sleeping well. So you get home from work. One of you cooks a dinner, and you just want to go straight

to bed, if you're feeling like that, don't have a good night's sleep. That can make your partner, or vice versa, a bit dejected, you know, all you're doing is coming home, having dinner, going to bed. But if you're not sleeping well, you can't really function very well, can you? So it's like-,

...

Simon: That's, that's where the communication comes in.

It seems that the 'intimacy' discourse can mitigate some romantic love disappointments. With recall to Extract 5, Simon speaks about a gift that backfired from a 'Traditional Romantic' position, but also how it wasn't a problem because, she was after all being honest with him. As mentioned earlier, rather than experiencing a rejected gift as a personal failure, Simon in the 'Best Friend Romantic' position and located in the 'intimacy' discourse is able to privilege the *honesty* that he has with his wife. Davies and Harré (1999) describes a weaving of positions within and across discourses, as people navigate: the emotional meaning attached to a position, the stories that can be made sense of via specific positions, and the moral order that legitimates the choice.

#### Strategic vs. Best Friend

The 'Best Friend Romantic' notably values the expression of feelings as shown in Extract 9's 'new man' disclosures. Immediately after these 'new man' admissions, Kevin is asked for his views of feelings and romance (see Extract 14). There is evidence of some tension for Kevin: the extended silence; and that he replies ignoring feelings (despite saying he *agrees with what the lads are saying*). Instead he responds from the position of the 'Strategic Romantic' and mobilizes a 'reciprocity' discourse. In this way, it can be read that he is restoring heteronormative order and preserving his masculinity.

#### Extract 14

**What do you think about feelings and romance there Kevin?** (silence 01.15.11-01.15.15)

Kevin: I don't know. I agree with what the lads are saying, it is a-, in a long relationship-, everyone's different aren't they? So it is I guess, that's when the relationship breaks down. If there's a conflict and you two are being a bit more selfish I think as I've got older I've, kind of, learned to be a bit more tolerant and a bit less-, and so I worked quite hard when we first got together to make the transition from being single and being able to do what you want all the time to actually having a give and take and then, I think that-, then building the trust and still being able to recognise each other's needs and wants.

Meanwhile, In Extract 2, Justin constructs that it can be romantic to have time apart. This represents a direct challenge to the more conventional construction of romance as being together. Indeed, preceding Extract 2 is dialogue that endorses the 'intimacy' discourse and the 'Best Friend Romantic' position. Justin acknowledges his counter-discourse by opening with *it might sound bizarre*.

#### Strategic Romantic vs. Traditional Romantic

The men in the group are not financially privileged and thus may find it literally easier to mobilise the 'economic' compared to the 'romantic love' discourse. As an aside, supermarkets

with their low-cost options for flowers and cards might be helping to mobilize the 'Strategic Romantic' position. In Extract 15 Simon and Eric speak animatedly about bargain gestures that do the *same job* as more extravagant gestures.

Extract 15

Eric: Something like-, I'm thinking it does come down to the cost. If I'd gone out and bought her some crazy-priced thing, 'We're working for family, and you buy me stuff like that?' So I wouldn't do that, yes, a bottle of wine.

Simon: Just a fiver on the flowers, I'm not going to go out and buy, you know, spend £50 on a massive thing of roses or whatever, but just £5 from the supermarket, just-,

Eric: You can get a lot of value as well now for such a little (talking over each other 01.05.57-01.06.00) valentine's day, £1.99 for a card that big (hand gesture indicates a large card). I know some people don't and whatever but some people could spend £20 on a card but for £1.99-,

Simon: It's the same.

Eric: Get that, it's cool. Everything's okay.

Simon: It's sound. It's just a sound job.

Men when located in the 'Strategic Romantic' position see romance as a job or a chore. Like Simon in Extract 15, we can see Justin in Extract 4 saying *it gets the job done* with reference to giving his wife money rather than a gift. Crawford (2004) writes that when a man calls romantic work - a job - he then 'grants his wife the status of a boss or supervisor, and implies that he is subject to legitimate performance standards' p. 75. Indeed, we can see in Extract 15 Eric citing his wife as endorsing the claiming of this 'Strategic Romantic' position. Certainly viewing romance as a job, from the 'Strategic Romantic' position, might shield men from the emotional vulnerability that is enmeshed in the 'Traditional Romantic' position.

On the flip side, from the 'Traditional Romantic' position, a gesture should be thought through - and not given *off the cuff*. In Extract 16 Kevin voices his experience of receiving a poorly thought through present from an ex-girlfriend as being *the first nail in the coffin*.

Extract 16

Kevin: [...] it was ad hoc and not really thought through I think that had a negative effect rather than a positive because what we just try to-, 'You've done this off the cuff here, and it's a waste of time really.'

**So it didn't really make you feel special?**

Kevin: No, it didn't no. So I think that's a-,

**That, sort of, backfired.**

Kevin: Yes, clearly. It was just, like, a quick panic I think, 'I need to do something because it's his birthday' so I think, I think that-, that was the first nail in the coffin, in that relationship.

Family Man vs Traditional Romantic

There is tension between the 'Family Man' and 'Traditional Romantic' positions. In Extract 17, you can see Andy in the 'Family Man' position and surrendering to there being no romance during the period when you are parenting young children. Whereas Kevin who also has children, takes up the position of the 'Traditional Romantic' takes charge of the situation and makes romance happen.

Extract 17

Andy: I think it's a, it's a mutual acceptance of how it is, and that, kind of, makes it okay. We, I think, I went to a friend's barbeque the other day. And we both sat there, it, I think it was the first time, so my daughter's six now, first time in six years, both of us had just sat, not had to do anything for about two or three hours, because the kids just entertain themselves. And we both got home, and went, 'Yeah, we just sat and had a drink with friends, and not had,' they came up every now and again and said, 'Can we have a drink?' Or whatever. But we didn't have to change a nappy, or we didn't have to take someone to the toilet, or anything like that. And it was like, if you, if you've made it to those milestones, it think you've made it to-,

Simon: That's the first stage, yeah.

**What are you thinking, Kevin, there?**

Simon: Can't wait for his kids to grow up. (Laughter).

Kevin: I was gonna say, like, for us, we're used to, plan it in around, like I say, they go to gym. If they go to the gym, and it's a couple of hours, then we'll do something then. [...] Now they're slightly older, we can take them to a class, or do whatever, do, they're left with grandparents, or whatever they do. Then that's the planned time to, to do whatever, bit of us time. You know, whatever it is, but it's a bit more focused on us two, rather than the everyday.

It can be seen in the Extract 18 below that in the 'Family Man' position, Andy has some conflict about leaving the children in order to have a romantic weekend away. Here Andy oscillates between the 'Family Man' position and the 'Traditional Romantic' and is having to convince himself *that we actually deserve it*. Romance is constructed from within the 'Family Man' position as a luxury that they can ill afford.

Extract 18

Andy: I think that's why we feel the most, when we go, like, one or two weekends a year, but when you go away it's like a recognition that, actually, 'You know what, we work pretty hard, and invest all our time in the children that actually we deserve this,' almost, and then make the most of it, and-, because you don't get the opportunity that often, so it's make the most of that opportunity, and not feeling guilty for it, the fact that the kids are at their Nan's or whatever, having a great time getting spoilt rotten.

Eric: That's another thing I think they live with, those with children, you can feel guilt. If you go away (Talking over each other 01.11.36).

### **3) Project of the Group**

It appears that the project of the six men in the group was to bond and support each other—whilst also preserving masculinity.

#### **Preserving Masculinity**

As touched on earlier, when I look at the immediate responses to my questions on romance, they are initially answered from a sexual perspective (deploying the wider discourse of 'romantic love') and often involving masculine humour, thereby evoking 'retributive man' and the 'Traditional Romantic' position. See Extract 19 for an example. Shortly thereafter would arise the 'new man' offerings. This is to say that the 'Traditional Romantic' position is at the forefront, and represents the dominant discourse—and could be read as asserting 'we're real men in the focus group first'.

Extract 19

**Are there times when you might want to be more romantic than normal? You know, like if you had a-**

Eric: Maybe after one or two brandies. (Laughter).

M: It's my birthday. (Raucous laughter)

Eric: Oh. [Composing himself] I think it's just when you are happy you know. It's anytime things have turned right, which is why-

While I reference that there is less use of the 'gender differences' repertoire, compared to the earlier focus group, when the men in this group disclose acting outside of traditional gender norms there is ready use of humour. For example Eric's claim to having feelings in Extract 9. In this way, they are active in retaining heteronormative order. See also, Extract 20 as the men are discussing housework.

Extract 20

Eric: I'll make the beds, my partner goes to bingo each Sunday, all the bed sheets and stuff has been washed, ironed, and I'll do all the beds, it's no difference.

Simon: It's something you've got to do.

Eric: Yes, it's got to be done.

Simon: We haven't got, 'That's your job, that's my job.'

Justin: Probably don't have them, but I don't know, preferred, sort of, she tends to do the ironing, you know, and I'll do the garden, the vacuuming and stuff like, you just tend to just pick them up like.

**What you have-, what you're happy to do?**

Justin: Yes, yes, if I've got the time. Because my wife's pregnant I did [ironed] twelve shirts yesterday. (Laughter) I nearly passed out. (Laughter).

Similarly when the men are making admissions that might reduce their heteronormative position by going against the macho 'retributive man', like having less sex now and revealing that they can no longer *do it all night*, they supplement the revelations with a good dose of humour. See Extract 21 where they discuss the frequency of sex dropping over the course of a relationship. Note also that a fall in heteronormative order is mitigated with reference to mastery *we know how to be more quieter* thus evoking a dominant norm of masculinity.

Extract 21

Simon: It does, it's okay.

Eric: It is, isn't it? Just 'cause we're older.

Ryan: It's probably better, now, when your kids were-

M: Yeah, yeah, time for it.

M: Well, you've got more time for it, probably.

Eric: We might be older, but we know how to be more quieter. (Laughter). And we don't shock - at all. (Laughter)

...

Simon: But no, like I say, you get to a certain point, when you're younger, you, you haven't got time, because you're working seven hours, you know, eight hours a day, seven days a week sometimes, in all. So they haven't got time for that (sex). And when the kids have grown up, then there is a bit more time. And then, then you can, well... while I used to be able to do it all night-, (Laughter). I still enjoy it. (Laughter)

### Bonding with Fellow Participants

There seems to be an agenda in this group to be respectful and empathetic towards fellow focus group participants. This is achieved through identification with their concerns and struggles, primarily via the 'life-stages' discourse; whereby Ryan, Simon and Eric identify as having grown children, whereas Andy, Kevin and Justin are fathers with young children (see Extract 22 below as well as Extracts 6 & 7). It can be observed that there proceeds to be something of a mentoring relationship between those who have survived the children *chaos*, with those contending with it; for example Simon can be seen validating Andy's concerns in Extract 17, while Eric and Simon offer Justin advice in Extract 12.

#### Extract 22

Kevin: I am. I think it's, err, my kids are a bit younger, so I think I'm probably still stuck with the chaos, really. So it's, sort of, being a bit chaotic, I guess, probably need a little bit more planned time, to be a, a bit, a bit more planned, than spontaneous

...

Eric: Yeah. I do think an age difference thing comes into it, though, when you can relax. Like you say, the kids are chaos. Three boys, we've had chaos all the way. It's nice, it's nice to be able to do that with the grandkids...

The participants are quick to support each other's disclosures whether it is Andy trying not to feel guilty about leaving the children, Ryan's crying, or Simon's admission of having less sex (see Extracts 18, 9 and 21). And if they are not in entire agreement, they try to minimize the appearance of challenge; as shown with Kevin saying *I agree with what the lads are saying* in Extract 14. Indeed, Kevin's referencing to his fellow participants as *the lads* is suggestive of familiarity and a longer history together. Likewise, there is use of each other's names and there is even a friendly *You bastard!*

Typical of seeking unity, the text is peppered with discursive features that include overlapping speech, repetition or echoing of other's phrases and laughter (e.g. Coates, 2007). Examples of echoing each other's word choice can be seen with *chaos* and *communication* in Extracts 22 and 13 respectively. There are multiple cases where they overlap their speech and occurrences of finishing each other's sentences. Meanwhile, laughter according to Coates 'is a manifestation of intimacy, with the voice of the group taking precedence over the voice of the individual speaker' pg 31. It can be clearly seen that the presence of laughter in this group is frequent, as documented in Extracts 2, 4, 9, 11, 19, 20, 21 and 23 below.

#### Extract 23

**So if I had your partners and wives here, and if I was asking them, 'Tell me, how's your-**  
Simon: I wouldn't be talking like this. (Laughter)(Talking over each other 59.34-59.43).

There was an enormous amount of intimacy and trust developed within the focus group. In this way I believe that the discursive site became increasingly fertile for acknowledgements of relationship hardships (e.g. Justin in Extracts 12 and 13) and 'new-man' discourses. It can be

noted that Ryan's admission to crying in Extract 9 and being held by his wife, came towards the end of the session at 1 hour 14 minutes. With this close rapport, the men I read, as *disclosing, admitting, revealing* and *offering* versions of their selves that counter to some degree the dominant 'retributive man'.

### **Reflections of a Female Researcher**

I wonder with the ready disclosures of doing housework and helping with the children (three of the men explicitly mention changing a nappy) that they wanted to prove to me—as a female researcher—that they are enlightened 'new men'.

There also some caution and hesitation about talking about sex, probably because of my ears as a female. As referenced in Summary 1, Coates (2004a) shows that men are less likely to display intense forms of hegemonic masculinity in the presence of a female researcher. She suggests that either men censor themselves in the presence of females, or that men are more dictated to by the dominant norms of masculinity when in all-male company. See Extract 24, for a censored account of Kevin's privileging of sex in his relationship.

#### Extract 24

Kevin: See, I find romance a bit more, for me, it's a bit more, I guess, it's in the physical things, really. It's in more the affection and the, just in both ways, need to, you know, to make her feel wanted and attractive and when I, when-, what we did when we first met, you know, exactly the same. Try and keep that going, and then coming back, and if I, if I give, obviously, it's the sort of thing, you know, so it'll come back my way. And that, I think that's, I appreciate that more than anything else, actually, in terms of romance.

A further reflection on censorship: the signs of needing to contain themselves could be for myself as a female researcher; or in general given dominant discourses. In Extract 24 Simon states that he has *got to be careful what I say*. While I initially read this as editing his speech for me as a female researcher, this extract also suggests alternative readings, for example that bondage belongs to a counter discourse to that of 'romantic love', and thus one should censor themselves accordingly. In line with either reading, is the laughter that acknowledges and reinforces the 'faux pas'.

#### Extract 25

**So what words would come to mind when I say the word 'romance' or 'romantic love'?**

**What comes to your mind?**

Simon: Caring.

Eric: Happiness, happiness.

Simon: Bondage. Well, not bondage. (Raucous laughter 01.49-01.57). No, just a bond, really. You're-, you're comfortable being with each other, and, and like each other's company.

**Okay, so it's not really about bondage. Or is it?**

Eric: Sometimes.

Justin: Maybe on a Saturday. (Laughter)

Simon: No, got to be careful what I say. (Laughter)

## FDA Summary Paper: Mixed Group

Exploring how women and men in established relationships construct romance and are positioned by ready-made or historically given discourses. This summary of the FDA seeks to answer three questions:

- 1) What discursive resources are available and drawn on by the group? Pg. 207
- 2) What are the tensions and challenges presented? Pg. 218
- 3) What is the project of the participants in the session? Pg. 221

The project along with tensions and challenges provide a reading as to what the participants in the group are doing with their discursive resources.

### 1) What discursive resources are available and drawn on by the group?

It would seem that the discursive economy – availability of wider discourses and constructions - for romance is similar for men and women, however how they make use of these resources varies considerably between them. The women show more complexity, as shown in Diagram 1 below, and mobilized five subject positions, while the men mobilized four subject positions. Detailed tables and further explanations of the subject positions<sup>25</sup> can be found later in this paper.

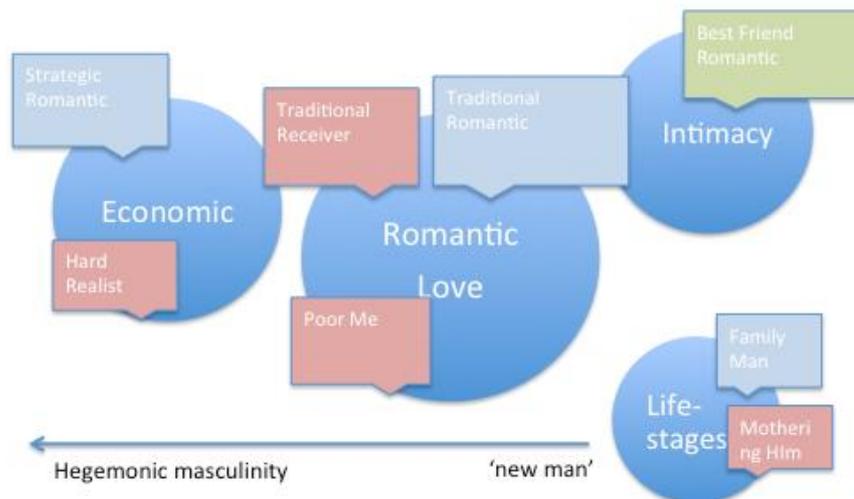


Diagram 1: A map of the available discursive economy<sup>26</sup> of romance, as illustrated by wider discourses and subject positions. The relative size of the discourse and subject positions represent frequently occupied and therefore dominant discourses and positions. Red indicates positions from which females speak, whereas blue positions are taken up by males.

<sup>25</sup> In this mixed-sex focus group, there was only fleeting occupation of the 'Hard Realist' position, the 'Mothering Him' position, and the 'Family Man' position. While I could have chosen to ignore these peripheral subject positions, in the Foucauldian spirit of the analysis it is important to recognize the marginal and explore how they are repressed by dominant discourses.

<sup>26</sup> The term discursive economy represents the discursive resources that are accessible to the participants. I have a preference for the word economy as it encompasses issues related to power.

There is one green position, from which both males and females speak. Hegemonic masculinity<sup>27</sup> is the term given to a set of gender expectations for males that are culturally privileged; this can be seen increasingly present as individuals take up positions in the 'romantic love' or 'economic' discourses.

Romance is constructed as everyday relationship warmth and thoughtfulness; grand gestures and special occasions, exclusive physical intimacy and affection; as pleasing her; and as a transaction.

Below you will find examples of these constructions from the text. It can be seen that these are interrelated, for example 'thoughtfulness and relationship warmth' and 'grand gestures' can be presented as / mobilized as ways of 'pleasing her'. Also 'pleasing her' and 'physical intimacy' can be seen as different parts of the 'transaction'.

Romance is constructed as thoughtfulness and relationship warmth (Extract 1)

Suhail: Maybe in the morning, when I wake up, she's getting ready in the bedroom, I'll probably cook her some breakfast. Find her, you know, a bit of clothing.

**For her work, so she can-?**

Suhail: Yeah, if she's needed a shirt or something, I'm happy with that, do some of the ironing, Prepare a sandwich or snack, you know, for her. Things like that, you know. (Talking over each other 59.08).

Romance is constructed as grand gestures and special occasions. (Extract 2)

Marion: So when-, when we went on our holiday last year, um, he booked one of those things on a beach, the-, like a, sort of, four poster bed with white surface.

George: Oh right, oh yeah, yeah.

Jimmy: Where was it, where was she?

Marion: In Belek in Turkey.

Jimmy: Oh, nice.

**Yeah.**

Suhail: That was on a beach?

Jimmy: That's, that's a good idea, I'll use that one, yeah, that is a good idea. Yeah, thing about the bed though, was it nice, smart with a waiter and everything?

Marion: Yeah, it was lovely, yeah. Full service, clean your glasses.

Romance is constructed as something that involves exclusive physical intimacy (Extract 3)

George: [...] There is romantic things you could do without money, but in this day and age there's not much, is there, really? The park. I could mention a few things but they'd be a bit rude. (Laughter).

Romance is constructed as something that focuses on pleasing her (Extract 4)

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<sup>27</sup> Hegemonic masculinity rejects behaviours perceived as feminine and is largely reflective of a heterosexual, authoritative and macho man – as represented by the masculine ideal 'retributive man'. Hegemonic masculinity reflects privileged gender expectations and is thus the highest level within the heteronormative hierarchy.

Jimmy: I take her out for something to eat or something like that. I do buy flowers, yes I do, I always liked flowers. She likes flowers as well, (inaudible 16.37). So I can have my moments now and then. We go out together, we'll go out on our own. So my mum has looked after the kids when we've gone away for a week. Just stuff, like looked at the sea together sort of thing, laying about, just relax together. I can be a little- [romantic], I think, I don't know, it's not for me to say I suppose, is it?

**No? Why is it not for you to say?**

Jimmy: I don't know, I suppose it's for the woman to say if you're romantic or not.

Romance is constructed as a transaction (Extract 5)

George: Yes, like Valentine's, sort of, chocolates, flowers, maybe some underwear, you know, a bottle of champagne, perfume. What else? Or take them away. You run out of things to choose then, don't you? If you buy underwear they think you're only after one thing. (Laughter)

**Then it backfires?**

George: They do though, don't they? It's true.

Jimmy: It might have been true actually (Laughter).

Or Extract 6

George: (Laughter) It's funny how the women, yeah, get a present or breakfast in bed; blokes get a massage and other stuff.

Jimmy: But it works. (Laughter)

Consistently, questions of romance are answered by the group as something that the man does for her that the man does for her—and by implication gets physical attention in return. Edley and Wetherall (1995) write that women are typically represented as supposed to want romance, with men represented as the initiators and women the receivers. There's heavy use of the 'gender differences' discourse by the men and women in the group, (see Extracts 17-22 later in this paper) these are generated by 'heterosexual' discourses and reflect respect of the heteronormative order. Indeed, the group spent a lot of energy in constructing masculinity and femininity (see Table 1 below). You will notice that the constructions shown on Table 1 reinforce hegemonic masculinity and the 'retributive man' and uphold classic feminine norms. Coates (2004b, p. 139) writes that 'Dominant versions of femininity in play today position women as gentle, caring, maternal, attentive to their appearance and above all *nice*'.

<b>Males</b>	<b>Females</b>
Men are constructed as the provider	Women are constructed as provided for
Men are constructed as being the initiator of romance	Women are constructed as the recipients of romance
Men are constructed as pleasing women	Women are constructed as being responsive to/pleased by men
Men are constructed as under pressure to be romantic	Women are constructed as the nurturers and child focused
Men are constructed as being low maintenance in terms of grooming and not vain or preoccupied by their appearance	Women are constructed as having to look nice
Men are constructed as able to go with the flow	Women are constructed as preferring notice of an evening out
Men are constructed as confident	Women are constructed as not wanting to be

Males	Females
	embarrassed
Men are constructed as being motivated by sex and physical affection	Women are constructed as liking presents & flowers
Men are constructed as liking the pub	Women are constructed as liking to go shopping
	Women are constructed as spending a long time in the bathroom

Table 1 Constructions of males and females in the mixed-sex focus group.

A construction of romance as pleasing her, could invoke an assumption that women are less secure in their relationships and need constant reassurance that they are indeed wanted/loved. As shown later in the ‘Poor Me’ and ‘Traditional Receiver’ subject positions, this places the man in a more powerful position as this reassurance is his to give or to withhold. Unlike the all-female focus groups which showed some women mocking romance and/or men and rebuffing male attempts to ‘please’. The women in this focus group exhibited more deference for men. Indeed, if the women in this focus group expressed having declined, or failed to engage, with a romantic gesture, the men in the focus group were demonstrative in showing their surprise and displeasure. Arguably, this rebuffing behavior is seen by the men, as *not nice*, and in this way the men are upholding feminine ideals. The women in the group meanwhile, did not challenge the men when they admitted to romantic faults; because these romantic failings invariably reinforced ‘retributive man’. (See the Project of the Group, Extracts 24-26, for more information).

By in large, the wider discourses whereby the group’s constructions of romance can be located were primarily the ‘humanist’ discourses that included ‘romantic love’, ‘economic’ and ‘intimacy’.

As mentioned in earlier focus group summaries, the ‘humanist’ discourse taps into the humanistic notions of an ontologically innate self, constructed as achieving its true potential through a process of self-actualization (Prager & Roberts, 2004, cited in Colahan, 2014). It paints a picture in which everyone has a claim to happiness. Kitzinger (1989, cited in Burr, 2015) identifies ‘romantic love’ discourses as being part of the broader ‘humanist’ discourse. The ‘romantic love’ discourse constructs the centrality of love and coupledness to happiness. As shown in Extract 7.

Extract 7

Sandra: It makes you happy. Romance makes you happy; you feel appreciated and loved, so you’re usually happy then in yourself, yes.

It is a discourse in which love, marriage and monogamy are inextricably linked with one another (Willig, 2008). In Extract 8 below we can see these links and the taken-for-granted assumptions of the ‘romantic love’ discourse. The bracketed text is included to highlight the common understanding being (re)produced.

Extract 8

Jimmy: Without trust [commitment to monogamy], you don't want to keep them [remain together or married] I suppose.

Lynn: Yes.

Marion: Yes, I couldn't be romantic [love and have sex] with somebody I didn't trust [to be monogamous].

The popular 'romantic love' discourse has come under scrutiny from scholars: according to Burr (2015) within this discourse, whereby love is the foundation for marriage, it involves caring for each other's welfare and sex is given freely. Burns (2002) writes that 'romantic love' discourses weds an emotional woman to an emotionally inexpressive man. Indeed in the focus group the female desire for 'retributive man' and dismissal of the more emotionally versed 'new man', within the 'romantic love' discourses is apparent (see Extract 12). There is a tension here between the characterization of the 'romantic love' discourse (as involving mutual love and care) and the reference to the emotionally inexpressive man. In the all-female focus groups, when compared to the male focus groups, the women were prone to expressions of discontent. In this group, the women also fall into this pattern of moaning about their men<sup>28</sup>; the negative comments about their men would be supplemented with pockets of warm regard. Coates attributes this curious discursive feature as 'women struggling to reconcile their perceptions of men's deficiencies with their unquestioning acceptance of the heteronormative order' (2013, p. 549).

In contrast the 'intimacy' discourse uses the language of therapy and demands of partners an emotional closeness. It continues to assume the marital dyad and monogamy as its norm but unlike 'romantic love' discourses it places a higher value of mutual relatedness in the intimate sphere (Shumway, 2003). While the 'intimacy' discourse does not expect marriage to be a romantic fairy-tale, Shumway (2003) warns that it does demand of partners a closeness that may be unrealistic.

There was also reference to 'economic' and 'life-stages' discourses. The 'economic' discourse constructs relationship behaviours as hinging on perceived costs and benefits. Following a period of the romantic love imperative (from the nineteenth century) whereby people would fall in love and then get married in pursuit of the happy ever after, in the mid-twentieth century it became apparent that couples would stay together even when there might not be romantic love motives, or even relationship happiness, and the Interdependence Theory was introduced as a new relationship paradigm<sup>29</sup>. It draws on Social Exchange Theories, which

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<sup>28</sup> Lynn who most regularly occupied the gender-neutral 'Best Friend Romantic' position, located in the 'intimacy' discourse, was conspicuous in not partaking in this critique.

<sup>29</sup> The degree of relationship satisfaction and commitment is a product of outcomes, which is additionally shaped by the nature of past relationships and quality of available alternatives.

argue that a trade underpins all social interactions (e.g. Colahan, 2014). In this way, it sees relationships as locations of conscious, rational and economic exchange. In line with liberal 'humanist' discourses, that everyone has a right to self-fulfillment, if the relationship transaction within a couple dyad failed, then the person who perceives a lower balance of benefits might legitimately seek to rebalance the trade in some way.

The 'life-stages' discourse, which was introduced in Summary Male Group 2, understands human behaviour as passing through taken-for-granted phases. The plethora of established taxonomies range from childhood models like Piaget's stages to cognitive development to Kubler Ross's stages of grief. In the relationship sphere, for example, it is commonly understood as shown in Extract 9, that love moves from an early stage of desire and passionate love to eventually settle on a companionate affection.

Extract 9

George: It's a nice prospect, isn't it? I've been in a relationship for ten years, so I obviously am romantically involved, but it's more companionship as time goes on as well I think. The older you get and, you know-, I don't know, people who say love at first sight, but my dad always says to me you'll never get that, it's lust at first sight, isn't it? Love comes after, and the romance I would have thought. That's my personal opinion.

Extract 10

Sandra: I think it's hard to get-, I mean, when you've been with someone for years and years, I can't really-, you just, kind of, you do get used to each other, you still love each other, you do things together, but, to keep the romance going.

Marion: How long have you been with him?

Sandra: Twenty odd years, so, it's, kind of, you know. If you brought in some flowers, I'm thinking, 'Ohhh.' (Laughter)

With reference to Extract 10, Marion's question of Sandra, *how long have you been with him?* reflects the assumption that a romantic spark can go with time. This supposition is located in the 'life-stages' discourse.

### **Subject Positions**

As seen in Diagram 1 there are two positions that women take up in relation to 'romantic love' discourses; these I have termed 'Traditional Receiver' and 'Poor Me'. Whereas the men in the focus group took up only one position, the 'Traditional Romantic' position when located in this discourse. In this way, it can be seen that men and women occupy different positions in the 'romantic love' discourse. This pattern of gender specific subject positions was found within the 'economic' discourse and the 'life-stages' discourses, with men occupying the 'Strategic Romantic' position and the 'Family Man' position respectively, while the women took up the 'Hard Realist' and the 'Mothering Him' positions.

See the pages next for tables showing each subject position and detailing their associated speaking rights and practices. Rather than introducing the most frequently occupied and

dominant subject positions, it might be more meaningful to speculate on the forces that marginalise the less popular subject positions.

### Hard Realist

The 'Hard Realist' position is occupied by women and located in the 'economic' discourses. As found within previous all-female focus group, when occupying the 'Hard Realist' position, the women are mocking romance and belittling all who are located in the 'romantic love' or 'intimacy' discourses, from this position they are not constructing their men as failures, but are turning down romance as not for them. In this way, the moral code of the 'Hard Realist' position allows for romantic apathy. This position was only fleetingly occupied in this mixed-gender focus group. Extract 11 provides clues as to this reduced occupation in the face of male company.

This subject position is reminiscent of prevailing attitudes of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, at that time individuals could have a say in their choice of spouse, yet it was generally thought that a marriage based on romantic love was foolish, and would inevitably be problematic. Consistent with the tradition of the past, marriage was deemed to serve more practical considerations (Stone, 1977) - as reflected by Marion in Extract 11. In taking up this subject position with its financial imperative, Marion is reprimanded by Jimmy, from the 'Traditional Romantic' position, which upholds a moral commitment to love being the foundation of a relationship. Marion readily concedes her 'Hard Realist' position with a somewhat apologetic *No, no*. It is likely that Marion's location in 'economic' discourses is seen as unfeminine and her concession to a male in the 'Traditional Romantic' position serves to preserve heteronormative order. (Female collusion in constructing male dominance is discussed in more detail in the Project of the Group).

#### Extract 11

##### **So, like, separate lives in the same house?**

Sandra: Yeah.

Marion: I know a few couples like that.

Jimmy: Well I don't think that's-, I wouldn't want that in a relationship, I would rather be on-, be on my own, seriously. Finding somebody that wants to be with me, I mean, I don't want to be with somebody just for the sake. (Talking over each other 01.18.06).

Marion: Financially they can't afford to (talking over each other 01.18.11).

Jimmy: So again, back to, we all go back to -, the same thing. It's all about money isn't it? And, y, y, you-, so that's what you're saying, and so-, it shouldn't be should it?

Marion: No, no.

### Family Man

Here in Extract 13, we can see Jimmy located in the 'Family Man' position, talking about how children can help relationships by *pulling things together*. Note how he peppers his speech with *I suppose*, and *I don't know*. Here we can pick up his hesitation about occupying this position and countering the dominant view of the focus group, located within the 'romantic

love' discourse that privileges the couple dyad and sees children as a challenge to romance. The last two lines of the extract, reinforces the assumption that love changes and acknowledges the 'Family Man' position being located within the 'life-stages' discourse. Here too, are hedges *I suppose; sort of* and a tag question *isn't it?* are indicative of a marginal subject position. This position did not feature again in the focus group.

Extract 13

Suhail: They'll lose focus on the relationship, when the emphasis is towards the children. I'm not there yet (laughter) but just others experiences.

**Do other people share that view, that maybe children can be a challenge?**

Yes (x2).

Sandra: I think especially (talking over each other 07.29).

Jimmy: They can bring you together as well sometimes, with the kids, doing things with children, can't you? Just spend time together a bit more when you have got kids. Sometimes you can take the kids out, I'd say so, yes.

**Could that be romantic at all?**

Jimmy: I don't know. It's one of them, I don't know. I suppose it's pulling things together a bit more I suppose when you have children.

George: It's a different, sort of love, isn't it? (Talking over each other 07.52).

Jimmy: (Inaudible 07.54) things change, don't they, I suppose.

Mothering Him

Sandra describes, in Extract 14, how she treats her spouse as a child: and her husband *keeps saying 'Yes Mum'*. This 'Mothering Him' position is located in the 'life-stages' discourse; this is evident in how Sandra explains that it is a daughter leaving home that has her *turned all motherly* towards her husband. She repeatedly *says only got the one* with reference to her children now living at home. Here we can see how Sandra is privileging the children over her husband, which contravenes the moral order of 'romantic love' and 'intimacy' discourses.

The importance placed on the set and specific roles of mother, father, and child is long established; Allen (1942) writes that it is biologic and essential to society order. Meanwhile, attachment theorist Ainsworth (1989) offers that parent-child dynamics in a spousal relationship though not ideal can be sustained nonetheless. She adds that the parent role is played by the person who is viewed as 'stronger and wiser and whose satisfaction comes through giving care and feeling needed' (p. 713). Picard (2016) writes that its common and beneficial for couples to occasionally find themselves in parent-child bonding patterns; as it offers a chance to connect with our 'inner child', show vulnerability and receive protection and love. However, if this bonding pattern is sustained then it is expected that the relationship will be de-sexualized. Research into egalitarian versus gender-dominant couple dyads show that marital satisfaction is lowest for those in wife-dominant relationships; this discontent is particularly evident from the wife as they can be willing their male partner to take more control (Gray-Little, Baucom and Hamby, 1996).

Likely this position is taboo, more so than the 'Family man' position that also privileges children over the relationship, because in treating her husband as a boy, she is emasculating the man. And the group is focused on preserving hegemonic masculinity. Sandra tries to recover by asserting that after all *she is quite romantic* and moves herself into the 'Bestfriend Romantic' position with references to valued couple time. She also tries to make light of the situation: *he just jokes about it now* Sandra reiterates.

I suspect the men in this focus group have clocked Sandra, from her take up of this 'Mothering Him' position, as they seem ready to police and challenge her during the remainder of the focus group. In Extract 14b below, Jimmy's voice shows dismay in her behavior at her yearning for Coronation Street when out with her husband. Jimmy is likely occupying the 'Traditional Romantic' position whereby it's hoped that a wife might occupy the 'Traditional Receiver' position and be grateful of being taken out for dinner.

Extract 14

**Okay. Sandra, would you describe yourself as romantic?**

Sandra: I probably am, but since I've only got the one son at home now, I've turned more motherly towards my husband. He keeps saying, 'Yes mum.' Treat him like another child, more than my husband now, because I've only got the one there, you know, my daughter has left so I've turned all motherly. Like, 'Tuck in your collar,' and, 'You can't go out looking like that,' this kind of thing. I am quite romantic, I do like going away together and we like going to London a lot and we went to the park, things like that. That's what we do, like do sightseeing.

**Tell me, do you think when you treat your husband, you know, do you think it's possible for him to be romantic when he's being treated in that way?**

Sandra: Yes, he is, he just jokes, he just said, 'Yes mum.' He just jokes about it now. Yes, I think he is romantic anyway, he is the that type of person anyway, so-

Extract 14b

Sandra: I think sometimes you like go for a meal and you, kind of, start chatting and then you're running out of conversation and thinking (laughter) 'Gosh, I'm missing Coronation Street.' (Laughter)

Jimmy: That's a bad sign. (Laughter) (Talking over each other 36.38).

### Interactions and Oscillations

As seen with Sandra in Extract 14 that there can be fluid movement between subject positions. We can also see Marion taking up and then rejecting the 'Hard Realist' subject positions in Extract 11. Davies and Harré (1999) describes a weaving of positions within and across discourses, as people navigate: the emotional meaning attached to a position, the stories that can be made sense of via specific positions, and the moral order that legitimates the choice.

Below are tables that detail all the subject positions, these are based on a systematic exploration of the ways in which the discursive constructions emerged during the focus group. Shown first are the dominant subject positions, and secondly are the marginal subject positions.

1) Dominant Subject Positions

The Best Friend Romantic (wider discourse: 'intimacy'; gender neutral)

<b>Rights and Practice</b>	<b>Implications for Subjectivity</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender neutral</li> <li>• Pleasing both persons</li> <li>• Taking a collaborative approach to romance</li> <li>• May question traditional gestures like weddings and marriage</li> <li>• Caring is valued</li> <li>• Share the same interests</li> <li>• Creating daily sparkle – small moments of happiness e.g. sending texts</li> <li>• Duty to show you're being thoughtful</li> <li>• Together time and companionship is valued</li> <li>• Use of the <i>we</i> pronoun</li> <li>• Both partners initiate romantic gestures</li> <li>• Personality match is valued</li> <li>• Privileges the couple dyad</li> <li>• Privileges feelings</li> <li>• Romance does not always lead to sex</li> <li>• Views friendship as affection</li> </ul> <p><i>Wrongs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To privilege looks and physical desire</li> <li>• To privilege grand gestures</li> <li>• To engage in gestures with selfish intent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feels strong connection and friendship with partner</li> <li>• Has a sense of the couple working as a team</li> </ul>

Traditional Receiver (wider discourse: 'romantic love'; gender: female)

<b>Rights and Practice</b>	<b>Implications for Subjectivity</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Man is focused on pleasing her</li> <li>• To be treated like a lady</li> <li>• Gestures are expressions of ideals and traditions: flowers, holidays, special occasions</li> <li>• Men take the initiative to be romantic</li> <li>• Male way of showing appreciation of you in the relationship</li> <li>• Good to be desired/ and confirmed as attractive</li> <li>• Unprompted gestures preferred</li> <li>• Privileges the couple dyad: does not include children</li> <li>• Represents a welcomed departure from daily life: gestures do not happen every day.</li> </ul> <p><i>Wrongs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yearning for solitary television viewing over together time</li> <li>• Not to show appreciation</li> <li>• Romantic apathy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May feel frustrated or disappointed if resources or opportunities are not available e.g. lack of money, energy or time</li> <li>• Men are in control</li> <li>• Source of value in the relationship. If a women isn't complimented – or provided with flowers - they could feel under appreciated.</li> <li>• May feel jealous</li> </ul>

The Traditional Romantic (wider discourse: 'romantic love'; gender: male)

<b>Rights and Practice</b>	<b>Implications for Subjectivity</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pleasing her, and in so pleasing himself</li> <li>• To be a gentleman, and treat her like a lady</li> <li>• To take romance seriously and think through gestures</li> <li>• A way of being, an intrinsic practice of self. Lacks the temporal element found in 'Strategic Romantic'</li> <li>• Takes the initiative to be romantic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vulnerable to partner feedback as can be highly invested in the gestures</li> <li>• Can feel hurt if gift not fully embraced</li> <li>• May feel inadequate, frustrated or anxious if resources or opportunities are not available e.g. lack of money, energy or time</li> </ul>

<b><i>Rights and Practice</i></b>	<b><i>Implications for Subjectivity</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gestures are expressions of ideals and traditions: theatre and flowers.</li> <li>• Privilege the couple dyad</li> <li>• High focus on getting the gesture right</li> <li>• Wants to make her feel wanted and desired</li> <li>• Privileges sex</li> </ul> <p><i>Wrongs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To think of another woman</li> <li>• To lose focus on the relationship</li> <li>• To forget important dates</li> <li>• To collect brownie points</li> <li>• To give a token gesture</li> </ul> <p>To do housework as a romantic gesture</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can feel unloved, or underappreciated if gestures are token</li> </ul> <p>Can feel jealous</p>

The Strategic Romantic (wider discourse: 'economic'; gender: male)

<b><i>Rights and Practice</i></b>	<b><i>Implications for Subjectivity</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pleasing her for an easy life</li> <li>• Keen sense of the transaction: conscious of costs and reality</li> <li>• Being one of the lads</li> <li>• Earning brownie points</li> <li>• A means to an end, has a temporal element</li> <li>• The form of the gesture is open to negotiation</li> <li>• Takes shortcuts when they're available</li> <li>• Engages in laddish humour</li> </ul> <p><i>Wrongs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being too sentimental</li> <li>• Wasting money</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Romantic gestures can feel like a job/chore</li> <li>• Less invested in their gestures, so more resilient to rejection or dismissal</li> <li>• Sensitive to personal expense</li> <li>• Less likely to be jealous</li> <li>• Can experience romance as hard work</li> </ul>

Poor me, he doesn't always please (aligned to 'romantic love'; gender: female)

<b><i>Rights and Practice</i></b>	<b><i>Implications for Subjectivity</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wanting to be treated like a lady</li> <li>• Seeking appreciation</li> <li>• Engages in wishful thinking</li> <li>• Alert to gestures having reduced over time</li> <li>• Looking for traditional gestures</li> <li>• Desiring a willing romantic partner</li> <li>• Can be seeking affection</li> <li>• Might fish for compliments or leave hints for gifts</li> <li>• Aware of last romantic gesture</li> <li>• May moan and express unhappiness</li> <li>• Might appear needy for attention</li> <li>• Engages in upward social comparison</li> </ul> <p><i>Wrongs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not doing your gender role e.g. being nice or looking after your family</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Male in control</li> <li>• Can feel taken for granted</li> <li>• Can feel isolated ie. missing out</li> <li>• Can feel rejected</li> <li>• Can feel jealous of other people's relationships</li> <li>• May feel undesired</li> </ul>

2) Marginal subject positions

Hard Realist (aligned to 'economic'; gender: female)

<b><i>Rights and Practice</i></b>	<b><i>Implications for Subjectivity</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationships serve other purposes</li> <li>• Practicalities prevail over romance</li> <li>• Represents romantic apathy</li> <li>• View romance as a fairy-tale, not real life</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See themselves as 'cynical'</li> <li>• Can be seen as 'hard'</li> <li>• View themselves as mature in years/wise to the world</li> </ul>

<b>Rights and Practice</b>	<b>Implications for Subjectivity</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Privileges others over the couple e.g. children, friends</li> <li>• Deploys relationship stage rhetoric or age discourse to facilitate position</li> </ul> <p><i>Wrongs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To be slushy or engage in PDA</li> <li>• Moaning about a lack of romance</li> </ul>	

Mothering Him (aligned to 'life-stages'; gender: female)

<b>Rights and Practice</b>	<b>Implications for Subjectivity</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Treats man like another child</li> <li>• Takes man for granted</li> <li>• Represents romantic apathy</li> <li>• Privileges children over husband</li> <li>• Too much effort to get dressed up to go out</li> <li>• Would rather be home watching TV, than think of conversation when out with husband</li> <li>• Forgetful that he likes affection</li> <li>• Privileges being caring and nurturing</li> <li>• Deploys relationship stage rhetoric or age discourse to facilitate position</li> </ul> <p><i>Wrongs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To not focus on children</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can emasculate their husband</li> <li>• Woman is in control</li> <li>• Sense of not being bothered with romance</li> </ul>

The Family Man (wider discourse: 'life-stages'; gender male)

<b>Rights and Practice</b>	<b>Implications for Subjectivity</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on the family unit</li> <li>• To be hands on with children</li> <li>• To privilege doing things as a family</li> </ul> <p><i>Wrongs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To privilege the couple dyad over the family</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May have a satisfying team bond with partner</li> </ul>

**2) What are the tensions and challenges presented?**

In the introduction to the Subject Positions, the tensions and challenges of the marginal subject positions were outlined, and it was seen that they are repressed by dominant discourses and the need to preserve heteronormative order. Below are the tensions and challenges that were shown among the more frequently occupied subject positions.

Traditional Romantic vs. Best Friend Romantic

In Extract 15 we can see Jimmy occupying the 'Traditional Romantic' position which privileges sex in a relationship and resisting the 'Best Friend Romantic' position. Jimmy is alarmed at the prospect of becoming his partner's best friend and losing sexual intimacy. Jimmy repeats *you've got to have that bit of* . thereby reinforcing the sexual imperative that is encompassed within the 'Traditional Romantic' position. While Jimmy is constructing affection as sexual intimacy, his fellow focus group participants speaking from the 'Best Friend Romantic' position construct affection more broadly; referencing friendship as well as hand holding. The 'Best Friend Romantic' position is located in the 'intimacy' discourse, which sees emotional

closeness as the essence of a relationship, as voiced by Suhail *It's part of affection, isn't it? And a relationship.*

Extract 15

Jimmy: I think then you lose the affection don't you? If it becomes your best friend, you've got to have that bit of-, you got have an affection within a relationship, you've got to have that bit of-, I don't think I would like to become her best friend.

Marion: Mmm, but you might not say when you're in your 60s or 70s.

Jimmy: You know the way I look at it, the way I look at it even when I'm 60.

Marion: Best friends is affection isn't it, I think? Being best friends.

George: Holding hands as well.

Suhail: It's part of affection, isn't it? And a relationship.

Jimmy: I know, lets wait till I'm 70 and see what happens.

Notice also, how the 'life-stages' discourse, and being older, is used to legitimize the 'Best Friend Romantic' position in Extracts 15 and 16. Albeit we can see from George's hesitancy *You know, so you've got-, even my-, my age, you know*, that he is recognizing that people his age might be taking up the 'Best Friend Romantic' (George is 35 years old and the youngest member of the focus group). In Extract 16 we can see looks and the sense of being physically desired, which is indicative of the 'romantic love' discourses as being trumped by the 'intimacy' discourse and the idea of having a personality match that will facilitate long-term closeness.

Extract 16

George: It's more companionship as well, is it. You know, so you've got-, even my-, my age, you know, like, I speak to girls at work and that and they say, 'Oh, I want to find a boyfriend etc.' And, like, yes, as you get older, looks, etc. it doesn't come in to it as much, does it? It's more about the companionship and people's personality.

Marion: Yeah.

Sandra: Yeah.

George: It's nice growing-, growing old together.

Traditional Romantic vs. Strategic Romantic

At times it is a challenge for men to sustain the 'Traditional Romantic' position. At the start of Extract 17 we can see George occupying the 'Traditional Romantic' position and being thrown that his grand gesture, of a romantic dinner on the beach, failed in 'pleasing her'. As George recounts this story, it can be heard from the recordings that he is oscillating between the 'Traditional Romantic' and 'Strategic Romantic' position that is located in the 'economic' discourse, there is telling emphasis placed on the *cost me £100*. It could be that the 'Strategic Romantic' position shields men from emotional vulnerability and viewing the failed gesture as a transaction, is more comfortable than a failed expression of love. Indeed the moral commitment of the 'Strategic Romantic' is considerably different to that of the 'Traditional Romantic' (as shown in the tables).

Extract 17

George: Men are expected to be romantic, aren't they, more so than women? [...]

**So you think it's on the bloke, pressure?**

George: It is. I would say so, yes. It's like, we went to Mexico and I thought, 'Oh, we'll have a nice meal on the beach, and what not, cost me £100.' At the end of the night she turned around and said, 'You know, this was the ideal opportunity to propose to me,' and I thought you can't win, sort of. (Laughter)

Suhail: Maybe next time. (Talking over each other 24.16-24.21).

Jimmy: Maybe next year. (Laughter)

George: I don't know, you're just always expected to do more, sort of thing.

**Okay, so you feel pressure to be romantic?**

George: Yes, I would say so, yes, as a man.

**What do you think guys? Do you feel pressured to be romantic?**

Jimmy: I think you're right. It is my job, sort of thing, to-, with the holidays and bookings and things like that. It is, I think it is the man's job to be romantic. Sometimes we're not really good at it I don't think. There are sometimes you're trying to be and then you do the wrong thing.

Suhail: I think the longer you've been with somebody, it's looking for something-, new challenges to do as opposed to repetitive (talking over each other 25.09).

Jimmy: I think it's hard, it is hard. It's hard.

Suhail: 'Oh, you've done that again.'

Marion: You did that last year. (Laughter)

Men when located in the 'Strategic Romantic' position see romance as a job or a chore. In Extract 17, we can see Jimmy saying *it is my job, it is the man's job to be romantic*. Crawford (2004) writes that when men call romantic work – a job – 'grants his wife the status of a boss or supervisor, and implies that he is subject to legitimate performance standards' p. 75. This is visible when Jimmy references to doing the *wrong thing* and being *not really good at it*. George also references that women are the evaluator of romance with *you can't win* and *you're just always expected to do more*. Positioning the woman as the 'employer/boss' can then legitimize certain 'rebellious' practices such as 'skiving off' or even minor forms of cheating or other forms of 'protest'. Certainly viewing romance as a job, from the 'Strategic Romantic' position might stem the emotional vulnerability that may be experienced when judged as failing in the affairs of the heart.

Poor Me female vs. Strategic Romantic male

Below in Extract 18 we can see Sandra occupying the 'Poor Me' subject position and wishing for her husband to be romantic. The 'Poor Me' position is located in the 'romantic love' discourse; which prescribes women as desirous of romantic attention from their men. Unlike the 'Traditional Receivers', speakers from this position are mournful that they are not being romantically pleased by their partners. Sandra is even telling her husband '*Oh don't worry*', yet wants for him to surprise her with a gift. Note the male bafflement at this behaviour *why do they tell you that they don't?* Indeed, the men's use of *they* and *she*, are indicative of a 'gender differences' discourse. Arguably, the female tendency to say *don't worry* reflects subscription to femininity norms—and being nice.

Extract 18

Sandra: I think you wish your husband would do something [for Valentine's day], even though you're telling him not to do something, saying, 'Oh, don't worry.' Then when it comes you're thinking, 'God, he hasn't done anything.' (Laughter)

Jimmy: (Talking over each other 29.59) they tell you not to do anything, then you don't do anything. (Laughter).

George: I was told not to buy a Christmas present because we were saving for a house, so I didn't buy anything and she was like, 'Where's my present?' (Laughter)

**Yes. So you are disappointed when you don't get something for Valentine's Day?**

Sandra: Yes, I am. Even though I say it's a rip off and all that, and then you've got your friend ringing you up saying, 'Oh, I had this lovely bouquet of flowers. Did you get anything?' 'No' So yes, I think most people would like something.

Jimmy: Why do they tell you that they don't? (Talking over each other 30.37). (Laughter)

It can also be seen that George and Jimmy are taking up the option of not supplying a gift. In this way, they are occupying the 'Strategic Romantic' position and taking available economic shortcuts. Theoretically, a male situated in the 'Traditional Romantic' position would provide a romantic gesture even when a get out clause is offered; as for them it's an intrinsic practice of self. I am therefore left pondering if a male located in the 'Strategic Romantic' position somehow brokers a female's move from the 'Traditional Receiver' position to the 'Poor Me' position. Men are regularly shown as the central figure and that women carve out their destiny in relation to men (Whelehan, 2000, cited in Nicholls, 2009). With recall to the earlier all-female focus groups, the 'Poor Me' position seemed pivotal for female subsequent uptake of the 'Hero Assessor', 'Hard Realist' and 'Best Friend Romantic' positions.

### 3) Project of the Group

As can be seen in the discussion on the forces impacting marginal subject positions the project of the group was primarily to uphold hegemonic ideals. Another project of this focus group was to bond and have fun. In line the 'pleasing her' imperative of romance, the males in the focus group also had the project to glean ideas for romance (for example Extract 2), whether they be watching 50 Shades of Grey, renting a four-poster on the beach or going to the theatre. As will be shown next, all these projects are enmeshed and serve to sustain heteronormative order.

The concept of the heteronormative hierarchy, derived from the work of Cameron and Kulick (2003, cited in Coates, 2013), suggests that people aligning themselves with heterosexual norms – adopting traditional gender roles, prizing monogamy, and raising children, are privileged and enjoy a higher status than others. Coates (2013) demonstrates that within everyday conversations speakers use a considerable amount of discursive resources to position themselves in the heteronormative space and align themselves within dominant norms of femininity or masculinity. It was seen in Table 2 that the constructions of men and women in this group closely adhered to traditional gender norms. With the masculine norm,

akin to 'retributive man', is typically associated with heterosexuality, toughness, power and competitiveness (e.g. Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman, 2002). While the feminine norm reflects caring, being maternal, attention to appearance and being nice (Coates, 2004b).

During the focus group the conversation would at times fall into pockets of same-gender conversation<sup>30</sup>. When this happened the topics conformed to gender norms and likely reflected a group project to preserve heteronormative order. See Extract 19, whereby the all-male dialogue reflects a need for authority, being logical and the expectation among males to provide for a family. Contrast this with the latter part of the extract, the all-female talk, which reflects the woman being more home and child oriented and showing care through emotional concern.

#### Extract 19

Suhail: Maybe getting into a relationship whereby the kids are from a previous relationship, a partner has them.

#### **Managing that?**

Suhail: 'You can't tell me what to do, you're not my parent.'

Jimmy: Yeah sorry, I'm in a relationship and I've got two children and I don't want to, say if I was out of that relationship, I don't know if I'd go into another relationship with another woman that had children.

George: I think a lot of blokes are like that, and maybe some women, aren't they? They don't want to take on the responsibilities (talking over each other 08.55).

Jimmy: Yes, I don't think I would. (Inaudible 08.57) I don't know if I would.

Suhail: There are other circumstances that come into that, like additional expenses and that can be a burden and pressure as well. Providing.

...

Marion: Yes, if you've got no money and a lot of kids in the house and you haven't got a job and your partner hasn't got a job, then that's a very tense atmosphere I would imagine.

#### **So maybe the stress-,**

Sandra: Stress, yes.

Marion: Not being able to get out and do anything.

Lynn: Worrying about money brings you down, doesn't it?

Sandra: Yes.

Lynn: You feel unhappy.

#### Creating Solidarity

Coates (2004b) suggests that shared denigration of outsiders is a way of constructing solidarity in everyday talk. On two separate occasions the talk of the participants fell into a pattern of deriding vain 'new man'.

See how the women in Extract 20 are upholding 'retributive man': *men nowadays don't look like men; A man should be a man*. Unquestionably, selecting the subject of male presentation is guaranteed safe territory – as it was physically apparent in the focus group that the male

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<sup>30</sup> It should be noted that the participants were seated at the focus group table alternating in gender, to promote a mixed conversation.

attendees were relaxed about their grooming. The women are demonstrating their respect for heteronormative order —and male participants — with *I hate that* and *It's wrong*. Sandra we can see seeking consensus with her use of tag questions. In addition, the synchronized completion of her sentence *be groomed*, shows that an intimacy has been formed.

Extract 20

Sandra: Yes, I think the pressure is on men. I think nowadays a lot of men are pressurised to be a bit more feminine as well in their ways, kind of, in their appearance and all these products on and that. Whereas years ago, men would just have a quick wash and out the door type of thing, but now they're expected to-

Be groomed (x2).

Sandra: Yes, like metrosexual is it called?

**Yes.**

Sandra: (Inaudible 26.55). Supposed to be a bit more-, I think a lot of the men nowadays don't look like men, they look more like-

Lynn: Oh no, I hate that. A man should be a man. No spending loads of time in the bathroom, like we do. (Laughter)

Sandra: It's wrong, isn't it?

Lynn: Yes.

Some twenty-five minutes later George returns to this subject to build on the conversation. This time we see endorsement, from the men, of 'retributive man' *a bloke should be a bloke*. It's curious how George and Jimmy are choosing to reference a women's perspective to supplement their own: *she wouldn't like it either if I was like that; if I was a lady. I wouldn't like my husband...* I suppose that even to ponder grooming from a male perspective might come across as vain and therefore feminine. In Extract 21 even the choice of terms to demarcate a male and female: *bloke* and *lady*, reiterate hegemonic ideals. As a reminder, hegemonic masculinity rejects behaviours perceived as feminine and is largely reflective of a heterosexual, authoritative and macho man – as represented by the masculine ideal 'retributive man'.

The moral commitment to heteronormativity is evident with *that's not right; bloke should be a bloke; It's weird; it's a bit too vain and it looks odd, it looks so artificial*, and finally – *it almost looks feminine*.

Extract 21

George: (TC: 00:50:00) I think it goes back to what Sandra said, though, I think these days, you know, men are taking more of an effort though, aren't they? You know, especially, like, programmes, like, TOWIE and, like, like, blokes I know they have their eyebrows threaded, they have, um, err,

Lynn: You see, that's not right- (talking over each other)

George: -sunbeds and stuff like that. I think a bloke should be a bloke (Talking over each other 50.18).

Jimmy: Some people, on the sunbeds and they even have that fake tan, I just-, I've never really never been on a sunbed. I remember years ago, the wooden ones you used to have. And I'm

not doing that-, I'm not having that fake tan put on me. (Inaudible 50.37) and I don't think the men that do do that-, or, or-,

Suhail: I do that sometimes. [Suhail is British Asian] (Laughter 50.44-50.50).

Jimmy: I know men that do that, it's never, it's never appealed to me. Some reason, I don't know. Like, I know some lady, who dates-, older men. Well, she wouldn't, like it either if I was like that.

George: I just think (talking over each other 51.01-51.08).

**Yeah, George, you were saying?**

George: I wouldn't like, um, if I was a lady. I wouldn't like my husband or partner in the bathroom longer than me. I mean, you're walking down the street, you look in the mirror more than the woman does. You know. It's weird. It's a bit too vain, sort of, thing.

Lynn: I think it looks strange, as well, when men are too, like, primmed and pruned. It looks odd. With all those eyebrow waxing, and fake tan and the teeth whitening. And it looks so artificial. It's-, it almost looks feminine, it's-,

Typical of seeking unity, the text is peppered with discursive features that include overlapping speech, repetition or echoing of other's phrases and laughter (e.g. Coates, 2007). We can see George mirroring Lynn's expression in Extract 20 – a *man should be a man* with his *bloke should be a bloke*; and he references bathroom time as per Lynn and Sandra.

Throughout the transcript there are multiple cases where the participants overlap their speech and occasional occurrences of finishing each other's sentences (as in Extract 20). As for laughter, which according to Coates 'is a manifestation of intimacy, with the voice of the group taking precedence over the voice of the individual speaker' (2007, p.31), it can be seen that its presence is frequent, as documented in Extracts 20 and 21, as well as Extracts 3, 5, 6, 10, 12, 17 and 18.

Having a laugh – men allowed to be men

Humour is conceived generally as a mode of discourse and a strategy for social interaction (e.g. Crawford, 2003) and in Extract 21 we can see how humour served to provide light relief. There were also displays of laddish humour, which worked to bond the men in particular, as it invariably related to gender differences discourse – for example Extract 5 with Jimmy and George joking about buying a woman underwear. Extracts 22 and 23 below show further examples of male humour and how it manifests power. The funny lines speak to fantasizing about other women—and not one's partner. The men, in making these jokes, are recognizing the dominant 'romantic love' and 'intimacy' discourses that privilege monogamy and the couple dyad. These jokes could possibly have been experienced as offensive – as they sexualize women. Yet the power of the male joke-teller is fully realised when the entire group laughs.

Extract 22

Suhail: Usually they have me doing the carrying [shopping].

Jimmy: I don't mind going to the supermarket. But I'm not going shopping round the Bull Ring [shopping mall in Birmingham].

George: Is it the food shopping, it gets in the way, so.

Jimmy: No, I don't mind that, because I do the food shopping. But I'm not walking around-, err, clothes shops and things like that. Because you're there for hours and hours and then go back to the same thing at the end. Where they should have gone in the first place. But then, that's Birmingham.

George: Top Shop on Oxford Street, I would highly recommend that. I've never seen so many nice looking women in all my life. (Laughter)

**So maybe that's not particularly (talking over each other 01.08.04).**

Suhail: You'll be getting divorced soon. (Laughter) (Silence 01.08.09-01.08.12).

#### Extract 23

Sandra: You can pretend you've just met, you know. (Laughter)

Jimmy: I tried that it doesn't work very well (Laughter) It doesn't work (talking over each other 46.54-47.09).

Suhail: Plus I think of somebody else. (Laughter)

It should be noted that in Extract 22 Suhail's comment *You'll be getting divorced soon* serves to police George. Curiously, Extract 23 shows Suhail committing the same crime – privileging another women over his partner. In this way, the witty comments can be seen to have more to do with establishing dominance – they represent an interruption to the conversation and are a call for attention (as detailed next) – than reflecting a deeply held moral code.

#### Male Conversational dominance

In mixed-gender settings, it is generally found that men dominate the floor (e.g. Coates, 2004b). From a cursory look at the turn taking, it could be seen that the floor holding from the men and women was fairly even. Jimmy did take the most turns: 105, Marion 92, Suhail 85, Sandra, 84, George 82, Lynn 49; this amounts to males taking 54% of the turns. However, a closer look at the interaction shows that the men dominated the proceedings.

Powerful people use questions (Coates, 2004b); they require that the person being questioned serve them with an answer. The participants asked questions of each other, in the analysis it can be seen that the men asked 80% of these questions, of which 70% of them were directed towards female participants; Suhail was the most prolific in asking direct questions of fellow participants.

As touched upon earlier, wit was used in the focus group to interrupt the conversation and dominate the floor; such interruptions are usually found by men (Coates, 2004b). In this focus group, Suhail deployed wit 10 times, Jimmy 9, George 7, Sandra 4, Marion 3 times and Lynn only twice. Essentially males accounted for 75% of these interruptions in the focus group.

It should be noted that Suhail, made the most bids to exert dominance in the group. Interestingly, Suhail most frequently occupied the 'Best Friend Romantic' position (as seen in Extract 2); it is the 'Best Friend Romantic' and the 'Family Man' that are the least aligned to dominant norms of masculinity—as they reflect 'new man'. It is likely that Suhail was

dominating proceedings and proving his masculine muscle in a bid to ensure that he does not come across as 'feminine'. His credibility was as Edley and Wetherell (1997) found: 'dependent on some level of proximity to or correspondence with those of the macho men' pg. 211. Coates (2004a) says that men, 'normally choose to present themselves in alignment with the norms of hegemonic masculinity' pg. 200.

Allowing male dominance and/or masking male vulnerability?

The females showed deference to the men in this group; they were active in upholding heteronormative order and sustaining hegemonic gender ideals, as discussed earlier. The men were encouraged to perform 'retributive man'; if they made some romantic error that was reflective of 'retributive man', understanding was readily shown by the women. Whereas when women fell off the romantic wagon, and were unappreciative of their husband's gestures, the men chastised them—afterall, feminine norms require women to be nice. In Extract 24 George confesses to not wanting to be held when he's sleeping. Marion (and I) aid him in his admission. Notice how George expressing his authority with his partner by telling her 'No' – and in this way asserts his masculinity. Contrast this dialogue with Extracts 25 and 26 whereby the men are playfully reprimanding the women for not engaging with their husband's gestures or showing appreciation.

Extract 24

George: Yeah, yeah, but when I've-, when I'm sleeping I like to-, and I get hot, you know, if someone's cuddling me, I'm like, 'No.'

**Yeah, so it's not really romantic, it's just a bit-,**

Marion: Sweaty.

George: Yeah, yeah, sweaty so I just like to be left to-, you know, when I'm sleeping.

Extract 25

Sandra: [...] That was-, well, I think we ended up then in a pub, which I didn't want to go to the pub. I said, 'Let's not go to a pub,' because I don't drink (talking over each other 37.16).

Jimmy: Oh, you're not one of them (Laughter 37.16-37.26).

Extract 26

**And so did you find it romantic [husband's gesture] at the time?**

Marion: No, no. (Laughter)

George: Should have given her 4 cans of Stella (Laughter 01.24.33-01.24.39).

Marion: It's a nice a gesture, I wouldn't have said it was, you know. Romantic.

George: You're hard work you are! (Laughter 01.24.44-01.24.49).

Williams (2008) research with working class men found that humour was used to divert attention from vulnerability and reinforce their own heterosexuality. If we consider that the amusing yet reprimanding comments: *should have given her 4 cans of Stella; you're hard work*, are indicative of male occupation of the 'Strategic Romantic' position and that this position might serve to protect men from emotional vulnerability, then a reading might be considered: that this expression of power is a mask. Feminist Wendy Hollway argues (1983, pg. 5) that

male power can be ‘...a façade that is easily experienced as power by women because of their particular social roles and expectations that are projected on to them by men’. Hollway voices that making political the knowledge that men are vulnerable, gives us a new view of male behavior and their more important commitment. Returning to Extracts 25 and 26, the expressed disappointment by the men, can be seen as reflecting their moral commitment to ‘pleasing her’. Indeed the men showed keen interest in gathering romantic ideas from fellow participants (see Extracts 2 and 26). Furthermore, the men were eager to present themselves as romantic; Extracts 27 and 28 show the men boasting about their romantic prowess.

Extract 27

Sandra: I mean, I have mentioned about the ballet many times. I still haven't got there.

George: The theatre's good. I didn't think I'd like that but you know, but that's good.

Jimmy: I bought good tickets, as well for the theatre, Mama Mia, so that's one of the romantic things, really. I just realised that's a romantic thing.

Yeah x 2

Extract 28

Suhail: She would probably say something, like, you know, 'I wouldn't change him, ten out of ten.' (Laughter) 'Everything he's doing you know. I'm happy'. (Laughter)

**Reflections of a female researcher**

Is it arduous being a man? On the one hand, men are ‘getting away’ with making laddish jokes and dominating the floor. On the other hand, it could be argued that this behavior is demanded of them. Certainly showing feminine ‘new man’ behaviors will readily be frowned upon within this focus group—and found unattractive. Hollway (1983) writes ‘the perception of men as powerful is also promoted by women’s desire for ‘the other’ and subsequent misrepresentation of men as a result of their own vulnerabilities and also their assumptions about gender difference’ (p.126).

The rhetoric of romance can function to legitimise claims of ‘gender difference’ and sustain the heteronormative order. Unlike the all-female focus groups, in this mixed-gender group we saw less resistance to the ‘romantic love’ discourses. The analysis reveals women largely endorsing the balance of power in heterosexual relationships.

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**Appendix 30:**  
**Enlivening the FDA with the Insider Perspective**

## **Enlivening the FDA with the Insider Perspective**

### **Introduction**

The Foucauldian discourse analysis (FDA) of the focus groups can deduce, from within various subject positions, what can be felt, thought and experienced. However, as Willig (2013) cautions, the reality of what people actually feel, think or experience cannot be answered by this approach alone. Therefore, with reference to hermeneutic phenomenology I'm *enlivening*<sup>31</sup> my research by drawing on the IPA, of the in-depth interviews, to express the romantic experiential and emotional reality that is produced from location within these discourses.

This document works through the identified subject positions from the FDA and voices the associated experiential and emotional consequence of taking up these positions using findings from the in-depth interviews. Accordingly, the felt impact of location within the romantic discursive terrain can be read via the lenses of the three master experiential themes derived from the IPA: *Romance as the Sparkle in the Mundane*; *Striving to Protect the Self*; *Romance as a Relationship Building Transaction*<sup>32</sup>.

This Enlivening the FDA paper shows how these experiential themes, can play out in different ways depending on the subject positions, and their discursive location. For example small daily acts of thoughtfulness are experienced as *Romance as the Sparkle in the Mundane* by those who are located in the 'intimacy' discourse and occupy the 'Best Friend Romantic' position, while gifts, special occasions and grand chivalric gestures are felt as the *Romance as the Sparkle in the Mundane* to those located in the 'romantic love' discourse and occupy the 'Traditional Romantic', 'Traditional Receiver', 'Hero Assessor' or 'Poor Me' positions.

### Matching the Two Sets of Readings

In piecing the analyses together and matching the insider perspectives from the IPA to the subject positions, required that I cast a FDA eye over the IPA data. A full Foucauldian analysis was not conducted, as in the 'and/and' approach used by Colahan (2014). However, the participants shared constructions provided a link for matching the two sets of readings. In the FDA of the focus groups, for example, it was found that romance is constructed as 'pleasing her', 'thoughtfulness and relationship warmth' and 'grand gestures' and these interrelated constructions are mobilized differently depending on the subject position. Thus identifying the representation of these constructions from the participants' interviews made possible the synchronization of the separate IPA and FDA readings and enabled the *enlivening* process.

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<sup>31</sup> In comparison, Stephen Frosh refers to a *thickening* of discourses when he additionally employs psychoanalytic interpretative strategies (Willig, 2013).

<sup>32</sup> Sub themes that include *Savouring Grand Gestures*, *Romance as the Physical Sparkle* and *Watching the Romantic Equilibrium*, are also referenced in this document and can be identified by the use of italics.

### On the Margins of Romance

Not surprisingly, for the marginal positions there was less IPA material to draw on (there were twelve individuals who participated in sharing their romantic selves via empathetic in-depth interviews, whereas the subject positions were identified through a more critical process<sup>33</sup> involving thirty-three people). In the case, of 'Hard Realist', 'Hero Assessor' and 'Family Man' positions I have named the participant(s) whose lived romantic experiences guided my integration. There was no evidence of any interview participant being located in the 'Mothering Him' position, and this is likely due to the mother-son couple dyad being somewhat taboo in today's society, thus this position cannot be *enlivened*. It is however, mentioned in the final section called 'On the Edge of Romance', which highlights the experiential tensions created by saluting romance while rendering it irrelevant at the same time.

### Subject Positions *enlivened* with the Insider Perspective

1. Best Friend Romantic	Pg. 232
2. Traditional Receiver	Pg. 234
3. Traditional Romantic	Pg. 238
4. Strategic Romantic	Pg. 243
5. Poor Me	Pg. 246
6. Hero Assessor	Pg. 249
7. Hard Realist	Pg. 252
8. Family Man	Pg. 256
9. On the Edge of Romance	Pg. 258

Each subject position is introduced with a table that summarises the social practices they invoke/demand and implications for subjectivity, as identified from the FDA of the focus groups. The third column is the new *enlivened* addition, which details the insider perspective, the experiential and emotional romantic reality as relayed from the in-depth interviews; it separates out the IPA experiential master themes as lenses to this lived reality.

Following this *enlivened* table, there is a one or two-page description of what the romantic perspective looks and feels like for participants when occupying that subject position. To bring these descriptions to life, the voices of participants are expressed, with the use of quotes as extracted from the in-depth interviews. As mentioned earlier, it can be seen that all subject positions accommodate the same experiential themes but how they manifest depends on discursive location.

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<sup>33</sup> For the FDA, in order to identify the discursive resources and tease out those marginal subject positions, available to participants, as a facilitator I needed to question the 'taken for granted' constructions offered by the focus group participants and invite challenge.

### 1. Best Friend Romantic - *Enlivened* with the insider perspective

As a reminder, the ‘Best Friend Romantic’ is a gender-neutral position that can be occupied by both males and females, it is respectful of ‘new man’ masculine ideals and is located in the ‘intimacy’ discourse.

This table summarises the social practices and implications for subjectivity, when occupying the ‘Best Friend Romantic’ position, as identified from the FDA of the focus groups. The third column is the *enlivened* addition, which details the accordant romantic reality as relayed from the IPA of the individual interviews.

<b><i>Rights and Practice</i></b>	<b><i>Implications for Subjectivity</i></b>	<b><i>Experiential and Emotional Reality</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender neutral</li> <li>• Privileges the couple dyad</li> <li>• Taking a collaborative approach to romance</li> <li>• Pleasing both persons</li> <li>• Caring is valued</li> <li>• Share the same interests</li> <li>• Creating daily sparkle – small moments of happiness e.g. sending texts</li> <li>• Duty to show you’re being thoughtful</li> <li>• High focus on emotional intimacy, privileges feelings</li> <li>• Having a good chat together</li> <li>• May question traditional gestures like weddings and marriage</li> <li>• Can always talk problems through</li> <li>• Prefers spending time with partner vs. friends</li> <li>• Together time and companionship is valued</li> <li>• Use of the <i>we</i> pronoun</li> <li>• Both partners initiate romantic gestures</li> <li>• Personality match is valued</li> <li>• Romance does not always lead to sex</li> <li>• Views friendship as affection</li> <li>• Duty to be transparent</li> <li>• It is okay to cry</li> <li>• Focused on supporting each other develop their own potential</li> </ul> <p><i>Wrongs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To privilege looks and physical desire</li> <li>• To privilege grand gestures</li> <li>• To engage in gestures with selfish intent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feels strong connection and friendship with partner</li> <li>• Has a sense of the couple working as a team</li> <li>• Being sensitive to each other’s feelings</li> <li>• May have a limited life outside of the relationship</li> <li>• Could be particularly devastated if the relationship breaks down</li> <li>• Males may feel marginalized from traditional men</li> <li>• Males may need to prove masculinity in other ways</li> <li>• Feeling respected</li> <li>• Sense of gender equity in the relationship</li> </ul>	<p><i>Romance experienced as the sparkle in the mundane</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small gestures brighten their everyday lives</li> <li>• Caring gestures are experienced as a lift – they provide sparkle to the day</li> <li>• Feel tenderness as they buoy each other up with their thoughtfulness</li> <li>• Loving text messages or conversations are experienced as daily highlights</li> <li>• Daily thoughtful acts make them feel significant and appreciated</li> <li>• Having fun together makes the mundane feel worthwhile</li> <li>• Caring gestures reinforce a valued sense of connection and intimacy</li> </ul> <p><i>Striving to protect the self</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unrelenting commitment to a personal code of spending couple time together</li> <li>• Take pride in emotional closeness/intimacy</li> <li>• Experience a sense of peace that they are not reliant on grand gestures</li> <li>• Engage in downward social comparison re: quality of friendship</li> <li>• Comforted by readily available, daily evidence of romance (thoughtful acts)</li> </ul> <p><i>Romance as a relationship building transaction</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring partner’s body language for clues as to their affective state</li> </ul>

<i>Rights and Practice</i>	<i>Implications for Subjectivity</i>	<i>Experiential and Emotional Reality</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speaking negatively about your partner</li> <li>• Males being one of the lads</li> <li>• Being embarrassed to disclose feelings or vulnerability e.g. crying</li> <li>• To not communicate/discuss</li> <li>• To privilege social media over your partner</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alert to changes in daily rituals – partner forgot to text</li> <li>• Compelled to ‘talk through’ romantic discontentment</li> <li>• Anticipating caring gestures to be reciprocated/mirrored</li> <li>• Heartened by displays of matched thoughtfulness</li> <li>• Disgruntled and saddened if no longer prioritized— arrival of children; or work takes over.</li> </ul>

Next is a description of what the romantic perspective looks and feels like for participants when occupying the ‘Best Friend Romantic’ position. It voices the felt impact of location within the romantic discursive terrain via the lenses of the three master experiential themes derived from the IPA:

**Romance as a Sparkle in the Mundane**

People who occupy the ‘Best Friend Romantic’ position readily experience *Romance as a Sparkle in the Mundane*; their daily lives are brightened with small thoughtful acts and time for togetherness. Sending loving text messages, having good conversations, or being playful together are some of the activities described by the participants as romantic. These gestures provide a welcome lift out of the daily toil and serve to make them feel significant and appreciated, while also reinforcing a valued sense of connection and intimacy:

*I, like, sent him a text message a couple of weeks ago and just said, umm, ‘I love you. Missing you,’ and his reply was, umm, ‘You must sense that I’m not having a good day.’* Hilary, pg.15

Booking a holiday or going out for a nice meal are also considered romantic. Such occasions offer treasured time together and are a sought after escape from the bleak reality of the daily grind. Importantly, it gives them dedicated couple time to look forward to.

**Striving to Protect the Self**

For those in the ‘Best Friend Romantic’ position having romance in their relationship is seen as a sign of success—a badge of honour. All the participants were highly protective of themselves as they spoke about the romance in their relationships. Those who occupied the ‘Best Friend Romantic’ position showed unswerving commitment to a *Personal Romantic Code* that privileged their special friendship:

*[...] my mates say to me, ‘Come out, come out,’ and I turn them down. She goes, ‘Why are you turning them down for?’ I says, ‘Cause I wanna spend the time with you’* Don, pg.18

Those in the ‘Best Friend Romantic’ positions engaged in social comparison and were ready to slate those expecting traditional romance and grand gestures:

[...] she expects to be wined and dined [...] I think she just expects it 24/7, then she gets really upset all the time... Kelly, pg.15

[...] when you go to people's houses and get all the- (wedding photos) [...] you've got all the standard married vibes, and, you know, 'Look how happy we are,' and, and whatever. But that's standard, do you know what I mean? What else have you got in common? What else do you do together? Will, pg.15

Participants who occupied the 'Best Friend Romantic' position were quick to frame thoughtful relationship gestures as romantic. Whether that be doing the washing up, buying a crème egg or changing the window wipers. In this way, they have frequent and plentiful evidence of romance, which serves to *Protect the Romantic Self*.

### **Romance as a Relationship Building Transaction**

Participants speak candidly yet tenderly about their relationship's unique and successful style of romance—that romantic repertoire that brings sparkle to their lives. For those in 'Best Friend Romantic' positions the range and blend of activities that bring sparkle is focused on emotional intimacy, thoughtfulness and pleasurable together time. The latter being mutually enjoyable experiences that can range from getting drunk together or going to the garden centre to watching a box set. Underpinning this repertoire is a *Relationship Building Transaction*, which succeeds when both parties play their part and serves to build warmth and foster relationship strength.

Accordingly, participants *Watching the Romantic Equilibrium* are heartened by displays of matching effort and disgruntled by imbalance or transaction misdemeanors. *When the Transaction Breaks Down* participants can feel sad, rejected and experience loss of self-esteem. This can follow times when one or both parties do not fulfill their romantic roles and could be due to illness and depression, or consuming work patterns. Most commonly, it is the arrival of children that will derail the couple's romantic repertoire and bond. Participants express sadness and talk about this bleakness as: 'going through the motions'.

## **2. Traditional Receiver - *Enlivened with the insider perspective***

As a reminder, the 'Traditional Receiver' is a female occupied position that is located in the dominant 'romantic love' discourse and is respectful of 'retributive man' masculine ideals.

This table summarises the social practices and implications for subjectivity, when occupying the 'Traditional Receiver' position, as identified from the FDA of the focus groups. The third column is the *enlivened* addition, which details the accordant romantic reality as relayed from the IPA of the in-depth interviews.

<b><i>Rights and Practice</i></b>	<b><i>Implications for Subjectivity</i></b>	<b><i>Experiential and Emotional Reality</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Man is focused on pleasing her</li> <li>• To be treated like a lady</li> <li>• Gestures are expressions of ideals and traditions: flowers, holidays, special occasions</li> <li>• Men take the initiative to be romantic</li> <li>• Privileges the couple dyad</li> <li>• It's good practice to not question the motivation</li> <li>• Recognises Valentine's day</li> <li>• It's good practice to show appreciation 'say thanks' for the gesture</li> <li>• It can be practice to have sex after being taken out</li> <li>• Male way of showing appreciation of you in the relationship</li> <li>• Good to be desired/ and confirmed as attractive</li> <li>• Unprompted gestures preferred</li> <li>• Privileges the couple dyad: does not include children</li> <li>• Represents a welcomed departure from daily life: gestures do not happen every day.</li> </ul> <p>Wrongs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yearning for solitary television viewing over together time</li> <li>• Not to show appreciation</li> <li>• Romantic apathy</li> <li>• To expect sex without romance</li> <li>• Staying home isn't romantic</li> <li>• To give household items as gifts</li> <li>• To assume doing housework is romantic</li> <li>• To live like a brother and sister, no sex</li> <li>• Tick box exercise gestures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May feel frustrated or disappointed if resources or opportunities are not available e.g. lack of money, energy or time</li> <li>• Men are in control</li> <li>• Source of value in the relationship. If a women isn't complimented – or provided with flowers - they could feel under appreciated.</li> <li>• May feel jealous</li> </ul>	<p><i>Romance experienced as the sparkle in the mundane</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Looks to male partner to provide the sparkle</li> <li>• Anticipating a special occasion – a meal out or going to the theatre - provides a welcome lift from the daily toil</li> <li>• The private pleasure of sexual intimacy provides a sparkle to the day</li> <li>• Receiving a gift is a memorable highlight</li> <li>• A spa day or a weekend away are romantic occasions that offer escape from the daily grind</li> <li>• Faithfully attends to the out-of-the-ordinary detail of a gesture that makes an occasion even more romantic e.g. petals on the bed</li> <li>• Rare lavish gestures are cherished and provide joy</li> <li>• Past grand gestures are recalled for everyday sparkle</li> <li>• Excited to have an occasion to get dressed up</li> <li>• Physical intimacy reinforces a valued sense of connection</li> <li>• Attends to and compliment appearances</li> <li>• Get a 'kick out' of being seen as attractive</li> </ul> <p><i>Striving to protect the self</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Animatedly recall grand gestures as evidence of romance</li> <li>• Unrelenting commitment to personal code of looking attractive</li> <li>• Take pride in physical connection</li> <li>• Engage in downward social comparison re: being more active in the bedroom.</li> <li>• Takes delight in being treated like a princess – self esteem boosting</li> <li>• Being the recipient of gifts and the occasional lavish gesture offers</li> </ul>

<b><i>Rights and Practice</i></b>	<b><i>Implications for Subjectivity</i></b>	<b><i>Experiential and Emotional Reality</i></b>
		<p>proof that they are a 'good wife'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joyfully broadcasts, to family and friends, grand gestures or surprises – somewhat like winning a prize</li> <li>• Physical intimacy and desire testifies that they have a successful relationship</li> </ul> <p><i>Romance as a relationship building transaction</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledges requirement to compliment him and 'build him up'</li> <li>• Attentive to body language and eye contact for assurance</li> <li>• Heartened by displays of matched effort for special occasions</li> <li>• Disgruntled when partner doesn't reciprocate efforts – e.g. to look nice</li> <li>• Disheartened and cross when the male partner ceases to be the hero on special nights e.g. gets too drunk</li> <li>• Sensitive to male partner's grumpiness or bad mood –as a need for more physical attention/affection</li> <li>• Monitors patterns of expressions of romance as a sign of relationship well-being</li> <li>• Feel down and confused when gestures stop or slow down.</li> </ul>

Next is a description of what the romantic perspective looks and feels like for participants when occupying the 'Traditional Receiver' position. It voices the felt impact of this location within the romantic discursive terrain via the lenses of the three master experiential themes derived from the IPA:

**Romance as a Sparkle in the Mundane**

Women who occupy the 'Traditional Receiver' position experience *Romance as a Sparkle in the Mundane*; their daily lives are brightened with physical affection and chivalric acts: gifts and special occasions. The provision of a theatre trip, spa day or dinner out—by their man—is

considered romantic. Such events are seen as treats and indulgences that offer sought after escape from the bleak reality of the daily grind.

The sparkle that dazzles is the grand gesture, whether that be extravagant purchases of flowers, staying somewhere wildly romantic or a sentimental proposal. While lavish chivalric gestures might be rare, the women occupying the ‘Traditional Receiver’ position animatedly recalled the details, speaking enthusiastically with awe and joy.

*And it ended up being really super special, because when we got to the room there was, like, umm, petals on the bed and there was towels made out in, like, heart shapes.* Hilary, pg.2

Meanwhile, a consistent and frequent highlight is provided by *Romance as the Physical Sparkle*; sexual intimacy and feeling attractive. Sex is cherished by women who occupy in the ‘Traditional Receiver’ position, it’s seen as a private pleasure and offers valued intimacy. Accordingly, being desired and seen as attractive, are sought after by the those who frequent this subject position and they seem to get ‘a kick out’ of their own and partner’s looks. Correspondingly, the women occupying the ‘Traditional Receiver’ position faithfully attend to, and compliment, appearances.

*He trains ever such a lot so he’s got a great physique on him so I’ll often say to him how nice he looks, yeah.* Lily, pg.14

### **Striving to Protect the Self**

Like most positions in this discursive terrain, those who take up the ‘Traditional Receiver’ position view having romance in their relationship is seen as a sign of success—a badge of honour. For the women who occupy the ‘Traditional Receiver’ position, it is testament to being a ‘good wife’ and having a successful relationship. They appeared to be comforted to have *Romantic Evidence at the Ready* in the form of savoured chivalric gestures. These women also showed unswerving commitment to a *Personal Romantic Code* of keeping attractive and being proactive in the bedroom; and deployed *Social Comparison* to reiterate their prowess.

*I might not necessarily cook because I’m not the best cook anyway but I’ll probably make the effort in the bedroom department I suppose. I think so (spoken assertively).* Lily, pg.9

Participants’ expressions could be described as insistent, proud and occasionally smug:

*I’m doing it not just for him, but for myself as well, you know. I’m still taking pride in my appearance, you know.* Hilary, pg.10

Other women speaking from within the ‘Traditional Receiver’ position amplify the feel good factor—the self-esteem enhancement—of acting on these codes.

*[...] dress up for him, and make gestures to him, and so forth, so it was all good [...] I felt good. I felt good, you know. It gives you a bit of, as you say, confidence boost, you know, your self-esteem...* Hannah, pg.14

### **Romance as a Relationship Building Transaction**

For women in the ‘Traditional Receiver’ position the activities that bring sparkle are chivalric gestures and physical affection. This romantic repertoire serves to build warmth and foster relationship strength. Underpinning the repertoire is a *Relationship Building Transaction*: the ‘Traditional Receiver’ relies on her romantic partner occupying the reciprocal subject position—the ‘Traditional Romantic’—in order for this *Relationship Building Transaction* to be fulfilled. Accordingly, participants *Watching the Romantic Equilibrium* are heartened by displays of ‘Traditional Romantic’ behaviours and disgruntled by imbalance or transaction misdemeanors. For example, Hannah is fatigued and sorry for herself about doing all the giving (see also ‘Poor Me’), whilst Kelly is cross with her husband for failing the chivalric code by getting drunk and failing to match her efforts.

*[...] there's been a lot of time where it's me doing the giving, you know, he's been the recipient, but, not getting it back in vice versa.* Hannah, pg.3

*[...] we were meant to have a nice night out but he'd been to the football beforehand and he'd got too drunk. So it wasn't what it was meant to be. So I was really annoyed then. 'Cause I'd made the effort and he hadn't.* Kelly, pg.11

*Watching the Romantic Equilibrium* has a highly affective component that incorporates the embodied. Participants show sensitivity to partner’s moods in respect to their romantic action (or lack of): bad moods and grumpiness may require that they need to take remedial action.

*If I go all night without giving him a kiss or a cuddle he'd be like, 'Oh you haven't really bothered with me tonight,' that kind of mentality, you know?* Lily, pg.10.

As is the case for these relational subject positions, which rely on a couple dyad, *When the Transaction Breaks Down* participants can feel sad, rejected and experience loss of self-esteem (see also the *enlivened* accounts of the ‘Best Friend Romantic’, ‘Traditional Romantic’ and ‘Poor Me’.) For a ‘Traditional Receiver’ who is with a ‘Traditional Romantic’, *these* are times when one or both parties do not fulfill their romantic roles and could be due to illness and depression, consuming work patterns or the arrival of children. Alternatively, it could be that the ‘Traditional Receiver’s’ partner occupies a less sympathetic subject position; the ‘Strategic Romantic’ or ‘Family Man’ for example. The perspective of a broken transaction experienced from within the ‘Traditional Receiver’ position can mobilize their subsequent occupation of the ‘Poor Me’ subject position.

### **3. Traditional Romantic - *Enlivened* with the insider perspective**

As a reminder, the ‘Traditional Romantic’ is a male occupied position that is located in the dominant ‘romantic love’ discourse and is respectful of ‘retributive man’ masculine ideals.

This table summarises the social practices and implications for subjectivity, when occupying the ‘Traditional Romantic’ position, as identified from the FDA of the focus groups. The third

column is the *enlivened* addition, which details the accordant romantic reality as relayed from the IPA of the in-depth interviews.

<b><i>Rights and Practice</i></b>	<b><i>Implications for Subjectivity</i></b>	<b><i>Experiential and Emotional Reality</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pleasing her, and in so pleasing himself</li> <li>• To be a gentleman, and treat her like a lady</li> <li>• To take romance seriously and think through gestures</li> <li>• A way of being, an intrinsic practice of self. Lacks the temporal element found in 'Strategic Romantic'</li> <li>• Takes the initiative to be romantic</li> <li>• To provide hero moments e.g. whisk her off her feet</li> <li>• Duty to keep the peace</li> <li>• Being aware of her feelings</li> <li>• Need to be emotionally contained</li> <li>• Gestures are expressions of ideals and traditions: theatre and flowers.</li> <li>• Privilege the couple dyad</li> <li>• High focus on getting the gesture right</li> <li>• Wants to make her feel wanted and desired</li> <li>• Privileges sex</li> </ul> <p><i>Wrongs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To think of another woman</li> <li>• To lose focus on the relationship</li> <li>• To forget important dates</li> <li>• To collect brownie points</li> <li>• To say things that might upset her</li> <li>• To give a token gesture</li> <li>• To do housework as a romantic gesture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vulnerable to partner feedback as can be highly invested in the gestures</li> <li>• Can feel hurt if gift not fully embraced</li> <li>• May feel inadequate, frustrated or anxious if resources or opportunities are not available e.g. lack of money, energy or time</li> <li>• Can feel unloved, or underappreciated if gestures are token</li> <li>• Can feel jealous</li> <li>• May at times feel like a servant</li> </ul>	<p><i>Romance experienced as the sparkle in the mundane</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gets a lift from the joy he is able to provide by giving a gift or organizing something special</li> <li>• The private pleasure of sexual intimacy and feeling desired provides a sparkle to the day</li> <li>• Feels significant when he soothes his wife e.g. stroking her hair or running her a bath</li> <li>• Organising and anticipating a special occasion – a meal out or theatre trip – provides a welcome lift from the daily toil</li> <li>• Excited to have an occasion to get dressed up</li> <li>• A spa day or a weekend away are romantic occasions that offer escape from daily grind</li> <li>• Past grand gestures are recalled for everyday sparkle</li> <li>• Excited to plan, and save for, his next grand gesture</li> <li>• Experiences a high in pulling off a surprise or grand gesture</li> <li>• Feels like a king to spend money on her or themselves and experience some luxury</li> <li>• Physical intimacy reinforces a valued sense of connection</li> <li>• Attend to and faithfully compliment appearances</li> <li>• Gets a 'kick' out of their partner's attractiveness</li> </ul> <p><i>Striving to protect the self</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unrelenting commitment to being a gentleman and treating a woman like a lady</li> <li>• Takes pride in being able to make her dreams come true</li> </ul>

<b><i>Rights and Practice</i></b>	<b><i>Implications for Subjectivity</i></b>	<b><i>Experiential and Emotional Reality</i></b>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Animatedly recalls grand gestures as evidence of romance</li> <li>• Relays her embodied reaction - surprise and pleasure or public broadcast - as proof of his successful undertaking</li> <li>• Reiterates the challenges in pulling off a grand gesture to amplify his achievement</li> <li>• Devoted to personal code of looking 'his best'</li> <li>• Takes pride in physical connection</li> <li>• Engages in downward social comparison re: being more chivalric</li> <li>• Being the giver of gifts and the occasional lavish gesture offers proof that he is a 'good provider'</li> <li>• Physical intimacy and desire testifies that they have a successful relationship</li> </ul> <p><i>Romance as a relationship building transaction</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alert to being the sole focus of partner's affection</li> <li>• Attentive to body language and eye contact for assurance that their gesture provides pleasure</li> <li>• Feel jealous or hurt if not the main focus of partner's attention</li> <li>• Heartened by displays of matched effort for special occasions</li> <li>• Disgruntled when partner doesn't reciprocate efforts – e.g. to look nice</li> <li>• Disheartened when gifts aren't received enthusiastically</li> <li>• Sensitive to partner's grumpiness or bad mood –as a need for more physical attention/affection</li> <li>• Monitors responsiveness to expressions of romance as a sign of relationship well-being</li> </ul>

<i>Rights and Practice</i>	<i>Implications for Subjectivity</i>	<i>Experiential and Emotional Reality</i>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feels down and confused when physical affection reduces or stops.</li> </ul>

Next is a description of what the romantic perspective looks and feels like for participants when occupying the ‘Traditional Romantic’ position. It voices the felt impact of this location within the romantic discursive terrain via the lenses of the three master experiential themes derived from the IPA. As the reciprocal subject position to the female occupied ‘Traditional Receiver’ position, there can be found many parallels in how these experiential themes play out:

### **Romance as a Sparkle in the Mundane**

Men who occupy the ‘Traditional Romantic’ position experience *Romance as a Sparkle in the Mundane*; their daily lives are brightened with physical affection and pleasing her with chivalric acts: gifts and special occasions. The provision of a theatre trip, spa day or weekend away—for her benefit—is considered romantic. Such events are seen as treats and indulgences that offer sought after escape from the bleak reality of the daily grind.

*[...] and it's like five kids and it's raining, [laughs] house is a mess, [...] but then the excitement is first thing I'll say to her if she says, like, it's a tough-, you know, a bad day and it's been a tough day, it's like that, 'It's our weekend this week.' It creates a lot-, it creates a lot of a buzz and enjoyment. Peter, pg.42*

The sparkle that dazzles is the grand gesture, whether that be extravagant purchases of flowers, staying somewhere wildly romantic or a sentimental proposal. While lavish chivalric gestures might be rare, the men occupying the ‘Traditional Romantic’ position animatedly recall the details, speaking enthusiastically with awe and joy.

*We stopped in a suite, and it was just-, if you describe it, what it was like, it was lovely. It was romantic. We had dinner in a library served by waiters in, umm, penguin suits and everything, and it, it was-, how would you describe that day? That, that day was amazing. Went to the spa followed by dinner. And lovely suite, so-, and do you know what I mean? Kenny, pg.6*

Men who occupy the ‘Traditional Romantic’ position take enormous pride in making her dreams come true: like flying her over the grand canyon or buying her dream car. These men are highly invested in these gestures and can spend months, even years, planning and saving for them. They speak about orchestrating these events as if they are on some Special Forces undercover assignment, they express: excitement, fear, bravery and vigilance. They also reveal a great sense of achievement.

*I went out and bought her the platinum ring that she always wanted, and hid it in my case, which is dangerous, because you're probably not supposed to do that. Hid it in my case, umm, and was waiting for the special night. Peter, pg.18*

Meanwhile, a more consistent and frequent highlight is provided by *Romance as the Physical Sparkle*; the private bliss of sexual intimacy and feeling attractive. Sex is cherished by men who occupy in the 'Traditional Romantic' position, it's seen as a deserved pleasure and offers valued intimacy. Accordingly these men faithfully attend to, and compliment, appearances. Furthermore, dressing up for a special night out is regularly referenced by men who frequent the 'Traditional Romantic' position. It's a chance to make the best of themselves and discard their everyday attire. Participants share excitement and anticipation, along with evident pride in each other.

*[...] when she comes down in, in her-, in her nice clothes and nice dress, and she comes down or whatever, and you're thinking, 'That effort there is for me'. 'That's for me,' and it's like she-, well, she might feel the same. I come down, get your best suit on, do whatever you-, everything's polished, you're gleaming, and they're thinking, 'Yes.'* Kenny, pg.16

### **Striving to Protect the Self**

For men who occupy the 'Traditional Romantic' position having romance in their relationship is seen as a sign of success—an endorsement of their masculinity and relationship. They appeared to be comforted to have *Romantic Evidence at the Ready* in the form of savoured chivalric gestures—and were demonstrative in relaying her enchanted or delighted reaction.

*[...] went round to her mum and dad's and showed it off (his gift of her dream car). And, you know, that was a nice-, I'm sure she'll never forget it to be honest. Umm, so yeah, I think it's fairly romantic.* John, pg.9

These men showed unswerving commitment to a *Personal Romantic Code* of being a gentleman; and deployed *Social Comparison* to claim the moral high ground and reiterate their chivalric superiority:

*[...] her proposal was, 'Er,' her ex-husband. 'Er, yeah, just get married. Let's just get married then,' or something stupid...* Peter, pg.18

### **Romance as a Relationship Building Transaction**

From within the 'Traditional Romantic' position the activities that bring Sparkle are physical attention and pleasing her with traditional gestures. This repertoire serves to build warmth and foster relationship strength. Underpinning the repertoire is a *Relationship Building Transaction*: the 'Traditional Romantic' relies on his romantic partner occupying the reciprocal subject position—the 'Traditional Receiver'—in order for this *Relationship Building Transaction* to be fulfilled. Accordingly, participants *Watching the Romantic Equilibrium* are heartened by displays of 'Traditional Receiver' behaviours and disgruntled by imbalance or transaction misdemeanors.

*But I don't-, I'm not expecting anything back, but you [pause] you-, I suppose in a way you are, but you're not.* Don, pg.5

*Watching the Romantic Equilibrium* has a highly affective component that incorporates the embodied. Those who occupy the 'Traditional Receiver' position show sensitivity to partner's moods and body language in respect to their romantic action:

[...] feel the connection from your partner. That everything's right, eye contact, umm [pause] and just how they look, how they got at ease. Peter, pg.25

Participants described distressing periods when the *Relationship Building Transaction* broke down. This could be due to illness and depression, or consuming work patterns. For the male occupying the 'Traditional Romantic' position these are times when he or his partner do not fulfill their romantic roles. Commonly, it was the arrival of children that derailed the *Relationship Building Transaction*.

When *Romance as a Relationship Building Transaction* fails then the participants lose the *Sparkle in the Mundane*—and are left with the mundane. Furthermore, without romance they are less able to *Protect the Romantic Self* and likely lose confidence and self-esteem. Life can feel grim and bleak. Participants express sadness and talk about this bleakness as: 'going through the motions', 'just plodding through', 'wasted years', 'blown apart' and 'end of the fairy tale'.

The broken transaction experienced from within the 'Traditional Romantic' position can mobilize the men's subsequent occupation of the 'Strategic Romantic', 'Best Friend Romantic' or 'Family Man' subject position.

#### 4. Strategic Romantic - *Enlivened* with the insider perspective

As a reminder, the 'Strategic Romantic' is a male occupied position that is located in the 'economic' discourse and is respectful of 'retributive man' masculine ideals.

This table summarises the social practices and implications for subjectivity, when occupying the 'Strategic Romantic' position, as identified from the FDA of the focus groups. The third column is the *enlivened* addition, which details the accordant romantic reality as relayed from the IPA of the in-depth interviews.

Rights and Practice	Implications for Subjectivity	Experiential and Emotional Reality
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pleasing her for an easy life</li> <li>• Keen sense of the transaction: conscious of costs and reality</li> <li>• Being one of the lads</li> <li>• Earning brownie points</li> <li>• A means to an end, has a temporal element</li> <li>• The form of the gesture is open to negotiation</li> <li>• Takes shortcuts when they're available</li> <li>• Acknowledging Valentine's, and other official occasions, as quick wins</li> <li>• Keep out of the 'doghouse' by doing enough</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Romantic gestures can feel like a job/chore</li> <li>• Less invested in their gestures, so more resilient to rejection or dismissal</li> <li>• Sensitive to personal expense/ personal sacrifices</li> <li>• Less likely to be jealous</li> <li>• Can experience romance as hard work</li> <li>• Tends to be defensive, and feel the need to justify the lack of a proper gesture: as 'she's happy anyway'</li> <li>• Can wrestle with what is enough e.g. asking for a list vs. giving her money</li> </ul>	<p><i>Romance experienced as the sparkle in the mundane</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Romance can be experienced as a bit of chore, rather than a sparkle</li> <li>• Everyday sparkle may be experienced elsewhere e.g. with the lads at the pub</li> <li>• Relies on wife to prompt him that he needs to be romantic</li> <li>• Happy to provide treats which they both enjoy and offer a win-</li> </ul>

Rights and Practice	Implications for Subjectivity	Experiential and Emotional Reality
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take the blame if you get it wrong</li> <li>• Engages in laddish humour</li> </ul> <p><i>Wrongs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forgetting Valentine's or other easy romantic transactions</li> <li>• Wasting money</li> <li>• Being too sentimental</li> </ul>		<p>win e.g. sharing a bag of crisps</p> <p><i>Striving to protect the self</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage in downward social comparison re: having an easier life/ relationship length</li> <li>• Frames general relationship behaviours as romantic</li> <li>• Take pride in being prudent</li> <li>• Committed to personal code of doing what is necessary to keep out of trouble</li> <li>• Feels accomplished that he has time for himself</li> </ul> <p><i>Romance as a relationship building transaction</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Romantic gestures are deployed to get out of, or keep out of, trouble</li> <li>• Waits for wife to voice displeasure – e.g. that they haven't been out in a while</li> <li>• Disgruntled when partner becomes demanding of his time</li> <li>• Assumes that his romantic efforts must be enough because she's still with him.</li> </ul>

Next is a description of what the romantic perspective looks and feels like for participants when occupying the 'Strategic Romantic' position. It voices the felt impact of this location within the romantic discursive terrain via the lenses of the three master experiential themes derived from the IPA:

### Romance as a Sparkle in the Mundane

Men who occupy the 'Strategic Romantic' position do not always experience *Romance as a Sparkle in the Mundane*. The provision of a dinner out, spa day or weekend away—for her benefit—is considered romantic but they keenly feel the personal sacrifice:

*And, you know, buying flowers and taking her out for meals, you know, every week, you know, it's quite expensive, isn't it?* John, pg.5

*[...] we'll go out for a meal, umm, go to the cinema, and as much as it, sort of, can be, not a pain, but, you know, finding babysitters and things like that* Martyn, pg.5

They can almost begrudge having to be romantic:

*[...] she doesn't have to flipping pay for it* John, pg.10

Men who occupy the 'Strategic Romantic' position might invest in the occasional grand gesture as a form of relationship insurance or as a way of getting out of trouble. If they manage to pull-off something memorable then they might be excused from having to do romance for a while. Key to banking the brownie points is getting it right (and thereby not wasting the time, money and energy spent) which can cause a degree of consternation:

*Only putting pressure on myself, I'm not, not pressured from-, by anyone else, but, it is, like, a big thing though. 'Cause you can-, and you don't want to blow it, do you?* Will, pg.18

When the risk of getting it wrong is too high, men in the 'Strategic Romantic' position will consider it a waste of their personal time and divest themselves of the responsibility:

*Jane wants an eternity ring. I know there is no point in me going out to pick her an eternity ring, I'd be wasting, wasting my-, I'd say wasting my time. Jane would need to be there.* Martyn, pg.16

### **Striving to Protect the Self**

Like other male subject positions in the romantic discursive terrain, those who occupy the 'Strategic Romantic' position see romance in their relationship as a sign of success. For these 'retributive men' it is experienced as an endorsement of their relationship and masculinity. They appeared to be relieved to have *Romantic Evidence at the Ready* in the form of traditional gestures—and also keenly framed general relationship behaviours as romantic.

These men when occupying the 'Strategic Romantic' position did not demonstrate a *Personal Romantic Code*, other than just doing enough to stay out of trouble and have an easy life. Yet, they vociferously deployed *Social Comparison* to reiterate their practical wisdom and personal freedoms:

*(speaking about a friend) you're going to get into trouble if you forget your wife on Valentine's day, and I can't-, honestly can't imagine how on earth [pause] anybody can forget, I don't know. Don't know.* Martyn, pg. 8

*If he (friend) comes out with me for beer, she'll (friend's wife) be like, 'Well, what time are you going to be back?' And this that and the other and-, Yeah. Think she demands romance a bit more.* John, pg.15

Notably, they were highly defensive about their lack of traditional romantic action:

*I think a romantic thing is-, I don't know, decorating the front bedroom, or doing the garden, but Linda is like, 'Cooking the dinner, buying me chocolates, wine,' so because I'm that way like, she'll go, 'You never do nothing.' I go, 'Well, I do. Who do you think has just done the garden?' Don, pg.2*

### **Romance as a Relationship Building Transaction**

It is only when these men find themselves in trouble with their wife or partner, that romance is deployed as a *Relationship Building Transaction*:

*Perhaps if I was in trouble [...] If I've done something wrong.* Will, pg.2

Generally, from within the ‘Strategic Romantic’ position, providing a basic level of romance is seen as a relationship necessity; it’s less of a *Relationship Building Transaction*, and more of a relationship maintenance activity. Rather than invest too much time proactively *Watching the Romantic Equilibrium* they tend to be reactive and rely on being prompted by their partner for when romance is needed.

*I just need a gentle reminder every now and then, shall we say.* Will, pg.9

In respect to a choice not to deliver romance when requested, the ‘Strategic Romantic’ will then find themselves *Watching the Romantic Equilibrium* and being alert to their partner’s moods and body language. Those in the ‘Strategic Romantic’ position understand that by not providing the necessitated romance can result in them getting into a difficult situation:

*[...] if I don't want to watch a (romantic) film, I would say, and it's a bit of a risk. It's a-, you know, she doesn't really get moody, but-, You know, if she showed signs of getting moody, then I'd probably change my decision* John, pg.5

The fact that they are still in relationships, makes the men who occupy this position feel validated that they are doing enough romance:

*I just don't think five years down the line.. Er, it matters that much. Because you're with-, you know, if Lisa didn't want to be with me. She would have got rid of me a long time ago.* John, pg.11

*I guess I must be doing alright, otherwise I wouldn't be with her, do you know what I mean?* Will, pg.12

## 5. Poor Me - *Enlivened* with the insider perspective

As a reminder, the ‘Poor Me’ is a female occupied position that is located in the dominant ‘romantic love’ discourse and is respectful of ‘retributive man’ masculine ideals.

This table summarises the social practices and implications for subjectivity, when occupying the ‘Poor Me’ position, as identified from the FDA of the focus groups. The third column is the *enlivened* addition, which details the accordant romantic reality as relayed from the IPA of the individual interviews.

<b><i>Rights and Practice</i></b>	<b><i>Implications for Subjectivity</i></b>	<b><i>Experiential and Emotional Reality</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wanting to be treated like a lady</li> <li>• Seeking appreciation</li> <li>• Engages in wishful thinking</li> <li>• Looking for traditional gestures</li> <li>• Alert to gestures having reduced over time</li> <li>• Aware of last romantic gesture</li> <li>• Desiring a willing romantic partner</li> <li>• Can be seeking affection</li> <li>• Might fish for compliments or leave hints for gifts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Male in control</li> <li>• Can feel taken for granted</li> <li>• Can feel isolated ie. missing out</li> <li>• Can feel rejected</li> <li>• Can feel jealous of other people’s relationships</li> <li>• May feel undesired</li> </ul>	<p>Romance experienced as the sparkle in the mundane</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Looks to male partner to provide the sparkle</li> <li>• Strong sense of missing out</li> <li>• Eager for a show of romance from their man</li> <li>• Daily life is experienced as mundane</li> <li>• Feel sad and let down with each passing occasion that could be</li> </ul>

<b><i>Rights and Practice</i></b>	<b><i>Implications for Subjectivity</i></b>	<b><i>Experiential and Emotional Reality</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aware of their own efforts e.g. looking nice</li> <li>• May moan and express unhappiness</li> <li>• Might appear needy for attention</li> <li>• Might role model behaviours in the hope they get reciprocated</li> <li>• Engages in upward social comparison</li> </ul> <p><i>Wrongs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not doing your gender role e.g. being nice or looking after your family</li> </ul>		<p>romantic e.g. anniversary, Mother's day, Valentine's</p> <p><i>Striving to protect the self</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suffers low self-esteem</li> <li>• Feels rejected, unattractive &amp; undesired</li> <li>• Draws some comfort from their relationship length</li> <li>• Holds tightly to potential reasons for husband's lack of romance e.g. family background, health etc.</li> <li>• Past gestures are longingly recalled</li> <li>• Unrelenting commitment to looking attractive &amp; being a 'good wife'</li> </ul> <p><i>Romance as a relationship building transaction</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disappointed that the relationship is not the 'happy ever after'</li> <li>• Frustrated by husband's lack of romantic character/ investment</li> <li>• Monitors consistency in behaviours</li> <li>• Disheartened when the male partner ceases to take up any hints</li> <li>• Highly conscious of the demise of romance in the relationship</li> <li>• Feels down about the failed relationship transaction</li> <li>• See themselves as doing all the relationship work – feel fatigued and sorry for themselves.</li> <li>• Senses the relationship as vulnerable</li> </ul>

Next is a description of what the romantic perspective looks and feels like for participants when occupying the 'Poor Me' position. It voices the felt impact of this location within the romantic discursive terrain via the lenses of the three master experiential themes derived from the IPA:

### **Romance as a Sparkle in the Mundane**

Like the occupants of the 'Traditional Receiver' position, women who take up the 'Poor Me' position experience *Romance as a Sparkle in the Mundane*; they are hoping for their daily lives to be brightened by a chivalric partner who indulges them with romantic gestures and provides them with special occasions to look forward to. However, for the 'Poor Me' the daily reality of their life and partner doesn't match up to these romantic expectations, and those who occupy this position will feel deflated:

*[...] nothing how I imagined when I was younger, how I'd want this and this and this, is not how it is today... Hannah, pg.22*

*He'd take me out all the time but that only lasted, like, six, seven months and then I got pregnant... Lily, pg.8*

*Umm, just like him to, sort of, be the one to instigate something or to ask you to go out for a drink or to [pause] have a meal or go to the pictures. Jackie, pg.3*

There's a strong sense that they are 'missing out':

*Yeah, we never had the honeymoon period if you like. We never had the getting married and buying a home and living there for five years and then having children. It wasn't like that for us. [...] I think we've missed out. Lily, pg.16*

*I feel like I've missed out on some of that really. [...] we've never been on holiday just the two of us. Lily, pg.16*

Without *Romance as a Sparkle in the Mundane* life can be experienced as bleak to women who frequent the 'Poor Me' position and they can feel 'down':

*I was just stuck in that box of being a full-time mum at home, kids, nappies, school, cooking, cleaning. The normal, everyday scenario, and it was, like, it got me down. Hannah, pg.6*

### **Striving to Protect the Self**

Like most other occupants of positions within this discursive terrain, the women who occupy the 'Poor Me' position see romance in their relationship as a sign of success—a badge of honour. Mirroring the perspective of the 'Traditional Receiver', the 'Poor Me' prizes romance as testament to being a 'good wife' and having a successful relationship. Without *Romantic Evidence at the Ready*, women in this position risk suffering from a loss of confidence. In order to safeguard some self-esteem, they will typically recall a gesture, from early in their relationship, as proof of romance.

They also hold on tightly to reasons and personal theories for the lack of Sparkle and their husband's lack of chivalry, whether it be religion, family background, health, economic or personality:

*[...] due to his health, he can't travel, like, can't go abroad on holidays, or whatever Hannah, pg.4*

*I was only working part-time, well I'd be only be working once I'd had the baby and he was only a bus driver back then. So, money was tight for us. It was, like, 'We need to cancel the holiday.'* Lily, pg.16

*Social Comparison* is deployed in relation to relationship endurance as assurance of some relationship merit:

*...you know. 'Oh my husband does this for me,' and, 'My husband does that,' and sometimes I suppose you do think, 'Oh well mine doesn't do that for me.' Then the next thing you know they've split up and you just think it's all a farce I think.* Lily, pg. 17

### **Romance as a Relationship Building Transaction**

For women in the 'Poor Me' position, like those in the 'Traditional Receiver' position, the activities that bring sparkle are chivalric gestures and physical affection. Fulfillment of this romantic repertoire serves to build warmth and foster relationship strength. Alas, for those in the 'Poor Me' position, this repertoire is not realized. Occupation of this subject position follows a breakdown in the *Relationship Building Transaction* from the position of 'Traditional Receiver'; where *Watching The Relationship Equilibrium* they are aggrieved in that their husband or partner is not pulling his weight, recognizing a chivalric code and motivated to 'please her' romantically. As such they feel hurt, let down, sad and rejected. By nature, of the *Relationship Transaction* having failed the partnership is experienced as vulnerable and women in the 'Poor Me' position are not sure that they are truly loved.

Women in this position are looking for proof of love and might see themselves as needy of romance. As such they might incite romantic responses, by leaving hints, chastising, sulking or in desperation walking out:

*I was, like, you know, 'Fine then,' and go off in a sulk, and then make him run after me. If he didn't, then I'd know he wasn't as bothered as I thought he would be. So, like, you know, it's, like, a test, as well, isn't it?* Hannah, pg.13

The broken transaction experienced from within the 'Poor Me' position can mobilize their subsequent occupation of the 'Hard Realist', 'Hero Assessor' or 'Best Friend Romantic' subject position.

## **6. Hero Assessor - *Enlivened* with the insider perspective**

As a reminder, the 'Hero Assessor' is a female occupied position that is located in the dominant 'romantic love' discourse and is respectful of 'retributive man' masculine ideals.

This table summarises the social practices and implications for subjectivity, when occupying the 'Hero Assessor' position, as identified from the FDA of the focus groups. The third column is the *enlivened* addition, which details the accordant romantic reality as relayed from the IPA of the individual interviews.

<b><i>Rights and Practice</i></b>	<b><i>Implications for Subjectivity</i></b>	<b><i>Experiential and Emotional Reality</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Treats men/ or man as deficient</li> <li>• Views romance as heroic or idealist gestures</li> <li>• Stays together for reasons other than romance</li> <li>• Right to rebuff gestures</li> <li>• Open dislike of flowers and less significant gestures</li> <li>• Open dislike of gushy gesture</li> <li>• Questions motivation of token gestures</li> <li>• Privileges others over the couple e.g. children, friends</li> <li>• Might result in testing their man, leaving to get attention</li> <li>• Engages in upward social comparison – via TV, Facebook</li> <li>• May take caring gestures for granted</li> <li>• Harsh critic of romantic attempts</li> <li>• May joke about men and their gestures</li> <li>• Represents romantic apathy</li> <li>• Deploys relationship stage rhetoric or age discourse to facilitate position</li> </ul> <p><i>Wrongs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To initiate romance as a female</li> <li>• Token gestures</li> <li>• To privilege the caring or small daily gestures of kindness e.g. housework</li> <li>• To privilege affection like hand holding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Females are judge of romantic endeavours</li> <li>• Can be seen as 'hard'</li> </ul>	<p><i>Romance experienced as the sparkle in the mundane</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Believes romance is for him to provide 'he should be doing the romance, not me...'</li> <li>• Grand heroic gestures are prized as romantic – but not realized in her experience</li> <li>• Daily life is encountered as mundane</li> <li>• Arranges her own sparkle with children and friends</li> <li>• Buys her own romantic gifts; doesn't trust him to get it right</li> <li>• Sex is experienced as 'a bit staid'</li> <li>• Takes for granted thoughtful &amp; caring acts from partner</li> </ul> <p><i>Striving to protect the self</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critical of her husband's and other men's attempts at romance</li> <li>• Blames husband for the lack of romance in the relationship</li> <li>• Views herself as without fault for 'the problem' of lack of romance</li> </ul> <p><i>Romance as a relationship building transaction</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Romance is rightfully deserved for her, as part of the relationship transaction</li> <li>• Irritated by husband's lack of heroism</li> <li>• Chastises husband to for not taking a lead and organising romantic gesture</li> <li>• Attends to his romantic failings</li> <li>• Lords his 'lack of romance' over him</li> </ul>

<i><b>Rights and Practice</b></i>	<i><b>Implications for Subjectivity</b></i>	<i><b>Experiential and Emotional Reality</b></i>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feels licensed to take him for granted or treat him mean</li> <li>• Entitled to express romantic apathy.</li> </ul>

Next is a description of what the romantic perspective looks and feels like for participants when occupying the ‘Strategic Romantic’ position. It would seem from a review of the interviews that Jackie most frequently occupied the ‘Hero Assessor’ position. She is a harsh critic of her husband’s romantic efforts and during the interview reflects that she can be ‘bolshie’ and ‘mean’. The description below voices the impact of this location within the romantic discursive terrain via the lenses of the three master experiential themes derived from the IPA:

**Romance as a Sparkle in the Mundane**

Women who occupy the ‘Hero Assessor’ position want *Romance as the Sparkle in the Mundane*. However, they set a high bar when it comes to romance, they covet an ideal—a Hollywood style of romance. Accordingly, they do not receive small thoughtful gestures as romantic:

*Probably other people would see it as romantic but I don't really see it as such.* Jackie, pg.14

For them, romance is the chivalric gesture, special occasions and being generally treated like a princess. Invariably, any attempt at romance by their husband is viewed, by females who frequent the ‘Hero Assessor’, as not good enough. Gifts, for example, are returned if they are not perfectly to their liking:

*I suppose, I'm not a perfectionist, but I like my things my way, you know what I mean?* Jackie, pg.15

*[...] I'd probably take something back if I didn't like it. [...] So, probably, I am too bolshie* Jackie, pg.9

Furthermore, from the ‘Hero Assessor’ position, physical intimacy and affection is sorely lacking sparkle:

*[...] hugs, kisses, he will, but they don't just always, umm, umm, come out properly-*, Jackie pg.16

*[...] it's, we do have sex, don't get me wrong [...] I suppose you can get a bit staid...* Jackie, pg.8

**Striving to Protect the Self**

The women who occupy the ‘Hero Assessor’ position work hard to *Protect the Self*; they are particularly outspoken that the ‘problem’ with the lack of romance, is due to her partner’s failing.

They regularly take the moral highground and see themselves as without fault. Here, Jackie from within the 'Hero Assessor' position, can be seen expressing exasperation over her man's romantic incompetence:

*He-, it's, it's bizarre, but he's just can't-, he just can't-, you tell him, but he just doesn't-, I don't think he can just carry it through. Jackie, pg.3*

When discussing the romance of friends, the women in the 'Hero Assessor' position can also be seen to be decry other men's romantic attempts:

*[...] it had felt too gooey with him. [...] It's sickly to me sometimes. Jackie, pg.4*

### **Romance as a Relationship Building Transaction**

Those who inhabit the 'Hero Assessor' position are adamant that they are exempt from having to contribute romantically to the *Relationship Transaction*; it's for him to provide:

*I always feel like he should be doing the romance, not me,... Jackie, pg.2*

It seems that from the 'Hero Assessor' position, the *Romance as a Relationship Building Transaction* involves her being treated rightfully like a princess and in return she is the 'good wife'. Women who occupy this position, actively *Watch the Relationship Equilibrium* for signs that he's failing his heroic duties, which then transacts in her feeling entitled to treat him disrespectfully. Interestingly, they ignore or disregard evidence that will tip the scales of the *Relationship Building Transaction* in his favour. For example, Jackie reports in her interview, a yearning for him to provide flowers; she forgets that it has been acknowledged—earlier in the interview—that she has received bouquets:

*Or even a bouquet, that's, umm, er-, not wild flowers, but that sort of thing, or lilies, I like those, or daffodils, you know, but they'd have to be the nice, really yellowy ones.  
Jackie, pg. 17*

For the women who occupy the 'Hero Assessor' position, having their husband fail the romantic *Relationship Building Transaction* seems to license them to take him for granted or treat him a bit mean:

*He always did-, would ask you (wanted something to eat). Whereas, with me, if I need-, if I wanted something to eat, I suppose I'm mean, and I probably wouldn't ask him.  
Jackie, pg.7*

*Wasn't this year, it was last year I think. Just bought him something (a gift) from Marks & Spencer.  
Jackie, pg.12*

It also seems to transact in the 'Hero Assessor' being in charge of her own sparkle: going to the theatre with friends or buying her own jewellery.

## **7. Hard Realist - *Enlivened with the insider perspective***

As a reminder, the 'Hard Realist' is a female occupied position that is located in the 'economic' discourse and is respectful of 'retributive man' masculine ideals.

This table summarises the social practices and implications for subjectivity, when occupying the 'Hard Realist' position, as identified from the FDA of the focus groups. The third column is the *enlivened* addition, which details the accordant romantic reality as relayed from the IPA of the individual interviews.

<b><i>Rights and Practice</i></b>	<b><i>Implications for Subjectivity</i></b>	<b><i>Experiential and Emotional Reality</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relationships serve other purposes than romance</li> <li>Practicalities prevail over romance</li> <li>Represents romantic apathy</li> <li>Sees reality as black and white, categorical and knowable</li> <li>Suspicious of romantic gesture as being given because are because they want something, self-serving</li> <li>Quick to judge 'Traditional Receivers' and 'Best Friend Romantics'</li> <li>Rebuffs romantic gestures</li> <li>Privileges personal space and routines</li> <li>Patronises those who engage in romance</li> <li>Views romance as foolish</li> <li>Can mock romantic activities</li> <li>Uses assertive language</li> <li>View romance as a fairy-tale, not real life</li> <li>Privileges others over the couple e.g. children, friends</li> <li>Deploys relationship stage rhetoric or age discourse to facilitate position</li> </ul> <p><i>Wrongs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To be slushy or engage in PDA (public displays of affection)</li> <li>Moaning about a lack of romance</li> <li>To allow for doubts or hesitations</li> <li>Moaning about a lack of romance</li> <li>To want affection or physical intimacy</li> <li>To dote on your husband</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>See themselves as 'cynical'</li> <li>Can be seen as 'hard'</li> <li>View themselves as mature in years/wise to the world</li> </ul>	<p><i>Romance experienced as the sparkle in the mundane</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Takes the lead to organise any special occasion or evening out</li> <li>Resistant to sex; is armed with ready practical excuses for avoiding sexual intimacy</li> <li>Special occasions typically include others beyond the couple dyad</li> <li>Belittles unprompted attempts to buy romantic gifts – e.g. returns jewelry</li> <li>Thoughtful and caring acts from husband are <i>not</i> seen as romantic</li> <li>Daily life is encountered as boring – but how she likes it</li> <li>Only wants to receive specified gifts</li> </ul> <p><i>Striving to protect the self</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifies herself as someone who doesn't want male attention or to be 'fussed over'</li> <li>Unswerving commitment to being in control</li> <li>Mocks other people's romantic relationships</li> <li>Engages in downward social comparison re: relationship length</li> <li>Confident that other people's relationships – presented as romantic - are not as they seem</li> </ul> <p><i>Romance as a relationship building transaction</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Confident in the durability of her relationship</li> <li>Comfortable with her romantic apathy – 'nice underwear ... no'</li> <li>Fears romance, views it as being controlled</li> <li>Links receiving romantic gestures to an</li> </ul>

<b>Rights and Practice</b>	<b>Implications for Subjectivity</b>	<b>Experiential and Emotional Reality</b>
		expectation of sex in return • Relationship transaction does not include romance 'he is a good dad. He's a lovely husband and he provides for us and, and we're happy'.

Next is a description of what the romantic perspective looks and feels like for participants when occupying the 'Hard Realist' position. It would seem from a review of the interviews that Elaine most frequently occupied the 'Hard Realist' position. The other female participants also occasionally located themselves in the 'economic' discourse and spoke matter-of-factly about times in their lives that lacked romance. The description below voices the felt impact of this location within the romantic discursive terrain via the lenses of the three master experiential themes derived from the IPA:

#### **Romance as a Sparkle in the Mundane**

Unlike the female occupants of other subject positions, those who take up the 'Hard Realist' position do not want romance. If they see a sparkle, or even a glimmer, of romance, they will do their best to dampen it. Accordingly, they can be resistant to their husband or partner privileging couple time and attempting to be romantic:

*I don't think I'd like somebody too romantic, like, 'We're going out for, you know, just a candlelit dinner for two of us,' and, 'We're doing this, just the two of us.' [...] So I wouldn't want him to be more controlling.* Elaine, pg.8

Efforts by their male partners at chivalry or traditional gestures are belittled and rejected:

*[...] it was quite funny that he had to take it (gift) back and then got the wrong thing and I didn't like it and he had to go back again. I'd go, 'If you'd just listened to me in the first place, then you'd know what I'd want.'* Elaine, pg.14

From this position, grand gestures from the past are not savoured as romantic but just seen as memories:

*[...] you know, looking back, rather than looking at that and going, 'Oh, that was romantic.' I just think of them as, yeah, as memories rather than anything romantic.* Elaine, pg.14

Notably women who occupy the 'Hard Realist' position, are particularly adverse to sex or physical intimacy:

*[...] you know what, just leave me alone, I can't be bothered. Like it or lump it, basically.* Hannah, pg. 7

*[...] if he wants sex, I'm, like, 'No because, like-,'* Elaine, pg.3

### **Striving to Protect the Self**

The women who occupy the 'Hard Realist' position work hard to *Protect the Self* and are particularly vociferous in respect to *Social Comparison*. When discussing the romance of friends, or that presented on social media, the women in the 'Hard Realist' position can be seen to be suspicious, mock the situation and score points by lauding their relationship length.

*She was like, you know, 'He's my soulmate,' and blah, blah, blah and, err, they've split up now and you're just like, 'Oh, okay.'* Elaine, pg.12

The 'Hard Realist' can be sensitive to comparisons and ready to defend their relationship and actions (or lack of):

*I'm tired. I've been at work all day. I've been running round. I've taken one to gymnastics, her up and dropped them at guides. I've done everything for everyone else. The last thing I want to do is that.' [Respondent laughs]. So, so quite a few times I'm like that, 'It's not happening.'* Elaine, pg.3

Curiously, Elaine made a few romantic claims like going on a date night, which was an evening spent with another couple. The need to flag some kind of romance, likely speaks to the pervasive dominance of the 'romantic love' discourse and a need to have some *Romantic Evidence at the Ready*.

### **Romance as a Relationship Building Transaction**

Romance is an avoided part of the relationship for those who occupy the 'Hard Realist' position. The women in this subject position are indeed managing and *Watching the Romantic Equilibrium* to ensure it does not necessitate romantic activity on her part. From the 'Hard Realist' perspective allowing romance in her life obligates her to provide sex in return:

*I think with men, I think romance, they'll-, it tends to lead just to sex, doesn't it? I think that's their, sort of, image of a romantic night out.* Elaine, pg.9

Her *Relationship Building Transaction* is around practicalities and being able to provide a comfortable life for the family—fulfillment of this arrangement serves to build warmth and foster relationship strength:

*So I think I'm quite happy that, you know, he is a good dad. He's a lovely husband and he provides for us and, and we're happy.* Elaine, pg.12

Underpinning the success of this *Relationship Building Transaction*, women frequenting the 'Hard Realist' position, rely on their partner occupying a reciprocal subject position:

*Yeah, I suppose so, we must, must have found our balance that works well with us [...] neither of us are romantic and maybe that's probably why.* Elaine, pg.10

A partner's occupation of the chivalric 'Traditional Romantic' position will likely lead to relationship tension and conflict, as seen with Hannah's occupation of the 'Hard Realist' position:

[...] he thought I was going off him. [...] we spoke, but then speaking would, like, get into a bit rowdy, arguing about it.... Hannah, pg.7

## 8. The Family Man

As a reminder, the 'Family Man' is a male occupied position that is located in the 'life-stages' discourse and is respectful of 'new man' masculine ideals.

This table summarises the social practices and implications for subjectivity, when occupying the 'Family Man' position, as identified from the FDA of the focus groups. The third column is the *enlivened* addition, which details the accordant romantic reality as relayed from the IPA of the individual interviews.

<i>Rights and Practice</i>	<i>Implications for Subjectivity</i>	<i>Experiential and Emotional Reality</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on the family unit</li> <li>• To be hands on with children and help with practical domestic duties</li> <li>• To privilege doing things as a family</li> <li>• To be sensible</li> <li>• Romance is a luxury that he cannot afford</li> <li>• Temporal element. Until the children are more independent</li> <li>• Being a team member with partner</li> <li>• Need to account for non-family focused actions to partner</li> </ul> <p><i>Wrongs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To privilege the couple dyad over the family</li> <li>• To spend money on lavish romantic gestures</li> <li>• To be spontaneous and take control e.g. book a romantic weekend away</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May have a satisfying team bond with partner</li> <li>• Can feel helpless /powerless</li> <li>• May feel emasculated</li> <li>• May feel bored</li> <li>• May feel guilty spending time away from the children</li> <li>• Might not know if his wife desires him</li> </ul>	<p><i>Romance experienced as the sparkle in the mundane</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Daily life can be experienced as mundane</li> <li>• Can feel defeated and run down</li> <li>• Can feel underappreciated &amp; resentful '...you're not just a full time parent'</li> <li>• Feels restricted by female partner 'you know, she'd be, like, knackered with the kids'</li> <li>• Fondly replays pre-child gestures and lifestyle as a way of re-experiencing some sparkle</li> </ul> <p><i>Striving to protect the self</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Committed to being a 'responsible family man'</li> <li>• Judge couples who privilege the couple over the children as irresponsible</li> <li>• Pre-child gestures and lifestyle are readily recalled as proof of romance</li> <li>• Small everyday gestures are relayed as romantic evidence e.g. holding hands</li> </ul> <p><i>Romance as a relationship building transaction</i></p>

<i>Rights and Practice</i>	<i>Implications for Subjectivity</i>	<i>Experiential and Emotional Reality</i>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationship transaction is moderated for less, or no, romance</li> <li>• Forced to reduce romantic expectations – sharing a take away rather than a having a night out</li> <li>• Accepts period of romantic apathy.</li> </ul>

Next is a description of what the romantic perspective looks and feels like for participants when occupying the ‘Family Man’ position. It would seem from a review of the interviews that Will and Martyn most frequently occupied the ‘Family Man’ position. The description below voices the felt impact of this location within the romantic discursive terrain via the lenses of the three master experiential themes derived from the IPA:

**Romance as a Sparkle in the Mundane**

Men who occupy the ‘Family Man’ position view *Romance as a Sparkle in the Mundane*, and recognize that with prioritizing children he forgoes romance in his life. The daily existence for men who frequent this subject position can be experienced as mundane:

*Well, it just-, I think you need it, because if it just carries on, you know, nothing changes, and it's quite mundane, then it becomes defeated and run down... Will, pg.9*

However, some men who occupy the ‘Family Man’ position find some sparkle in being with their children and are happy to privilege children over couple time:

*But if we were doing them (special occasions), we'd be doing it as a family, and I don't know, I think, maybe, that's changed, I suppose, to a degree, and certainly in our relationship, but I don't see that necessarily as a negative. Martyn, pg.3*

Men who usually inhabit the ‘Family Man’ position, can feel a bit awkward engaging in couple intimacy and affection:

*I don't know, one of us will make a joke, you know, 'Get us holding hands.' Martyn, pg.4*

**Striving to Protect the Self**

For men who occupy the ‘Family Man’ position having romance in their relationship is still seen as a sign of success—an endorsement of their relationship and masculinity. They appeared to be relieved to have *Romantic Evidence at the Ready* in the form of pre-child gestures—and also keenly framed general relationship behaviours as romantic:

*Organising a-, even organising a babysitter so she can go-, well, organising it so I can look after the kids and she can go out. Will, pg.8*

Not wanting to be seen as unromantic, Martyn insisted that all couple time is by definition romantic:

*[...] the two of us happy, it's going to be romantic, do you know what I mean? That's-, in fact, that, yes, that, that would be it, realistically. It doesn't-, I'm not saying every time, but do you know what I mean? But in, in fact no, because if we're happy, yes, every, every, every time it would be (romantic), there would be no reason it wouldn't be. Martyn, pg.17*

Men occupying the 'Family Man' position did not demonstrate a *Personal Romantic Code* and deployed *Social Comparison* to emphasize their responsible parenting.

*We've got friends that go away, you know, for a week without the kids, and we're, like, 'How on earth do you do that?' [...] I'd have to be aware they were 100% safe... Martyn, pg.3*

### **Romance as a Relationship Building Transaction**

Romance is no longer part of the *Relationship Building Transaction* for those who occupy the 'Family Man' position; their couple repertoire revolves around contributions to the family and parenting. Underpinning the fulfillment of this *Relationship Building Transaction*, the 'Family Man' occupant relies on his partner frequenting a receptive subject position—the 'Hard Realist' or 'Mothering Him'—otherwise the *Transaction Breaks Down* and the relationship can fail. Below is an extract from Peter's interview, whose ex-wife (who feasibly occupied the 'Traditional Receiver' position) had an affair and left him.

*I put my kids above her, which, you know, it, it, it's not gonna make your, er, relationship, your marriage work. [...] I was a good father, but I wasn't a good husband. Peter, pg.6*

However, it should be noted that the occupation of the 'Family Man' position invariably comes after a breakdown in the *Romance as a Relationship Building Transaction* of the 'Traditional Romantic' or 'Best Friend Romantic' position, where they are obliged to reduce, or drop, romantic expectations. As such they can feel restricted and begrudge the forced occupation.

*'Cause, you'd wanna do all those things, but you just simply couldn't do them. 'Cause, you know, she'd be, like, knackered with the kids, and it was, like, like, really, sort of, knowing that, you know, the kids come first, then. Will, pg.13*

## **9. On the Edge of Romance**

The romantic discursive terrain revealed subject positions that lie on the edge of romance—that acknowledge romance but dismiss it at the same time—they are the 'Hard Realist', the 'Family Man' and the 'Mothering Him' subject position<sup>34</sup>.

*And it's not the-, I don't know, the fairy-tale book, do you know what I mean? Martyn, pg.12*

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<sup>34</sup> The 'Hard Realist' and 'Family Man' positions have been described and *enlivened* already in this document. However, I have limited information on the 'Mothering Him's' insider perspective; yet, Martyn says his wife refers to him as the third child in the family, so it can be deduced that his wife, Julie, occupies the 'Mothering Him' position.

The pervasive dominance of the ‘romantic love’ discourse has a felt impact on the lives of occupants of these subject positions. Their experiential challenges speak to how privileged in today’s society having a romantic relationship continues to be. As shown throughout this paper, having romance in your relationship—whether grand gestures, special nights out or emotional intimacy—is experienced as a sign of success. Romance in the established relationship is a badge of honour.

While from the ‘Hero Assessor’, ‘Strategic Romantic’ and ‘Poor Me’ subject positions, individuals can wrestle with the frequency and/or the delivery of romantic gestures, they still prize romance. Whereas occupants of the ‘Hard Realist’, the ‘Family Man’ and the ‘Mothering Him’ render romance as irrelevant in their relationship but find themselves saluting it at the same time. The IPA of the interviews gives us some purchase on the tensions produced by occupying these three positions that lie on the edge of romance.

It can be precarious for men to occupy positions at the margins of romance; across the male occupied subject positions, masculinity is attached to having romance in your relationship. There’s the sense that you are not a ‘proper man’ if you persist in a romance-less union. So while the ‘Family Man’ can logically rationalize, and even promote, that the children come first, or that he and his wife are a great team, occupying this position or being partnered to the emasculating ‘Mothering Him’ position can feel a bit shaky. There’s a degree of anxiousness about being found out. Notice below how Martyn uses the phrase ‘in fact’ and repeats ‘every’; he wants to convince me, and possibly himself, that they have romance (and he is a man).

*But in, in fact no, because if we're happy, yes, every, every, every time it would be (romantic), there would be no reason it wouldn't be. Martyn, pg.17*

Similarly, we can see in the ‘Hard Realist’ *enlivened* description the dominance of the ‘romantic love’ discourses. Indeed, that Elaine has to actively avoid and dampen any romantic spark, in case she’s obligated to have sex, speaks to the taken-for-granted physical intimacy expected of relationships. Elaine, who dismisses romance as not important, owns going on date night with her husband. As mentioned earlier, date night for Elaine is an evening that she arranges out with her friend and their husbands come along; Elaine acknowledges that if she let her husband arrange date night (just the two of them) that there would be an expectation of sex. Evidently, Elaine is on high alert; she constantly has to contend with, and deflect, the ‘romantic love’ discourse. A partner’s occupation of the chivalric ‘Traditional Romantic’ position will likely lead to relationship tension and conflict, as seen with Hannah’s occupation of the ‘Hard Realist’ position.

*[...] he thought I was going off him. [...] we spoke, but then speaking would, like, get into a bit rowdy, arguing about it.... Hannah, pg.7*

The relational nature of the couple dyad means that for those who occupy the subject positions on the edge of romance, they will be confronted with the 'romantic love' discourse via their partner or spouse, or if saved from that then they need to account for it at some level in society. Elaine, like Martyn, by framing her night out with friends as date night is acknowledging the social merit of being seen to have romance in her relationship.

**Appendix 31:**  
**Insider Perspective Final Formulation**

## Insider Perspective Final Formulation

**Romance as the Sparkle in the Mundane** Pg. 262  
Romance experienced as a lift  
Savouring grand gestures  
Romance as the physical sparkle

**Striving to Protect the Self** Pg. 269  
Honoring a personal romantic code  
Social comparison  
Romantic evidence at the ready

**Romance as a Relationship Building Transaction** Pg. 276  
Watching the romantic equilibrium  
When the transaction breaks down

### Master Theme 1: Romance as the Sparkle in the Mundane

The participants stories portray *Romance as a Sparkle in the Mundane*. The daily lives of those in romantic relationships were brightened with romantic acts, as shown in *Romance experienced as a lift*. *Savouring Grand Gestures* illustrates that while lavish chivalric gestures might be rare, they are cherished and repeatedly recalled. *Romance as the physical sparkle* captures the private pleasure of sexual intimacy and feeling attractive.

All the participants in romantic relationships converse about their unique style of romance—which speaks to the range and blend of activities that bring Sparkle. This can be getting drunk together, going to the theatre or it could be primarily focused on sex.

#### Note: Insider perspectives from the non-romantic participants

Rather than look to the relationship for needed *Sparkle*, those without romance create *Sparkle in the Mundane* in other ways, and noticeably prioritise time with others. Elaine and Jackie lightheartedly divulge rejecting their husbands' attempts at grand gestures. I suspect Martyn lacks romance in his relationship; he divests himself from grand gestures (his wife is wanting an eternity ring and he treats it as a chore) and resists being separated from his children. These participants do not speak about attraction or desire; Elaine is particularly adverse to sex.

#### **Theme: Romance experienced as a lift**

The participants are busily occupied with daily life and romance provides welcome respite from the same old, mundane daily activities. It adds sparkle to their life.

*...and it's like five kids and it's raining, [laughs] house is a mess, [...] but then the excitement is first thing I'll say to her if she says, like, it's a tough-, you know, a bad day and it's been a tough day, it's like that, 'It's our weekend this week.' It creates a lot-, it creates a lot of a buzz and enjoyment. Peter pg. 42*

Sending a loving text message, running a bath—or stroking hair, are some of the activities described by the participants as highlights. They provide a welcome lift out of the daily toil and serve to make them feel significant and appreciated, while also reinforcing a valued sense

of connection and intimacy. Tenderness is expressed as they buoy each other up with romantic gestures.

*I, like, sent him a text message a couple of weeks ago and just said, umm, 'I love you. Missing you,' and his reply was, umm, 'You must sense that I'm not having a good day.'* Hilary pg. 15

Booking a holiday, spa day, or going out for a nice meal are considered romantic occasions. Such special occasions are seen as treats and indulgences that offer sought after escape from the bleak reality of the daily grind. Importantly it gives them something to look forward to. These periodic events brighten everyday living, and for some participants it can make life feel more worthwhile.

*So, it makes it worthwhile. Well, it just-, I think you need it, because if it just carries on, you know, nothing changes, and it's quite mundane, then it becomes defeated and run down...* Will pg. 9

### **Theme: Savouring grand gestures**

The sparkle that dazzles is the grand gesture, whether that be lavish purchases of flowers, staying somewhere wildly romantic or a sentimental proposal. These are treasured, as they are rare events in the face of practical concerns like money and children.

Both male and female participants savoured the grand gestures; they animatedly recalled the details, speaking enthusiastically with awe and joy. The gesture might even be retold within the interview – as if the retelling provides them with extra sparkle.

*We stopped in a suite, and it was just-, if you describe it, what it was like, it was lovely. It was romantic. We had dinner in a library served by waiters in, umm, penguin suits and everything, and it, it was-, how would you describe that day? That, that day was amazing. Went to the spa followed by dinner. And lovely suite, so-, and do you know what I mean?* Kenny pg. 6

*And it ended up being really super special, because when we got to the room there was, like, umm, petals on the bed and there was towels made out in, like, heart shapes.* Hilary pg. 2

The male participants, who orchestrate grand gestures, take personal pride in making her dreams come true: like flying her over the grand canyon or buying her dream car. These men are highly invested in these gestures and can spend months, even years, planning and saving for it. They speak about planning these events as if they are on Special Forces undercover assignment, they express: excitement, fear, bravery and vigilance. They also reveal a great sense of achievement.

*I went out and bought her the platinum ring that she always wanted, and hid it in my case, which is dangerous, because you're probably not supposed to do that. Hid it in my case, umm, and was waiting for the special night.* Peter pg. 18

Note: See also *Striving to Protect the Self*; the grand gesture can be drawn upon as romantic evidence.

### **Theme: Romance as the physical sparkle – sex, desire and attraction.**

Sex is cherished by both males and female participants in romantic relationships. It provides a sparkle to the day; this valued intimacy, is described as a deserved pleasure—as well as cheeky and fun.

*Just our time, lock the bedroom door, and just stay in bed [...] just make that little, private our time, otherwise he's the same as, you know, we'd be in that same old, stuck in that rut, doing the same old, same old, you know. So, that, to us, is our, you know, our own time* Hannah pg. 19

Being desired, and seen as attractive, are sought by the participants in romantic relationships. They seem to get 'a kick out' of each other's looks. Accordingly the participants in romantic relationships faithfully attend to, and compliment, appearances.

*He trains ever such a lot so he's got a great physique on him so I'll often say to him how nice he looks, yeah.* Lily pg. 14

Dressing up for a special night out is regularly referenced by participants. It's a chance to make the best of themselves and discard their everyday attire. Participants reveal excitement and anticipation, along with evident pride in each other.

*...when she comes down in, in her-, in her nice clothes and nice dress, and she comes down or whatever, and you're thinking, 'That effort there is for me!' 'That's for me,' and it's like she-, well, she might feel the same. I come down, get your best suit on, do whatever you-, everything's polished, you're gleaming, and they're thinking, 'Yes.'* Kenny pg. 16

<b>Romance as the Sparkle in the Mundane</b>	<b>Quote</b>	<b>Location</b>
Romance experienced as a lift	...and it's like five kids and it's raining, [laughs] house is a mess, [ ] but then the excitement is first thing I'll say to her if she says, like, it's a tough-, you know, a bad day and it's been a tough day, it's like that, 'It's our weekend this week.' It creates a lot-, it creates a lot of a buzz and enjoyment.	Pete 42
	So, it makes it worthwhile. Well, it just-, I think you need it, because if it just carries on, you know, nothing changes, and it's quite mundane, then it becomes defeated and run down...	Will 9
	I, like, sent him a text message a couple of weeks ago and just said, umm, 'I love you. Missing you,' and his reply was, umm, 'You must sense that I'm not having a good day.'	Hilary 9
	'Cause then you'd just be left with the everyday life. And I don't think it would work then 'cause it would be a bit boring. You'd just be getting on, you'd just be doing, plodding along doing the same thing.	Kelly 10
	...we're both happy now but I think when you, I dunno, when you've got a house, you've got bills and a child, you focus on those a bit too much sometimes-, But it would be nice to have more of the fun and romance.	Kelly 11
	... I think maybe you appreciate the fact that you've got that, umm, time back, and you're not just a full-time parent. Umm, I'm not just somebody that then goes to work, to pay the bills, to come home, do you know what I mean?	Martyn 12
	...she does enjoy it, (he plays with her hair 1hr a day) and she literally-, it's the highlight of her day she says. So,	John 14

<b>Romance as the Sparkle in the Mundane</b>	<b>Quote</b>	<b>Location</b>
	<p>you know, taking that away from her would be a bit mean.</p> <p>Her reaction to that is massive. [...] And she'll tell everyone, and, er, she loves my cards, and, you know, that's one of the highlights for her.</p> <p>And we hadn't got around to booking anything yet, so I thought, I'm gonna book it, we need something to look forward to, I went ahead and booked it.</p> <p>...it was nice for that day, was that-, do you know, that little bit of luxury and lavishness. To spend money on yourselves...</p> <p>...when you go to a nice restaurant [ ] I do look forward to it, I do look-, you know, having a laugh, treating ourselves...</p> <p>...sometimes I'll come home from work and he's run me a bath. That to me I think is really nice because he's obviously thinking about me when I'm not there kind of thing.</p> <p>Yeah, or like time together becoming a routine. [ ] I work nightshifts so sometimes before I go to work I might, like, leave something on his pillow. You know, just as a reminder that I might not be there, but I am there in a sense, kind of, thing.</p> <p>Umm, and I suppose, just off the-, you know, just, sometimes, if they would say, like, you know, 'This Saturday shall we go up-, shall we do such and such?' But that just never happens.</p> <p>I don't think I'd like somebody too romantic, like, 'We're going out for, you know, just a candlelit dinner for two of us,' and, 'We're doing this, just the two of us.' [ ] So I wouldn't want him to be more controlling.</p>	<p>Peter 11</p> <p>Don 4</p> <p>Kenny 10</p> <p>John 22</p> <p>Lily 2</p> <p>Hilary 15</p> <p>Jackie 16 (unrom)</p> <p>Elaine 8 (unrom.)</p>
Savouring grand gestures	<p>I went out and bought her the platinum ring that she always wanted, and hid it in my case, which is dangerous, because you're probably not supposed to do that. Hid it in my case, umm, and was waiting for the special night.</p> <p>He bought me some diamond earrings and left me, like, a little trail to find them and they was, like, tucked in his coat jacket ...</p> <p>I've got her 40<sup>th</sup> coming up pretty soon. So, on a scale of one to ten of romance, you know, I've got to do something pretty spectacular. [ ] I want it to be remembered...</p>	<p>Peter 18</p> <p>Lily 12</p> <p>Will 18</p>

<b>Romance as the Sparkle in the Mundane</b>	<b>Quote</b>	<b>Location</b>
	<p>... I know that she wanted to go on the boat trip down the Thames on the speedboat, and turn round and come back, and then go on to the London Eye, it wasn't cheap, but it was nice to see her face.</p>	Kenny 5
	<p>Ant and Dec were in the restaurant. She adores Ant and Dec, so I followed him into the toilet. I've got to tell you the whole story-...</p>	Peter 45
	<p>...we travelled on Christmas Day and my birthday was in the January. So he'd kept the ring all that time and not told me.</p>	Kelly 2
	<p>And it ended up being really super special, because when we got to the room there was, like, umm, petals on the bed and there was towels made out in, like, heart shapes.</p>	Hilary 2
	<p>...one of the Christmas presents that he did was, umm, a little anagram and, umm, and it spelt out the word 'Oliver', and he took me to go and see Oliver in London. [ ] it was something that he'd had to think about and he had to save up his money. And, and do, so, so yeah, it was quite special.</p>	Hilary 1
	<p>... so I knew she liked that car, so I didn't tell her. I went to go to the Fiat garage, started getting some prices. And, you know, it was her favourite car. And she, kind of, ended up with it and, you know, 'Wish I had my favourite car,' but-, umm, but no, she was over the moon, and to, to this day she absolutely loves it.</p>	John 9
	<p>I've been reliably informed. She's mentioned it, not only to me but to close mates and stuff as well, so. If [pause]-, I haven't got a plan B so it'll have to work, won't it? [ ] well, it'll just be-, it'll be me and her for a bit, and then there's, like, the Grand Canyon and all of that, 'cause she wanted to go and see all of that, so there'll be all that on the helicopter and all that</p>	Will 19
	<p>We stopped in a suite, and it was just-, if you describe it, what it was like, it was lovely. It was romantic. We had dinner in a library served by waiters in, umm, penguin suits and everything, and it, it was-, how would you describe that day? That, that day was amazing. Went to the spa followed by dinner. And lovely suite, so-, and do you know what I mean?</p>	Kenny 6
	<p>...we went to this little backstreet restaurant, and it had the grapevines, and there was a guy playing a violin and-, [pause] you know, and the wine was lovely, and it just-, it just felt good. It just felt, 'Yeah, this is nice'.</p>	Don 9
	<p>Yeah, I mean, I mean I haven't told anyone this, I thought I might as well tell you because it's confidential. [ ] I've been saving up for, you know, a year or so now. [ ] I can</p>	John 6

<b>Romance as the Sparkle in the Mundane</b>	<b>Quote</b>	<b>Location</b>
	<p>imagine, nearer the time, incredibly nervous and-, I mean I've never asked anyone to marry me before. So it would be a big step in my life. And yeah, quite excited.</p> <p>Back in the day, before money would be an issue, back in the day, like, each birthday, or whatever, I'd get, whatever age I am, that amount of roses, you know.</p> <p>I sent her a postcard every day. Like, fourteen. She got-, she's still got all of them, and it was like I just knew that it was right. [ ]and it's like all of them, they are all kept, and all the special cards, and like, er, it's really nice to know that they are not just thrown. That they are in order. Even like-, it was nice that I saw them, but even the fact is that they are still-, like, they've been looked at, but they are still in day order from day one, day two, day-</p> <p>Jane wants an eternity ring. I know there is no point in me going out to pick her an eternity ring, I'd be wasting, wasting my-, I'd say wasting my time. Jane would need to be there.</p> <p>...unless it was something I was choosing, I wouldn't want somebody to go and buy me a piece of jewellery like that, unless, I am a bit funny like that [laughs].</p> <p>...the bracelet that he brought without me prompting him to buy it. [ ] it was quite funny that he had to take it back and then got the wrong thing and I didn't like it and he had to go back again. I'd go, 'If you'd just listened to me in the first place, then you'd know what I'd want.' [Respondent laughs].</p>	<p>Hannah 3</p> <p>Kenny 4</p> <p>Martyn 16</p> <p>Jackie 9 (Unrom.)</p> <p>Elaine 14 (unrom.)</p>
Romance as the physical sparkle	<p>...when she comes down in, in her-, in her nice clothes and nice dress, and she comes down or whatever, and you're thinking, 'That effort there is for me'. 'That's for me,' and it's like she-, well, she might feel the same. I come down, get your best suit on, do whatever you-, everything's polished, you're gleaming, and they're thinking, 'Yes.'</p> <p>I know that I, er, just the thrill of being with somebody that you're really happy with, really fancy...</p> <p>...I'll go to the gym, get ready, she's got her own space, she can get ready, start from X and end up at Y (Peter's hand moves from low to high), put her music on in the room, to herself-, have herself to, you know, herself. And I'll go to the gym and I'll, er, then I'll come back and see her looking stunning and I'll tell her, you know, 'You look beautiful,' compliment her.</p> <p>...special thing is when you do feel a connection and you talk a bit risqué, and flirty-, And whatever, and that can add a little bit of sexual, sensual spice to things-.</p>	<p>Kenny 16</p> <p>Peter 40</p> <p>Peter 39</p> <p>Peter 25</p>

<b>Romance as the Sparkle in the Mundane</b>	<b>Quote</b>	<b>Location</b>
	<p>Just our time, lock the bedroom door, and just stay in bed [ ] just make that little, private our time, otherwise he's the same as, you know, we'd be in that same old, stuck in that rut, doing the same old, same old, you know. So, that, to us, is our, you know, our own time</p>	Hannah 19
	<p>...my figure got back, as well, so that was good thing. So, because I wasn't so frumpy, and feeling depressed [ ] That's when I started feeling better about myself, and started dressing sexy again</p>	Hannah 8
	<p>...you got to have a physical attraction obviously. That's the-, I think if you're not attracted to somebody, then it would be really, really hard for me personally.</p>	Don 10
	<p>Yeah I think it is verbal comments I suppose, yeah. [Pause] yeah and physically I suppose, wanting to come and give me a cuddle and a kiss, it just makes you naturally feel needed, doesn't it? And special I suppose. So yeah I suppose physical and verbally.</p>	Lily 13
	<p>...it's nice to know that he still finds me attractive as well because although we, we're obviously going to age, aren't we? As we get older, it's-, I know it's all about the inner person as well but it's nice to know that he's still attracted to me and me to him, yeah.</p>	Lily 14
	<p>I try to take pride in my appearance and, you know, look nice when we go out together. [ ] I guess it makes you feel loved. Umm, and, and special I guess really and it's just nice really to have somebody to pay you a compliment, isn't it? And to say that, you know, after all that time of being in a relationship that he still feels, you know, that he's, you know, he's complimentary of the way you look. And notices it...</p>	Hilary 10
	<p>I probably don't sometimes compliment him enough or build him up. I think men in general like to, you know, they like you to make a comment of, like, perhaps 'Oh, you look really nice in that shirt.</p>	Hilary 8
	<p>...he had his suit and that, and I got my dress, or whatever, and did like, people are saying, the couple of cousins and that who saw it, had the preview, were like, 'Is it you two getting married?</p>	Hannah 36
	<p>... she always does her hair quite nice. And whenever she goes out or she does it, always say, 'Oh, your hair looks nice.' And she-, then she'll say, 'No it doesn't.' I was like, 'Okay, well it does,' [ ] She's not good at taking compliments. 'Cause she sometimes would say, 'Oh, you're only saying that because you have to say it.' But I'm not, I actually, I actually mean it.</p>	John 14

<b>Romance as the Sparkle in the Mundane</b>	<b>Quote</b>	<b>Location</b>
	...he'll pick something (a dress whilst shopping) and then say, 'I think this really suits you' and then when we get home he's like, 'Come on then, get your dress on, we'll go out tonight.'	Kelly 6
	Candle lit, bottle of wine, all dressed up, those are romantic nights. (audio: reveals emphasis on 'all dressed up')	John 20
	I mean, you've obviously got your-, you know, you've got sexual relationship, you've got, umm, you know, flattery, umm, you know,	Will 6
	I wouldn't flatter just for the sake of it, 'cause I think that's false. But, you know, if your partner goes out, and really makes an effort, and looks good, then you would say, 'Oh, you look fantastic.' They'd be-, they'd be chuffed with that because they'd feel flattered	Will 7
	I mean it would just end up intimate, wouldn't it? You know, as soon we're alone time we do that as well and that just makes you closer I think, for me anyway, yeah.	Lily 8
	We, we need that time together and we need the intimacy really. That's what makes us tick I suppose.	Lily 11
	...that sexual time, it does be important, it does.	Hannah 20
	...she doesn't do it anymore, have an afternoon nap, so we used to like sneak into bed [ ] I was like, 'Quick, quick, she's asleep, come on, let's go.'	Kelly 14
	We know each other well enough-, in fact, we're just each other in front of each other,	Martyn 13
	...it's, we do have sex, don't get me wrong [ ] I suppose you can get a bit staid, can't you, with it, when you've been in a romance-, a role for a long time.	Jackie 8 (unrom.)
	it's, sort of, like you just grab it (sex) when you can and then that's it, you know. It's not really romantic, is it? No, no candles or anything like that. [Respondent laughs]. I think that's why, with men, that's-, they're happy when they've had it, where for us, I think, I suppose you like being wooed a bit, don't you, rather than just, like, 'Right, that's it.' [Respondent laughs].	Elaine 9 (unrom.)

### Master Theme 2: Striving to Protect the Self

For participants having romance in their relationship is seen as a sign of success —a badge of honour. It communicates that they are not boring and sad with a dull relationship (referenced as a common fear in *Romance as the Sparkle in the Mundane*). For the female participants having romance is testament to being a 'good wife' and having a successful relationship. For

men, romance seems to be an endorsement of their actions and masculinity. Ultimately romance serves to make the individuals feel good about themselves and their role in the relationship. All the participants were highly protective of themselves as they spoke about the romance in their relationships. They showed unswerving commitment to a *Personal Romantic Code*, they spoke heatedly using *Social Comparison* and were comforted and assured to have *Romantic Evidence at the Ready*.

Note: Insider perspectives from the non-romantic participants

Unsurprisingly, of the twelve participants only Jackie and Elaine owned up to relationships that were void of romance. As mentioned earlier, I suspect Martyn's relationship may not be romantic<sup>35</sup>. These three participants work hard to *Protect the Self*; they are particularly vociferous in respect to *Social Comparison*. Jackie fervently blamed 'the problem' of the lack of romance on her husband (his lack of *Personal Code*); even when she herself is the likely inhibitor of romance. Meanwhile, Elaine threw in a few romantic claims like going on date night, which in reality is an evening spent with another couple, and Martyn frantically suggested all couple time is romantic.

**Theme: Honouring a personal romantic code - self pride**

Participants acted on *Personal Romantic Codes*, a principled set of romantic behaviours. The unrelenting commitment to these behaviours suggests that they stem from values and make up part of their identity. These codes will likely move with the individual from one relationship to another as a way sustaining or boosting confidence and self-esteem. Indeed, there is acknowledgement of partners potentially being indifferent to these behaviours. Emphatic words like 'definitely', 'important', 'never' and 'always' feature heavily in this theme; and the tone is assertive and confident.

*I'd always pay for the meal when we go out. Umm, [pause] I spoil her on her birthday, always get her flowers, like... John pg. 11*

*I might not necessarily cook because I'm not the best cook anyway but I'll probably make the effort in the bedroom department I suppose. I think so. (Spoken assertively). Lily pg. 9*

Participants' expressions could be described as insistent, proud and occasionally smug:

*...my mates say to me, 'Come out, come out,' and I turn them down. She goes, 'Why are you turning them down for?' I says, "Cause I wanna spend the time with you' Don pg.18*

*I'm doing it not just for him, but for myself as well, you know. I'm still taking pride in my appearance, you know. Hilary pg.10*

*...I wouldn't say romance is his first trait, definitely not. Jackie pg. 2*

Other quotes amplify the feel good factor—the self-esteem enhancement—of acting on these codes.

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<sup>35</sup> Martin regularly refers to himself as one of the children and seems ill at ease (needs to make a joke) when holding his wife's hand for example.

*...dress up for him, and make gestures to him, and so forth, so it was all good [...] I felt good. I felt good, you know. It gives you a bit of, as you say, confidence boost, you know, your self-esteem...*  
Hannah pg. 14

### **Theme: Social comparison**

Being invested in having a romantic relationship, the participants can be sensitive to comparisons and ready to defend their relationship and actions (or lack of). When discussing the romance of friends, or that presented via social media, some participants can be seen to be suspicious, mock the situation and score points by lauding relationship length.

*She was like, you know, 'He's my soulmate,' and blah, blah, blah and, err, they've split up now and you're just like, 'Oh, okay.'* Elaine pg. 12

Participants frequently claimed the moral high ground and actively engaged in downward comparison to reinforce this sense of superiority:

*...her proposal was, 'Er,' her ex-husband. 'Er, yeah, just get married. Let's just get married then,' or something stupid...* Peter pg. 18

*I do do things, probably that not every average, normal couple would do all the time*  
Hilary pg. 9

A few participants, like Kelly and John, used social comparison to affirm acceptance of their current romantic situation. For them, it provides a sense of peace and furthers contentment within the relationship (see also *Relationship Transaction*, next master theme).

*...she expects to be wined and dined and, she's got this picture in her head of how it should be and she never gets those expectations met by her partner. So I think she sets the bar too high [...] I think she just expects it 24/7, then she gets really upset all the time...* Kelly pg.15

### **Theme: Romantic evidence at the ready**

All participants in romantic relationships were quick to frame thoughtful relationship gestures as romantic. Whether that be 'doing the washing up', 'buying a crème egg' or 'changing the window wipers'. In this way, they magnify the value of the gesture (it becomes a little *Sparkle in the Mundane*) and provides readily available evidence that serves to *Protect the Romantic Self*. Noticeably, Don, John and Martyn repeatedly use the word 'fact', perhaps to add weight to the— sometimes questionable — romantic evidence. Irrespective of the quality of evidence, this reframing endorses the self and relationship, offering comfort and assurance.

*I think the fact that she knows-, well, I've seen the window wipers aren't working, I go out and do that. I think the fact that that day I thought about her, that she finds it romantic.* Don 19

*...have a good conversation about things that are important to her. [...] And things that matter and things that we need to resolve. And things we needed to talk about and she'd be happy. [...] They don't have to be romantic. For it to be a romantic night.* Peter pg. 27

Not wanting to be seen as unromantic, Martyn energetically framed all couple time as by definition being romantic.

*...the two of us happy, it's going to be romantic, do you know what I mean? That's-, in fact, that, yes, that, that would be it, realistically. It doesn't-, I'm not saying every time, but do you know what I mean? But in, in fact no, because if we're happy, yes, every, every, every time it would be (romantic), there would be no reason it wouldn't be.* Martyn pg. 17

Note: See also *Savouring Grand Gestures*; the grand gesture can be drawn upon as ready romantic evidence.

<b><i>Striving to protect the self</i></b>	<b>Quote</b>	<b>Location</b>
Honoring a personal romantic code	...my mates say to me, 'Come out, come out,' and I turn them down. She goes, 'Why are you turning them down for?' I says, "Cause I wanna spend the time with you'	Don 5
	...and she said, 'Because that's what you do (romance), but some people would class that as, "I'm being romantic because I've bought my wife flowers-," Or, "I bought her perfume."'	Kenny 2
	I've never been, umm, adversed to showing, sort of-, [pause] I suppose that-, some people-, again, there's other couples that we know, I've never seen them hold hands. And, you know, again, everybody's different, but to me, I've-, we've always done it...	Martyn 4
	You're thinking about what-, 'What do they need? What do they want?' And you-, for me, like I say, I'm very practical minded, so it's practical stuff, and she's come to learn that, so she knows that when I do something, it is romantic.	Don 18
	...if I feel good about myself, then hopefully that will reflect him and make him see that, you know, I'm doing it not just for him, but for myself as well, you know. I'm still taking pride in my appearance, you know.	Hilary 10
	...dress up for him, and make gestures to him, and so forth, so it was all good [ ] I felt good. I felt good, you know. It gives you a bit of, as you say, confidence boost, you know, your self-esteem...	Hannah 14
	I'd always pay for the meal when we go out. Umm, [pause] I spoil her on her birthday, always get her flowers, like	John 11
	I could quite easily have a beer, and she could have a glass of wine, but as we're sharing something (bottle of wine) together. Umm, I suppose it's, yeah, quite romantic in a way. [ ] be interesting to ask what she thinks about it. But she probably just wouldn't even bat an eyelid. But I think, you know, its, she knows I don't really like wine but. It's nice to share a bottle isn't it?	John 4
	I think romance can be too serious. And that's how I think my friend is with hers. It doesn't have to be. It can just be a silly whacky gesture or fooling around because it is romantic 'cause you're with that person that you love. [ ] I don't wanna be serious all the time 'cause-, I think the most important thing is to have fun with each other.	Kelly 15

<b>Striving to protect the self</b>	<b>Quote</b>	<b>Location</b>
	<p>I might not necessarily cook because I'm not the best cook anyway but I'll probably make the effort in the bedroom department I suppose. I think so. (Spoken assertively)</p> <p>I-, it's something I've never done is buy the card for the words. [ ] When, you know, no, that's-, but that's not from you. I don't know. It is-, but it's just me. Of course it is. They're the words-, you've picked that card, them words, but, er, so I think it's more important to come from your heart, and from your hand, and your pen.</p> <p>no point in taking someone out to dinner, and then, you know, not complimenting them. Not, you know, being polite and ignoring them, because then it's-, you're not being affectionate, are you? You're not being affectionate, both to them mentally or physically or-, you're not being able to deliver that if you just sit there, just, sort of, cold, then that, that romance, that, it's lost, isn't it?</p> <p>...I wouldn't say romance is his first trait, definitely not.</p> <p>I always feel like he should be doing the romance, not me,...</p> <p>I don't know whether I'd-, I'm the type of person that would like constant attention all the time, or somebody faffing all over me and fussing. Umm, I don't know whether I'd, I'd like that if-, whether that's romantic or controlling.</p>	<p>Lily 9</p> <p>Peter 10</p> <p>Will 17</p> <p>Jackie 2 (unrom.)</p> <p>Jackie 2 (unrom.)</p> <p>Elaine 8 (unrom.)</p>
<p>Social comparison</p>	<p>...one of my mates, he's out every Saturday night, and you're thinking, 'Is that romantic? What does your wife think?' And then you hear her, she's out every Friday night, and you're thinking, 'Well, how is it working?' But it must do. But for me, that's not the way a relationship should be, definitely not.</p> <p>I do do things, probably that not every average, normal couple would do all the time</p> <p>...we've proved a lot of people wrong, [ ] And, we're still this much later and going strong. And, as I said to you before, we've saw so many people that we know, that you'd think, 'They would be a nice love story,' stay together, they suit each other, and everything, kids, house, everything, and its fell apart.</p> <p>I've got a friend, and he got married a couple of years ago. And he's with a girl that's quite high-, quite high demanding. And I look at that and I think, 'I can't do it.' You know, she demands you know, to go out all the time ...</p>	<p>Don 15</p> <p>Hilary 9</p> <p>Hannah 12</p> <p>John 15</p>

<b>Striving to protect the self</b>	<b>Quote</b>	<b>Location</b>
	<p>...she expects to be wined and dined and, she's got this picture in her head of how it should be and she never gets those expectations met by her partner. So I think she sets the bar too high [ ] I think she just expects it 24/7, then she gets really upset all the time...</p>	<p>Kelly 15</p>
	<p>...romance in this relationship has just come natural where with previous partners, it's like I had to work at it, and think, 'God, I'd better buy some flowers,' or, 'God, I'd better buy her some perfume,' or, 'I'd better do this.'</p>	<p>Kenny 2</p>
	<p>... many people on social networks that like to flounce about their life and, you know. 'Oh my husband does this for me,' and, 'My husband does that,' and sometimes I suppose you do think, 'Oh well mine doesn't do that for me.' Then the next thing you know they've split up and you just think it's all a farce I think.</p>	<p>Lily 17</p>
	<p>...she'll say, 'Oh, so-and-so-', so then, you know, you make a note of it, so, then if in a month's time I'll say-, or two months', 'Yeah, so-and-so was great, but, you know, where's so-and-so now?' Do you know what I mean? I, like, think it's just keep maybe a bit of a reality check, that sometimes-, the old saying, 'if it appears too good to be true, it sometimes is'.</p>	<p>Martyn 9</p>
	<p>...her proposal was, 'Er,' her ex-husband. 'Er, yeah, just get married. Let's just get married then,' or something stupid...</p>	<p>Peter 18</p>
	<p>...when you go to people's houses and get all the- (wedding photos) [ ] you've got all the standard married vibes, and, you know, 'Look how happy we are,' and, and whatever. But that's standard, do you know what I mean? What else is there, apart from that? Do you know what I mean? What-, is that all there is to it, just that one day? What else is there? What else have you got in common? What else do you do together?</p>	<p>Will 15</p>
	<p>Dave's always doing things for Fiona, different things, you know. Umm, but sometimes Dave-, it would, I don't know, it had felt too gooey with him. [ ] It's sickly to me sometimes.</p>	<p>Jackie 4 (unrom.)</p>
	<p>...you know when you look on Facebook and it's one of those isn't it, 'Oh, look at the bath that he's ran for me and look at all this,' and you're like, 'Oh, he doesn't do any of that for me.' Umm, but then you don't know, you know, the other side of what's going on. It's not always as it's made out to be, is it? So I think I'm quite happy that, you know, he is a good dad. He's a lovely husband and he provides for us and, and we're happy.</p>	<p>Elaine 12 (unrom.)</p>
	<p>She was like, you know, 'He's my soulmate,' and blah, blah, blah and, err, they've split up now and you're just like, 'Oh, okay.' You know, just 'cause you don't go round</p>	<p>Elaine 12 (unrom.)</p>

<i>Striving to protect the self</i>	Quote	Location
	advertising the fact that, you know, you've, you've got a good partner and you're lucky and things like that. I don't think it-, I don't think you have to. I don't feel the need, that I have to go round and say those things, no.	
Romantic evidence at the ready	<p>It's sometimes not the massive gesture, it's just more the small things, that I think that, you know, although it might not look romantic, it's being, sort of thoughtful.</p> <p>I think the fact that she knows-, well, I've seen the window wipers aren't working, I go out and do that. I think the fact that that day I thought about her, that she finds it romantic.</p> <p>...some days, he'll do the washing up for me, or, he'll vacuum, and he knows, and he's, like, he does it 'cause he does bother, 'cause he cares, because he knows that I'm tired, you know</p> <p>I probably cook once a month, but when I do cook that once a month, well, I know that Jane appreciates the fact that I've done that, because it's not something that-, it's not something that I do, if that makes sense.</p> <p>...just doing someone's lunch for the day, for the next day. Putting a note in someone's lunch. Umm, getting their car valeted. Er, I don't know. Organising a-, even organising a babysitter so she can go-, well, organising it so I can look after the kids and she can go out.</p> <p>...it sounds silly when I say it out loud, yeah, just like, I know for a fact that we always take a drink to bed.</p> <p>If he's been out with his friends, just, I know it's probably not romantic to other people, but he'll always come back and bring me my favourite takeaway</p> <p>...that was probably a romantic gesture, because I was just being thoughtful and considerate, knowing that he'd got a stressful day</p> <p>...have a good conversation about things that are important to her. [ ] And things that matter and things that we need to resolve. And things we needed to talk about and she'd be happy. [ ] They don't have to be romantic. For it to be a romantic night.</p> <p>...the two of us happy, it's going to be romantic, do you know what I mean? That's-, in fact, that, yes, that, that would be it, realistically. It doesn't-, I'm not saying every time, but do you know what I mean? But in, in fact no, because if we're happy, yes, every, every, every time it would be (romantic), there would be no reason it wouldn't be.</p>	<p>Will 3</p> <p>Don 19</p> <p>Hannah 9</p> <p>Martyn 6</p> <p>Will 8</p> <p>John 7</p> <p>Kelly 3</p> <p>Hilary 10</p> <p>Peter 27</p> <p>Martyn 1</p>

<b>Striving to protect the self</b>	<b>Quote</b>	<b>Location</b>
	Probably other people would see it as romantic but I don't really see it as such.	Jackie 14 (unrom.)
	I don't know whether I class things as romantic though. I don't think what I do, you know, things like that, I don't sit there and think, 'Oh, that's romantic. That's, you know, romantic that he's done that.'	Elaine 12 (unrom.)
	We've got some good friends that, you know, who'll try to come round, you know, just go for date night or they'll phone up, 'We just fancy a curry,' on a Friday night [ ] it's nice sharing things with, like, another couple that's got the same sense of humour and chat. So I can talk to my friend and, you know, they talk and we talk, so yeah.	Elaine 6 (unrom.)

### Master Theme 3: Romance as a relationship building transaction

Participants speak candidly yet tenderly about their relationship's unique and successful style of romance— that romantic repertoire that brings Sparkle to their lives. As mentioned in *Romance as the Sparkle in the Mundane*, the formula is bespoke to the couple, it could involve going out for dinner; booking holidays or be primarily focused on sex. These repertoires serve to build warmth and foster relationship strength. Underpinning these behaviours is a *Relationship Building Transaction*, which succeeds when roles and responsibilities are fulfilled.

Accordingly, participants *Watching the Romantic Equilibrium* are heartened by displays of matching effort and disgruntled by imbalance or transaction misdemeanors. *When the Transaction Breaks Down* participants can feel sad, rejected and experience loss of self-esteem.

#### Note: Insider perspectives from the non-romantic participants

The non-romantic participants Jackie and Elaine choose not to contribute to the romantic relationship transaction. They acknowledge that they are not putting any effort into romance: Elaine believes all romance leads to sex, which she prefers to avoid. Whereas Jackie believes that that he should be doing it all not her.

Martyn is a different story, *When the Transaction Broke Down*, after the arrival of his first child, he felt displaced, resentful and depressed. I suspect at that time he stepped away from the *Romance as a Relationship Building Transaction* and now concedes to token gestures. It appears that all three participants are assured of relationship strength by the longevity of their coupledness.

#### **Theme: Watching the romantic equilibrium**

The perceived balanced effort of both persons serves to build a harmonious and fulfilling relationship. As such, the participant's romantic efforts in relation to their partner's are under scrutiny. There appears to be a romantic gauge operating which has a highly affective quality.

Relief, pleasure are felt and contentment experienced when balance and a romantic state is achieved. Concern and anxiety when there is uncertainty of a satisfactory outcome, with disappointment and bad tempers accompanying imbalance.

Across the participants there is varying degrees of conscious awareness of the romantic gauge being in operation and the underlying desire for equilibrium.

*But I don't-, I'm not expecting anything back, but you [pause] you-, I suppose in a way you are, but you're not.* Don pg. 5

Conscious awareness inevitably comes with disappointment and frustration that accompanies a lack of balance. Hannah is fatigued and sorry for herself about doing all the giving, whilst Kelly is cross with her husband for not prioritizing their arrangements and failing to match her effort.

*... there's been a lot of time where it's me doing the giving, you know, he's been the recipient, but, not getting it back in vice versa.* Hannah pg. 3

*...we were meant to have a nice night out but he'd been to the football beforehand and he'd got too drunk. So it wasn't what it was meant to be. So I was really annoyed then. 'Cause I'd made the effort and he hadn't.* Kelly pg. 11

*Watching the Romantic Equilibrium* has a highly affective component that incorporates the embodied. Participants show sensitivity to partner's moods in respect to their romantic action (or lack of): bad moods and grumpiness may require that they need to take remedial action.

*If I go all night without giving him a kiss or a cuddle he'd be like, 'Oh you haven't really bothered with me tonight,' that kind of mentality, you know?* Lily pg. 10.

Participants in romantic relationships are monitoring the affective state of their partners and use body language as clues.

*...feel the connection from your partner. That everything's right, eye contact, umm, [pause] and just how they look, how they go at ease.* Peter pg. 25

*It's, you just-, you just know from the vibe you're getting and the smile that, that, that means, you know, you're-, well, put it this way, if it's not going well, you know [both laugh], do you know what I mean? So that's the way that I would weigh it up, but it-, you know, you just know, because they're enjoying it, they're laid back, they're chilled out.* Will pg 6

### **Theme: When the Transaction Breaks Down**

Participants described distressing periods when *the Relationship Building Transaction* broke down. This could be due to illness and depression, or consuming work patterns. These are times when one or both parties do not fulfill their romantic roles. For participants, commonly it was the arrival of children that derailed the *Relationship Transaction*.

When *Romance as a Relationship Building Transaction* fails then the participants lose the *Sparkle in the Mundane*—and are left with the mundane. Furthermore, without romance they are less able to *Protect the Romantic Self* and likely lose confidence and self-esteem. Life can feel grim and bleak. Participants express sadness and talk about this bleakness as: 'going

through the motions', 'just plodding through', 'wasted years', 'blown apart' and 'end of the fairy tale'.

*...it was just, like, probably a wasted few years, do you know what I mean? Where it was kids had took over, house had took over, work had taken over, and we'd forgotten about maybe each other a little bit.* Kenny pg. 12

There appears to be a victim—the person who played their part; who is wounded by the broken transaction. They can struggle to reconcile the situation and feel neglected and sidelined, which is accompanied with feelings of insecurity, jealousy, resentment and rejection.

*...he thought I was going off him. [ ...]we spoke, but then speaking would, like, get into a bit rowdy, arguing about it, and I was like, you know what, just leave me alone, I can't be bothered.* Hannah pg. 7

*I'd got all of Julie's affection and vice-versa, you've then got somebody else coming into that situation, [... ] obviously, some of Julie's affection would then-, or, it goes towards Hailey, so it's taken from me. [... ] Maybe jealousy would be the way to describe it...* Martyn pg. 11

A concerted effort is then needed to re-claim *Romance as a Relationship Building Transaction*; the phrase 'step back' is used repeatedly by participants. They talk about going back to what they use to do, so reengaging with their proven romantic *Relationship Transaction*. Also in a sense stepping back from being otherwise consumed – by work, children or illness. This act of stepping back can be difficult; some participants, like Kenny and Hannah, needed to marshal courage and give themselves a pep-talk.

*...I shouted in my head that, you know, 'You don't want to be stuck like this long already, so early in a relationship,'* Hannah pg. 8

<b>Romance as a Relationship Building Transaction</b>	<b>Quote</b>	<b>Location</b>
Watching the romantic equilibrium	But I don't-, I'm not expecting anything back, but you [pause] you-, I suppose in a way you are, but you're not.	Don 5
	... there's been a lot of time where it's me doing the giving, you know, he's been the recipient, but, not getting it back in vice versa.	Hannah 3
	So I think the balance that we've got is probably-, well it must be right, because we wouldn't still be together really if it wasn't. So I think the balance that we've got, you know, is right.	Hilary 17
	...and it was romantic because we both wanted it to be good. I'd put the effort in. She'd put the effort in. She was enjoying it, I was enjoying it	Kenny 6
	I think the fact that it's just the two of us. In fact, it would be that, and the fact that we both-, you know [ ] both of us have had to make some effort for that to happen...	Martyn 13
	There's got to be something there for you to think, 'I want them to feel nice. I want them to feel special,' but	Lily 15

<b>Romance as a Relationship Building Transaction</b>	<b>Quote</b>	<b>Location</b>
	<p>if you're not bothered about them because you've been together so long and you're just married for being married then you probably wouldn't even think to do anything romantic, so-</p>	
	<p>If I go all night without giving him a kiss or a cuddle he'd be like, 'Oh you haven't really bothered with me tonight,' that kind of mentality, you know? [ ] It's almost like you've got to prove that you still, he's, you know, he's still very important to me.</p>	Lily 10
	<p>...if he went through a phase of not saying it (how attractive she looks), I'd probably say, 'You don't say that to me anymore,' and I'd want to divulge more as to why he doesn't. I'd see it as an issue [ ] Because I think it comes quite naturally, so if he stopped there must be some reason why he's stopped, he's not feeling it anymore..</p>	Lily 13
	<p>...we were meant to have a nice night out but he'd been to the football beforehand and he'd got too drunk. So it wasn't what it was meant to be. So I was really annoyed then. 'Cause I'd made the effort and he hadn't.</p>	Kelly 11
	<p>...you might have had something (romantic) organised. And then that can-, that can cause, you know, cause concern. 'Cause, basically, you might have had something organised then 'cause of work, then that's, you know-, might take precedent. So that's always difficult to, sort of, manoeuvre.</p>	Will 4
	<p>if, you know, we hadn't been out for a while, then, I think she'd, er, definitely voice her opinion. Which is good. I mean, it is good. I think it's a positive. 'Cause sometimes maybe, I'd-, I might be guilty of just, you know, just so busy with work and that, that I'm not-, you know, I just need a gentle reminder every now and then, shall we say</p>	Will 9
	<p>Like, some men are a bit lax, aren't they? You know, you have to prompt them sometimes but, umm, yeah.</p>	Lily 2
	<p>...sometimes if I don't want to watch a (romantic) film, I would say, and it's a bit of a risk. It's a-, you know, she doesn't really get moody, but-, You know, if she showed signs of getting moody, then I'd probably change my decision.</p>	John 5
	<p>It's, you just-, you just know from the vibe you're getting and the smile that, that, that means, you know, you're-, well, put it this way, if it's not going well, you know [both laugh], do you know what I mean? So that's the way that I would weigh it up, but it-, you know, you just know, because they're enjoying it, they're laid back, they're chilled out.</p>	Will 6

<b>Romance as a Relationship Building Transaction</b>	<b>Quote</b>	<b>Location</b>
	<p>...feel the connection from your partner. That everything's right, eye contact, umm, [pause] and just how they look, how they go at ease.</p> <p>...you know, just to do something as like-, even like a Mother's Day. To take you out. But he's not that way inclined. And it just falls on deaf ears, whatever you say.</p> <p>I always feel like he should be doing the romance, not me,...</p> <p>I suppose it probably might have-, when we were together at the beginning, I think you do plan things, you know, like nice underwear and, you know, and-, or romantic things like that but not now, no.</p> <p>They're doing it for you, aren't they, like the little gestures and that? They're making an effort. I sound really selfish now because it's, like, all him making the effort and not me. [Respondent laughs]</p> <p>I think with men, I think romance, they'll-, it tends to lead just to sex, doesn't it? I think that's their, sort of, image of a romantic night out. But I think with me, I'm, you know, just being in a nice place with nice conversation, nice food or, you know, just being relaxed and happy at the end of the day. I suppose that's romantic, if you know that the other person's feeling happy and relaxed with themselves. That's-, yeah, rather than maybe putting that person in a situation that they don't want to be in, yeah.</p> <p>I feel a bit grumpy sometimes but then I'm just, like, 'No, I don't want it. I'm not in the mood for it. I'm tired. I've been at work all day. I've been running round. I've taken one to gymnastics, picked her up and dropped them at guides. I've done everything for everyone else. The last thing I want to do is that.' [Respondent laughs]. So, so quite a few times I'm like that, 'It's not happening.'</p>	<p>Peter 25</p> <p>Jackie 2 (unrom.)</p> <p>Jackie 2 (unrom.)</p> <p>Elaine 9 (unrom.)</p> <p>Elaine 10 (unrom.)</p> <p>Elaine 9 (unrom.)</p> <p>Elaine 3 (unrom.)</p>
<p>When the transaction breaks down</p>	<p>I just, physically, couldn't be bothered (suffering depression). So, he was, like-, because he's always been used to me doing a lot of the giving, for him it was, like, he thought I was going off him. [ ]we spoke, but then speaking would, like, get into a bit rowdy, arguing about it, and I was like, you know what, just leave me alone, I can't be bothered. Like it or lump it, basically.</p> <p>So it was-, it was a-, it was difficult to, umm-, it was difficult to manage.</p> <p>'Cause, you'd wanna do all those things, but you just simply couldn't do them. 'Cause, you know, she'd be, like, knackered with the kids, and it was, like, like, really, sort of, knowing that, you know, the kids come first, then.</p>	<p>Hannah 7</p> <p>Will 13</p>

<b>Romance as a Relationship Building Transaction</b>	<b>Quote</b>	<b>Location</b>
	<p>...it was just, like, probably a wasted few years, do you know what I mean? Where it was kids had took over, house had took over, work had taken over, and we'd forgotten about maybe each other a little bit.</p>	Kenny 12
	<p>I'd got all of Julie's affection and vice-versa, you've then got somebody else coming into that situation, [ ] obviously, some of Julie's affection would then-, or, it goes towards Hailey, so it's taken from me. I'm trying to think, would jealous-, maybe I felt like I'd got my nose put a bit out of joint, and I'm, like, 'Oh.' All of a sudden, it's not just, you know, I don't know. Maybe jealousy would be the way to describe it,</p>	Martyn 11
	<p>I would say down, and, you know, it does get you down, and, umm, I'm not going to say the word 'depressed', but you can then, sort of, [pause]</p>	Martyn 12
	<p>I put my kids above her, which, you know, it, it, it's not gonna make your, er, relationship, your marriage work. I was a good father, but I wasn't a good husband. Er, so I understand. So I can look back, hold my head in the mirror and say, 'Look, I understand what, what she did (ex-wife had an affair and left him). You know, I'm not angry about anything.</p>	Peter 6
	<p>I've been in a past relationship where, you know, we would, like, make collages out of photos. But I would never do that now. [ ] Because I thought it was ridiculous.</p>	John 7
	<p>...if you have got a big family and it's manic in your house. And you're both going out to work and, if you're doing that for such a long time, it does happen (lack of romance). It's happened with us, I've seen it happen with other people. I think if you do take a step back, it all comes back though.</p>	Kelly 17
	<p>It become boring, and it just really did. Arguments and, you know, we'd say, like, 'Same stuff every week,' but none of us would go, 'Well let's do this then, let's do this then.' So it did just fade out.</p>	Don 13
	<p>... that's not to say that you can't have romance any time during a relationship or a long-term relationship or being married as such as we are. But I think it's probably just never been that way...</p>	Jackie 18 (unrom.)
	<p>I think because-, maybe because we've been together that long and we've-, neither of us are romantic and maybe that's probably why.</p>	Elaine 10 (unrom.)

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**Appendix 32:**  
**Glossary**

## **Glossary**

This glossary cites definitions from reputed sources, from Vivien Burr's (2015) *Social Constructionism* to Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke's (2012) *Successful Qualitative Research*. *Italics are used below where I have contextualised a definition to the thesis, or the definition is a product of, or specific to, this research.*

**Blueprints** Three forms of relationships as identified by Cancian (1987/1990): the Independence, Interdependence and Companionship blueprints. The extent that the blueprints differed, Cancian (1987/1990) suggested, was related to the degree to which love was in conflict with self-development, and the polarisation of gender roles. The Companionship blueprint reflected a traditional marital formula that privileged hegemonic ideals and involved women being subjugated in order to sustain family life. The Interdependence blueprint involved gender-neutral roles with both partners negotiating contributions, being dependent on each other, and whereby supporting each other's self-development was seen as strengthening commitment. In contrast, the Independence blueprint privileged individual pursuits and personal development over and above a committed relationship.

**Construction** A term that Braun and Clarke (2013) describe as: '...can be used to refer to a process and a product. As a process, it is about the production of meaning and reality through language, representations and other social processes... As a product it refers to a specific object or meaning that has been produced through this process...' (p.328.)

**'Cool' cognition** The original terms 'hot' and 'cold' cognition were introduced by Ableson (1963, cited in Safran & Greenbert, 1982) to distinguish between cognitive processes which are affective in nature and those which are affect free. The underlying idea is that feelings can serve as a signal, to the individual experiencing them, of the need for sense-making (e.g. Goldfried & Davison, 1976, cited in Safran & Greenberg, 1982). 'Cold'—or 'cool'—cognition can be understood as those thoughts, memories and mental representations of events, which may have at one time been 'hot', therefore burning and emotive, that have been addressed with reflection and extensive meaning making and now are expressed in a considered measured manner. Areas of 'cool' cognition can be recognised when the participant speaks about their own sense-making, a theory they have developed, or a cooling of emotion. See also 'Hot' cognition.

**Critical realism** A theoretical approach that assumes an ultimate reality, but claims that the way reality is experienced and interpreted is shaped by culture, language and political interests. (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p.329)

**Deconstruction** The analysis of a piece of text to reveal the discourses and systems of oppositions operating within it. (Burr, 2015, p.235)

**Discourse** This term is used to refer to a systematic, coherent set of images, metaphors and other semantic formations that construct an object in a specific way (Burr, 2015). The marital discourse, for example involves concepts like commitment, trust and fidelity (Willig, 1997). Discourses pre-exist and operate as the medium through which we come to understand our environment and ourselves. A discourse should be fairly big; it needs to contain many constructions and an array of subject positions. *Discourses offer different versions of what it means to be 'romantic' for example.*

**Discursive economy** Represents the discursive resources that are accessible; also referred to as the discursive terrain. *I have a preference for the word 'economy' over 'resources' as it encompasses issues related to power (Willig, 2001).* See Discursive terrain.

**Discursive Emotional Dynamics** *A theoretical offering that stems from this research, which illustrates how available discourse and relationship contexts construct the ways in which we can experience ourselves in our romantic relationships. It enables us to explore the relationship between discourses, accordant subject positions, and the emotional meaning making constructed within that context which then implicates future positioning. Importantly, Discursive Emotional Dynamics gives us an understanding as to why we mobilise some subject positions and not others.*

**Discursive resources** See Discursive terrain; *I use the terms interchangeably.*

**Discursive terrain** Those accessible discourses and the subject positions they contain. Given discourses are (re)produced by society, people who live in different social domains will likely have access to different discourses, and consequently their discursive terrain will vary. *In this thesis, I mention romantic discursive terrain, which refers to the available discourses when speaking on the subject of romance. I also posit that the discursive terrain of single adults will likely differ from those in established relationships, as their social domain is not the same.*

**Dual focus methodology** A form of binocular research that combines two methodologies (Willig, 2017). In this thesis I combine Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) and Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA). This dual focus methodology attempts to draw on the strengths of both methodologies and produce a more complete understanding of experiential phenomena (Willig, 2017b). Willig (2017, p. 285) introduces dual focus methodology with reference to Colahan's pioneering research: 'Colahan (2014; see also Colahan *et al.*, 2012) developed a dual focus methodology in order to investigate the experience of 'satisfaction' in long-term heterosexual relationships. He combined IPA and FDA in a cycle of analysis which

allowed him to examine the interplay between language, culture and experience with the aim of developing an understanding of how participants experienced 'relationship satisfaction' within a particular social and discursive context.' This dual focus methodology that combines IPA with FDA, Willig (2017) proposes 'allows researchers to situate subjective experiences within their socio-cultural contexts and thus expand the usual remit of IPA studies' (p. 285).

**Emergent theme** A term that describes initial low-level themes as used in Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Representing an early stage of analysis, emergent themes are conceptual labels that the researcher uses to represent each section of text, based on initial exploratory comments. They should capture experiential qualities that are significant at that point (Willig, 2008). Braun and Clarke (2013) add "emergent' signals that these themes are preliminary' (p.330).

**Empathic interpretation** This approach to interpretation seeks to elaborate and amplify the meaning that is contained within the material that presents itself. Here, the interpreter stays with (rather than digs below) what presents itself and focuses on what is manifest (as opposed to that which is hidden). (Willig, 2012, p.13)

*In this thesis an empathic interpretation was taken with the IPA to the interviews.*

**Empowered/subjugated** In line with Foucault's claim that knowledge and power are inextricably linked, these terms refer to the processes whereby certain constructions, subject positions, or subjectivities are privileged as the norm (empowered) or marginalised (subjugated) within a given set of socio-historical discursive conditions. (Colahan, 2014, p. 360)

**Enliven** *Voicing the lived consequence of discursive location. The FDA can deduce, from within various subject positions, what can be felt, thought and experienced. However, the reality of what people actually feel, think or experience cannot be answered by this approach alone (Willig, 2013). Consequently, with reference to hermeneutic phenomenology in the form of IPA, I chose to 'enliven' my research, to articulate the subjective experience produced by romantic discourses. In comparison, Stephen Frosh refers to a 'thickening' of readings when he additionally employs psychoanalytic interpretative strategies in conjunction with social constructionism (Willig, 2013).*

**Enlivened discursive terrain** *The combination of FDA and IPA provides an enlivened view of the discursive terrain. FDA creates an outline of the discursive terrain; it identifies the discourses and the subject positions they contain. People can be seen speaking from different subject positions and the FDA registers this movement. However, the IPA, with its attention on emotion and experiential claims, can be seen as fully enlivening the terrain. We can now appreciate their*

*joy and hope or their hurt and frustration. Also, we can observe the entrenchment or pace and gait that comes with taking up subject positions; some may be emphatically rejected while others may be swiftly adopted.*

**Essentialism** The view that objects (including people) have an essential, inherent nature that can be discovered. (Burr, 2015, p.236)

**Epistemology** The philosophy of knowledge. The study of the nature of knowledge and the methods of obtaining it. (Burr, 2015, p.236)

**Formulation** A concept from Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), also referred to as a gestalt. An arrangement of the master themes underpinned with various combinations of the higher order themes as experiential sub-themes. A researcher may need to contemplate several formulations in order to find one that addresses the research questions and speaks convincingly to the phenomenological experience of the participant(s).

**Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA)** There is no recipe for conducting FDA; it is an analysis of discourse undertaken in the Foucauldian spirit of unpacking the taken-for-granted to reveal insights to broader social tensions and underlying power dynamics.

**Genealogy** A historical review, advocated by Foucault, to illustrate that our understanding is historically-situated, that meanings constructed may vary over the centuries, and that depending on our location in time we are positioned by available discourse. *The genealogy, or history of romance, presented in this thesis shows that romantic love is a Western construct that evolved from the glorification of courtly love in twelfth century feudal Europe and became the dominant way of conceiving marriage in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.*

**Gestalt** See Formulation.

**Hegemonic** A description for that which is dominant in a particular socio-cultural context. Hegemonic masculinity for example, rejects behaviours perceived as feminine and is largely reflective of a heterosexual, authoritative and macho man—as represented by the masculine ideal ‘retributive man’. It was Rutherford (1988, cited in Edley & Wetherall, 1997) in his analysis of masculine representations that distinguished ‘retributive man’ from the ‘new man’. See Retributive Man.

**Hermeneutics** The theory of the rules that preside over interpretation (Stewart, 1989).

**Heteronormativity** A concept developed in queer theory that describes the social privileging of heterosexuality and the assumption that heterosexuality is the only natural and normal sexuality. (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p.331)

**Heteronormative hierarchy** This model suggests that people aligning themselves with heterosexual norms, adopting traditional gender roles, prizing monogamy, and raising children, are privileged and enjoy a higher status than others (Coates, 2013).

**Higher order theme** A concept from Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA); also called a higher-level theme, it is a broad or superordinate theme under which emergent themes cluster. Depending on the final formulation, a higher order theme can become a master theme or be retained as sub-theme to a master theme. Alternatively they might be eliminated from the formulation for a number of reasons, including they are subsumed within another higher order theme, or they do not merit the research question and/or fully voice the participant(s) concern. See also Sub-theme.

**'Hot' cognition** This can be defined as 'those matters in a person's life which are burning, emotive and dilemmatic' (Eatough & Smith, 2008, p.186). 'Hot' cognition can be recognised by affect-laden verbal or non-verbal expressions, for example tears, change in pitch or abruptness. 'Hot' cognition may require interpretation by the researcher, as the nature of the emotion suggests that the individual has yet to process or make sense of these feelings. See also 'cool' cognition.

**Idiographic** An approach to knowledge production that is used in Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, which is based on the specific and the individual (e.g. case studies and small samples), rather than the shared and the generalisable (e.g. quantitative survey methods). (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p.331)

**Insider perspective** A term associated with Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). It was deployed by Jonathan Smith (1996) in a positioning paper, which introduced IPA as an articulation of a phenomenological approach to psychology that involves the meticulous examination of human lived experience, in an attempt to provide an 'insider's perspective'. Accordingly, IPA requires a detailed analysis of verbatim accounts, generally produced by interview, with the aim of amplifying experiential qualities to reflect the person's concerns.

**Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)** An articulation of a phenomenological approach to psychology that involves the meticulous examination of human lived experience, in an attempt to provide an 'insider's perspective'. It is primarily concerned with accessing the meaning and texture of subjective experience. IPA was introduced by Jonathan Smith (e.g.

1996), who saw its merit in the field of health psychology, which had been dominated by social cognitive theory.

**Language-dominant conceptualisation** A social constructionist conceptualisation of the relationship between discourse and experience. It offers that discursive resources produce particular experiential realities (Willig, 2017). In undertaking a dual focus methodology that combines IPA with FDA it is necessary to conceptualise the relationship between discourse and experience in order to determine how the findings are integrated. *This thesis adopts a language-dominant conceptualisation; accordingly the reading unfolds as a top-down story showing how discursive resources produce particular romantic realities.* See also Dual focus methodology.

**Macro social constructionism** A term used 'to refer to forms of social constructionism that focus on the constructive force of the culturally available discourses, and the power relations embedded within them' (Burr, 2015, p.237). Micro social constructionism, on the other hand, focuses on the structure of accounts and the construction of identities within dialogue. *The research in this thesis is macro social constructionist. Given the absence of any references to micro social constructionism in this thesis, for simplicity I refer to it as social constructionist.*

**Master summary table** A concept from Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). A table, which groups the master themes with their accordant experiential sub themes and associated quotes from transcripts. The provision of verbatim quotes demonstrates the evidential base of the formulation. See also Formulation.

**Master theme** A concept from Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) that is also called master experiential themes. Representing the final outcome of the IPA, master themes should address the research question. In IPA there is no set expectation to have a specific number of master themes, rather they will vary from one study to another. Each master theme is supported by experiential sub-themes and should be validated with verbatim quotes from the transcripts. See also Master summary table.

**Mainstream** A term used to delineate that research, which searches for singular universal 'truths', from which they can ascribe generalisable laws. Colahan (2014, p.1) describes the mainstream approach as taking 'a realist, positivist, and essentialist approach to knowledge and research'. Correspondingly, mainstream research is typical of scientific, experimental and psychological inquiry.

**Member checking** The practice of checking one's analysis with participants, to ensure it does not misrepresent their experiences; often treated as a form of validation in qualitative analysis. (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 332)

**New man** In his analysis of masculine representations, Rutherford (1988, cited in Edley & Wetherall, 1997) distinguished 'retributive man' from the 'new man'. The label 'new man' denotes someone who engages with housework, child care and seeks to get in touch with his emotional side (e.g. Whannel, 2005). In many ways the 'new man' is a feminised male, indeed the fashion world saw the 'new man' as a lucrative market, being more body and fashion conscious. See also Retributive man.

**Phenomenology** An influential philosophy in qualitative research that originated in the early twentieth century with philosopher Edmund Husserl. There are many varieties of phenomenology, but broadly speaking it is concerned with exploring the experience of being human.

**Pluralism** A combined approach to qualitative research, characterised by either within-method or across-method pluralistic approaches. Across-method pluralism analyses a single data set with different qualitative methods; the analysis is conducted either by a single researcher (e.g. Burck, 2005, 2011) or multiple researchers (e.g. Frost *et al.*, 2010). Within-method pluralistic approaches can involve analysing a single data set with variations of a qualitative technique (e.g. Frost, 2009) or deploying multiple researchers to interpret the data using one qualitative technique.

**Pre-existing groups** A focus group that is formed by a pre-established group of people, for example a friendship circle or work colleagues.

**Privilege** The endorsement of a certain practice, normally by way of a dominant discourse. *For example, we live in a society where romantic love is privileged as a normal and taken-for-granted way of being.*

**Positioning** A process which Burr (2015) concisely defines as the 'practice of locating oneself or others as particular kinds of people through one's talk' (p.238). Braun and Clarke (2013) elaborate that positioning 'represents the process by which subject positions within discourse are mobilised through language; refers to the locating of individuals (including the researcher) in systems of representation about particular objects' (p.332). *In this study, for example, the male participants would frequently position themselves as 'retributive men' and take up the hegemonic 'Traditional Romantic' or 'Strategic Romantic' subject positions in a bid to ensure they did not come across as feminine.*

**Positioning theory** Conceptualises how different forms of subjective experience are produced. It endeavours to theorise subjectivity, via the concept of the subject position; in that the individual is constructed by the take up of various subject positions in discourse.

**Positivism** A theoretical perspective for making sense of the world which assumes that the world exists independently of our ways of getting to know it, and that if we observe properly, we can discover the reality of the world. (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p.334)

**Postmodernism** The rejection of 'grand narratives' in theory and the replacement of a search for truth with a celebration of the multiplicity of (equally valid) perspectives. (Burr, 2015, p.238)

**Practice** A term that Braun and Clarke (2013) describe as capturing: '...the very diverse 'things that people do'. Often used in place of the term 'behaviour', but it is conceptually much broader than a traditional understanding of behaviour because it includes things like language use and moral codes.' (p.335.) It reflects the possibilities for action contained within the construction and associated subject position and thereby represents what can be said and done from within different discourses. *For example, the chivalric 'romantic love' discourse constructs romance as 'pleasing her', in which case romance would be incompatible with her being upset or disappointed.*

**'Pure' relationship** A form of relationship as proposed by Giddens (1992). In *The Transformation of Intimacy*, Giddens (1992) examined the various social and ideological factors that have contributed to changes in intimate relationships and offered hope of the possibility of a 'pure' relationship, which is egalitarian and operates on democratic negotiation. It can be seen that this version of coupledness is constructed as rational and promotes the discourse of intimacy, or personal emotional fulfilment. In such relationships there is a more symmetrical balance of power, it is gender neutral and accordingly less observant of the heteronormative order. Giddens' portrayal of the 'pure' relationship is one that can be entered and exited at will, that people should stay together when they can achieve emotional and personal fulfilment. In this relationship there is no expectation of sexual exclusivity. In this way, Giddens' 'pure' relationship pre-supposes an individualistic society and a privileging of the needs of 'the self' over the needs of society or family life.

**Purpose-constructed group** A traditional form of focus group, whereby the researcher brings together strangers for the purpose of the study. *This research deploys purpose-constructed groups.*

**Realism** An ontological and epistemological position which assumes that the world has a true nature which is knowable and real, discovered through experience and research; that we 'know' an object because there are inherent facts that we can perceive and understand. (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p.335)

**Relativism** An ontological and epistemological position which assumes 'that there are multiple, constructed realities, rather than a simple, knowable reality; it holds that all we have are representations or accounts of what reality is' (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 335). Therefore 'a relativist epistemological position states that, theoretically, knowledge is always perspectival and therefore a singular, absolute truth is impossible' (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p.29). *This thesis takes a relativist stance.*

**Retributive man** In his analysis of masculine representations, Rutherford (1988, cited in Edley & Wetherall, 1997) distinguished 'retributive man' from the 'new man'. The 'retributive man' can be thought of as the hegemonic masculine norm described as tough, authoritative and independent. See also New man.

**Romantic discursive terrain** See Discursive terrain. *Refers to the available discursive resources when speaking on the subject of romance. Within the romantic discursive terrain, it is theorised that individuals take up various subject positions, which provide the basis for their identity and romantic experience.*

**Romantic love** *A form of love characterised by romance.*

**Romantic repertoire** *The formula of romantic rituals that a couple engages in—whether it be getting drunk together, going out for dinner or sexual intimacy. It is not to be confused with the technical usage of repertoire as derived from discursive psychology, which is a way of understanding the linguistic resources that a speaker uses in their constructions. In this thesis, it is argued that these romantic repertoires are produced by discursive location, for example experiencing romance as a candle-lit dinner is produced by location in the chivalric 'romantic love' discourse.*

**Social construction** A broad theoretical framework...which rejects a single ultimate truth. Instead, it sees the world, and what we know of it as produced (constructed) through language, representation and other social processes rather than discovered. (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 336) *This research is theorised as social constructionist.*

**Sub-themes** A concept from Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). The experiential themes clustered under a master theme in the final outcome of the analysis. At

an earlier stage of the IPA they would have been recognised as higher order themes. *In this thesis, for example, Watching the Romantic Equilibrium and When the Transaction Breaks Down are sub-themes to the master theme: Romance as a Relationship Building Transaction.*

**Subjectivity** The term used by social constructionists to refer to: ‘...the state of personhood or selfhood. It replaces mainstream psychological terms such as ‘personality’ and ‘individual.’ (Burr, 2015, p.238.) The FDA conceptualises subjectivity as what can be felt, thought and experienced from within various subject positions. This is arguably the most speculative aspect of FDA as what people actually feel, think and experience cannot be answered by this approach (Willig, 2008). From a phenomenological theoretical perspective, subjectivity refers to the ways in which an individual understands and experiences their sense of self.

**Subject position** Implied position within a particular discourse that may be occupied or taken up by a person, providing a basis for their identity and experience. (Burr, 2015, p.239) Braun and Clarke (2013) suggest that ‘subject positions offer ways of thinking about oneself in relation to the world, and delimit the options available for action.’ (p.337.) *Subject positions address people in certain ways, for example, in this thesis the ‘Hard Realist’ position, which is located in the ‘economic’ discourse, addresses a woman as hard, wise to life and sceptical, accordingly she rejects or belittles romantic gestures.*

**Suspicious interpretation** This type of interpretation tends to be theory driven. To extract (or it could be argued, construct) deeper meaning from an account, it is necessary to have access to a theoretical formulation that provides concepts with which to interrogate the text. (Willig, 2012, p.12)

*In this thesis a ‘suspicious’ interpretation was taken when FDA was deployed with the focus group transcripts.*

**Working class** *In this thesis, I use the term ‘working class’ in its broadest sense—those who are not educationally or financially privileged. To identify working-class participants for this study, I included those people who matched grades C1, C2 and D from the Ipsos Social Grading classification system and excluded university graduates.*