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**'Home is where the heart is':
everyday geographies of young heterosexual couples' love in and of
homes**

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on the relationships between heterosexuality, love, and home. It examines the homemaking practices and relationship activities of 14 heterosexual couples, and in particular the experiences of women in these relationships, who are aged between 20-40 years, have no children, and live in Hamilton, Aotearoa New Zealand. It is argued that heterosexual bodies that 'love', and the domestic spaces they occupy, are mutually constituted and continually reproduced through the everyday practices of homemaking.

'Couple' interviews, solicited diaries and self-directed photography, follow-up individual interviews and evaluation questionnaires are used to access couples', and in particular women's, everyday geographies of heterosexuality, love and home. A combination of qualitative research methods and feminist poststructuralist theory is used to give rise to an embodied, emotionally situated and partial geography.

My findings are organised around three spatial scales: body, dwelling, and household and beyond. Focusing on the first scale – body – provides an opportunity for foregrounding gendered and sexed bodies as important sites of homemaking. A multiplicity of homemaking practices occur at the site of the body, including: the feelings, emotions, sensations, and language of love; the expressions and spaces of physical affection and intimacy; and the presence of corporeal and domestic dirt. Focusing on the second scale – dwelling – allows for an understanding of the ways in which discourses of love are mapped on to specific materialities of home. Issues of privacy and the negotiated use of shared domestic spaces, the creation and enactment of domestic activities and routines, and the accumulation and arrangement of material domestic objects all come to the fore when considering dwellings. The third scale – household and beyond – is used to examine some of the ways in which households and homemakers are connected to broader social, cultural, political and economic relations of power beyond the physical dwelling. Paying attention to the household and beyond prompts a consideration of the ways in which housing tenure and the practices of household consumption can dissolve the public and private boundaries that surround home.

The heteronormativity of geographical discourse means that the relationship between heterosexuality, love and home is often taken-for-granted as 'natural' and 'normal' and as such is left 'invisible' and unremarked upon. Making the relationship between heterosexuality, love and home explicit in the production of geographical knowledge displaces ontological and epistemological assumptions about the naturalness and normality of heterosexuality. This study responds to the lack of critical attention paid to the relationship between love, heterosexuality and home in geography. Considering the homemaking practices and relationship activities of heterosexual couples encourages a more critical understanding of the normative and powerful ways in which heterosexual bodies and domestic spaces are mutually constituted.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

A woman, aged between 20-30 years, is standing in the kitchen of her house throwing clothes and yelling at her partner, a man of around the same age, 'I feed the dog, I put out the rubbish, I do all the washing!' The man stares at her sheepishly. She storms into their bedroom and slams the door. After a night sleeping on the couch and an awkward encounter with his partner in the kitchen, the man is left home alone. He leaves the house with their dog in tow. When the woman arrives home later that day she is pleasantly surprised to see that her partner has left small Post-it notes on various items around the house pointing out that he has loosened the jam jar lid for her, fed the dog, put the rubbish out, washed, ironed and folded the laundry, and has found her the nicest apple in the fruit bowl. The couple are shown in bed together. The man pre-empts his disruptive snoring and writes a final Post-it note apologising for her sleepless night, which he sticks to his face. As the woman rolls over, after reading the note, a slight smile emerges on the man's face. He knows that his partner has forgiven him.¹

The above vignette is a description of an advertisement for Post-it notes that screened on television in Aotearoa² New Zealand last year. It is a common media depiction of home, homemaking, heterosexuality, love, coupledness, and gendered roles and relations. I start with this vignette because it points to the ways in which discourses of home are imbued with normative and naturalised notions of heterosexuality and the ways in which homemaking practices are constitutive of heterosexual subjectivities.³

¹ See the following website for a clip of the television advertisement, titled "A Little Bit of Wonderful Everyday" (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tEfXqM_B4Mc).

² Aotearoa is the Māori term for New Zealand. Māori became an official language of New Zealand in the 1980s, and since that time the term Aotearoa has been used by individuals and groups in a range of both formal and informal contexts. Sometimes it is used alone and sometimes it is used with the term New Zealand. Throughout this thesis, I mainly use the term New Zealand but I do so in a way that acknowledges the politics surrounding the naming of places.

³ I use the term subjectivities, over identities, as a way to highlight the 'spatial imperative of subjectivity' (Probyn 2003). Probyn (2003) argues subjectivities are produced, and the site and space of their production is crucially important. She notes that subjects are interpellated or 'called in to being' by a range of site-specific ideological systems. This means that people often inhabit conflicting and contradictory subjectivities in different spaces and different times.

The relationship between heterosexuality and home is widely taken-for-granted as the 'norm.' It is seldom questioned. In this thesis it is argued that, despite widely held beliefs, there is nothing 'natural' or 'normal' about the links between heterosexual subjectivities and domestic spaces. Instead, this thesis shows that the relationship between heterosexuality and home is continually reproduced and performed through the everyday practices of homemaking. The central aim of the research is to de-essentialise and denaturalise heterosexuality. I expose the performative power of heterosexuality by revealing it as a sexual subjectivity constructed and reproduced by social, political and cultural spatial relations. Drawing on the lived experiences of 14 heterosexual couples, and in particular the women in these relationships, who are aged between 20-40 years, have no children, and live in Hamilton, New Zealand, I explore the ways in which home is constructed and experienced at a range of spatial scales. Exploring the mutual constitution of heterosexuality and home is a strategic move that displaces ontological assumptions about the naturalness and normality of heterosexuality (Blum and Nast 1996).

The discipline of geography, in varied and complex ways, reifies heterosexuality as the 'natural' and 'normal' sexuality. Geography, as a site of knowledge production, is heteronormative (Bell 2009). A lack of critical attention to the domestic spaces and subjectivities of heterosexuality reinforces the heteronormativity of the discipline. "Leaving heterosexuality unmarked, un-researched, is a clear representation of the weight of heteronormativity in the discipline: heterosexuality simply isn't legible as sexuality" (Bell 2009 119). An implication of ignoring the domestic functions, spaces, bodies and emotions of heterosexuality is that it remains the dominant and invisible form of sexuality in relation to home spaces. The heteronormativity of geographical understandings of home remains intact and unchallenged. Making the relationship between heterosexuality and home explicit in the production of geographical knowledge offers a direct challenge to normative assumptions about heterosexuality. It provides new opportunities for re-conceptualising the gendered and sexed body in geography. Such a challenge encourages a more critical understanding of the

ways in which heterosexual bodies, power and domestic spaces are mutually constituted.

An important focus of this research is the intersection of love, heterosexuality and home. I argue that spatialised and embodied concepts of love are crucial for understanding the relationship between subjectivity and domestic space for young heterosexual couples, and in particular, young women in heterosexual relationships. I decided to examine the connections between love, heterosexuality and home because, as shown in the opening vignette, the discourses of love are often normatively mapped on to the domestic spaces and subjectivities of heterosexuality, and vice versa. Heterosexual love and home constitute each other as 'natural', 'normal', moral, and proper. Love gives heterosexuality and the domestic spaces in which it is constituted the appearance of being 'normal' because love itself is deemed to be a basic biological human experience. "What could, in the end, be more natural than love? We love because of who we are – love just 'is'" (Johnson 2005 137). Discourses of nature and naturalness allow the practices and embodied experiences of heterosexual love and home to remain 'invisible' and unremarked upon. 'Naturalness' exempts the relationship between heterosexuality, love, and home from social or political explanation (see also McDowell 1992).

Crucially, love plays an important role in heterosexual homemaking and subjectivity construction processes. Yet, to my knowledge, this has not received much attention in geography. A gendered politics of knowledge production has excluded love from geographical discourse. The discipline of geography is founded upon a mind/body dualism that is gendered/sexed and sexualised (Longhurst 1997a). This dualism constructs knowledge in a way that privileges the mind and eclipses the body. Grosz (1989 xiv) argues that the mind has traditionally been associated with positive terms such as "reason, subject, consciousness, interiority, activity and masculinity" whilst the body has been implicitly associated with negative terms such as "passion, object, non-consciousness, passivity and femininity." As an emotion, love is normatively associated with the irrational workings of 'the body'. Geography has tended to

exclude from its discourse that which is thought to be emotional, irrational, sensual, private, natural, feminine and of the body. I employ concepts of love and link them to heterosexuality and home in a strategic move to unsettle the masculinism of geography (Longhurst 2001; Rose 1993).

My research, then, is an initial response to a lack of attention paid to the relationship between love, heterosexuality and home. In responding to this lack, discursive constructions of love come under scrutiny as I highlight the constitutive relationship between domestic space and heterosexuality.

Feminist geographers have been engaging in a critique and re-conceptualisation of the discipline for several decades. I show that research on heterosexuality, love and home can offer new challenges to, and exciting possibilities for, social, cultural, feminist, embodied, and emotional geographies. I offer a means to re-theorise geography by fleshing out the 'loving heterosexual body' and making it explicit in the production of geographical knowledge. Examining the ways in which notions of love affect and inform heterosexual couples' – particularly women's – ideas about, and experiences of, home offers a direct challenge to heteronormative, masculinist, and disembodied geographies.

My decision to focus primarily on women's experiences of heterosexual love and home was a conscious and considered one. The discourses of love are situated within a patriarchal and heteronormative framework (Jackson 1993a). As such, heterosexual women continue to be uncritically associated with love and home. This association is ideological, in that it helps to prescribe gendered roles, relations and norms and in practice at an everyday level, in that women still spend more time at home (McDowell 1983a), gain a greater sense of self from homemaking (Domosh and Seager 2001), and continue to find pleasure and pain in love and romance (Jackson 1993a). Bringing the relationship between women, heterosexuality, love and home into question is a political strategy to undercut the presumed normality and naturalness such an association holds.

This research will contribute to the project of developing a spatialised understanding of heterosexual love by examining the sexual-spatial practices

which produce heterosexual home space and by exploring how subjectivity and love are spatial processes. I focus on the practices of heterosexual love and home in a way that problematises heterosexuality. In line with scholars who maintain that emotions are not pre-given, essentialised components of subjectivity, I present an approach to love which “regards the emotion itself as just as much cultural as the conventions which surround it, but which still takes seriously the subjective experience of love” (Jackson 1993b 202).

I have three main research objectives. First, I analyse how heterosexual couples use their homes to construct, consolidate, and sometimes undermine their partnerships and sexual subjectivities. Second, I examine how homes are normatively heterosexualised through homemaking practices and investigate how these norms are sometimes resisted. Third, I consider the ways in which notions of love produce heterosexual feminine subjectivities and spatialities of home. This project therefore seeks to bring together and advance several areas of work: geographies of sexualities; geographies of home; emotional geographies; and feminist and sociological literature on love, romance and sexual intimacy. Feminist, poststructuralist, and geographical theories on ‘the body’ inform this research. These theories provide me with the tools to conduct a thorough reading of the competing discourses, social imaginaries and experiences of heterosexual love and home in contemporary New Zealand.

The homemaking and subjectivity construction processes of couples are examined at three interconnected sites: body, dwelling and household and beyond. This is because home, as a concept and lived experience, operates simultaneously across multiple scales (Blunt and Dowling 2006). The ‘smallest’ scale – body – is used to provide an embodied reading of the relationship between corporeality, love and domestic space. Moving out from the body, the ‘meso’ scale – dwelling – is used to examine the processes of subjectivity construction within domestic space. The ‘largest’ scale – household and beyond – is used to draw attention to the ways in which households and homemakers are connected to societal structures beyond the dwelling. Each scale represents a unique geography of the diverse intersections between heterosexuality, love and

home. When taken as a whole, these three scales offer an in-depth, focused and critical appreciation of the complex uses, experiences and constructions of love and home in New Zealand.

The relationship between heterosexuality, love and home is examined through a version of feminist poststructuralism that holds on firmly to the notion of materiality (see also Johnston and Longhurst 2010). Using this theoretical framework means thinking about bodies as socially constructed and represented through language and discourse as well as 'real' and material.

Bodies ... are deeply embedded in psychoanalytic, symbolic and social processes yet at the same time they are undoubtedly biological, material and 'real'. Bodies are an effect of discourse but they are also foundational. They are referential and material, natural and cultural, universal and unique (Longhurst 2005a 337).

In this description, it is argued that bodies are simultaneously fleshy, material, and biological, and are grounded and experienced within political, economic, cultural and social contexts. Bodies are an intersection of the 'natural' and the 'cultural.' Taking this conceptualisation of bodies further, Johnston and Longhurst (2010 22) argue: "There is no pre-constituted sexed body; instead, a variety of sexed and gendered behaviours can be attached to numerous different bodies, in different times and spaces." Butler's notion of performativity (1990; 1993), which I outline in more detail in chapter 3, is central to understandings of sexed and gendered bodies as both real and socially constructed. Butler (1990; 1993) conceives of gendered and sexed bodies and subjectivities as the effects of repeated, everyday practice. She argues that bodies are not fixed by nature and instead they are acculturated and inscribed by discourse. They are the effect of repetition that congeals over time to produce a seemingly 'natural' body. This does not mean, however, that bodies are completely culturally constructed.⁴

⁴ Multiple versions of feminist poststructuralism have been used by geographers in order to challenge ideas about the body as a natural given. Moss and Dyck (2002), for instance, examine the lives of women with chronic illness. Simmonds (2009) explores Māori women's embodied, spiritual, material and discursive relationship with Papatūānuku. Johnston (1996) looks at the spaces of women's body building. In her own way, each author destabilises the mind/body dualism by drawing on a framework that acknowledges discursive formation *and* materiality and takes into consideration spatial, temporal and cultural contexts.

Bodies have an undeniable biological certainty about them and always exist with political, economic, social and cultural ideological and material spaces (see Nelson 1999 for a discussion on the limits of performativity). Gendered, sexed and sexualised bodies require examination and explanation because there is no 'real' material body on the one hand and cultural representations of bodies on the other.

Just as bodies are sexed, so too are the spaces and places they occupy. Butler's (1990; 1993) notion of performativity lends itself well to understanding the ways in which the spaces of everyday life are produced and performed through the iteration of sexually embodied social practices. As Brown *et al.*, (2007 4) argue: "spaces, whether sexualised, heterosexualised or even homosexualised, are constituted through enactment and contestation of norms or appropriate sexual conduct, even where the sex act itself may seem to be 'irrelevant.'" Crucially, sexualised spaces are neither fixed nor temporally stable. Instead, they change over time and space according to sexualised and gendered norms. An analysis of heterosexuality, then, cannot ignore the sexed and sexualised nature of home. In this respect, there must be room for reconceptualising the relationship between heterosexuality and home as fluid, partial and performative.

Heterosexuality is "constructed as a coherent, natural, fixed and stable category; as universal and monolithic" (Richardson 1996 2). According to Foucault (1981), heterosexuality emerged as a concept in 1870 when it was considered in relation to homosexuality. Since this time, heterosexuality has been the hegemonic, normative sexuality and it underpins a variety of social relations and institutions, including marriage and family. The idea of monogamous procreative sex – the quintessential sexual act – is central to the naturalisation of heterosexuality (Valentine 1993a). This sexual act is fundamentally based on the notion that opposites attract and that desire is the want for the Other and confirmation of the Self. It is commonly believed that 'natural' sexual relations originate in difference, that is, sexual attraction occurs 'naturally' between differently sexed

male and female bodies.⁵ There have been discussions, for example, by Hubbard (2000) and Blum and Nast (1996), about the ways in which ideas surrounding the 'quintessential' sexual act have reduced heterosexuality to a set of pragmatic social relations devoid of any erotic value. Hubbard (2000 197) explains that heterosexuality has become de-eroticised because "sexuality is subordinated to a 'higher' purpose (i.e., procreation)." He makes the point that discourses of morality have naturalised the idea that sex must be a significant and emotionally meaningful exchange between two oppositely sexed bodies with the aim of building a family. In other words, heterosex, when it takes place between a heterosexual couple in the loving spaces of their home, typically euphemised as 'lovemaking', constitutes couples as 'normal', 'proper' and adhering to 'appropriately' sexed and gendered subject positions. Johnson (2005 53) explains: "When making love, sex is purposeful, directed, it aims to consolidate something." Discourses of love legitimise and naturalise certain heterosexual practices, pleasures and bodies. Heterosex for any other purpose, according to institutionalised heterosexual notions of love, is deemed to be outside the bounds of normality and morality.

Geographers have shown that the naturalisation of heterosexuality means that it is assumed to be everywhere and at the same time nowhere. "Heterosexual space and heterosexual desire are all pervasive – just *there*. Heterosexual subjectivity is ubiquitous and thereby *placeless*" (Binnie 2001 107, emphasis in original). The ubiquitous and taken-for-granted nature of heterosexuality means, that in many ways, it is thought to be aspatial and asexual. Nast (1998 192) explains:

⁵ Queer theorists have convincingly argued that the idea of heterosexual relationships as 'natural' expressions of sexual desire for the Other have shaped popular understandings of gay and lesbian relationships. Valentine (1993a), for example, talks about the ways in which lesbian relationships are deemed to emulate heterosexual couples, with 'butch' women supposedly taking up the role of the dominant male partner and feminine women playing the submissive female partner. Queer theorising has also highlighted the ways in which this 'natural' impression comes undone (Bell *et al.*, 1994).

heterosexuality is constructed as benign and/or asexual. By benign, I mean that heterosex's normative public expressions are seen as innocent, natural, or unremarkable: (typically white) hetero-couples kissing in parks, placing a public advert in a local newspaper for a hetero-mate; the public predominance of heterosexual dating agencies; and promotional tourism images of affectionate heterosexual couples, often scantily clad, sipping pina coladas or wading through blue waters with small children in tow, are simply not perceived as racy or even sexy.

The naturalisation of heterosexuality structures the spaces of everyday life. Valentine (1996 150), drawing on Butler (1990; 1993), states: "repetitive performances of hegemonic asymmetrical gender identities and heterosexual desires congeal over time to produce the appearance that the street is normally a heterosexual space." Space and bodies therefore become heterosexual as an effect of repetition. Asymmetrical and complimentary gender roles define constructions and performances of heterosexual masculinity and femininity.

Like the street, home is a taken-for-granted space of heterosexuality. Geographers have shown that home is a heterosexualised space with normative ideas about the formation and use of domestic space idealised in public policy and popular culture (Blunt and Dowling 2006; Gorman-Murray 2007a). The naturalisation of heterosexuality and home has profound impacts on the ways in which people live their lives and experience social and sexual spaces (Hubbard 2000). In contemporary Western societies social imaginaries and political discourses of home have constituted heterosexual pairing as the 'norm.' Heteronormative narratives and practices of love and sexuality are implicated in the definition of what constitutes home, thereby framing people's everyday domestic lives. The dominant scripting of love has been in terms of monogamous heterosexual coupling, institutionalised in marriage (VanEvery 1996) and idealised in social imaginaries of home. Indeed, notions of home continue to be bound up with the practices, forms and experiences of heterosexual love and romance.

The implications of such ideals are wide-ranging and deeply felt. It means that sexual subjectivities, relationships and homemaking practices other than those

comprising a 'loving' heterosexual dyadic relationship, are rendered deviant, abnormal and perverse. In addition, the heterosexualisation of home masks the constructs of heterosexual love. As Johnston (2006) argues, however, heterosexuality and its spaces have no 'natural' ontological status. Rather, they are jointly produced and mutually constituted through performance and practice. The activities, spaces and embodied practices of love and daily domestic living comprise the focus of this project. It is argued that the ordinary practices and performances of home are one of the ways that heterosexual bodies that love and/the domestic spaces they occupy are brought into being. Homes are normatively heterosexualised through homemaking practices and discursive constructs of love. Yet, such gendered and sexualised norms are continually negotiated, contested and resisted.

Geographers interested in the construction and lived experiences of home are yet to include an explicit interrogation of heterosexuality. Most studies of home have brushed over the functions of heterosexuality, although it has been rightfully argued that social imaginaries of home are heterosexualised and this greatly impacts on the lives of non-heterosexuals (Gorman-Murray 2007b; Johnston and Valentine 1995). As the unmarked norm, heterosexuality is assumed to be the focus of most studies of home. Yet, there is actually very little work which explores how homes become heterosexualised through embodied performance and practice (although see Robinson *et al.*, 2004; Thomas 2004). The heteronormativity and masculinism of geographical discourse means that the everyday practices of heterosexual subjecthood, particularly those aspects which are linked to embodiment and emotions – including love, romance and intimacy – are rarely mentioned in studies of home. Heterosexual couples' everyday practices of home are a central part of the fabric which makes up contemporary society but are often taken-for-granted as 'normal' and 'natural' and as such are under-researched and not well-understood. Johnston and Longhurst (2010 59) argue: "home is a rich and important site for understanding sex and sexuality." They call for more work which interrogates the relationship between place, space and sex as a way of realising "new knowledge about the

diversity of sexualities and spaces” (Johnston and Longhurst 2010 161). In seeking to investigate the love lives of a small group of heterosexual couples who live in Hamilton – and the women of these couples in particular – I argue that the ordinary, banal and mundane practices of homemaking need to be addressed.

The ways in which homes function as sites of sexual subjectivity and relationship formation for heterosexual couples is an under-studied area in geography. This research attempts to address this knowledge gap and advance geographical work on heterosexuality and home. In this thesis, the subject of love is used to examine the ways in which heterosexual relationships, and in particular, feminine subjectivities, are constructed, practiced and negotiated in domestic settings. The attention given to heterosexual homemaking and relationship activities offers a direct challenge to naturalised notions of heterosexuality. It enhances current understandings of home by revealing and teasing out the co-constituted relationship between heterosexuality, love and domestic space.

Thesis outline

In this introductory chapter I have established the need for a more thorough examination of the links between heterosexuality, love and home. The relationship between heterosexuality, love and home has long been conceived of as ‘natural’ and ‘normal.’ Yet, I argue that the domestic spaces and subjectivities of heterosexuality are continually (re)produced through the everyday practices and performances of homemaking at a variety of spatial scales. In setting out to undermine the implicit correlation between heterosexuality, love and home I have outlined the main aims of the research: to analyse how heterosexual couples use their homes to constitute and consolidate their sexual subjectivities and interpersonal relationships; to examine how homemaking practices both conform to and resist heteronormativity; and to consider the ways in which notions of love produce normative heterosexual feminine subjectivities and spatialities of home. The overall aim of this thesis, then, is to show that the relationship between heterosexuality, love and home is mutually defining and constitutive as opposed to something that is ‘natural’, ‘normal’ and inevitable. It

aims to challenge aspatial and asexual conceptions of heterosexuality. The remainder of this thesis is concerned with exploring the diversity and complexity of heterosexual love by focusing on three particular spatial scales of home.

In chapter 2 I locate the research within a New-Zealand-specific socio-cultural context. I do this to avoid universalising homemakers' experiences. The research is situated within wider debates on the importance of geographies from 'down under' (Gorman-Murray *et al.*, 2008). I also begin to situate myself in the research; a process of critical reflection which helps to ensure that I remain a constant presence throughout this thesis.

Chapter 3 extends the argument that geographical discourse is couched largely within a heteronormative framework. In order to expose and contest geography's heteronormativity, I bring together and critically examine four bodies of scholarship: geographies of home; geographies of sexualities; geographies of emotion; and sociological and feminist literature on love, romance and intimacy. The material reviewed in this chapter illustrates the notion that home is a sexualised space, in particular a heterosexualised space, but not in the sense that it is pre-given, 'natural' or 'normal'. A critical reading of this scholarship creates a space within the discipline of geography to problematise discursive constructions of love and home. It affords the opportunity to challenge naturalised and normalised notions of heterosexuality that continue to dominate geographical discourse.

Methodologies are the focus of chapter 4. The research is informed by qualitative feminist-inspired research methods. Four interconnected phases of research – joint and individual interviews, solicited diaries and self directed photography, follow-up interviews, and evaluation questionnaires – were used to access the everyday geographies of heterosexual love and home. I reflect on the motivations for, and critiques of, using these research methods. The process of analysis is outlined and I critically reflect upon the interpersonal dynamics of intimate research relationships. I bring the chapter to a close by considering my

position in this research and argue that the researcher's embodied subjectivities play an important role in the construction of geographical knowledge.

Chapter 5 examines the body as an important site of homemaking. The body is the closest and most immediate of geographical spatial scales. I consider a multiplicity of homemaking practices that occur at the site of the body, including the feelings, emotions and sensations of love and the ways in which they are talked about, the expressions and spaces of physical affection and intimacy, and the presence of corporeal and domestic dirt, in order to highlight the constitutive relationship between heterosexual corporeality and home. This chapter provides an embodied account of heterosexual love and home.

The specific materialities of the dwelling are the topic of chapter 6. I examine the ways in which heterosexual love and subjectivity are constructed within domestic space. I make visible the links between discourses of love and homemaking practices by focusing on the material, tangible and visible articulations of heterosexual love within the dwelling. In particular, I focus on issues of privacy and negotiated use of shared domestic spaces, the creation and enactment of domestic activities and routines, and the accumulation and arrangement of material domestic objects. The empirical data discussed in this chapter points to the various ways home, love and subjectivity construction operate at the level of the everyday, banal, and mundane.

Chapter 7 focuses on homemaking practices at the scale of household and beyond. It is argued that households and homemakers are connected to, and constituted by, wider relations of social, cultural, political and economic power. This chapter draws on empirical data to examine the ways in which subjectivities, space, place and broader power relations intersect to produce heterosexual bodies, love, and home spaces. Issues of housing tenure are examined. Home ownership and renting are the dominant forms of housing tenure in New Zealand. Practices of household consumption are considered. The consumption of domestic goods blurs the public and private boundaries of home and links homemakers to processes of power beyond the dwelling. In this chapter (and in

the thesis as a whole) I thus draw on, and contribute to, geographical arguments about the multi-scalarity of home and homemaking.

In chapter 8, I bring the argument to a close and suggest avenues for future research. I revisit the research objectives and summarise the main arguments. In looking forward, I suggest how the themes explored in this thesis might be adapted and developed in order to expand the relatively small body of work which seeks to explore the constitutive relationship between heterosexuality, love and home.

CHAPTER 2

'Our stories, our spaces and places': locating the research

The editors of a special issue on geographies of sexuality and gender in Australia and New Zealand argue: "Geographical knowledge about sexuality ... remains centred in the Anglo-American context" (Gorman-Murray *et al.*, 2008 237). New Zealand's (and Australia's) position at the 'margins', both physically and discursively, means that most studies on gender and sexuality are excluded from, or subsumed within, Anglophonic geographies. There is an abundance of exciting and ground-breaking research by Australasian geographers on the spatial dimensions of gender and sexuality. Unfortunately, this work is yet to be fully recognised and made use of in wider international scholarly debates. In the afterword of the special issue, Longhurst (2008a 381) contends: "It is important to tell 'our' stories about 'our' spaces and places."

The papers in the special issue mentioned above,⁶ as well as specialist conference sessions⁷ and other publications (Johnston and Longhurst 2010) have challenged the domination of Anglo-American research. They have brought 'down-under' geographies of sexualities and gender from the periphery to the centre. Importantly, however, these down-under geographies do not ignore our position at the 'margins'. Geographical studies of sexuality and gender 'down under' "offer different perspectives and prompts for studying and

⁶ A range of themes, topics and theoretical frameworks are used and examined in this special issue. For example, Ablitt (2008) explores the connections between movement and coming out in the works of gay Australian author David Moluf; Kentlyn (2008) examines gay men and lesbian couple's domestic lives; Caluya (2008) uses notions of affect and desire to explore the relations between race, sexuality and masculinity in Sydney's gay dance clubs; Gorman-Murray (2008a) looks at the relationship between masculinity and home; Johnston and Longhurst (2008) focus attention on researching and teaching sexuality in Australasia; Luzia (2008) looks at same-sex parenting; Mclean (2008) focuses on women's experiences of coming out in Melbourne; Prior (2008) interrogates the shifting discourses of inclusion/exclusion which surround gay bathhouses in Sydney; Prior and Cusack (2008) examine the intersections of sexual and spiritual subjectivities in Sydney's gay bathhouses; Ruting (2008) looks at the changing international reputation of Oxford Street in Sydney; and, Waitt and Warren (2008) look at masculinities and surfing.

⁷ At the 2009 Institute of Australian Geographers Conference and the 2010 New Zealand Geographical Society with Institute of Australian Geographers Conference I, with colleagues, organised specialist sessions that considered geographies of sexuality and gender from 'down-under'.

conceptualising spatialised sexualities” (Gorman-Murray *et al.*, 2008 238). Our position at the ‘margin’ marks us, our geographical experiences, and knowledge production as unique and distinct. In saying this, I do not seek to privilege or celebrate Australasian geographical knowledge, nor do I seek to *add* them to the centre. Like the papers in the special issue I:

offer a corrective to Anglo-American centrism in geographical work on sexuality because sometimes the differences between Anglo-American and Australasian geographical contexts – are understandably – not known or recognised by our Anglo-American colleagues (Gorman-Murray *et al.*, 2008 239).

Using Hamilton, New Zealand as the specific geographical location, I explore 14 homemakers’ culturally specific – gendered, sexualised and ‘raced’ – understandings and experiences of love and home. Embedding this discussion within a specific setting is crucial to avoid constructing homemakers’ experiences as universal. Although New Zealand is influenced by global trends demonstrated in such things as lifestyle media,⁸ these trends are mediated and shaped through a socio-spatial context to create something specific to New Zealand. Meanings are contingent on the specific temporal and spatial context in which they develop. In order to understand more fully the homemaking and relationship activities of some couples in Hamilton, this study is set within a framework that takes into account specific features of the New Zealand context.

Houses and housing in New Zealand

In New Zealand, social norms, governmental strategies and home-financing practices are linked to suburban housing, idealised living, and the heterosexual nuclear family form. Perkins and Thorns (1999) explain in detail how the ‘Kiwi⁹ dream’ of acquiring a family home in the suburbs has long been supported by

⁸ Lifestyle media includes books, magazines, websites, and radio and television shows that focus on topics such as cookery, gardening, travel and home improvement.

⁹ The term ‘Kiwi’ is a colloquial term often used by New Zealanders as a form of self-reference. The name derives from the Kiwi, a flightless bird, which is native to, and a national symbol of, New Zealand.

governmental policies. Subsidised loans and mortgage programmes, particularly in the 1950s and 1960s, supported the home ownership 'idyll' by providing families with financial support when purchasing, altering and/or paying off of a house. The aims of such policies were to assist in creating 'model' New Zealanders who fitted into mainstream social and economic life; citizens who were 'naturally' part of a heterosexual nuclear family and who took pride in home ownership. Since this time, suburban New Zealand has largely been made up of proud home-owners who enjoy a home-based leisure lifestyle (Mackay *et al.*, 2007). The influence of these ideologies, which came to the fore in the late 19th century, can still be seen today. Contemporary New Zealand society still attaches notions of social respectability and achievement to home ownership.

The layout of houses in New Zealand also reflects government strategies and social norms about the presumed naturalness and normality of heterosexuality. New Zealand homes embody idealised notions of the heterosexual family and gendered norms. "Developers, architects and builders often assume that the occupants of houses are members of a nuclear family" (Longhurst 1999 157). Figures on household composition from the 2006 Census, however, indicate that the proportion of households consisting of couples with children is decreasing, whilst the proportion of households comprising couples without children is increasing (Statistics New Zealand 2010).

Houses in New Zealand are typically detached dwellings and include a lounge, family room, dining room – often in an open-plan layout¹⁰ – laundry, three bedrooms and one or two bathrooms (figure 1).

¹⁰ In recent years, open-plan living has become common in nations where suburban living predominates, for example, Australia, Canada and the United States, where not only are the connections between family, familial subjectivity and open plan living deeply ingrained in ideologies of home, but the growing size of newly constructed houses allows for relatively large living areas (Dowling 2008).



Figure 1: Floor plan of a 'typical' New Zealand house. Reproduced with permission from Versatile Buildings 2010

The arrangement and organisation of rooms within a house assume specific social relations:

Assumptions about nuclear families and that their members will want to spend all their time together (in the family room), that couples do not want a room and/or bathroom for each partner, and that two or three rooms will be occupied by children are built into most homes. In this way, suburban homes are valorised as sites of heteronormative relations (Johnston and Longhurst 2010 43).

Johnson (1992 45), drawing on Australian-based examples, similarly argues that many Western dualisms and cultural assumptions are built into houses, particularly:

the need for enclosure and privacy behind four walls ... the existence and relative importance of spatially separating public and private, front and back, collective and individual spaces – which, in turn, are highly structured by gender, status and assumptions about heterosexuality, family form and interaction.

In New Zealand houses that have three or more bedrooms, it is common for one of the rooms to be larger than the others. This room is the designated 'master' bedroom and is designed to be shared by a presumably heterosexual couple. The two smaller bedrooms are typically designed for the children (ideally one boy and one girl). Johnston and Longhurst (2010, see also Longhurst 1999) rightly make the point that the design of many New Zealand houses do not fit the needs of its inhabitants. "Such houses do not fulfil the needs of large or extended families, groups of young people sharing, single parents, elderly people sharing, couples who each want a bedroom, or almost any group other than a traditional nuclear family" (Johnston and Longhurst 2010 43). Houses would better fit the needs of many New Zealanders, and in particular, several of the couples in this research, if they contained a number of medium-sized bedrooms, as opposed to one large and two smaller rooms.

Real estate advertisements in newspapers, and more recently on the internet, provide useful examples of the heterosexualisation of domestic space (Johnson 1992; Johnston and Gregg 2003). In New Zealand, advertisements for buying and selling houses often draw on heterosexual relations and gendered norms. It is presumed that buyers will want a particular type of house; one that 'fits' normative gendered and sexed assumptions. Various clichés such as 'traditional family values' are used to promote homes as idealised sites of heterosexuality and the nuclear family (Johnston and Gregg 2003). Many advertisements refer to 'family homes', 'large sections for the kids', 'well designed kitchens for mum', 'spacious garages for dads'. There is also a focus on home renovation and DIY¹¹ projects with slogans such as 'ripe for renovation,' and 'first home buyer's dream.' For many home buyers, particularly first-time buyers, it is important to be able to transform a 'house' into a 'home' through DIY and home renovations (Mackay *et al.*, 2007).

¹¹ DIY is shorthand for Do-It-Yourself. This term refers primarily to home renovations projects. I discuss DIY in more detail chapters 6 and 7.

In New Zealand, home renovations and DIY are important homemaking activities (Cox 2010; Mackay *et al.*, 2007; Perkins and Thorns 2003). While statistics are difficult to locate, it has been suggested that New Zealanders are more likely to be involved in DIY than any other country in the Western world (Mackay *et al.*, 2007). The origins of DIY in New Zealand are rooted in the colonial era where early European settlers obtained land, cleared bush, designed and built their own houses. During this period, cultural values such as self-determination, resourcefulness, practicality and physical ability became deeply embedded in New Zealand's national psyche and attached to a particular form of hegemonic masculinity (Mackay *et al.*, 2007; Mansvelt 2005). With the spread of suburbanisation and home ownership, particularly in 1950s and 1960s, DIY became a popular past-time for many New Zealanders. As Perkins and Thorns (2001 43-44) write, these characteristics of New Zealand's suburban history have encouraged many homeowners to develop:

a special type of relationship with their houses, which has seen them continually renovating and changing the physical shape of house and garden – painting the roof or the house, putting up and staining fences, extending the living areas or building on rumpus rooms.

While DIY in New Zealand is traditionally associated with men and a particular form of hegemonic masculinity, there is evidence to suggest that women are increasingly involved in DIY. One survey found, for example, that 61 percent of women have taken on DIY projects and increasingly DIY goods are being designed and marketed to women (Mackay *et al.*, 2007). Perkins and Thorns (2003) talk about DIY as playing an integral role in shaping the lives of many New Zealanders, including leisure patterns, gendered roles and subjectivities. Likewise, in their study on first homeowners' experiences and perceptions of DIY, Mackay *et al.*, (2007) found that family members and friends enjoy DIY as a shared activity. What is clear from the above discussion is that DIY, in New Zealand, is about more than simply the ability (or not) to alter the physical structure of a dwelling. Instead, for New Zealand homeowners, DIY is linked to their sense of self and their subjectivities. It helps to shape their emotional connection and feelings of belonging to their house.

Hamilton, New Zealand

Hamilton is located in the North Island of New Zealand, approximately 100km south of the nation's largest city – Auckland (figure 2).

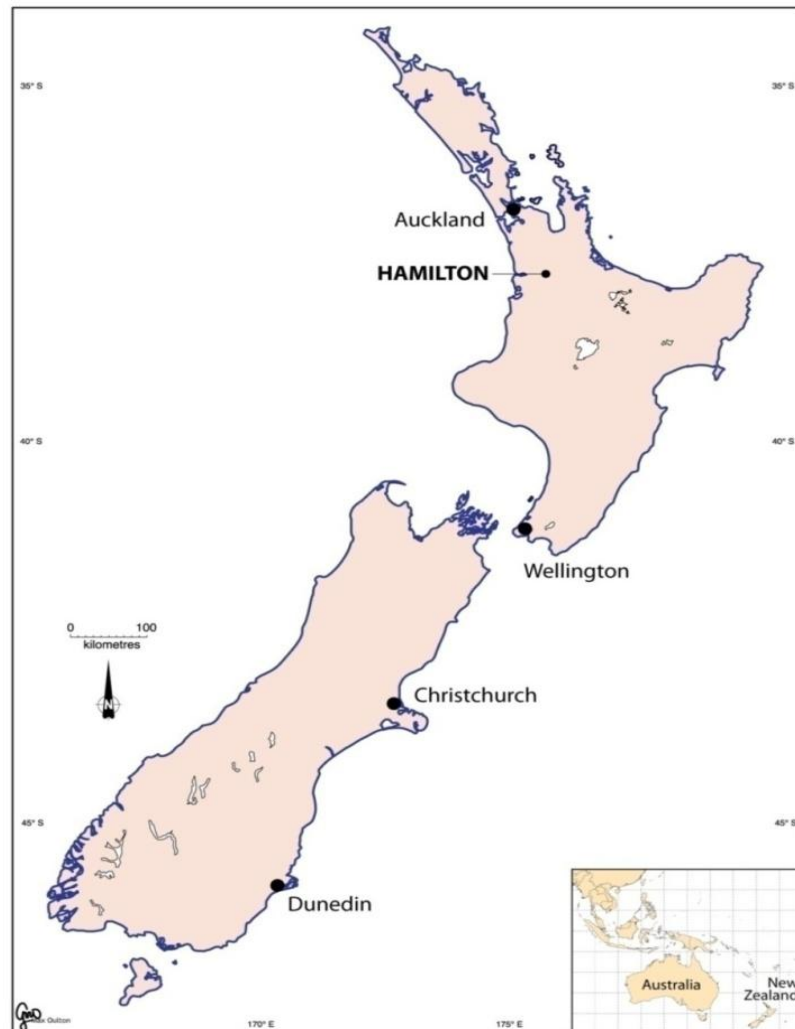


Figure 2: Map of New Zealand. Source Max Oulton, 2010

Hamilton is situated in the Waikato region on the banks of the Waikato River. It has an estimated population of 129,249 and is the largest inland centre as well as the nation's fourth largest city (Statistics New Zealand 2006a). It was founded in 1864 by Imperial Army troops, militia and settlers on the site of the Māori settlement: Kirikiriroa. Since then, Pākehā¹² occupation and growth has continued, with extensive periods of development following the Second World

¹² Pākehā refers to White New Zealanders of European descent. I discuss 'race' and ethnicity in more detail further on in the chapter.

War (Gibbons 1977).¹³ Hamilton is suburban in character and surrounded by land used mainly for dairy farm production.

Hamilton is made up of 47 suburbs. Johnson (2006a 261) explains that suburbs, in Australia, are founded upon:

the idea of a single storied, freestanding dwelling on a relatively large allotment, in a mainly residential area, with strong local identity and limited governance, located midway between the city and rural lands, where women tend to children and community while their husbands journeyed elsewhere for paid work.

Suburbs in New Zealand represent similar spatial ideals. Figure 3 is a map of Hamilton which roughly identifies the suburbs where participants' live.¹⁴ A reading of participants' local areas can give insights into the diverse socio-spatial make-up of Hamilton.

Suburbs in the northern part of the city, such as Horsham Downs and Rototuna, are rapidly expanding. They are some of the most newly established suburbs on the edge of the city. Allotment sizes in these suburbs tend to be smaller than the more established areas nearer the city centre. Many young families, first-time home buyers and retirees live in the northern suburbs. Houses in this area are 'eave to eave' which suggests a move towards bigger homes and smaller gardens. The eastern suburbs, also located on the outskirts of the city, are more established. These include Fairview Downs and Silverdale, areas which tend to be associated with low to middle income earners, house owners and renters. Suburbs in the west and south west of Hamilton are similarly areas of lower socio-economic status. Suburbs in the south and south east of the city, where the majority of participants live, including Hillcrest, Silverdale, and Hamilton East, are well-established. These suburbs are diverse in their social make-up. Because of the availability of local amenities including schools and shopping centres, they

¹³ There is very little scholarly work published on Hamilton, at any given historical moment. See Gibbons (1977) and Rule (2007) for in-depth descriptions and analyses of Hamilton within specific historical contexts.

¹⁴ To ensure anonymity I have not specified the exact location of participants' houses nor have I included their names.

are popular suburbs for (nuclear) families. The style of houses – bungalows and other character villas – in these areas also means that they are sought after by young professionals and people interested in home renovations. The location of the University of Waikato in Hillcrest means that there are pockets of student accommodation, primarily three or four bedroom houses, which are rented to students in that suburb.

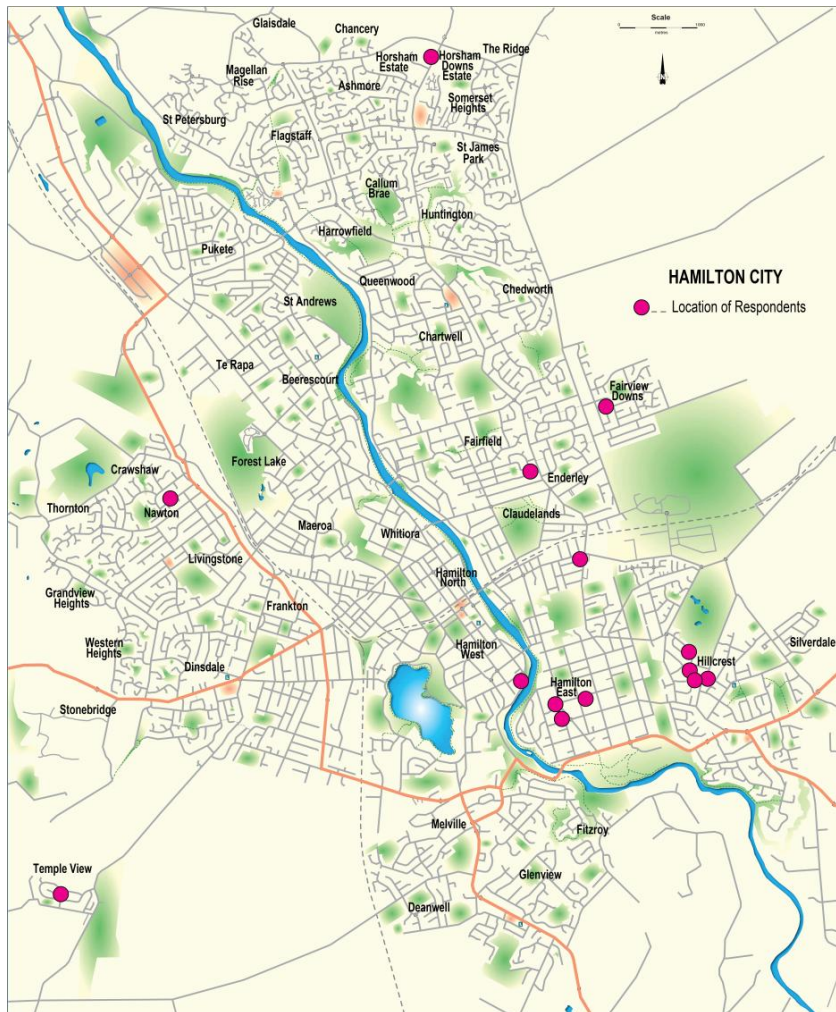


Figure 3: Map of suburbs in Hamilton and the approximate location of participants' houses. Produced by Max Oulton, 2010

Hamilton’s location – as an urban space within a rural basin – means that idealised notions of rurality, heterosexuality and hegemonic gendered expectations and norms are deeply ingrained in local discourse and impact on the spaces and practices of everyday life. Research shows that many rural communities continue to be founded upon taken-for-granted and rigid

heteronormative gendered structures and relations (Little 2003; 2007). As argued earlier, normative notions about heterosexuality are maintained and reproduced through the repetition of everyday practice and social imaginaries (Butler 1990; 1993). The Fieldays, for example, which is described as “New Zealand’s iconic farming event” (Fieldays 2010) is held annually in the Waikato. It aims to bring together both buyers and sellers of agricultural products and is believed to be the largest agricultural event in the southern hemisphere (Fieldays 2010). The Fieldays (re)produce a particular form of normative heterosexuality which emphasises traditional characteristics of masculinity and femininity deemed important in rural communities. Likewise, a public monument which is situated on Victoria Street at the north end of the main shopping strip celebrates and reproduces Hamilton’s conservative farming heritage (figure 4).



Figure 4: Photo of the Farming Family on Victoria Street, Hamilton. Photograph by Carey-Ann Morrison

Monuments “might seem to function largely as backdrops in daily life, [but] they are intended to commemorate what we value and to instruct us in our heritage through visible expressions on the landscape” (Monk 1992 124). The monument is of a tall strong man with a toddler (most likely a boy) sitting on his shoulders, a

slender woman holding an infant (most likely a girl), a cow, a sheep, and a dog (animals that have become synonymous with rural New Zealand). Longhurst (1999) notes that the monument is meant to be typical of contemporary, as well as past, settler farming families in the area. It, according to Longhurst (1999), both celebrates and unsettles traditional depictions of gender and sexuality. On the one hand, the monument represents a direct challenge to normative gendered depictions of urban space because it represents 'domestic' as opposed to 'political' life and it depicts a 'real' as opposed to a mythical woman. On the other hand, the monument is also highly traditional because it valorises heterosexuality, nuclear families, traditional European gender roles and Pākehā colonisation of the area. The farming family monument both reflects and reinforces Hamilton's conservative farming heritage.

Yet, material and discursive practices which serve to naturalise sites of heterosexuality are neither fixed nor stable. Instead, they are always subject to contestation and negotiation. With the increasing presence of queer spaces, such as the gay-owned and gay-friendly nightclub 'Shine' (www.shinenightclub.co.nz), the queer mobile cabaret show 'Glamz' (www.glamz.co.nz), and the large bronze statue of the character Riff Raff (figure 5), a cross-dressing character from the cult film and musical *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (www.riffraffstatue.org),¹⁵ Hamilton's socio-sexual landscape is beginning to change.

Johnston and Longhurst (2010 3) chose the Riff Raff statue as the cover image for their book *Space, Place and Sex* because it "illustrates the ways in which bodies become sexualised, included, or excluded depending upon time and place." Johnston and Longhurst (2010 3) note that what makes the Riff Raff statue so significant is that it displaces the idea that public monuments have to be "heteronormative, commemorate, and celebrate conservative family values." The statue of Riff Raff works to queer Hamilton's street and contests its heteronormativity.

¹⁵ The decision for Hamilton City to support a statue of Riff Raff was hotly contested. Support for its erection prevailed, however, and the statue has been an important figure in the centre of Hamilton's nightlife and café culture since 2004.



Figure 5: Statue of Riff Raff on Victoria Street, Hamilton. Photograph by Carey-Ann Morrison

Locating the researcher

Here, I think it is timely to acknowledge my position in this research. I live in Hamilton. I have spent the majority of my life here, apart from a few stints travelling and living overseas. I am thus well ‘placed’ to offer an explanation of housing, home and homemaking in Hamilton. I am also ‘placed’ in this research in other significant ways. I am a 26 year old, able-bodied, New-Zealand-born Pākehā woman. I identify as heterosexual and I am currently in a long-term monogamous relationship. My partner and I jointly own a house where we live together along with a flatmate.¹⁶ We do not have any children. In this research, then, I am both the ‘researcher’ and the ‘researched.’

¹⁶ In New Zealand, members of a shared household are typically referred to as ‘flatmates’ (similar to roommates or housemates). Flatmates, usually between two and eight people, live together in a collective household arrangement and often divide up living costs. This type of living arrangement is called ‘flatting.’ I discuss flatting in more detail in chapter 7.

As an 'insider' in this research I do not claim to live beyond the social, cultural and sexual cultures which are the focus of this thesis. I cannot exist outside the discourses of heterosexuality, love and home that organise contemporary social life. Growing up I have been continuously exposed to images in the media and popular culture which present an ideal version of heterosexual love and home. This material has helped me to make sense of my life and position(s) in the world. I recognise the personal and public privileges that go with identifying as heterosexual.

As I began to think through this topic in relation to my own experiences, I expected to find geographical literature from which to begin to think critically about heterosexuality, love, romance and home. My tertiary education equipped me with the ability to challenge assumptions about what and who is 'normal' and 'natural' by identifying and undermining homophobic, heterosexist, masculinist and racist discourses within the academy and beyond. A naturalised and unquestioned heterosexuality lies at the heart of all spatialised social difference, discrimination and inequality (Blum and Nast 1996). Yet, I found little geographical work which explicitly examines heterosexuality – its practices, pleasures, routines, bodily desires and disgusts, spaces and subjectivities. It is within this context, then, that I, as a woman in a heterosexual relationship, set about attempting to problematise heterosexuality from within.

'Race', ethnicity and cultural subjectivity in New Zealand

New Zealand is an ethnically, 'racially' and culturally diverse society. Statistics New Zealand (2010) defines ethnicity in New Zealand in terms of five broad ethnic groups: European or other white New Zealander; Māori; Pacific Peoples; Asian; Middle Eastern/Latin/American/African. White New Zealanders of European descent, typically known as 'Pākehā', form the dominant and hegemonic ethnic group in New Zealand. The term 'Pākehā' is highly contested (Spoonley 1993). For some white New Zealander's, identifying as Pākehā is a political stance:

In recognition of the complexities of their national heritage, some white New Zealanders ... have begun to develop a more self-conscious cultural politics of identity ... this has involved a recognition of Māori sovereignty, tribal autonomy and the rights of self-development (Jackson 1998 102).

This is not to suggest, however, that there is a universal commitment to biculturalism in Aotearoa. Some Pākehā refuse to use this term, instead favoring the terms European or Caucasian (Johnston 2005a).

The term Pākehā denotes a specific form of 'whiteness' (Jackson 1998; Johnston 2005a).¹⁷ Recent work in human geography has seen a growth of interest in whiteness (Bonnett 1997; Jackson 1998; Johnston 2005a; McGuinness 2000). Like other studies on categories of social and cultural difference, studies of whiteness seek to problematise it as a social construction while retaining a critical awareness of its material embodiments and affects. Embedded in this approach is an understanding of the complex and context-specific ways 'race' intersects with gender, sex, and classed subjectivities. This body of work has emerged in response to the relative absence of studies of whiteness in geographies of 'race' and ethnicity. Like other dominant categories – masculinity, heterosexuality, able-bodiedness – whiteness is an unmarked and invisible category. In other words, white people are typically not deemed to be 'raced'. Jackson (1998 100) argues: "'whiteness' comes to stand for virtually anything besides the position of racial privilege that it has historically denoted, appearing unmarked, colorless, bland, invisible, cultureless, everything and nothing." As the unmarked norm in New Zealand, Pākehā represent an invisible category. Many Pākehā do not see themselves as having a 'race'. The hegemony that affords Pākehā power and privilege goes unnoticed. Yet, 'race' plays an important role in all spatial relations and the subjectivity construction of all of those who live in New Zealand. Where appropriate, then, I problematise whiteness by examining the ways in which bodies and homes in New Zealand become gendered, sexed, and 'raced'.

¹⁷ My use of the word Pākehā does not assume universality or homogeneity. I use it in a way that recognises the fluidity of subjectivities and that these are neither fixed nor stable.

Geographical scale

I use the concept of geographical scale to organise my argument and the content of this thesis. It has been shown that scale is useful for thinking about specific kinds of socio-spatial activities because it represents an intersection of specific people and places (Valentine 2001). Geographers have usefully drawn on the notion of scale as a way of exploring how social subjectivities, relations and inequalities are constituted in and through different spaces. Valentine (2001), for instance, explores the broad concept 'society and space' from the body to the globe. Johnston and Longhurst (2010) use geographical scale to explore the relationship between sex, bodies and space. They point to a significant gap in the geographical literature on sex and sexuality, noting that the potential of geographical scale to further understandings of sexed bodies and spaces has not been fully realised. "Issues of space, place, territories, borders, and boundaries in relation to sex and sexuality need to be explored in greater depth and at a range of scales" (Johnston and Longhurst 2010 159). It is within this context that my thesis is situated. I argue that geographical scale provides an appropriate platform from which to think about the mutual constitution of heterosexuality, love and home.

It is important to be aware, however, that the production of scale itself is a politicised process and a socially constructed concept (Marston 2000). There is nothing natural, normal or inevitable about geographical scale. Instead, each scale represents, and is imbued with, meanings specific to a particular time and place. Moreover, geographical scales are neither spatially bounded nor hierarchically ordered entities. Instead, they are fluid and malleable and intersect and overlap in diverse ways (Smith 1992). This means that the geographical scale used to organise this thesis is by no means the 'right' or only way to think about heterosexual homemaking. Nor does it mean that the scales of home used in this thesis are fixed, absolute or stable locations. Rather, the specific scales of heterosexuality and home used in this thesis are constituted in and through each other and through the social practices and relations in spaces beyond them.

Some geographical scales have received more scholarly attention than others. The scales of nation and communities, for example, have been the focus of much critical geographical debate, whereas scales such as the body and home have been subject to less academic attention. Home is, however, experienced across multiple sites. Blunt and Dowling (2006) explain that when studying geographies of home it is possible to look beyond the conception of house-as-home to the homemaking practices which stretch across geographical scales from the body to the nation. In saying this, geographical studies of home have also tended to privilege some scales over others. Geographers have looked effectively at wider geographical processes of home but sometimes this has meant that the finer details – the sexually embodied geographies – have been overlooked. If geographers are to gain a more complete picture of homemaking, then it is important to look at the mundane practices, embodied routines and spatial patterns of ordinary day-to-day normative sexual relations.

This thesis, then, tells a story about mundane heterosexual domestic life. It shows that heterosexual subjectivities and domestic spaces are mutually produced and performed through everyday homemaking practices at a variety of spatial scales. The emphasis is on what people have and do within and to their homes, their various day-to-day activities, their bodies, and the relationships which constitute such spaces. I focus on habitual day-to-day heterosexual domestic life at a variety of spatial scales. The domestic spaces and subjectivities of heterosexuality exist only through the socio-spatial practices and performances that give them meaning and form. By focusing on the mundane practices of heterosexual home-life, at three specific spatial scales – body, dwelling, and household and beyond – I seek to de-essentialise and destabilise heterosexuality and the spatial relations that constitute it.

CHAPTER 3

Literature review and theoretical issues

Feminist and queer interventions into geographical studies of home expose and undermine the presumably natural association between heterosexual nuclear families and the suburban house (Blunt and Dowling 2006; Gorman-Murray 2007a; Johnson 2000). Yet, the heteronormativity of geographical discourse continues to go largely unnoticed in relation to the everyday geographies of heterosexuality and home. In particular, the practices and performances of heterosexual love, romance and intimacy remain 'invisible' and unremarked upon. The discipline of geography, then, continues to be a largely heteronormative discourse (Bell 2009). Heteronormative geographical thought tends to locate geographies of heterosexual love and home in the realm of the 'natural' thereby exempting it from critical scrutiny and explanation.

Drawing on feminist poststructuralist theory, I re-conceptualise the relationship between heterosexuality, love and domestic space as multiple, diverse and fractured. In doing so, I make discursive space available for thinking about a variety of *heterosexualities* as opposed to a monolithic *heterosexuality*. Thinking about the relationship between heterosexuality, love and home in this way undermines aspatial and asexual notions of heterosexuality. By revealing heterosexuality's performative power and iterative nature, I am able to challenge heteronormative geographical conceptions of love and home.

This chapter sets out and extends the theoretical terrain in which my research is situated. It provides the theoretical tools for unsettling and undermining the naturalisation of heterosexuality, love, and home. I bring together and extend four bodies of literature: geographies of home; geographies of sexuality; geographies of emotions; and sociological and feminist literature on love, romance and sexual intimacy. The material reviewed in this chapter illustrates the notion that homes are sexualised spaces, in particular spaces of heterosexual love, but not in the sense that they are a pre-given, 'natural' or 'normal'. Home is not only where positive emotions, feelings and sensibilities of love are

configured, but also where feelings of hurt and pain are experienced. A critical reading of relevant scholarship allows me to problematise discursive constructions of love and home in a way that challenges the heteronormativity of geographical discourse. I begin by looking at the geographies of home literature. I offer a critique of the homemaking literature which has tended to ignore the functions of heterosexuality. Second, I document the work of sexuality and home scholars. This body of work has also been limited in its focus on heterosexuality with the implication being that the heteronormativity of everyday domestic life often goes unchallenged. Third, I look at the emerging work on geographies of emotions and show that a gendered politics of knowledge construction has meant that emotions have been marginalised in academic discourses. I then move beyond the discipline of geography to review feminist and sociological theories on love, romance and intimacy. Geographers have been slow to explore notions of love in relation to place. Feminist and sociological scholarship on love allows me to develop new lines of feminist geographical research.

Geographies of home

Previously marginalised as an area of academic scrutiny, studies of home and domesticity are now firmly on the agenda. Indeed, home as an area of social and critical inquiry is now well established. This is evidenced in various publications on home and domesticity from numerous disciplines. Books (Blunt and Dowling 2006; Chapman and Hockey 1999; Cieraad 1999), book chapters (Blunt 2003; Duncan and Lambert 2004; Young 2005a), journal articles (Bhatti and Church 2004; Blunt 2005; Blunt and Varley 2004; Burman and Chantler 2004; Chevalier 2002; Domosh 1998; Waitt and Gorman-Murray 2007; Walsh 2006), special issues in journals such as *M/C Journal*, *Cultural Geographies* and *Antipode* and the establishment of the forthcoming *International Encyclopaedia on Housing and Home* by Elsevier all recognise the importance of home in understanding the social and spatial of everyday life.

Gorman-Murray and Dowling (2007) attribute this rise of scholarly work to a renewed fascination more generally with home and domesticity in the media, popular culture and everyday life. Domestic life continues to be the central plot for many of the most popular television sitcoms and programmes screened in New Zealand, including the Australian produced *Neighbours* and *Packed to the Rafters*, and the US produced *Desperate Housewives* and *Friends*. Perhaps most telling of all is the onslaught and popularity of ‘lifestyle’ television shows which provide audiences with information on home renovations, decorating and insights into the emotional toll these activities can have on couples and families. Locally produced New Zealand shows include *Mitre 10¹⁸ DIY Rescue*, *Mitre 10 Dream Home*, and *My House My Castle*. Likewise, there is a never-ending supply of popular magazines, such as *New Zealand Your Home and Garden* and *New Zealand House and Garden*, which seek to teach people how to make their homes more appealing and more pleasant to live in. The burgeoning of media and popular interest in home and domesticity runs deeper than a mere backdrop for entertainment. Rather, it reflects social and cultural ideas about the construction and use of home in relation to gender, sexuality, ‘race’, class, age, dis/ability and so on.

Home is a complex and important site. It is “powerful, emotive and multi-faceted” (Gorman-Murray and Dowling 2007 1). As an idea, home is connected with a range of normative meanings in contemporary Western societies. One of the most common ideologies of home is that it is a place configured through positive sensibilities. Home is typically deemed to be a place of belonging, intimacy, security, stability, hope and subjectivity. Moreover, home has traditionally been constructed as a ‘private’ space away from the demands of ‘public’ life. This means that home has become imbued with sanctuary-like qualities; a refuge away from the world of work.

¹⁸ Mitre 10 is the name of a corporation that specialises in home renovation products and services. They have large home renovation stores through New Zealand and Australia and endorse several television shows, such as *Mitre 10 DIY* and *Mitre 10 Dream Home*.

Home is a word that positively drips with association – according to various academic literatures it's a private, secure location, a sanctuary, a locus of identity and a place where inhabitants can escape the disciplinary practices that regulate our bodies in everyday life (Johnston and Valentine 1995 99).

At the same time, however, home is not always a secure site of selfhood. For some people, home is not a refuge and instead it poses the threat of danger and harm. Indeed, “home takes on very different meanings when it is a site where one is beaten, abused, or raped, away from the scrutiny of others” (Johnston and Longhurst 2010 45). Home can hence be a site of alienation, rejection, absence, hostility and danger. As either a site of belonging and hope, alienation and despair, or a combination of all of the above, home continues to have strong claims to our resources and emotions.

One of the dominant and most enduring constructions of home is that it is *the* site of heterosexuality. “Over the course of the twentieth century, a combination of government policies, house design, and deeply ingrained social norms have conflated the nuclear family with domestic space across the ‘West’” (Gorman-Murray 2006a 147). Idealised discourses of home continue to suggest that a house becomes more ‘homely’ when it is a site of heterosexual nuclear family life (Blunt and Dowling 2006; Gorman-Murray 2006a; 2007b; 2008a). Indeed, Bell (1991) makes the point that housing is primarily designed and built for nuclear families and Valentine (1993a 399) argues: “the ideology of home ... derives much of its meaning from this identification with the asymmetrical family.” Dupuis and Thorns (1998) similarly demonstrate that home, in New Zealand, is strongly associated with the activities and practices of collective family life. Blunt and Dowling (2006 100-101) argue that a variety of popular media outlets have played a significant role in influencing dominant ideologies of home:

Public discourse – in the media, in popular culture, in public policy – presents a dominant or ideal version of house-as-home, which typically portrays belonging and intimacy amongst members of a heterosexual nuclear family, living in a detached, owner-occupied dwelling, in a suburban location.

This idealised conflation of house, home and the heterosexual nuclear family works to privilege some – namely white heterosexual nuclear families – and marginalise others; anyone who deviates from this norm. It thus has a significant bearing on people’s experiences of home.

Critical geographies of home understand domestic space as a deeply politicised site. Blunt (2005 510) argues: “home itself is intensely political, both in its internal intimacies and through its interfaces with the wider world.” Indeed, home is intimately connected with struggles over subjectivity, access to and control over, social spaces and power. This means studies of home are alert to the processes of oppression and resistance and often focus on the ways in which normative notions of home may be re-worked and contested. A feminist geography of home, for example “allows the possibility of seeing housing as both an expression of patriarchal economic and cultural relations but also as a site of the subversions of these relations” (Johnson 1992 46). Home is also understood as the outcome of the relationship between material and imaginative qualities. In other words, home is seen as located *in* space but not necessarily fixed *to* space. It is a site that is located, emplaced and situated and it is an idea and an imaginary that is imbued with meanings, feelings and memories. Home, then, is:

a fusion of the imaginative and affective – what we envision and desire home to be – intertwined with the material and physical – an actual location which can embody and realise our need for belonging, affirmation and sustenance (Gorman-Murray and Dowling 2007 2).

Blunt and Dowling (2006 22) capture this relationship between the material and the imaginative in their oft-cited assertion that home is a ‘spatial imaginary’ where home “is neither the dwelling nor the feeling, but the relation between the two.” Importantly, this conceptualisation allows for the notion of home to extend far beyond the physical dwelling. Gorman-Murray and Dowling (2007 2) make the point that Blunt and Dowling’s (2006) framework: “detaches ‘home’ from ‘dwelling’ *per se*, and invokes the creation of home – as a space and feeling of belonging – at sites and scales beyond the domestic house.” Instead, as a spatial imaginary, home takes the form of “a set of intersecting and variable

ideas and feelings, which are related to context, and which construct places, extend across spaces and scales, and connect places” (Blunt and Dowling 2006 2).

Geographers have convincingly shown that the concept of scale is useful for furthering understandings of home. Home is typically understood as a multi-scalar spatial imaginary (Gorman-Murray and Dowling 2007). This means that home, as a material space and social imaginary, is open, porous and connected to wider social relations of power. “Home is not separated from public, political worlds but is constituted through them: the domestic is created through the extra-domestic and vice versa” (Blunt and Dowling 2006 27). The multi-scalarity of home also points to the ways in which it is created in and through diverse sites. Spatially, home can be a mental state, a physical dwelling, a neighbourhood, community, or the world (‘real’ or virtual). Importantly, recent critical studies have shown that the scales of home are not discrete, contained and bounded entities. Instead, they are conceptualised as intersecting and interacting in numerous and complex ways (Blunt and Dowling 2006; Gorman-Murray and Dowling 2007). In this way, home is understood as functioning across multiple sites simultaneously. I too take this approach and conceptualise New Zealand homes as imaginative and material, politicised and multi-scalar.

What is clear in much of the above discussion is that home is the *ongoing* result of complex, fluid and contested practices. “Home is a process of creating and understanding forms of dwelling and belonging. This process has both material and imaginative elements” (Blunt and Dowling 2006 23). As a process, home is fragmented, incomplete and never fully realised.

Across the social sciences, home has been explored as a key site for “the construction and reconstruction of one’s self” (Young 2005a 153). Geographers, in particular, have enthusiastically taken up the notion that home is important to subjectivity construction (Blunt 2003; Blunt and Dowling 2006; Reimer and Leslie 2004; Tolia-Kelly 2004a; 2004b). They are, however, yet to fully examine home as a site of heterosexual subjectivity. Blunt and Dowling (2006 24) contend: “Home

as a place and an imaginary constitutes identities – people’s sense of themselves are related to and produced through lived and imaginative experiences of home.” Likewise, Duncan and Lambert (2004 387) argue: “Homes and residential landscapes are primary sites in which identities are produced and performed in practical, material and repetitively affirming ways.” In this literature, home and subjectivities are posited as relational and ongoing. It is argued that neither home nor subjectivities are ontologically fixed, but are mutually defining and continually reproduced through the practices of everyday living.

Homemaking – the ordinary practices of daily domestic life – is the ongoing process of turning a house into a home (Blunt and Dowling 2006; Gorman-Murray 2006a; Gregson and Lowe 1995; Young 2005a). Homemaking practices, whilst contributing to the material constitution of home, are deeply connected to people’s sense of self. In other words, as people make home, they make the self. This is because homemaking embodies, reflects and supports subjectivities (individual and collective) through everyday practices such as domestic routines (Young 2005a), the accumulation and arrangement of meaningful objects, for example photos (Gorman-Murray 2007a; Rose 2004), and through social and intimate relationships (Blunt and Dowling 2006). Homemaking practices are a means by which people’s subjectivities are materialised and manifested over time and in different domestic spaces.

Responding to these conceptualisations, this thesis seeks to tease out the links between homemaking and subjectivity construction. It focuses specifically on heterosexual couples’ – and mostly the women in these couples – use of home by drawing attention to the ways in which domestic routines shape and are shaped by heterosexual relationships. In addition, it looks at the materiality of bodies and domestic space. It explores the ways in which homes become embodied through the presence of heterosexual bodies that love. In doing so, I draw attention to homemaking and subjectivity construction as an ongoing and incomplete process that occurs across multiple sites of home.

Longhurst (2005a 344) makes the point that it is important to “determine which aspects of subjectivity and space matter when, and how particular combinations can be examined to create more emancipatory social relations.” Simply examining one variable of social subjectivity, such as class, ‘race’, dis/ability, gender or sexuality, may not fully convey the complexities of the relationship between bodies and spaces. The primary focus of this thesis is sexuality and gender, however, these social categories intersect with other forms of social difference and I acknowledge these intersections throughout this thesis. Of particular importance to this research is scholarship on the links between homemaking and gendered, sexed and shared subjectivities.

Feminist frameworks have played an instrumental role in the development of geographical studies of home. This is, in part, due to the strong and enduring link between gender and home. Feminists have shown that gender is a crucial component of home as a lived experience and social imaginary (Blunt and Dowling 2006; Domosh 1998; Domosh and Seager 2001; Johnson 2000). The focus of much of this work has been to interrogate normative associations between ‘femininity’ and ‘domesticity.’ Specifically, geographies of home have examined women’s everyday domestic lives arguing that normalised gendered roles have very real impacts for women and their experience of home. Feminist geographies of home have looked at a variety of topics including: women’s everyday experiences of the kitchen (Johnson 2006b; Llewellyn 2004; Longhurst *et al.*, 2009); women’s relationship with domestic objects (Rose 2003; 2004; Tolia-Kelly 2004a; 2004b); women and domestic violence (Meth 2003a; Warrington 2001); and the tensions and inequalities surrounding women’s experiences of domestic labour, including paid domestic work (Cox and Rekha 2003; McDowell 2009; Pratt 1997; Silvey 2004; Stiell and England 1997). Recent feminist thinking on home has drawn on postcolonialist theories in order to show that racialised differences are important for shaping women’s lived experiences and imaginaries of home (Blunt 1999; Burman and Chantler 2004). In addition, the links between masculinity and home are now coming under scrutiny. Gorman-Murray (2008b), for instance, provides one of the first explicit

geographical examinations of masculinity, domesticity and home. Given the long-standing focus on women, Gorman-Murray's (2008b) interest in the home as a key site of masculinity advances geographical conceptualisations of domestic space.

Gorman-Murray (2006a; 2006b; 2007a; 2007b; 2008a; see also Elwood 2000; Kentlyn 2008; Johnston and Valentine 1995) also makes important contributions to geographical studies of home through his focus on gay men's and lesbians' domestic lives. In this work, Gorman-Murray (2006c 13) makes the point that the narrow (but much needed) focus on women's lived experiences of home has meant that most studies have "taken place within an implicit and largely unquestioned heteronormative framework." I have to agree. It seems that the focus of much of this work has been on the ways in which women might reconfigure and resist gendered roles, relations and expectations within, but not against, institutionalised heterosexuality. This means that, with few exceptions, the naturalisation of home as a heterosexual site has remained largely unexamined and unchallenged.¹⁹ Gorman-Murray (2006a; 2006b; 2007a; 2007b; 2008a) sets about unsettling the taken-for-granted heterosexualisation of home. He breaks new ground by showing that homes, for gay men and lesbians, can be sites of resistance to heterosexual norms as well as important spaces of queer subjectivity construction. Importantly, he shows that homes are always sexualised spaces, but not in the sense that they are 'naturally' or 'normally' heterosexual.

It is now widely recognised that home is a normative site of heterosexuality (Blunt and Dowling 2006). There is, however, little explicit research on the homemaking practices, domestic activities, interpersonal relationships and sexual practices which constitute home spaces as heterosexual. A consequence of neglecting the multiple processes and functions of heterosexuality means that the heteronormative structures of home continue to go unchallenged. In order

¹⁹ Although see Johnson (2000) for a discussion about the ways in which heterosexual domestic relationships are idealised in public discourses of house and home; and Johnston and Valentine (1995) on lesbians' experiences of home.

to understand further the expectations surrounding the ways subjectivities are constructed, practised and negotiated in domestic settings, dominant socio-sexual relations need to be made explicit.

Nonetheless, some recent research has begun to interrogate the heterosexualities of home. Thomas' (2004) queering of straight sexuality and space is particularly notable. Thomas (2004) explores the social and sexual practices of 27 young women between the ages of 14-19 in Charleston, United States of America. Drawing on Butler's (1993; 1997a; 1997b) theory of performativity, Thomas (2004) offers examples of two of the teenage girls' social and sexual practices in the home, city and school, in order to question how socio-spatial ideals and activities constitute practices of self and subjectivity. Although Thomas (2004) reflects on numerous spaces of heteronormativity, it is significant that home space is the main place where the teenage girls engage in practices of straight sex. These spatialised rituals involve not only the act of sexual intercourse but other heteronormative gestures such as 'playing house'. The child-like games "invoke heterosexuality and, accordingly, produce heterosexual space and identity through the sexed and gendered activity of the teens" (Thomas 2004 778).

Sociologist Gurney (2000a) examines how the material space of home is managed to facilitate the expression of sexual subjectivities. He makes the assertion that:

For most people, the home is the place where solo or mutual sexual activity most frequently takes place. Being 'at home' means having the freedom to represent or practice your sexuality without the fear of embarrassment, sanction or ridicule and to maintain sexual secrets in the form of pornography, erotic literature, sex toys, or evidence of infidelity, from partners, parents or friends (Gurney 2000a 40).

According to Gurney (2000a), the facilitation of a space impartial to the judgements associated with sexual activity is important to the production of sexual subjectivities. In his paper, participants' sexuality is never actually specified, only their sexual acts are reflected upon. The heterosexualisation of

home is thus uncritically taken-for-granted. Nevertheless, it is Gurney's (2000a) recognition of an explicitly sexualised subjectivity that I find particularly relevant for my research. Home provides a space for Gurney's (2000a) respondents to perform an integral part of heterosexuality: sex. Like other feminist theorists (Jackson 1996; Richardson 1996; Robinson *et al.*, 2004), I take heterosexuality to be a multiple construct and lived experience. Heterosexuality is about more than just sex, yet the "sexed nature of heterosex" (Nast 1998 191) is rarely mentioned in studies of home.

The work outlined above constitutes an important beginning. Much remains to be said, however, about the often implicit relationship between heterosexuality and home. Heterosexualised discourses of love shape and are shaped by images of home and impact on people's everyday homemaking practices. In order to better understand the experiences of heterosexual love in contemporary Western societies, the relationship between heterosexuality and home needs to be more fully appreciated.

Research on joint and/or collective homemaking practices is also relevant to this thesis. Gorman-Murray (2006a 145) points out that much of the work on spatialised sexual subjectivities has focused primarily on (queer) individual (Bell *et al.*, 1994; Kirby and Hay 1997) or community (Miller 2005; Nash 2005) subjectivity formation, as opposed to couples or households. This means that the importance of homes for couples, both non-heterosexual *and* heterosexual, has been largely absent from geographical studies of sexuality. Accordingly, this thesis makes an important contribution to the field of home and subjectivity construction by focusing on the performance of heterosexual couples' subjectivities in domestic spaces.

Some authors are beginning to explore the ways in which homes are not only sites of individual subjectivity construction, but also facilitate collective and shared subjectivities. This work focuses primarily on the processes of domestic consumption and the ways in which these facilitate couple's subjectivities. Reimer and Leslie (2004), for example, examine how mainly heterosexual

couples produce and narrate a shared subjectivity through joint decisions over the purchasing of household furniture. Chevalier (2002) argues that familial and couples' subjectivities are materialised in home furnishings. Noble (2004) shows that the accumulation of domestic objects embodies consanguinity between household members and other relatives. Valentine (1999a 492) argues: "Understanding how goods become incorporated into people's everyday lives ... can therefore shed light on the social context of consumption and on the situated daily practices of individual and household identity formation and identity crises." Gorman-Murray's (2006a) study on cohabitating gay and lesbian couples explores the everyday ways homes are used to consolidate partnerships and generate couples' subjectivities. Critically responding to this literature, I seek to understand the importance of home for heterosexual couples. I explore how cohabitating heterosexual couples generate and sometimes disrupt shared subjectivities through domestic space.

It is evident that the geographies of heterosexual practices in and of home rarely surface as a topic of research. The heteronormativity of home tends to render the subjectivities and domestic spaces of heterosexuality and love 'invisible' and beyond the need of critical scrutiny. In order to understand how heterosexual bodies are continually (re)produced in and through home, expressions of heterosexuality need to be made explicit. Therefore, in the following section I look at a variety of research to explore how heterosexuality, a social construction that is often rendered 'invisible', may be brought to bear on the interpretation of homes in New Zealand.

Geographies of sexualities

Geographers have made important contributions to understanding sex, sexuality and sexual lives. Crucially, they have shown that space and place are central to understanding sexuality as a social relation and category of social difference. Geographers argue that sexuality and place are inextricably linked. In other words, geographers understand space and sexuality as mutually defining and constitutive as opposed to simply interacting with or reflecting each other.

Browne *et al.*, (2007 4) suggest: “sexuality – its regulation, norms, institutions, pleasures and desires – cannot be understood without understanding the spaces through which it is constituted, practised and lived.” Geographers ask questions about the ways in which sexualities are geographical, and/or questions about how space(s) and place(s) become sexualised (Browne *et al.*, 2007).

Geographical studies of sexualities have steadily grown over the last decade. Since the publication of Bell and Valentine’s (1995) seminal edited collection *Mapping Desires* there has been a proliferation of geographical studies, from a range of theoretical and political positions, which seeks to broaden understandings of sexual difference, relations and desire. There are numerous journal articles (Bell 2006; Binnie and Valentine 1999; Brown 2008), special issues in social, cultural and feminist geography journals (Gorman-Murray *et al.*, 2008), edited (Bell *et al.*, 2001; Browne *et al.*, 2007) and authored books (Bell and Binnie 2000; Elwood 2000; Hockey *et al.*, 2007; Hubbard 1999) on the topic.²⁰ The field of geographies of sexualities is also now taught in a number of undergraduate courses in the United Kingdom, United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

Work on sexuality and space poses important epistemological challenges to the geography discipline and geographical discourses. Homophobia and heterosexism has, and continues to,²¹ influence the academy. Bell (1995 127) points to examples of discriminatory academic censorship based on sex and sexuality: “having our articles pulled from library collections, gaining negative press coverage when we get ‘public money’ to do our work, having secretaries refuse to type up papers, not to mention all the whispering and all the silences

²⁰ I have only included a select number of geographers working on issues of sexuality. There are many more scholars, both within and beyond the discipline, who are actively engaged in examining a diverse range of sexual lives, spaces, experiences, and practices.

²¹ Longhurst (2008a) relays a story about a recent incident where a colleague found it difficult to believe that homophobic discrimination still exists within academia. She argues, and I wholeheartedly agree, that while we have come a long way in attempting to resist and overturn discrimination within the academy, incidences such as the one described by Longhurst (2008a) highlight just how important it is to continue to talk about the areas of sexuality, space and queer geographies.

from colleagues.” It is becoming common practice for researchers to acknowledge their positionality. Yet, for some people the personal and professional costs of sexually embodying knowledge are high.²² Longhurst (2001 25) considers the political implications of ignoring certain topics, including sexuality, in geography, arguing:

The cost of geography shunning dirty topics/messy bodies is borne by those people who desire to examine such topics ... people who want to address dirty (Other) topics, people who themselves may be defined as Others (such as ill, frail, diseased, homosexual, elderly, black, poor, disabled, working class – bodies that are often thought to be messy and out of control), are forced to struggle for legitimisation of their interests in the discipline.

For people, then, who are marked as Other because they are negatively tied to their body, their knowledge is marginalised and deemed unworthy of academic attention. The knowledge and experiences of ‘unmarked’ bodies; bodies which constitute the Self, like heterosexuals for example, is the domain of appropriate and legitimate academic knowledge. Unmarked bodies – white, heterosexual, able-bodied men – are presumably able to transcend their embodiment (Longhurst 2001). Hegemonic, objective and masculinist geographical discourses suggests that unmarked bodies are “autonomous, transcendent and objective; mess and matter-free” (Longhurst 1995 98). What happens, then, when ‘unmarked’ bodies acknowledge their sexual embodiment; their heterosexual desires, disgusts, pleasures and pains? My answer to this question is threefold.

First, in acknowledging heterosexuality as an embodied component of subjectivity, the notion that some bodies – ‘unmarked’ bodies – are untainted by their corporeality is problematised. Sexually embodying knowledge means that ‘unmarked’ bodies are no longer taken-for-granted as mess and matter-free, rather they are bodies with an undeniably fleshy materiality (Longhurst 2001). This leads to my second point, that (hetero)sexually embodying knowledge

²² See, for example, Johnson (1994) and Valentine (1998) for poignant accounts about the costs and risks of sexually embodying knowledge in geography. I discuss my own experiences of sexually embodying knowledge in chapter 4.

destabilises the mind/body dualism, which serves to privilege some, and marginalise other, forms of geographical knowledges. The mind/body dualism plays an important role in determining what counts as legitimate knowledge in geography (Longhurst 1995). It means that which is deemed to be rational, reasonable, public, productive, masculine and of the mind is privileged over irrational, unreasonable, private, reproductive, feminine and of the body. Third, making heterosexuality explicit in geographical discourse works to expose, resist and overturn the homophobic and heterosexist underpinnings of geography. The dominance of heteronormative geographical discourse means that heterosexuality is often deemed to require no social or political explanation. It is relegated to the realm of the 'natural' and 'normal' and is therefore deemed to be beyond the need for examination. In this thesis, I resist the disembodiment, masculinism and heteronormativity of geography by making gendered/sexed and sexualised bodies – the participants' and my own – explicit in the production of geographical knowledge.

The field of geographies of sexualities has a relatively short history. Panelli (2004) identifies geographies of sexualities as the most recent core category of social subjectivity and difference to be widely acknowledged in social and cultural geography. Likewise, Browne *et al.*, (2007 1) suggest geographies of sexualities is a "relatively young field" of critical geographical enquiry. Browne *et al.*, (2007) present a useful chronological summary of the different ways geographers have approached the relationship between sexuality and space.²³ Importantly, they note academic practice and development is located within wider processes of social power:

Neither academic theories nor the spatial practices which constitute sexual identities and spaces develop in a vacuum. Both influence and are influenced by politics. By 'politics' we mean not just the formal political power and practices of state institutions, but also broader

²³ Browne *et al.*, (2007) rightly make the point that in categorising the development of geographies of sexualities in this way, it does not mean that each new development replaces earlier theoretical models or objects of enquiry.

contestations of power and, in this context, heteronormative power relations in particular (Browne *et al.*, 2007 5).

In this way, it is crucial to consider the development of academic discourse and scholarship within historically and geographically specific political beliefs and practices.

Early work by geographers interested in sexual lives sought to locate sexuality in space by mapping, in particular, the residential concentrations of homosexual men in inner city America (Castells 1983; Lauria and Knopp 1985).²⁴ These gay urban enclaves were developed in response to the dominance of heterosexual models of space and acted as sites of resistance to heterosexist societies. They offered housing, social networks and services that afforded gay men a place where they could more easily live a 'gay lifestyle'. In response to the relative absence of women in many of these early works, lesbian experiences of sexuality and space began to be examined. Valentine's (1993a; 1993b; 1993c; 1995) work is particularly notable here. She demonstrates how women living in a small English town created a variety of both 'permanent' and 'temporary' lesbian living spaces including neighbourhoods, bars and clubs. Importantly, this work highlights the problematic nature of labelling spaces as either homosexual or heterosexual. Valentine (1993a; 1993b; 1993c; 1995) shows that the meanings imbued in different spaces change as different sexual groups appropriate them for their needs. Building on these ideas, lesbian geographies broadened the scope beyond the inner city and brought lesbian experiences of the home, work, street and beyond into dialogue with geographical studies of sexuality and space (Browne 2009; Elwood 2000; Johnston and Valentine 1995; Kawale 2004).

Understandably, a characteristic of much of the work on spatialised sexualities has been its neglect of a critical engagement with heterosexuality. Feminist geographers have long examined the ways in which masculinist and patriarchal

²⁴ Bell and Binnie (2000) note that the urban geography of gay space in British cities was minimal compared to work about gay men in America and it was not until the 1990s that significant gay centres in Britain's major urban centres, such as Manchester, began to be studied by geographers.

social relations are seen to reinforce, and be reinforced by, heterosexist relations within a variety of spaces. However, geographers have been slow to turn their attention to the spaces and subjectivities of heterosexuality. Broadly speaking, research that has examined the various ways spaces are (de)sexualised has typically focused on performances of gay, lesbian and bisexual subjectivities that are marginalised in the heterosexualised spaces of everyday life (Bell 1991; Hemmings 2002; Johnston and Valentine 1995; Kirby and Hay 1997; Munt 1995; Valentine 1993a). This work has been important for exposing and undermining the dominance and pervasiveness of heterosexuality. Yet, the geographies of heterosexual social and sexual practice only rarely surface as a topic of critical enquiry (Hubbard 2000). This is despite numerous calls for the expansion of geographical studies of sexuality to include a more nuanced, focused and critical appreciation of heterosexuality. As Richardson (1996 1) writes:

most of the conceptual frameworks we use to theorize human relations rely implicitly upon a naturalized heterosexuality – where (hetero)sexuality tends either to be ignored in the analysis or hidden from view, being treated as an unquestioned paradigm More recently there have been significant attempts by both feminists and proponents of queer theory to interrogate the way that heterosexuality encodes and structures everyday life.

Queer and feminist geographers are now beginning to move beyond conceptualisations of heterosexuality as simply the dominant space non-heterosexuals must negotiate. Instead, they are exploring heterosexuality as a lived experience and as a set of sexual practices, desires and subjectivities. Many geographers are building upon calls to queer the spaces and subjectivities of heterosexuality (Brown and Knopp 2002; Hubbard 2007; Thomas 2004). Brown and Knopp (2002 321), for example, suggest: “Spaces and places designed specifically to facilitate heterosexual sex, courtship and marriage [could] ... also be examined from a queer perspective.” Queer theory is linked to poststructuralist ideas of difference and diversity and as such works to destabilise normative notions of sexuality. It allows for a reading of sexuality as a diverse set of sexual preferences, performances and subjectivities (Panelli 2004). In other words, queer theory challenges the apparently fixed and stable

relationship between sex, gender, sexual roles and acts. In this context, it denaturalises heterosexuality (Brown *et al.*, 2007). Importantly, this view of sexuality disrupts and deconstructs the binary categories of heterosexual/homosexual, sex/gender and man/woman (Johnston and Longhurst 2010). It therefore allows for an acknowledgment of the diversity of sexualities which exist before, between and beyond the categories of heterosexual and homosexual. This is important for thinking about heterosexuality because it contests the idea that there is a monolithic and fixed version of heterosexuality (Hubbard 2008).

Geographers have made effective use of queer theories in order to understand the social and spatial dimensions of sexual life. Building on Butler's (1990; 1993) notion of performativity geographers have shown that space is also performative. Butler (1990; 1993) aims to disrupt dominant understandings of sex, gender and sexuality, which assume that there are just two sexed bodies: male and female; two gendered bodies: man and woman; and that heterosexuality is the inevitable relation between them. She argues that heterosexuality is not simply a pre-constituted expression of natural sexual difference between oppositely sexed bodies. Rather, it is continually made and remade through everyday actions and discourses which give it the appearance of being 'normal'. Geographers working in this mode show that space, like bodies and subjectivities, is produced through performance and practice. It is not simply a backdrop for social and sexual relations but instead is actively constituted through the actions that take place. Performativity denaturalises taken-for-granted social practices (Gregson and Rose 2000) making it a particularly useful theoretical tool for geographers seeking to challenge the naturalisation of heterosexual space. It reveals heterosexual space not as pre-existing sites of 'normal' sexuality, rather as effects of performance and iteration (Bell *et al.*, 1994; Binnie 1997). As Hubbard (2007 156) puts it: "Queering space involves exposing its performative power and drawing attention to the ways specific sites institutionalise and reify subjectivities of all kinds, straight and gay." Geographers' use of Butler's (1990; 1993) work has not been without its critics.

Binnie (2004; 2007), for instance, argues that with the increasing assimilation of performativity into critical human geography “it would appear that the body has become more abstract than ever” with the “physicality and guts of embodied sex” absent in many studies on the geographies of sexual life (Binnie 2007 31). The feminist poststructuralist approach I use for thinking about the geographies of heterosexuality, love and home takes into account the specific materialities of sexed and gendered bodies while acknowledging bodies are interpellated by a range of site specific ideological systems. Bodies are the intersection between the natural and the cultural. This intersection provides a useful starting point for thinking about the geographies of heterosexual love and home.

Feminists have also made important contributions to understanding heterosexuality. I draw extensively on their work. Feminists argue that the naturalisation of heterosexuality is a product of a range of institutionalised social practices, rituals and laws. They have demonstrated that heterosexuality is a combination of all domains of everyday life, including ‘ordinary’ and taken-for-granted institutions such as marriage and family life, as well as everyday practices and routines like domestic and emotional labour and paid employment (Rich 1980; Robinson *et al.*, 2004). Jackson (1999 26) argues:

Everyday heterosexuality is not simply about sex, but is perpetuated by the regulation of marriage and family life, the divisions of waged and domestic labour, patterns of economic support and dependency and the routine everyday expectations and practices through which heterosexual coupledness persists as the normative ideal, a ‘natural’ way of life.

Feminists generally agree that it is appropriate to distinguish between heterosexuality as an institution and as a practice or experience (Jackson 1996).²⁵ By separating heterosexuality into different, yet overlapping spheres, it is possible to critique institutionalised heterosexuality without condemning heterosexuality as a set of sexual acts, desires, pleasures and subjectivities.

²⁵ Feminist theorising of heterosexuality is politically diverse and contested. See Jackson (1999) for a useful discussion about the developments and politics of feminists’ conceptualisations of heterosexuality.

Like other feminists (Jackson 1996; Richardson 1996; Robinson *et al.*, 2004; VanEvery 1996), I understand heterosexuality to be an institution, despite its relative 'invisibility', that structures and maintains patriarchal social relations. As an institution, heterosexuality is based upon a gender hierarchy. The construction of heterosexuality works to privilege men and disempower women. Feminist theorists and activists have looked at a variety of topics to show how institutionalised heterosexuality works to reproduce inequitable gender relations, including: gender and the built environment (McDowell 1983b; Women and Geography Gender Group 1984); domestic violence (Warrington 2001); representations of sexuality and femininity (Bartky 1988; Bordo 1989; 1990); and domestic and emotional labour (Jamieson 1998; 1999; Little 1987; Pratt in collaboration with the Philippine Women Centre 1999; VanEvery 1997). Yet, it is important to remember that the structural and cultural ordering of a gender hierarchy can be contested (and confirmed) at the level of heterosexual practice.

In the 1970s and 1980s radical feminists argued that heterosexuality served to structurally disadvantage women and advantage men because it is founded upon unequal and exploitative gender relations. The ordering of heterosexuality was seen as detrimental to women because it encouraged an active masculinity and passive femininity. Men were viewed as appropriating women's bodies for their own sexual and material needs and women were seemingly powerless to stop it. Heterosexuality was thus deemed to be something that was imposed upon women. Yet, as Jackson (1999 24) argues: "The recognition of agency is crucially important if we are to admit of the possibility of resistance to hegemonic forms of gender and heterosexuality, as well as the ways in which we might be actively complicit in their perpetuation." More recently, feminists are drawing attention to individual power and agency within heterosexual relations and institutions. Informed by postmodernist, poststructuralist and queer theories, feminist scholars are beginning to offer a less condemning appreciation of heterosexuality while retaining a critical awareness of the role it can play in the production of the inequitable gender order (Davis 1991; Hockey *et al.*, 2007; Richardson 1996).

Jackson's (1996; 1999) work has been particularly important for highlighting women's agency and power within heterosexual relationships. Over the past 30 years, she has written extensively on the social construction of sexuality, looking specifically at heterosexuality as a diverse set of sexual desires and practices. Many of her key publications have been re-printed in *Heterosexuality in Question* (1999). Some of the themes covered in the book include: love and romance; sex education; rape; and the social construction of gender and sexuality. The book traces developments in feminist theorising of sexuality. It shows that there has been an important shift away from focusing primarily on patriarchy and male domination within heterosexual relationships towards attempting to critique, contextualise and understand heterosexuality in its own right. Advancing such feminist agendas, a fundamental objective of this thesis is to explore how women in heterosexual relationships negotiate the complexities and contradictions inherent in heterosexuality as both an embodied experience and an institution.

Although feminist and queer theorists both seek to expose and undermine the dominance of heterosexuality, it has been suggested that there are tensions and ruptures that exist amongst those working from feminist and queer perspectives respectively. Longhurst (2008a 384) notes: "in 1999 Jon Binnie and Gill Valentine argued that feminist geography has been both supportive but also restrictive in regard to homophobia remaining deeply seated in the discipline." Eight years later, Bell (2007 85) reiterates these sentiments, explaining: "Feminist geography has sometimes been home to work on queer politics and theories, though it is fair to say there are on-going tensions between queer and feminism that are also being played out in geography." Johnston and Longhurst (2010) make the point that tensions between feminist and queer geographies have not been as evident in New Zealand as they have been in the United Kingdom and United States. They suggest that this may be because there are fewer scholars working in the field, and those who do work on queer geographies in New Zealand tend to be women. Like Johnston and Longhurst (2010), I have found it beneficial to draw

on a combination of feminist and queer work and think that, for this particular study, feminist and queer frameworks complement and extend one another.

Queer and feminist theories afford geographers with the ability to deconstruct normative notions of heterosexuality. Queer theory, in particular, highlights the diversity and plurality of heterosexuality and shows that some heterosexual practices, pleasures, subjectivities and spaces are 'queerer' or more dissident than others (Browne *et al.*, 2007). Geographers have looked at a range of topics in relation to the negotiation and expression of dissident heterosexualities, including sex work and prostitution (Hubbard 1997; 1999; Hubbard and Whowell 2008), bondage, discipline and sadomasochism (BDSM) (Herman 2007), and 'dogging'²⁶ (Bell 2006) in order to challenge established heteronormative power relations. While there have been important academic and political reasons for paying so much attention to non-normative heterosexualities, this focus has meant that the more mundane processes and spaces by which everyday expressions of heterosexuality are reproduced have been neglected. The heteronormativity of geography as a discipline has therefore remained relatively intact. Phillips (2006 164) points out that:

geographical research on sexualities has had much more to say about the margins than the centres of sexual life ... there has been much less scrutiny of those who occupy the moral and sexual centre ground: people who quietly conform to the unwritten, commonly heteronormative rules of the time and place in which they find themselves.

Some geographers have explained the differing levels of interest in heterosexuality in relation to 'sexy' and/or 'unsexy' spaces (Hubbard 2008; Nast 1998). Spaces of leisure and consumption, including sex shops, red light districts, and night clubs, are deemed to be sexy spaces because they often represent explicit sexual rituals and encounters. Walsh's (2007) study of transient

²⁶ Dogging refers to a "complex set of sexual practices which centre on forms of public sex, voyeurism and exhibition, 'swinging', group sex and partner swapping" (Bell 2006 388). The spaces of dogging are typically on the outskirts of urban centres in large parks and nature reserves. Heterosexual couples and singles drive to these semi-secluded locations and engage in sexual acts by themselves and with others.

performances of heterosexuality amongst single British expatriates living in Dubai is a good example of research on the 'sexy' spaces of heterosexuality. Of particular interest is her observation that many British expatriates use transient performances of heterosexuality to challenge the domesticated love relationships institutionalised in British society. Many of her respondents felt 'trapped' in their heterosexual relationships and used migration as an opportunity to distance themselves, both materially and metaphorically, from domesticated couple relationships. Yet, as Walsh (2007) points out, the British expatriates in her study cannot live beyond the sexed and gendered discourses of intimacy that have structured much of their lives. In the long term, coupledness, for many of the participants in Walsh's (2007) study, remained the preferred enactment of heterosexuality. Crucially, this points to the ongoing centrality of heteronormative forms of intimate coupledness in contemporary Western society.

Brown and Knopp (2002) argue, however, that much can be gained from exploring the less contentious, 'unsexy' spaces of heterosexuality. Likewise, Phillips (2006) makes the crucial point that the construction of sexualities occurs not only at points of contestation but also at unremarkable and mundane moments in everyday life. He argues: "Though it is valuable to study sites in which (hetero)sexuality is flaunted, it would be a mistake to see these places as representative in a broader sense of the reciprocal relationship between heterosexuality and space" (Phillips 2006 167). Although sometimes visible, particularly in 'sexy' ways, for example through prostitution (Hubbard 1997; 1999; Hubbard and Whowell 2008), heterosexuality is commonly hidden away in 'unsexy' spaces (Nast 1998) such as the spaces of home, domesticity and family, spaces of marriage, and workplaces. The apparent benign sexuality of many everyday spaces, such as home, conceals and naturalises the hegemonic heterosexuality that organises and dominates them. By concentrating primarily on 'sexy' spaces, Nast (1998) argues, geographers are missing the opportunity to denaturalise heterosexuality. There is a need to look more closely at the performance of heterosexuality in everyday 'unsexy' spaces in order to critique,

explore and contest socially normative subjectivities and spatialities. This is where my research makes an important contribution.

Some geographers have begun to examine and subsequently invert the normative landscapes of hegemonic heterosexualities. There is, for example, an emerging body of work on the production and performance of heterosexualities in rural settings. Rural locations are often represented as 'natural', 'wholesome', 'tranquil' spaces of sexual stability and heteronormativity, contrasted with the 'unnatural', 'unsavoury', 'corrupted' urban spaces of sexual experimentation and adult entertainment (Hubbard 2008). In many rural communities, hegemonic gendered relations continue to inform the roles men and women take on in their family and work lives. The presumed naturalness of these traditional gendered roles remains unquestioned by many living in rural settings. "The persistence of highly traditional attitudes and expectations about masculinity, femininity, and family formations means that heterosexuality has become the dominant norm in many rural spaces" (Johnston and Longhurst 2010 96). Geographers are beginning to interrogate taken-for-granted traditional rural heterosexuality. There is research, for example, on the countryside as a haven for gay men and lesbians (Bell 2000a; 2000b; Valentine 1997a), a site of bestiality and zoophilia (Brown and Rasmussen 2010), and as a site for public sex (Bell 2006).

Little (2003; 2007) focuses on the ways in which the more familiar or mundane practices and views of familial heterosexuality are played out in the countryside. She draws attention to numerous themes, including:

the importance of the survival of the farm-family household to the agricultural business and rural community; the role of marriage and permanence in rural society; and the maintenance of traditional values in rural social relations and individual identities (Little 2007 852).

Little and Panelli (2007) have collaborated in order to undertake a study of romance in 'outback' Australia to show some of the varied ways in which the construction and performance of heterosexuality shapes, and is shaped by, nature. In this work, nature is seen as a component of heterosexual subjectivities

with iterative performances folding nature and heterosexuality back in to one another (Little and Panelli 2007). Ideas about nature are central to these arguments, with the countryside often thought of as the more 'natural' place for heterosexual relationships, in general, and for sexual reproduction, specifically. In this context, discourses of nature are used to naturalise particular (hetero)sexual acts.

Johnston (2006) also explores the connections between nature and heterosexuality in her account of wedding tourism in New Zealand. Johnston (2006 192) contends that weddings are an important public performance of normative heterosexuality and are "powerful markers of a couple's normality, morality, productivity and appropriate gendered subjectivities." She argues that heteronormative tourist weddings and New Zealand landscapes constitute each other as 'natural', '100% Pure', exotic, and romantic. When the bride and groom gather together in an 'exotic' down-under locale, Johnston (2006) writes, heterosexuality is enfolded into nature and nature into heterosexuality. The '100% Pure' landscapes depicted in New Zealand tourism discourses resonate with constructions of heterosexual romantic love. The representation of New Zealand as one of the world's utmost nature spaces, for example, romanticises the wedding, the couple and nature. In these tourism representations, heterosexuality is made to appear as 'natural' and as timeless as the environment in which it is celebrated.

Such studies point to the role of place and space in reproducing normative heterosexualities. They constitute an important intervention in geographical examinations of heterosexualities by highlighting the more mundane, familiar and taken-for-granted practices and spaces of conventional heterosexuality. What needs to be developed further, however, is an understanding of the relationship between heterosexual love and home, which is perhaps the 'unsexiest' space and practice of normative heterosexuality.

As an 'unsexy' space, heterosexual love and home constitute each other as innate, moral, and appropriate. Love gives heterosexuality and the domestic

spaces in which it is constituted the appearance of being 'normal' because love itself is deemed to be a biological and individually felt experience. By relegating the spaces and domestic subjectivities of heterosexual love to the natural arena they seemingly require no explanation. Instead, they simply and unproblematically exist; they just *are*. In addition, the marginalisation of certain topics, which I discuss further in the next section, means that the geographies of heterosexual love and home have not warranted legitimate academic attention within a discipline still dominated by masculinist and heteronormative epistemologies and ontologies. The geographies of heterosexual love and home, then, exist in a paradoxical space in the academy. On the one hand, they occupy a privileged position as the 'norm' and as such are 'invisible'. On the other hand, they are marginalised through their negative association with the feminine, private, emotions and body.

My research thus contributes to the limited, but growing, body of work on the spatial, sexual and emotional aspects of normative heterosexuality. In this context, I seek to de-essentialise and destabilise heterosexuality and its resulting spatial relations. One of the ways I do this is by re-conceptualising heterosexuality as a spatially situated emotional experience (see also Robinson *et al.*, 2004).

Emotional geographies

Emotional geographies constitute a new and exciting field of social, cultural and feminist research. Davidson and Milligan (2004 523) claim that geographers are starting to feel a "welling-up of emotions." This emerging interest in emotional geographies has encouraged recognition of emotions, feelings and embodied senses as central to contemporary social relations (Anderson and Smith 2001; Davidson and Milligan 2004). In an oft-cited editorial, Anderson and Smith (2001 7) speak to the centrality of emotions for understanding people and place interaction, asserting: "At particular times and in particular locations there are moments where our lives are so explicitly lived through pain, bereavement, elation, anger, love and so on that the power of emotional relations cannot be

ignored.” Indeed, it is impossible to fully understand the geographies of lived experience without considering the role of emotions and feelings. Emotional geographies seek to bring emotions, feelings and senses into dialogue with discussions about people and place.

Despite the obvious importance of emotions to many of the topics geographers study, the affective and emotional dimensions of everyday life have, until recently, been largely silenced in both social science research and public policy. Anderson and Smith (2001 7) attribute the neglect of emotions to a gendered politics of knowledge production where “detachment, objectivity and rationality have been valued, and implicitly masculinised, while engagement, subjectivity, passion and desire have been devalued, and frequently feminised.” Failing to acknowledge emotions as a core component of people and place relations contributes to the hegemony of masculinist and disembodied geographical discourse. I am not the only one to draw attention to the implications of ignoring emotions in academic discourse, with scholars across the social sciences making similar points (Pugmire 1998; Williams 2001). Longhurst *et al.*, (2008 210), for example, write: “To neglect feelings and emotions ... is to exclude key relations through which places and bodies become meaningful.”

Feminist geographers have made important contributions to the study of emotions. Davidson and Bondi (2004) argue that geographies of emotional life are situated within, and build on, feminist geography. Feminist geographers usefully problematise the binary structure of much geographical thinking (Massey 1994; Rose 1993) by drawing attention to and challenging essentialised binary associations between masculinity, rationality, objectivity, and the mind; and femininity, emotionality, subjectivity, and the body (Longhurst 2001; McDowell 1999). As Bondi (2005a 436) concludes: “Feminist geographers have sought to undo the mapping of emotion onto and into women’s bodies, at the same time as questioning the exclusion of emotion from the domains of rationality and masculinity.”

Feminist geographers contribute substantially to emotional geographies through a focus on embodiment (Butler and Parr 1999; Longhurst 1997b; 2001; Matthee 2004). Indeed, it has been suggested that the growth of interest in emotions is grounded in the extant work on geographies of 'the body' (Davidson and Milligan 2004; Gorman-Murray 2009; Longhurst *et al.*, 2008). This is perhaps not surprising given that the body is "our first and foremost, most immediate and intimately *felt* geography ... the site of emotional experience and expression *par excellence*. Emotions, to be sure, *take place* within and around this closest of spatial scales" (Davidson and Milligan 2004 523, emphasis in original). The body is the primary site of emotional experience and expression for even the most mundane day-to-day activities. Bodies are lived and experienced through emotions. Focusing on different and often Othered subjective experiences (see for example Johnston 1996 on the ways in which women bodybuilders challenge normative constructions of gender and femininity; Longhurst 1997b on the ways in which pregnant women are often constructed as overly emotional and irrational), feminist geographical research shows how bodily boundaries are thought of, performed, and negotiated in a variety of complex and often emotionally powerful and disruptive ways (Bondi 2005a).

Emotions are not, however, just located within the body. They are also connected to wider social structures and processes (Bondi 2005a; Thien 2005). In this way, emotions are not seen as simply internally felt experiences located in, and belonging uniquely to, individuals. Instead, emotions permeate social and physical environments and are generated by, and expressive of, wider social power relations (Bondi 2005a). Feminist interpretations of women's emotional geographies of fear have been particularly important for legitimatising emotions as a topic of study and also for showing that emotions like fear are roused, aggravated, offset and/or lessened by social and physical environments (Mehta and Bondi 1999; Pain 1991; Panelli *et al.*, 2004).

Geographers explore the emotional dimensions of lived experience at a range of spatial scales. Moving out from the body, they look at the emotional impact of inclusion and exclusion based on age, sexuality, gender, ethnicity, 'race', class

and so on at the level of community (Butler 1999; Johnston 1997), the city (Cloke *et al.*, 2008; Colls 2004; Hubbard 2005; Kawale 2004; Malbon 1998; Valentine 1993b), and the countryside (Cloke *et al.*, 2000; Milligan 1999). There is also a significant body of literature on the emotionalities of home. This work draws attention to the home as a key site of emotional experience: “homes – perhaps more than any other geographical locations – have strong claims on our time, resources and emotions” (Valentine 2001 71). It is for this reason that I review, in some detail, this corpus of work.

Home is a spatially located emotional experience. It is a material and an affective space that shapes, and is shaped by, everyday practices, experiences, social relations and emotions (Blunt 2005). As Rubenstein (2001 1) points out home is not “merely a physical structure or a geographical location but always an emotional space.” Home is one of, if not the, most intimate spaces of daily human inhabitancy. It is where significant (non)familial relationships and bonds are formed, fostered and destroyed. Geographical work on the emotionalities of home pays particular attention to the affects of gendered and family space (Domosh and Seager 2001; Sibley 1995a) including the challenges and rewards of parenting (Gabb 2004) and the pleasures and frustrations of home based eating (Bell and Valentine 1997; Matthee 2004; Valentine 1999a). There is important work that challenges the idea of ‘home as haven’ through illustrations of home as a potential site of domestic violence (Burman and Chantler 2004; Valentine 1992) and exploitative domestic labour (Chapman 2004; Chapman and Hockey 1999), including paid domestic work (Cox and Rekha 2003; Pratt 1997; Silvey 2004; Stiell and England 1997). There is some interesting work on the meanings of home, in particular the feelings of grief and loss associated with the breakdown of heterosexual relationships (Thompson 2007), gay men’s, lesbians’ and bisexuals’ emotional experiences of home (Gorman-Murray 2008c; Johnston and Valentine 1995; Kawale 2004), young people’s experiences of homelessness (Robinson 2005), the emotional labour of caring for frail, older or disabled people in their homes (Milligan 2000; 2003; Twigg 2000), and elderly people’s experiences of relocating to institutions of care (Hugman 1999; Valentine 2001).

Robinson *et al.*, (2004) offer one of the only studies on the embodied and emotional geographies of heterosexuality and home. They link heterosexuality to emotions through concepts such as intimacy, faithfulness, commitment and independence. I aim to build on and extend this work through an examination of a variety of normative and non-normative expressions of heterosexual love and home. Looking at a hegemonic model of heterosexuality – the conjugal family – Robinson *et al.*, (2004) argue that this dominant conception of heterosexuality powerfully informs the ways in which people experience and manage the emotional and bodily aspects of their daily lives. This spatialised account of emotions shows how institutionalised heterosexuality impacts on the ways in which people experience and feel their heterosexual subjecthood. They make the argument that in order to provide an emotionally situated account of the effects of institutionalised heterosexuality then “it is the family and its locations – the spaces it occupies and the spaces it abjects – which arguably need to be investigated” (Robinson *et al.*, 2004 419). Robinson *et al.*, (2004) thus set out to examine the ways in which domestic space frames, constrains and resources emotions in the production of a lived, situated experience of heterosexuality. In this context they ask:

How is the familial home used as a resource to facilitate the expression of individuals’ sexual identities? Do age and generational-based expectations impinge on the practice of sexual identities and, indeed, the acknowledgement of the existence of these among older and younger generations? Relatedly, how is the material space of the home managed to facilitate the expression of gendered emotional identities, particularly when the constraining impact of this environment can significantly impinge upon our embodied emotional selves? (Robinson *et al.*, 2004 421-422).

While the work reviewed above constitutes an important beginning, much remains to be said about the emotional and affective elements of heterosexuality and home. Bondi *et al.*, (2005 5, my emphasis) argue: “Questions about how emotions are embodied and located merit further elaboration in the context of *typical* and less typical everyday lives.” There is very little geographical work which offers an explicit examination of the links between emotional

embodiment and normative heterosexualised domestic space. Spatialised issues of heterosexual love, romance and intimacy, in particular, are under-theorised and under-examined empirically. I reflect critically on this omission in the next section.

Love, romance and intimacy

Discussions of heterosexuality and home could usefully involve a focus on love. Yet, love has been absent from most sexuality and home scholarship, in particular, and geographical discourse in general. While acknowledgement pages often contain written expressions of love – love for partners, children, friends and family – geographical texts contain little trace of bodies that love (see also Longhurst 2001). Love is present in these texts, but it provides the emotional backdrop to geographers' analyses as opposed to it being a subject in its own right. Johnston and Longhurst (2010) make the point that questions about why geographers have ignored love in their research are well-overdue. Bell and Valentine (1995) highlight the dangers of ignoring the performances and experiences of heterosexual love, romance and desire. Thien (2004 46-47) similarly suggests that a study of love has much to offer studies of space and place: "Thinking through love, feeling our way through in or out of all love's guises is a project that feminist geography stands to learn from."

One of the reasons why geographers have not paid much attention to love is because bodies have long been constructed as the Other in geography. As an emotion, love is typically associated with the irrational workings of 'the body'. Love is often understood as a basic biological human experience. As a biological experience, love conjures up negative representations and discourses associated with the material, volatile, uncontrollable and irrational nature of bodies. Overlooking the experiences of loving bodies/bodies loving is not a harmless omission. Rather, it contains political imperatives which reinforce dominant hierarchal dualisms. Geography's foundations rest on a gendered/sexed Cartesian dualism between mind and body (Longhurst 1997b). This masculinist politics of knowledge production may account for why geographers have been

slow to explore the intricacies of embodied accounts of love. Johnston and Longhurst (2010 51) argue that devoting “academic time and resources to ‘bodies that love’ would signal a challenge to existing ‘rational’ and traditional geographical knowledge.” This is precisely what I intend to do. I respond to calls about attending critically to the emotional geographies of love, desire and attachment (Bondi *et al.*, 2005; Gabb 2004; Thien 2004). I do so with the intent of unsettling the masculinism, disembodiment and heteronormativity of much geographical discourse.

In saying this, some academics, including geographers (Johnston and Longhurst 2010) and sociologists (Jackson 1993b), fall in and out of love and are writing about it. Second-wave feminists, for example, subjected heterosexual love to a feminist agenda (Comer 1974; de Beauvoir 1972; Firestone 1972). They argue that love is an invention of patriarchy and obscures gender inequalities and women’s oppression in intimate heterosexual relationships. This early feminist theorising, whilst instrumental in legitimising a study of love, has been critiqued for its unequivocal and uncritical focus on heterosexual love relationships (Jackson 1993a). The “heterosexual nature of love was taken as given. These analyses of love did, of course, contain within them an implicit critique of heterosexuality, but this was not their explicit object” (Jackson 1993a 41). More recently, studies across the social sciences and humanities, including feminism (Jackson 1993a; 1993b; 1995a; Sue Jackson 2001), sociology (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 1995; Giddens 1992; Jamieson 1998; Johnson 2005; Lindholm 1998; Schäfer 2008; Swee Lin 2008), leisure studies (Herridge *et al.*, 2003), masculinity studies (Allen 2007; Redman 2002), migration and mobility studies (Frohlick 2009; Gorman-Murray 2009; Mai and King 2009), psychology (Burns 2000; 2002), and philosophy (Ahmed 2004; Irigaray 1996) have built on these early feminist studies and have developed new critical perspectives on heterosexuality, love and romance.

Sociologist Johnson (2005) provides perhaps the only sustained and in-depth theoretical and empirical examination of heterosexuality, gender and love. He

offers a critique of sociological work on love, intimacy and romance, which he contends, has failed to engage critically with heterosexuality, writing:

What 'love' stands for in most sociological work is 'heterosexual love'. To say 'love' is just a shorthand which hides the heteronormativity which it reproduces; a nomenclature for a range of heterosexual practices which are performed by men and women. This split between an analysis of love and heterosexuality reiterates a certain heterosexism in sociological work. Although we find many different analytic insights in published research on love ... we find no significant study of the relationship between heterosexuality and love (Johnson 2005 14).

Challenging the assumption that biology dictates both gender differences and the 'naturalness' of heterosexual desire, Johnson (2005) stresses that intimate love is a socially constructed and culturally specific form through which heterosexuality is operationalised. His aim is to "explore how romantic love is enmeshed in the construction of a particular way of 'being': specifically, how love forms a dynamic process for producing practices and identities deemed heterosexual" (Johnson 2005 1). Using data from in-depth interviews with 24 men and women of a variety of ages and class backgrounds, Johnson (2005) investigates how heterosexuality, as both a subjectivity and set of social practices, is brought to life through love relationships. He explores a number of themes, including: the ways in which feelings are inscribed onto the body through narratives of romantic love; the links between love, gender and heterosex; the production of gendered subjectivities; the binary relationship between heterosexuality and homosexuality; and, desire outside the limits of normative heterosexuality. In doing so, Johnson (2005) reveals heterosexuality as a diverse set of social-sexual practices whilst also acknowledging that such practices remain constituted within highly regulated and institutionalised gendered and sexed norms.

Jackson (1993a; 1993b; 1995a) makes a particularly important contribution to feminist understandings of love. Linking her ongoing interest in sexuality to the social construction of emotions, she argues that love is a product of social and gendered relations. Importantly, this understanding allows for a critique of

institutionalised heterosexuality. Jackson (1993a; 1993b; 1995a) thinks about emotions as discursively produced and as experienced at the level of our subjectivities. In this way, the feelings, emotions and sensations of love are conceptualised not simply as internally felt subjective experiences. Instead, love and romance are theorised as a set of competing discourses, meanings, rules and practices which help give shape and form to sexual experiences, subjectivities and relationships. “We create for ourselves a sense of what our emotions are, of what being ‘in love’ is, through learning scripts, positioning ourselves within discourses, constructing narratives of self” (Jackson 1993a 45). Moving beyond limited and limiting discourses of love as something that is biologically ‘natural’ and instinctive, sexually restrictive and repressive, scholars such as Jackson (1993a; 1993b; 1995a), Johnson (2005) and the others mentioned above, recognise love as both a site of women’s, and men’s, complicity in, and resistance to, patriarchal, heteronormative and masculinist social relations. They show that love and its associated practices are socially constructed whilst also retaining an awareness of love as an undeniably biological experience.

Scholars interested in love have begun to take up the challenge of thinking about love beyond its normative form. Recent accounts suggest that modes of love and loving in late-modern de-traditionalised societies have undergone fundamental changes with new patterns and forms of intimacy emerging (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 1995; Giddens 1992; Weeks 2000). It is believed that traditional scripts of love and romance no longer exert much influence over the way people perform their intimate relationships. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995 5), for instance, argue: “Love is becoming a blank that lovers must fill in themselves.” The production of new frameworks of intimacy beyond the heterosexual couple is thus deemed to weaken the institutional parameters of heterosexuality with radical consequences for the gender order. At the same time, it has been argued that such writings not only overestimate the changes that are occurring (Jackson 1999) but also ignore the material realities of many heterosexual couples (Jamieson 1999). While it cannot be denied that broader changes in social, political and economic life are influencing intimate interactions, it similarly

cannot be said that such changes are systematically affecting the social constitution of normative heterosexuality. Research continues to show that heterosexual relationships are dominated by unequal gendered power (Jamieson 1999). Likewise, cultural representations of love remain normatively associated with heterosexuality and tied to marriage, family and the home (Johnson 2005). For many people, irrespective of sexual orientation or subjectivity, “one of the main ‘driving forces’ of the contemporary life cycle is finding a life partner – someone to fall in love, be intimate, and build a home with” (Gorman-Murray 2009 452).

Despite the important contributions scholars working beyond the discipline of geography have made to the study of love, too often they fail to appreciate that ‘bodies that feel love’ do so in particular places (Johnston and Longhurst 2010). It is important to think about love as a spatial process because bodies cannot be divorced from the places in which they are constituted (Longhurst 1997b; Nast and Pile 1998; Rose 1993). It is through the body that we connect with and experience place. This is where geographers can make significant contributions to theorising love relations. Thinking about the ways in which different places and spaces affect *how, when and why* people love reduces the possibility of an uncritical, essentialist and heteronormative account of bodies, love, gendered and sexed relations, and space. My examination of the links between home, love and heterosexuality in Hamilton does precisely this.

Geographers first began engaging with notions of love in the 1990s. Hay (1991; 1992), Bell (1992; 1994), and Robinson (1994) engaged in a heated discussion about heteronormative understandings of love and place. The epistemological battle commenced with Hay (1991) who offered a conception of people-love and place-love that drew primarily on normative heterosexual practices and expressions: marriage, family and domesticity. Bell (1992) forcefully responded to Hay’s short article claiming that the model of love put forward excluded sexual minorities and reinforced heteronormative and heterosexist concepts of society and space. Robinson (1994), entering the debate, criticised the way in which Bell (1992) approached his response and attempted to clarify much of Hay’s

argument, pointing out that by identifying one particular, normative form of love, “he [Hay] tacitly recognises love’s existence in differently constituted human relationships” (Robinson 1994 84). This early dialogue can be credited with opening up a space in geography to discuss the intersections of love, sexuality and space. By critically examining heteronormalised models of love, this early engagement with love’s complexities highlights the important contribution geographers have to make to understandings of emotional-sexual-spatial relations.

Some geographers are attempting to think about love outside of the constraints of heteronormativity. Challenging the idea that love only occurs in the couple form, Johnston and Longhurst (2010) use the geographies of polyamory and polygamy in the US Home Box Office (HBO) television drama *Big Love*²⁷ as a way of queering expressions of love, sexualities and home spaces. They argue that the love expressed between multiple lovers and/or ‘sister wives’ is both normative and non-normative. The love between three women and one man undermines normative models of love, sexuality and home yet at the same time conceals and perhaps justifies unequal gendered power relations. Gabb (2004) looks at the complex boundaries between mother-baby and adult-lesbian sexual love. Moving beyond traditional discourses of sexual and maternal love, she shows how the sexual-sexless boundaries between parents and children can become blurred in lesbian families. Gabb (2004) argues that home represents one of the few places where the sexual and maternal subjectivities of lesbian parents may be reconciled. Bell and Binnie (2000) think about love in its many forms – romance, friendship, family – and sexual citizenship. They make the point that thinking critically about the social construction of love requires being both dubious of, and receptive to, the possibilities of love outside limited and limiting discourses. Drawing on interviews with people who challenge normative notions of intimacy through their rejection of monogamy, Wilkinson (2010) questions neo-conservative rhetoric which promotes monogamous coupledness

²⁷ *Big Love* is an American television drama on HBO about a fictional Mormon family in Utah who practice polyamory.

as the ultimate source of care and love and as connected to the 'good' of society. She argues that a rejection of the idea that care, love and responsibility are always associated with spatial proximity – living in the same house – has the potential to rework intimacy as it is currently understood. Responding to these pieces of work, I pay close attention to the heterosexuality of love and home. Heterosexualised discourses and experiences surround and underpin the meanings, imaginaries and materialities of love and home and work to both constrain and confirm heterosexual subjectivities and activities.

Summary

While the dominant discourse of home presents a universal version of heterosexuality based on notions of reproduction, domesticity and love, the geographies of heterosexual love and home, are in fact, multiple, fluid, partial and constantly changing. This chapter provides the theoretical scaffolding from which to think about heterosexuality as a spatially located, embodied and emotional experience. It brings together, reviews, and extends four areas of scholarship: geographies of home; geographies of sexualities; geographies of emotions; and feminist and sociological literature on love, romance and intimacy. Feminist poststructuralism provides the theoretical tools for unsettling and undermining the naturalisation of heterosexuality, love and home.

Despite feminist and queer interventions over the past couple of decades, geography continues to be a site of heteronormativity (Bell 2009). The geographies of heterosexuality and home – particularly those relating to love, romance and intimacy – remain largely 'invisible' and unremarked upon. Heteronormative geographical discourse tends to locate these aspects of heterosexuality in the realm of the 'natural' thus exempting them from critical scrutiny and explanation.

The relationship between heterosexuality, love and home has been under-examined. Although research outside of geography has long questioned the significance of the construction, negotiation and enactment of heterosexuality and love to the ordering of everyday life, within the discipline they have not been

sufficiently addressed. Heterosexual love is a useful lens through which to examine the relationship between subjectivity and domestic space for young heterosexual homemakers. Before I go on to discuss the lived experiences of the 14 couples who participated in this research, I discuss the methodological process undertaken to conduct this research.

CHAPTER 4

Methodology

Methodologies in feminist and cultural geography continue to encourage a critical awareness of the power relations which constitute research relationships. There is a particular focus on the ways in which embodied emotions work to construct and inform research encounters (Bennett 2004; Bondi 2005b; Lees and Longhurst 1995; Longhurst *et al.*, 2008; Smith *et al.*, 2008; Widdowfield 2000). This scholarship draws on a variety of both traditional and less conventional methodological approaches in order to find new ways of accessing the complexities inherent in everyday life.²⁸ It is within this literature that my approach to research methodology is situated.

This research has been designed to make use of a variety of qualitative feminist-inspired research methods. Qualitative methodologies informed by feminism are founded upon the principles of equality, reciprocity, collaboration, partiality, non-hierarchical practices and commitment to action and social justice. Four interconnected phases of research – joint semi-structured interviews, solicited diaries and self-directed photography, follow-up interviews, and, evaluation questionnaires – were used to examine couples', and in particular women's, everyday geographies of heterosexuality, love and home. The decision to combine these four methods was a conscious and considered one (Bijoux and Myers 2006; Latham 2003; Luzia 2010; Meth 2003b). Although sometimes utilised as stand-alone research tools, the combination of these methods creates a research strategy that is rigorous, wide-ranging and complex. It can also give participants the opportunity for deeper participation in, and control over, the research process.

I used multiple methods because they allow for a breadth of coverage. I recognise that there are complex and constantly shifting relationships between

²⁸ See the 'Progress Reports' by Crang (2002; 2003; 2005) and Davies and Dwyer (2007; 2008) and Dwyer and Davies (2009) for detailed discussions of the changing place of qualitative methods in human geography.

gendered and sexed subjectivity and home that produce numerous conceptual questions, not all of which can be sufficiently addressed by one approach (see also Gorman-Murray 2006c; Johnston 1998). Multiple methods are highly compatible with feminist poststructuralist analyses. Feminist poststructuralists raise important epistemological questions about the social construction of knowledge. They offer a critique of scientific, detached and objective research methods. Feminist poststructuralist theories resist the idea that knowledge is neutral, objective and rational and instead allow for recognition of knowledge as local, partial and embodied.

Throughout the chapter I draw extensively on material gained from evaluation questionnaires (see also Myers 2009). Evaluation questionnaires formed the final phase of research and were used as a way to access participants' thoughts and feelings about their involvement in the project. Valentine (2002 125) makes the point that: "while we, as researchers have devoted considerable time to attempting the impossible task of reflecting on our own role in the research process we know little about how our informants experience, feel about, or reflect upon their own participation."

Women respondents were sent an email thanking them for their participation and asking if they would like to reflect on their involvement in the research process.²⁹ Out of the 14 women who participated I received nine completed evaluation questionnaires. Questions related to various aspects of the research and asked for reflections on things such as: the logistics of the process, including whether the phases complimented one another; the implications of participating, including any personal gains or problems encountered; and, practical considerations, such as the amount of time it took to participate. They were also given the space to offer any suggestions about how the method could be expanded or improved.³⁰ The findings from the questionnaires are

²⁹ See appendix 1 for a copy of the email I sent to participants requesting their involvement in the evaluation stage of the research.

³⁰ See appendix 2 for a copy of the evaluation questionnaire I sent out to participants.

incorporated throughout the chapter because they provide valuable insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the research strategy. They challenge the notion that 'knowledge' resides primarily in the formal institutions of academia.

In what follows, the processes and practices used in this research are discussed. I begin by outlining the procedure used to recruit respondents and I reflect on the profile of participants. Following this, I discuss the rationale for, and critiques of, couple interviews, solicited diaries and self directed photography, and follow-up interviews, as research techniques. I then move to explain how I set about analysing and presenting the data. Finally, I reflect critically upon the interpersonal dynamics of intimate research relationships and consider the role my embodied subjectivities have played in the construction of geographical knowledge.

Participant recruitment and profile

Participants were recruited in a three main ways. First, recruitment posters were used to advertise for potential participants.³¹ These posters were located in a variety of spaces around Hamilton where advertising was permitted. Second, I advertised in two local newspapers: the *Waikato Times* and *The Hamilton Press*. The third, and by far the most effective procedure for recruitment, was snowballing. At the end of the 'couple interview' I asked participants if they knew of anyone who would be interested in participating. If they did, I asked them to pass on my details. Once potential participants had expressed interest I sent an email thanking them for contacting me and included an information sheet which detailed the research aims and practices.³²

As it turned out, participants were a diverse group (see figure 6).³³ They live in a variety of situations and configurations. They have varying degrees of education, are employed in a range of occupations and identified themselves as located

³¹ See appendix 3 for a copy of the recruitment poster.

³² See appendix 4 for a copy of the information sheet.

³³ All participants have been given pseudonyms as outlined in the consent form (appendix 5).

within the range of lower to upper middle class. They vary in terms of political and religious beliefs and background, ethnicities, and the length of their relationships ranges from one to ten years. In accordance with the aims of the research, none of the couples have children. Some participants have lived in New Zealand for their entire life and others have migrated temporarily to New Zealand from Europe, the UK and the US. Participants identify as European, New Zealand Pākehā, or Māori. No participants identified as Pacific Islander or Asian.³⁴ I now move to discuss the methods used in this research, reflecting upon both the strengths and weaknesses of each approach.

Phase one: couple interviews

The first of a sequence of encounters between myself and research participants was a semi-structured interview with couples. Semi-structured interviews are a standard method in social science research and the benefits gained from using them are well-established (Dunn 2005; Longhurst 2003; Valentine 1997b). The way that semi-structured interviews take a “conversational, fluid form” (Valentine 1997b 111) and allow for a variety of interests, experiences and views to be expressed makes them a particularly valuable research tool. Given recent criticisms about geography’s methodological conservatism (Crang 2005; Latham 2003; Thrift 2000), however, and in response to questions about the effectiveness of words in articulating embodied and emotive dimensions of everyday life, semi-structured interviews, and other more traditional methods, such as participant observation and focus groups, are sometimes being passed over for ‘newer’ methods (Anderson 2004; Dodman 2003; Kindon 2003; Longhurst *et al.*, 2008; Wood and Smith 2004; Young and Barrett 2001).

³⁴ Given that no participants identified as Pacific Islander or Asian I do not discuss their unique cultural practices. I do, however, acknowledge that these groups make up a significant proportion of New Zealand’s population.

Name	Age	Ethnicity (self-defined by participants)	Length of relationship	Lived together	Housing tenure and living situation	Married (years)	Occupation
Lizzy & Zane	Late 20s	Māori & Pākehā/ NZ Caucasian	6yrs	2 yrs	Joint owner-occupiers, 1 flatmate	No	Administration/Tradesperson
Marie & Paul	Mid 20s	White European & German	5 yrs	1 yr	Renting, 3 flatmates	No	Higher degree students
Donna & Mark	Early 20s/ late 30s	White NZ/Māori & Irish	3 yrs	1 yr	Renting, no flatmates	No	Higher degree student/ Academic
Rose & Joseph	Early 20s/ early 30s	NZ European	2 yrs	1 yr	Joint owner-occupiers, no flatmates	No	Government department/IT
Kylie & Luke	Early 20s	NZ European & Māori/NZ European	6 yrs	2 yrs	Renting, live alone	Yes (5)	Curator/Administration
Ruby & Taylor	Late 30s	White Anglo-Saxon/ White British	10 yrs	8 yrs	Renting, 1 flatmate	Yes (6)	Childcare/IT
Rebecca & Tim	Early 20s	NZ European/NZ	1 yr	3 mths	Renting, 3 flatmates	No	Undergraduate students
Melissa & Peter	Early 20s	Māori & European	3 yrs	2 yrs	Renting, live alone	No	Higher degree student/Manufacturing
Debbie & Robert	Mid 20s/ early 30s	NZ Pākehā/Māori & Scottish	4 yrs	4 yrs	Single owner-occupier, 2 flatmates	No	Administration/Health sector
Angie & Cooper	Late 20s	NZ Europeans	9 yrs	8 yrs	Joint owner-occupiers, live alone	Yes (3)	Higher degree student/IT
Sheree & Alex	Early 20s	Māori	7 ½ yrs	4 ½ yrs	Joint owner-occupier, 1 flatmate	Yes (1)	Researcher/Tradesperson
Linda & Jeff	Late 20s	Caucasian/ European	6 yrs	2 yrs	Renting, live alone	Yes (4)	Higher degree students
Kimberly & Scott	Late 30s	Pākehā NZ	8 yrs	7 yrs	Single owner-occupier, live alone	No	Health sector/Researcher
Sophia & Alec	Late 20s	European/ German	2 yrs	6 mths	Renting, live alone	No	Higher degree students

Figure 6: Participants' details

Some geographers have shifted their focus from more traditional methodologies towards finding and using methods which seek to access 'new' ways of knowing and being in the world through embodiment and emotionality. Yet, there is still much to be gained from using semi-structured interviews in qualitative research.

Davies and Dwyer (2007 257) argue: "it is hard, though perhaps not impossible, to imagine what a radically new form of qualitative research practice might look like." I agree (see also Longhurst *et al.*, 2008). The same collection of qualitative methods – interviews, focus groups and ethnographies – are still being used, but importantly, the ways in which they are being conceptualised and executed is constantly changing. Feminists have long advocated for researchers to "use any and every means available" (Stanley 1990 12) and it is generally accepted that there is no one set of methods or techniques that are distinctly feminist. Instead, it is argued that the tools for data collection should be appropriate to the research question and adapted to suit the requirements of the research (Nelson and Seager 2005).

In my research, semi-structured interviews differ from more traditional formats in two main ways.³⁵ First, they are conducted with couples and include an examination of the production of 'shared realities' within the interview context. Second, they are used in combination with other research methods including solicited diaries, self-directed photography and follow-up interviews. Used in this way, semi-structured interviews have added a level of rigour and depth to the research process. In this section, I look at the various methodological logistics of conducting research with cohabiting couples.

³⁵ Traditional semi-structured interviews are usually based on an exchange between two people – the interviewer and interviewee (Longhurst 2003). This means that there is limited interaction in terms of interpersonal dynamics compared to other ethnographic methods, such as focus groups. Joint semi-structured interviews, then, are similar to focus groups as they encourage interaction between participants. In her research on pregnant women's experiences of Hamilton, New Zealand, Longhurst (1996) considers the composition of a focus group. She concludes that two participants and a facilitator can be considered a focus group as opposed to a joint semi-structured interview. I, however, decided in the context of this research that two participants and me (as facilitator) was not a focus group because in the interviews participants worked together to produce a 'shared' account and subjectivity as a couple. Focus groups are usually made up of individuals who share some common characteristics but do not attempt to narrate a shared story.

Twelve couples participated in the semi-structured interview.³⁶ This phase was designed to elicit narratives on the importance of home to the construction and lived experience of heterosexual couples and interpersonal relationships. It was also used as a way of gaining an insight into the power dynamics and social relations of their household. An examination of research interactions can, in itself, yield considerable insights into the workings of relationships and households. Couple interviews provided me with a unique opportunity to see how partners interacted with each other and negotiated the construction of a 'shared subjectivity' in the interview setting. I agree with Valentine (1999b 69), that:

conversations [during couple interviews] are particularly illuminating, not only because of the material they generate on the topic under discussion, but also because they offer the opportunity for the interviewer to see how the household relationships function, for example by observing how the couple support or undermine each other, who opens negotiations and what strategies they adopt to win the argument. In this way, the processes through which a couple negotiate their joint account can also illustrate the processes through which the household operates in relation to other issues.

Given the benefits of interviewing couples together (although there are some drawbacks, which are discussed later) and the dominance of shared living in Western societies, it is perhaps surprising that this research tool has not been used more thoroughly by geographers. In New Zealand, for example, approximately 75 percent of people live in a shared household of some sort (Statistics New Zealand 2010). Yet, there has been little geographical literature that examines the methodological practicalities and ethical complexities of interviewing couples, and other types of shared households, about their shared life.

Outside of geography, particularly in family studies (Allan 1980; Hertz 1995; Wheelock and Oughton 1996) and health research (Peters *et al.*, 2007), scholars are engaged in a long-standing debate about the methodological pitfalls and benefits of interviewing household members together and apart. The primary

³⁶ Fourteen couples were involved in the research in total but two men chose not to participate in the couple semi-structured interview.

focus of this body of work is on the practical processes of conducting couple interviews rather than on how the interview reflects and refracts the complexities of people's shared realities as they jointly construct an account of their life. Valentine (1999b 73) rightly points out that this oversight results in a lack of "attention both to the power-laden and ethical consequences of probing joint stories, and to exploring the complexities and contradictions of the contested realities of shared lives." Aitken (2001 74) similarly makes the point that when interviewing couples, particular attention needs to be paid to power relations:

In qualitative research with partners, you position yourself at the margins of an unfathomable set of interpersonal politics from where you scratch only a small fragment, which you hope is sufficient to answer your research questions without damaging the relationships you are trying to understand.

Some geographers have interviewed 'couples' for research purposes. Valentine (1997c) has interviewed couples on childhood safety and on the relationship between food and well-being (Valentine 1999a). Gorman-Murray (2006a) explores the ways in which gay and lesbian couples generate shared subjectivities through domestic space. Couple interviews have also been used to examine the relationship between subjectivity construction and home consumption (Gram-Hanssen and Bech-Danielsen 2004; Reimer and Leslie 2004). These examples point to geographers' growing interest in exploring intra-household relations and offer a nuanced understanding of the complexities inherent in domestic relationships. Unfortunately, however, they contribute little by way of methodological reflection because the complexities of the interviewer/interviewee(s) relationship are not the focus of these papers. Effectively, then, I went into the research setting with very little knowledge about how best to conduct interviews with couples.

I decided to follow a semi-structured interview format. I prepared a set of predetermined questions and used it to prompt discussion when necessary (Dunn 2005; Longhurst 2003; Valentine 1997b). The intent of employing a semi-

structured format was to discover what themes and ideas were significant to each participant whilst also covering matters of importance to the aim of the project. The interview schedule was based around two broad themes: first, meanings of home which included questions about home and subjectivity; making and designing home; using home; and second, meanings of love, which focused on intimate relationships; romance; expressions and performances of love.³⁷ I built flexibility into the interview schedule by asking two broad foundational questions which then allowed me to arrange the topics in an appropriate order.³⁸ This meant that each interview varied according to the personal experiences of respondents. After several introductory questions which addressed the identity of respondents, including their age, class, ethnicity and occupation, I asked them, firstly, what does 'home' mean to you? And, secondly, what does 'love' mean to you? In this way, interviewees were able "to construct their own accounts of their experiences by describing and explaining their lives in their own words" (Valentine 1997b 111).

Feminist geographers stress the importance of reciprocity in the interview and encourage researchers to interact and share their own experiences with research participants (England 1994; McDowell 1992; Valentine 1997b). At times, I participated in the interview by sharing some of my own opinions and experiences. This, without a doubt, influenced the type of information gathered. I am certain that it prompted participants to share different types of stories with me than if I had not been open about my own experiences. Sheree reflects on this in her feedback form, writing: "your willingness to do this [share stories of you and your partner] made it a comfortable environment and made it more of a conversation than an interview (feedback form 17 July 2008). Similarly, Lizzy points out that Zane (her partner) felt more comfortable participating in the research because I shared stories about my relationship: "Zane and I really

³⁷ See appendix 6 for a copy of the full interview schedule.

³⁸ I would like to acknowledge the assistance of Andrew Gorman-Murray who kindly sent me the interview schedule he produced and used in his PhD study on gay men's and lesbians' experiences of home (Gorman-Murray 2006c). His interview schedule helped enormously in the development of my interview questions.

enjoyed talking to you last week. You guys sound quite a bit like us, which made Zane relax a lot more than I expected him to” (personal email correspondence 29 April 2008).

Although I shared my experiences with participants I was careful not to assert my own understandings and opinions onto them. I tried to keep my input to a minimum and thus acted as a research ‘facilitator.’³⁹ The flexibility that this role afforded meant that I was able to allow the conversation to flow and develop and as a result the interviews ended up being a multidirectional flow of information, opinions and experiences. Partners shared their ideas with each other, confirmed and challenged each others’ stories and comments, and prompted further discussion in ways that I had not envisioned. Valentine (1999b 68) makes the point that these types of exchanges are a particular strength of joint interviewing:

a process of negotiation and mediation takes place between couples in the production of a single collaborative account for the interviewer, which can provide material or insights into the dynamics of the household that would be difficult to identify in a one-to-one interview.

Negotiations over who talked first were particularly revealing. Some couples worked their way through the interview without any obvious conflict or tension. For others, this proved to be more difficult and often eagerness to speak first caused conflict between partners. Kimberley and Scott’s interview, in particular, exposed the potentially contested nature of household relationships.

At the beginning of the interview Kimberly and Scott politely took turns at speaking. At times, they would accidentally speak over each other and the subsequent tension this created would be masked by nervous laughter. After several interrupted and overlapping answers, however, their struggle came to a head when Scott disputed one of Kimberly’s comments.

³⁹ I discuss the dynamics of the interviewer-interviewee relationship in more detail in the final section of this chapter.

Carey-Ann: Are there any spaces or objects that symbolise your home as a shared space?

Kimberly: I think this couch is another [important space] (//)

Scott: (//) I don't. I think the other couch was [more important]. I was going to say that.

Kimberly: Ok, well it's my turn to talk (*nervous laughter*) (joint interview 01 April 2008).⁴⁰

At this point, Scott promptly apologised and waited for Kimberly to finish speaking. He then attempted to amend the situation by agreeing with her. This seemed to be something of a turning point in the interview. Instead of struggling with each other over who would articulate their view first they began to make a conscious effort to encourage each other to speak. For the most part, this diplomacy continued throughout the interview. The exception was when they disagreed on a point or they began discussing a topic of underlying contention.

Valentine (1999b) points out that the interview process can accidentally expose tensions in the relationship and the researcher needs to be vigilant in the way s/he respond to these situations. I was careful to neither take 'sides' nor express an opinion when instances like those described above arose. Participants were also informed that they were able to request parts, or the entire interview, to be discarded from the research if they were not happy. I made it clear to women participants that while I would do my utmost to ensure anonymity and confidentiality there were also the possibility that their partners may be able to

⁴⁰ The transcribing codes are as follows: a word underscored indicates participants' emphasis on particular words; words contained in [square brackets] are used to make incomplete sentences more understandable. Italicised words contained in (*brackets*) are indicative of the conversational tone, such as (*laughing*). Successive full stops (...) indicate instances where text has been removed in order to improve the readability of extracts. A double slash (//) shows that one participant has interrupted another.

identify them through their diary stories and therefore maintaining confidentiality within couples may be challenging in this particular context.⁴¹

Regardless of any tensions that occurred during the interviews there were still obvious moments of shared understanding and appreciation of each other and their sometimes differing opinions and conflicts of interest. Most couples approached the situation with humour and enthusiasm. There was plenty of amicable banter and joking over who would answer 'difficult' questions.

Carey-Ann: What does home mean to you?

Kylie: You are going to make me answer first, aren't you?
[Speaking to Luke]

Luke: She's the talkative one [speaking about Kylie] (joint interview 19 May 2008).

Likewise, Sheree and Alex jokingly encourage each other to talk first:

Carey-Ann: Do you think love changes as you get to know someone?

Alex: Sheree?

Sheree: No, you go darling [speaking to Alex] (joint interview 30 April 2008).

Conversations such as these may initially appear to be trivial, light-hearted chitchat between partners and thus of little use to researchers, but they actually provide important insights into couple dynamics. "The communicative nuances of body language, interruptions and the use of humour or rhetorical quips can help uncover subtle, but clear, indications of how couples compromise and contest aspects of their day-to-day life" (Aitken 2001 77). The way that Sheree and Alex respond, particularly Sheree's jovial use of the word 'darling', suggests

⁴¹ There are also numerous other ethical and moral questions in relation to interviewing couples together and apart. See Valentine (1999b) for a useful discussion about the pros and cons of interviewing couples.

an attempt at portraying decision making in their household as a cordial and negotiated process.

Some participants seemed to employ strategies as a way of constructing a positive image of their relationship. In performing 'good' coupledness they were saying and doing things that showed them, in what they perceived, to be a 'good light'. For example, many respondents talked about the egalitarian nature of their relationship pointing out that domestic labour is evenly divided and that gendered power relations do not exist in their homes.⁴² They stressed that they had made a conscious decision to adopt a domestic lifestyle whereby traditional gendered roles are challenged and equality adopted. Research suggests, however, that emphasising mutual participation is a key tactic often used to disguise unequal participation in domestic labour (Lindsay 1999). Interestingly, performances of 'good' coupledness were gendered. It was mainly women who expressed concerns about their relationships appearing equitable and gender neutral. Domosh and Seager (2001 1-2) similarly remark:

When guests arrive for dinner it is usually the woman who worries about what judgements they will make: Is her house tidy? Are there clean towels in the bathroom? Will her planned menu please her guests' trendy taste buds?

Some participants also used performances of home as a way of highlighting the equitable nature of their relationships. Dowling (2008 541) suggests that home interviews are "material performances" where people narrate a story about their life. Like Dowling (2008), I found that many houses had been tidied before I arrived and I received humble apologies from several women (but not men) about untidy houses. I was also offered food and drinks at several interviews. In these situations participants worked together to produce a comfortable (home)

⁴² Bondi and Christie (2000) have similar findings in their study on gender and class divisions in contemporary Britain. They make the point that the absence of children makes it possible for couples to articulate a redefinition of gender roles and relations in their household because they do not have to deal with the practicalities associated with having children.

environment in which to conduct the interview but, I would suggest, also in an attempt to portray their relationship in a positive way.

Performances of 'good' coupledness affected and informed the information participants choose to divulge. Arguments, disagreements and bickering are an inevitable and common part of sharing a living space with other people. Yet, references to the 'darker side' of domestic life were rare. I had difficulty prompting participants to talk openly about aspects of their home life that they were unhappy about or dissatisfied with. The geographies of love and home are not, however, premised solely on positive sensibilities. Where love exists, so does hate (Ahmed 2004). Perhaps participants were cautious about articulating their annoyances and complaints because it would challenge their own and their partner's ideas about their relationships. Nevertheless, ruptures did occur in participants' performances of 'good coupledness' and I reflect on them where necessary. Doing so unsettles the premise that heterosexual love and home is normatively based on harmonious and compatible gendered and sexed interpersonal relations.

Two men chose not to participate in the research. In both cases I proposed several options of participation that they might like to consider instead of the face-to-face interview. I suggested, for example, that they might like to look over the interview schedule and talk through the answers by themselves. Angie and Cooper chose this option and together they wrote Cooper's answers on a piece of paper. Donna's partner Mark preferred not to participate in any way. Donna told me that when she asked Mark the reason why he did not want to participate he responded jokingly: "I don't like talking about love with you. Why would I want to talk about it with someone else" (first interview 17 October 2008).

I am aware that the two men who did not participate may not agree with their partners' depiction of their lives. Despite this, I do not think these men's absence jeopardises the validity of their partners' accounts, nor does it diminish the usefulness of this research methodology. In fact, I think, in some ways, it enhances it. Valentine (1999b 71) makes the point that: "one advantage of

separate interviews is that they give participants more freedom to express their own individual views than when interviewed jointly.” In both cases where partners were not present, the women participants shared deeply personal stories with me, perhaps more so than any other interviewees. If their partners had been present it is possible that they might not have been so open to discussing certain topics. This raises some interesting questions in relation to ethical consent. Both men declined to participate and yet their absence does not mean that their personal lives were not talked about. In all likelihood I heard a great deal more about the personal lives of these two men than I did from the men who participated. This is not to imply that the men who participated were unable to effectively articulate their own lives, experiences and emotions. Rather, it suggests that the men who decided not to be involved and their subsequent absence at the interview seemed to give their partners the space and freedom to talk more openly about them and their lives together.

The couple interview, then, proved to be an effective and enjoyable way of discussing everyday household practices and interpersonal relationships. For the most part I found that couples readily worked together to produce a coherent account and enjoyed the dialogue:

It was great last night [participating in the couple interview]. [It was] good to have someone remind us why we work so well together ... it was kind of like a mini informal marriage counselling session lol [laugh out loud]! (Sheree, personal email correspondence 01 May 2008).

I enjoyed the joint interview the most because you got to say out loud to other people how much you love each other and how well the relationship works. Most people do not want to hear us talking lovey dovey (Ruby, feedback form 16 August 2008).

Many couples enjoyed the opportunity to discuss aspects of their life that most people are not interested in hearing about or that are forgotten in the rush of everyday living. The interview seemed to provide a safe space where they were

able to sit down together and talk about their feelings and relationship. This seemed to be particularly important for the men who participated (see also Meth and McClymont 2009) given that hegemonic notions of masculinity in New Zealand mean that they do not always feel free to express their emotions.

At the completion of the semi-structured interviews, I gave each woman respondent a diary, pen and disposable camera so they were able to produce a solicited diary and take self directed photographs.⁴³ I decided to limit this phase of research to women as I wanted to problematise the taken-for-granted relationship between women, love and home. By making explicit the links between women, love and home I seek to undermine the presumed normality and naturalness such an association holds. In the following section, I discuss solicited diaries and self-directed photography as participatory research methods.

Phase two: solicited diaries and self-directed photography

Personal solicited diaries are a unique form of qualitative research. Unlike one-off methods, such as interviews and focus groups, which tend to provide momentary interactions in a specific time and space, solicited diaries have the potential to offer a more considered and nuanced insight into the complexities of everyday life. A “longitudinal” approach more accurately reflects the diversity of human feelings and thoughts (Meth 2003b 198). Elliott (1997 2) explains that diaries are written “discontinuously” and consequently they provide a selective recording of an “ever-changing present.” Solicited diaries allow for the documentation of a plurality and multiplicity of emotions and lived experiences.

Diaries are often overlooked by geographers as a methodological tool. This is evidenced in both the lack of empirical research using diaries and also in the limited critical discussion of diaries in geography methodology texts (although

⁴³ I also offered them the opportunity to type their diary out on the computer if this suited them better with two of the 13 women choosing this option.

see Hoggart *et al.*, 2002; Kitchin and Tate 2000.) In contrast, diaries have been used extensively in health-related research (Elliott 1997; Jacelon and Imperio 2005, Mackrill 2008; Milligan *et al.*, 2005). Diaries that are used by geographers tend to be of a historical nature and are often unsolicited. That is, the personal diaries of people are used to explore and reflect on the socio-cultural and political trends of the time (Blunt 2000; 2003; Gorman-Murray 2006b; Royle 1998). There is very little geographical work that uses diaries to explore the everyday processes of contemporary socio-spatial relations. Moreover, geographers who have used solicited diaries tend to be motivated by a desire to 'give voice' to socially and spatially marginalised people (see Meth 2003b on South African women's experiences of violence; Myers 2009 on gay men's experiences of living with HIV/AIDS in New Zealand; Thomas 2007 on people living with HIV/AIDS in Namibia).⁴⁴ Almost without exception there is no research that uses diaries, both solicited and unsolicited, to explore the everyday geographies of people who occupy normative socio-sexual and spatial positions. In this research, solicited diaries proved to be an effective, relatively unobtrusive, and unique means of examining 14 women's everyday geographies of heterosexual love and home.

Solicited diaries formed the second phase of research.⁴⁵ At the conclusion of the first interview each woman was invited to participate in this stage and if she

⁴⁴ I would suggest, however, that solicited diaries may not necessarily be the most appropriate method to use when researching some marginalised or disadvantaged groups. Diaries require specific competencies and abilities particularly in terms of literacy, time commitment, critical self-reflection and so on. It is likely that people who are overly constrained in some way, for example through illness, would be less able to commit to such an intensive method. With this in mind, the fact that I received all the diaries back is perhaps a reflection of the women's normative (able-bodied, middle class, educated, heterosexual, mostly working in full-time employment, have no children) socio-spatial positionalities. The women who participated in my research had the freedom and ability to spend time writing and reflecting in their diaries. They were not overly inhibited in any obvious way.

⁴⁵ I also decided to complete a diary. Like most women I found it to be a worthwhile but time-consuming exercise. I did not complete a diary with the intent of including the material in the thesis. Rather, I used it as a way of gaining a better understanding of diary-keeping as a methodology.

agreed I gave her a diary.⁴⁶ Rather than purchasing diaries, I spiral bound 10 double-sided A5 pages into a booklet and made a cover page.⁴⁷ In the front of the diary I included a set of instructions which outlined what was required.⁴⁸ I tried to keep instructions brief so that responses were not overly prescribed. I asked participants to reflect on their day and write about their homemaking and relationship activities. I constructed this set of instructions with the intent that it would encourage each woman to take notice of her everyday routines and to be conscious and contemplative of the mundane and banal in her life.

The type of information recorded in the diaries, and the way in which it was written, varied considerably and provided a wealth of qualitative data. At times, some women were extremely contemplative of their lives and demonstrated a high level of self-reflexivity. Sheree, for example, considers the meaning of home:

Home to me is a FEELING. To be home, to think of home, is a[n] indescribable feeling. I move through different thoughts of home – home to me will always be the beach, my parent’s house, the drive home. But home to me is also Alex, our cat and our house, wherever that house is. It’s a SENSE of home that involves people more than a physical space of a ‘house’. Without my whānau⁴⁹ and Alex my house wouldn’t be my home, it would just be a

⁴⁶ Out of the 14 couples who participated, 13 women chose to keep a diary. The one woman who did not keep a diary participated, along with her partner, in the joint interview as a pilot test for the research. The couple agreed to the inclusion of their interview material in the final thesis write-up.

⁴⁷ I am aware of the ways in which power is imbued in and intersects with research in a number of ways. I was conscious, then, of the possibility that the material properties of the diary – appearance, size, number of pages – would influence the type of information recorded. After spending several hours looking around various stationary shops I decided to make diaries. Most of the booklets/journals/diaries available to purchase contained 30 or more lined pages and I thought this would suggest a certain level of participation. See appendix 7 for a copy of the diary title page.

⁴⁸ See appendix 8 for the full set of diary and photography exercise instructions.

⁴⁹ Reed (2001 98) defines whānau as “family (in a broad sense).” It is a Māori concept used to describe immediate and extended family as well as wider social and cultural networks. The word whānau is used within the New Zealand context by both Māori and Pākehā.

house I live in. Home to me is comfort (emotional), security (of the people around me), belongingness (identity) and Alex plays a starring role in this. I move, 'my house' moves but my sense of home adjusts, fits it and stays with me always (diary entry no date, upper-case in original).

Others tended to be less reflexive in their accounts and instead provided a description of their daily activities. For instance, Sophia writes:

About one hour later Alec woke up, made breakfast and went to university as usual. I got up a few minutes later, ate breakfast, cleaned up the house a little (diary entry 30 April 2008).

Some women invoked themes and writing conventions reminiscent of romance novels. Here, Debbie eloquently describes a 'typical' morning:

This morning was one of those mornings that sorts the chaff from the wheat, sparkling, crisp and bright, perfect weather, lying naked in the world's warmest bed with the world's warmest and most wonderful man. The alarm sounds at six, I reset it for seven, the alarm goes off at seven, I hit snooze, before it can go off a second time I make to roll over and the lightest touch of a hand on my hip restrains me. I can't tear myself away, so much for an early morning (diary entry 12 May 2008).

While others decided to represent their thoughts and opinions in drawings and diagrams. Donna, for example, demonstrates in a graph how her feelings towards her partner, Mark and their relationship, change during the course of a week (figure 7).



Figure 7: Diagram by Donna which represents her feelings over the space of a week

Each woman, then, approached diary writing differently. The open format afforded participants a degree of authorial control as they were able to be selective in what they chose to write about and how they decided to structure it. However, the open format also caused unease in some women (see also Langevang 2007). Sheree, for example, wrote in her diary: “having no guidelines was a little daunting at first ... but I think it was better that way” (diary entry no date). The nature of the research ensured that each woman was able to write as little or as much as she wanted and accordingly diary entries varied in length. Some entries consisted of several pages and others only a few lines. Davidson and Tolich (2003) point out that flexibility is important when conducting qualitative research. I used and adapted methodologies that I thought would fit in with participants’ lives. I made it clear in the instructions that whilst it was preferable that they fill in their diary each day, if this did not suit they could fill it in whenever best suited them. Consequently, response patterns varied with some women writing in their diary each day and others writing every couple of days.

I deliberately chose to restrict the length of recording time to one week. I was highly aware of the intensive, and potentially intrusive, nature of this research and did not want to place unnecessary demands on participants’ time. I felt privileged that these women allowed me access into their homes and lives and I was humbled by the enthusiastic response to diary keeping and the level of writing in terms of the depth and openness. There is debate surrounding the

length of time deemed to be optimal for gaining adequate detail. Myers (2009) restricted diary keeping to three days, Jacelon and Imperio (2005) suggest one to two weeks is sufficient, while Meth (2003b) had participants record in their diaries for a period of four to six weeks. Whilst I agree that a longer period of time would yield more information, I do not necessarily think this always equates with depth or detail. As it stands, the combination of diaries and photographs with the first and follow-up interview means I have over 400 pages of interview transcripts, 14 diaries and around 50 photographs. I am aware, however, that restricting the diary phase to one week means that the diary content may or may not be an accurate portrayal of couple's love lives. Relationship and household dynamics can change from day-to-day and week-to-week so it is important to take into consideration the temporal nature of participants' diaries. The following conversation with Marie reflects the specificity of diary content:

Carey-Ann: Was this a typical week?

Marie: No I must say it wasn't. If I had written the diary a week later there would have been much more fighting scenes in it, so I think this was quite a lucky week because there was nothing to fight about (follow-up interview 15 May 2008).

Marie notes that if she had kept a diary for the week following her participation then her entries would have been different. The temporal specificity of the research may therefore be another reason for the lack of reference to the 'darker side' of domestic life.

I was also aware of the potentially repetitive nature of diary-keeping. Langevang (2007) explains that some of her participants found it tedious to repeatedly write about the same daily routine and consequently accounts of habitual daily activities contained little detail. In my research, some women similarly commented that they felt like, within the space of a week, they were beginning to repeat themselves. These observations were both explicit, in the form of feedback in the evaluation questionnaire, and implicit, in diary accounts. Debbie, for instance, explains in her feedback form:

I felt often that I was repeating myself or saying things that the researcher wouldn't particularly want to hear ... a lot of things would come up over the following month which I felt would better exemplify my idea of how we live and how our home reflects us (feedback form 14 July 2008).

While Lizzy writes in her diary: "nothing too exciting on Friday. Came home, cooked tea, and then watched the final of *So You Think You Can Dance* [Australian produced TV show]. Zane went to bed and I watched *Rove* [Australian produced TV show] (diary entry 02 May 2008).

Diaries offer respondents the opportunity to define the boundaries of their shared knowledge within guidelines set by the researcher (Meth 2003b). It is important to remember, however, that diaries are written with the researcher in mind (Elliot 1997). Bell (1998 72) explains that diaries are "an account produced specifically at the researcher's request, by an informant or informants." The content of the diary, then, usually reflects the diarist's awareness of the research aims and objectives. The "writing process [therefore] embodies subjectivities informed by the researcher-researched relationship" (Meth 2003b 196). Solicited diaries, then, are reflective of the socially constructed and partial nature of knowledge production.

Participants were certainly aware of me and wrote me into their narratives in a variety of ways. Some women, for example, used their diary as a means to correspond with me. Debbie, for instance, asked me for the name of a housing insulation company we spoke about in an earlier conversation: "while apart we almost always check in with each other via phone or text, discussed selling the caravan to pay for ceiling insulation (p.s can we have that [housing insulation] company name?)" (diary entry 10 May 2008). Angie apologised for the irregularity of her diary entries: "didn't get a chance to write last night, sorry" (diary entry 11 May 2008). Linda shared her thoughts about the couple interview: "Carey-Ann, you have just left and we thought the interview was fun" (diary entry 16 April 2008). Other women demonstrated an awareness of me

through concerns about how I would interpret their diary entries. Kylie, for example, told me that she felt embarrassed about some of the content of her diary. Some women worried about the legitimacy of their experiences and were anxious to provide me with “good stuff” (Sheree, diary entry no date), while others were concerned about their handwriting and spelling mistakes.⁵⁰ All of these concerns reflect the complex entanglements of power which constitute, and are constituted by, the researcher-researched relationship. Research relationships are a complex and multi-faceted web of intersubjectivity. ‘Researchers’ and ‘researched’ are emotionally entangled and are embroiled in a dynamic relationship where both are implicated in the construction and lived reality of the other’s emotional geographies (Bennett 2004; Meth and Malaza 2003; Widdowfield 2000).

The “contemporaneous” nature of diaries is useful for exploring lived experiences because it allows multiple and nuanced themes to emerge (Plummer 2001 48). Diaries have enabled me to trace the various socio-spatial processes and the fluctuating emotions of diarists as they are experienced. Meth (2003b 198) also found diaries to be useful in this respect and suggests that the temporal nature of diaries allows for a “break in logic between entries.” Diaries can similarly allow for a diversity of emotions and experiences *within* entries. A singular diary entry can give an accurate reflection of the emotional ebbs and flows of daily domestic life. In the following excerpt, for example, which is a single diary entry, it is possible to see a diversity of emotional experience. I have not repeated the entire entry. Instead, I have included the initial references Angie makes to how she is feeling.

I was kind of grumpy and tired when I got home from work ... so of course that pissed me off and I had a go at Cooper. He got annoyed at me because I was annoyed and we had a bit of a fight ... so we are pretty much over it by dinner and we make

⁵⁰ Meth (2003b) identifies several limitations of using diaries in qualitative research. She suggests the use of diaries assumes a certain set of skills that interviewees may or may not possess, namely the ability to read and write. Literacy was not an issue in this research.

burgers together ... before dinner Cooper made a smart comment ... so that made me mad again (diary entry 06 May 2008).

I suspect that one-off methods, like interviews, would not have been sufficient to convey these complexities. It is also highly unlikely that I would have been able to observe situations like this. Diaries offer researchers the potential to gain access to social contexts that are not usually available to them (Elliott 1997; Meth 2003b). In addition, I was aware that some women may not have been comfortable discussing the intimacies of their love and home life with me in an interview situation. Hence, diaries offered another medium through which participants were able to express themselves. This is particularly important because each woman came into the research with varying experiences and expectations and interpreted their participation from specific embodied locations. Some felt extremely comfortable expressing themselves in written form, like Melissa for instance, who already keeps a personal diary. Others were less comfortable and did not find diary keeping an easy or enjoyable task. Marie, for example, explains: "writing down my own thoughts was a bit challenging because I am not a writer" (feedback form 15 July 2008). The problems some women encountered is perhaps to be expected given that emotions have been identified as being notoriously difficult to define and talk/write about (Bondi *et al.*, 2005). The flexibility afforded by the mixed methods, particularly the diaries, was thus valued by some women. Melissa, for instance, wrote on her feedback form:

I just think that it is a really useful way to do research by using a range of techniques. It was good for me as a participant because where I thought I couldn't say something in the interview the diary and the photos gave me an opportunity to get those thoughts out (feedback form 15 July 2008).

Meth (2003b 201) suggests that diaries can be an empowering tool because they can offer a space to unburden "emotional 'luggage.'" Several women made

comments about the “therapeutic” nature of writing in a diary (Sheree, diary entry no date) and wrote about the perceived benefits of diary keeping on their feedback forms:

I definitely think the diary was a positive thing for us. Reading Joseph my diary entries was great as it gave me a chance to share my experiences of love with him and so he could feel appreciated for the things he does (Rose, feedback form 15 July 2008)

Yes, I think it was a personal gain as it made me take more notice of my relationship and appreciate what I had (Angie, feedback form 14 July 2008).

Yes, definitely! It was great writing in the diary. It helped me to recognise many little things that Mark does that I often take-for-granted and kept them at the forefront of my mind (Donna, feedback form 13 November 2008).

Participation in this phase of the research encouraged women participants to take notice of homemaking practices and relationship activities that are often forgotten in the rush of everyday living. It seemed that for some women their participation in the research gave them the opportunity to initiate conversations with their partners and broach intimate topics more easily than otherwise would have been the case if they had not been involved in the research.

Although the overall consensus about participation was positive, the very act of recording personal details has the ability to cause problems for respondents and hence can provoke ethical dilemmas for researchers. A key advantage of diary keeping is that it can “create a space that engenders self-reflection and enables scrutiny, contemplation and deliberation of the taken-for-granted frame of reference of daily life” (Bijoux and Myers 2006 59). Yet, it is this very increased level of consciousness that can simultaneously cause ethical harm to participants.

Thomas (2007) suggests that the process of diary recording can play a significant role in producing some of the emotions recorded. Several women noted that because diary-keeping prompted them to be more aware of their homemaking and relationship activities they began to notice things – good and bad – that they had not previously considered. This invariably affected their day-to-day lives. Kylie, for example, explains that the process of writing and having to consciously reflect on her day was, at times, difficult:

Kylie: [thinking about our relationship and then writing about it in the diary] almost made me question [our relationship], and like we are fine and everything but it was just like it was just kind of weird when you actually have to sit down and write something (follow-up interview 15 August 2008).

The feedback form proved to be a particularly useful platform from which to think about how diary-keeping impacted upon intra-household relations. Angie, for example, wrote on her feedback form: “[diary keeping] didn’t cause any stress or distress but because I was so aware and analysing everything it made me sort of set up a situation that led to an argument” (feedback form 14 July 2008). The complexities surrounding the (re)distribution of power in research processes has been explored in depth (see Rose 1997 on feminist methodologies; Sanderson and Kindon 2004 on participatory methods). Meth (2003b) similarly cautions against the use of diaries as agents of social change. Like Meth (2003b), I did not embark on the diary-keeping method as a vehicle to promote wider positive societal change (although this certainly would be a desirable outcome!), but I did hope that it would encourage women to be conscious of, and reflect on, their day-to-day lives.

Diary writing also impacted upon the lives of those people who were not directly involved in the research, such as flatmates, friends and family. Of particular interest is the effect participation had on partners who chose not to be a part of the research. As noted previously, Mark chose not to be directly involved in the

research and yet his non-participation does not mean that he was not affected by Donna's involvement. The following diary entry reflects this dynamic: "Mark started the day by doing two loads of washing (very unusual) and when I said 'thanks' he, aware of my participation in this research, said 'that's how I show I love you' (Donna, diary entry 19 October 2008). Whilst completing their diaries each woman was embedded within a specific social-spatial context. This inevitably affected what they decided to record or not record and impacted upon the social constitution of the space itself. Most women wrote in their diaries at home in the lounge. Some choose to write in their diaries in bed before going to sleep. Some women shared what they wrote with their partners and enjoyed the time to sit and talk about their relationship. Others did not. Donna, for instance writes in her diary: "Mark is reading this now and I feel all self-conscious!" (diary entry 19 October 2008). Meth (2003b) suggests that diaries can offer highly contextualised accounts. She notes they are often written in "the heart of social contexts' such as the home" (Meth 2003b 199). In my research, solicited diaries offer recordings of events and emotions in specific spatial and social contexts. They provide highly contextualised accounts of the everyday geographies of heterosexual love and home.

As the above quotations demonstrate, participants' and non-participants' lives were affected, in one way or another, by participating in this stage of the research. Any changes (positive or negative) that did occur as a result of diary keeping were temporally specific and confined to the week of participation.

I don't think it had any long term gain on our relationship. I may have thought more about what my partner and I were doing [during] the week of the diary but probably not more than that (Ruby, feedback form 16 July 2008).

I think it affected my daily life at the time of doing the diary and for a little while afterwards but I'm not sure that it does now (Angie, feedback form 14 July 2008).

Because it was only for a little while, it hasn't really affected our daily life (Lizzy, feedback form 16 July 2008).

Although it has been argued (Elliott 1997; Meth 2003b; Thomas 2007) that diaries can provide a more accurate portrayal of everyday life in process it is important to note that they still only provide a snapshot into a constantly shifting situation. Plummer (2001 48) suggests: "each diary entry ... is sedimented into a particular moment in time: they do not emerge 'all at once' as reflections on the past, but day by day strive to record an ever-changing present." Solicited diaries cannot be understood as a definitive account of each woman's lived reality. They are partial, situated and embodied accounts, located in time and place. As such, solicited diaries do not represent a single unified truth. Instead, they offer researchers with snapshots of particular social spaces and emotional practices in the making. As Longhurst (2003 128) notes, qualitative methods: "do not offer researchers a route to 'the truth' but they do offer a route to partial insights into what people do and think." Solicited diaries, then, continue to be a product of research 'momentariness'.

In addition to completing a diary, respondents were also asked to participate in self-directed photography. Bijoux and Myers (2006 44) suggests that: "Used in combination, diary entries and photography offer a way of clarifying less than conscious experiences and feelings about daily life experiences of place as well as minimising researcher input into what and how things are recorded." At the conclusion of the couple interview each woman was given, along with a diary, a disposable camera.⁵¹ Details about the photography exercise were included in the diary instructions but I also spent some time discussing the exercise with participants at the end of the couple interview. I asked each woman to take photographs within her home, focusing on "things, places, people, activities; anything that is important to or reflects the love within your relationship."⁵² This

⁵¹ Three women chose to use their own digital cameras and subsequently emailed me the photographs as attachments.

⁵² See appendix 8 for a copy of the full photography instructions.

exercise was designed to gain insights into the materialities of heterosexual love and home. Photographs cannot 'capture' emotions and the often fleeting moments of love that are shown through such things as small gestures, bodily movements, or eye contact. They can, however, be used as pathways into accessing the non-cognitive and subconscious (Bijoux and Myers 2006).

Participatory photo-methodologies are under-utilised by geographers (Myers 2009). In contrast, there exists a long history of visual methods, including photography, in anthropology (Banks 1998; Collier 1967; Collier and Collier 1986; Zimmerman and Wieder 1977), sociology (Becker 1998; 2002; Wagner 2002) and psychology (Ziller *et al.*, 1988). Although self-directed photography may not be common amongst geographers, it has proved to be a successful method in geographical studies where it has been employed. Myers (2009), drawing on material from evaluation questionnaires, notes that participants reflected positively on their experiences of self-directed photography and reported feeling a sense of empowerment. Dodman (2003) explains that all 45 cameras distributed to their participants were returned to the researcher with a total of 838 photographs depicting high-schools students' impressions of their urban environments in Kingston, Jamaica. Positive experiences of the process were documented with participants finding the task enjoyable. Self-directed photography also proved useful in Young and Barrett's (2001) study into street children's experiences of the urban environment in Kampala, Uganda. The children in this study gained self-confidence and esteem from being 'trusted' with, and learning the necessarily skills to operate, a camera. Aitken and Wingate (1993) also effectively use photo-methodologies to explore the ways in which children from different social backgrounds and with different physical abilities interact with their local environment.

In these examples, self-directed photography proves successful because it allows researchers to access spaces and situations that might otherwise be inaccessible. In addition, these examples highlight the ability of self-directed photography to work towards a re-distribution of unequal power in research relationships. Self-directed photography usually happens without the physical presence of the

researcher (although see Aitken and Wingate 1993) and in spaces chosen by research participants. In this way, much of the power is retained by respondents as opposed to remaining with the researcher. The nature of self-directed photography allows participants to document knowledge from their own point of view (Dodman 2003; Harper 2002; Markwell 2000; Thomas 2007). Consequently, photographs are situated, embedded and contextualised and contain rich information with numerous layers of meaning and complexity.

Rose (2008) provides a useful summary of the various ways geographers use photographs in their work. She points out that some geographers use photographs as illustrative of people's lived realities: "they [geographers] are usually interested in the material aspects of a place – its human-made or natural objects and processes – and use photographs to convey the qualities of materiality more directly to the viewer" (Rose 2008 155). Photographs are particularly useful for "capturing the 'texture' of places" (Rose 2007 247) and can convey the "real, flesh and blood life" (Becker 2002 11) of everyday experience. Used in this way photography can encourage a more embodied geography. Rose (2007; 2008) is careful to point out, however, that illustrative photographs of people and place are not simply unproblematic representations used uncritically by geographers to understand spatial relations. Instead, she suggests that geographers using photographs in this way "acknowledge that photos are indeed riddled with representation but they can still nevertheless carry a powerful descriptive charge" (Rose 2008 155). In line with this work, I use participants' photographs to explore how love and home space is constituted by social, cultural and intimate relations and how it is materially lived.

The photography exercise allowed women to document the material, tangible and physical homemaking and relationship activities that make up their everyday lives.

The photos really prompted me to think about the physicality of my love and my relationship. For me it had always been about feelings, but how do you take a photo of a feeling? The

combination of the diary and photos meant that I thought about both the feelings and the physical and material aspects of home, love and my relationship (Melissa, feedback form 15 July 2008).

The photograph exercise was good as it made me focus not just on daily events like those described in the diary but on objects and spaces in the home. Sometimes my experiences of love aren't directly from Joseph but from an object or scene which reminds me of him or something we share together (Rose, feedback form 15 July 2008).

Domestic objects, spaces and activities were the main subject matter of the photographs. Indeed, most photographs were strikingly similar in the content and focus. The universality of family photographs in terms of content matter has been noted (Steward 1984). Photos of domestic objects included books, CDs, pictures, ornaments, pieces of jewellery and food. Photos of domestic activities focused primarily on shared leisure activities and on domestic chores, for example, men cooking and cleaning. Bedrooms, gardens, living areas and couches were the primary spaces photographed. Most photographs featured one partner or the other as opposed to 'couple' photos and a few photos include flatmates or friends.

The photographs also proved extremely useful for exploring the emotional significance ascribed to particular domestic objects, activities and spaces. Participants told stories about the photos, why they were taken and what the content symbolised. By indicating the emotional meanings of particular objects and spaces, participants were able to reflect on their choice of subject matter and talk about the ways in which they were used in everyday life. Not only, then, did the photographs give insights into the ways in which participants materially construct and experience their home environments; they also provided a bridge for understanding the relationship between the non-cognitive and the material.

Some women reflected upon what they considered to be the inadequacies of photographs in capturing the complexities of their daily lives. In particular, they

thought that because their photographs were situated in a particular time and place and were therefore only partial representations, they did not give an accurate reflection of their lived realities. Sheree eloquently explains:

I don't think that any amount of photos would depict an accurate reflection of our experience. They are a snapshot in time, prescribed and performed. Careful thought went into capturing the 'right' moment in an attempt to 'capture' a moment of our experience. We were actors in the sense that I wanted to construct the picture, moved around to get in the correct position etc. Sometimes I was frustrated at the fact that these photos, once taken, may lose their meaning. It might capture the context but not all the thoughts and feelings of that moment, so it was great to explain each picture and explain the small but meaningful message that the picture represented for me (feedback form 17 July 2008).

Sheree describes the photography exercise as a performance. Latham (2003 2007) suggests that the notion of performativity is a particularly useful way of thinking through self-directed photography because it helps "to deflect us away from looking at depth (in the sense of a single unified truth) and directs us towards detail (in the sense of a fuller and more variegated picture of the interviewee)." Thinking about research encounters in this way allows photographs to be understood as products of research 'momentariness'. Like solicited diaries, photographs provide only a glimpse into people's lived realities. They do not represent a unified or fixed account of everyday life and instead they "present the researcher with an interrelated mosaic of interpretative snapshots and vignettes of a particular social space and set of social practices *in the making*" (Latham 2003 2005, emphasis in original).

To sum up, I found the diary and photography exercise to be a useful way of examining the geographies of heterosexual love and home, and participants

mostly enjoyed themselves. In the next section, I discuss the third phase of research.

Phase three: follow-up interview

At the end of the seven days I revisited each woman respondent to collect the diaries and cameras. After I had developed the pictures and read over the diaries, women were asked to participate in a final follow-up interview, to which everyone agreed. Organising the follow-up interviews proved, at times, to be difficult. Originally, I wanted to space the research over approximately three to four weeks because I was conscious that some women may begin to forget the content of their diaries.⁵³ As the research progressed, however, and I began meeting with more couples, it became particularly challenging to juggle the various phases of research that were occurring simultaneously. As a result, the time between the second and third phases of research varied for each woman. The shortest research encounter was with Linda (first respondent), which took only two weeks whilst the longest was with Kylie (last participant) spanning over a three month period.⁵⁴ On average, it took roughly two months to complete all three phases.

Whilst I am interested in the diaries and photographs as sources of data in, and of, themselves,⁵⁵ I am equally attracted to the ways in which they can be used to move beyond that which is recorded to a more general understanding of

⁵³ My concerns were confirmed when during the follow-up interviews several women asked me to repeat what they had written because they could not remember. I cannot help but think that this influenced the type and depth of information gathered in the follow-up interview because it is likely that the context within which the event/experience/emotion was situated was forgotten.

⁵⁴ This was also due to a combination of our conflicting commitments.

⁵⁵ Follow-up interviews have been used as a way of testing the plausibility and integrity of diary accounts (Zimmerman and Wieder 1977). I did not use follow-up interviews as a way of 'testing' the truthfulness of participants' diary accounts, which I believe, is a positivist epistemology based on masculinist, detached and scientific observations. Instead, like Latham (2003 2002), I used the diary as a "kind of performance or reportage of the week and the interview [as] a reaccounting, or reperformance. Thus, rather than seeing the idiosyncrasies of individual diarists as a problem, the methodological focus shifts to plugging into (and enabling) respondents' existing narrative resources."

experiences and attitudes. The follow-up interviews were thus used to gain a deeper understanding of the contexts and processes surrounding that which was recorded in the diaries and to contextualise the photographs (Bijoux and Myers 2006; Elliott 1997). They were also particularly useful for filling in gaps and eliciting further information.

The follow-up interviews followed a typical semi-structured format whereby I developed a series of questions in line with the diary entries (Latham 2003). These questions proved to be more effective in prompting further discussion than using the photographs as a means to start the interview, which is what I had originally intended to do (Dodman 2003; Markwell 2000). At the start of the interview, participants looked over the photographs they had taken and were asked to select images they wanted to include and discard those they did not. For the first few follow-up interviews I asked participants to write brief captions that explained what each photograph represented. I did this to avoid decontextualisation of the images (Bijoux and Myers 2006). After a couple of interviews, however, I decided to change this and instead of writing captions I asked them to simply talk to the images. Not only did this save a lot of time, it also created a much more comfortable environment. I found that sitting in silence while each woman firstly thought about their photographs and secondly wrote down their ideas created an awkward atmosphere.

Notwithstanding, the photograph component of the follow-up interview was a worthwhile experience and, as reported in other studies (Dodman 2003; Young and Barrett 2001), appeared to be enjoyed by most of the women. The length of time dedicated to discussing each photograph was dependent on how many were taken (the number ranged from four through to 16). On average, each woman spent only a couple of minutes talking about each photograph, which perhaps gives an insight into the level of worth attached to the images. I could have encouraged them to speak more about each photograph but by allowing them to direct the conversation they were able to retain some control over how they constructed their lives through the photographs. To this end, after the photographs were talked about they were generally not discussed again.

As mentioned earlier, the follow-up interview was particularly useful for eliciting further information. Bell (1998 79) makes the point that: “using diary material as unobtrusive observation by itself does little to unravel ... private meanings.” Follow-up interviews provided me and the participants with an opportunity to discuss and revisit events described in the diary. It also allowed me to probe deeper into aspects of their lives that were either only alluded to or were not included at all. References to sex, for example, were rare. When it was written about it was in passing and in the context of other, more mundane homemaking activities. Ruby, for instance, describes the events of a particular afternoon, writing: “we had sex then showers. Taylor cooked dinner while I got ready to go to a birthday party” (Ruby, diary entry 18 May 2008). Written accounts of sex therefore were brief and tended to be interwoven with other homemaking activities.

It transpired that some women were unsure about how much detail to include when writing about their sex-lives. Given the intimate nature of the research I thought that diaries (more so than photographs) would provide women with an alternative space to reflect on those aspects of their life that may have seemed too ‘private’ to talk about in an interview setting. The following conversation echoes the uncertainty felt by some participants:

Carey-Ann: My final set of questions, and um, if you’re not comfortable talking about it [sex] then that’s fine, but you did mention it in your diary...

Linda: Yeah, I didn’t know how much you wanted to know
(*laughter*) (follow-up interview 29 April 2008)

Melissa similarly reflects on the uncertainty she felt on her feedback form, writing: “I was not sure exactly how much detail to go into about our love in the diary, for example, was it ok to talk about sex etc. So I tended to leave that kind of stuff out of the diary and photos” (feedback form 15 July 2008). These concerns reflect the problematic nature of knowledge construction – what constitutes it and who knows it. Feminist geographers have quashed questions

about the validity of drawing on personal, 'private', and everyday experience in academic discourse (Domosh 1997; England 1994; Gibson-Graham 1994; McDowell 1997; Valentine 1998). Participants were unsure about whether their 'sex-lives' amounted to legitimate knowledge worthy of discussion in a research setting. I thought that I had made it clear, both in the diary instructions and through informal conversations with participants about the diaries, that I was interested in all aspects of their home-life, including their sex-life. The fact that very little was written about the intimacies of sex reflects the wide-spread impact, both within and beyond the formal spaces of academia, that hegemonic, masculinist, and disembodied modes of knowledge production have had on the ways in which people interpret and perceive personal experience. I thus took the opportunity to ask participants to expand on this theme in the follow-up interviews. Once I had reassured them that it was acceptable, even desirable, to talk about their sex-life, women participants were open and very forthcoming about this aspect of their lives.

Despite the opportunities for gaining a greater understanding of the emotional intricacies of everyday life, diaries and photographs do not always indicate the depth of emotion a participant might be feeling. This can prompt moments of reflection for both the researcher and the participant and issues of ethical practice can come into sharp focus. One example in particular illustrates the point.

One woman began her diary with an entry that alluded to an argument she had had with her partner. She had been vague and nonchalant, and on reflection I realise this was deliberate, in her description and reflection of the event. I was curious as to what the situation was about and wanted to know more. After some initial chit-chat at our follow-up interview, I moved to consider the 'theme' – communication – which I identified as running throughout her diary. I had a list of questions in relation to this theme and used her first diary entry, which clearly demonstrated the centrality of the theme, as an entry point. I prompted her to expand on the diary entry and in response she explained that she would prefer not to go in to any further detail. Respecting her wishes I apologised and moved

on to the next question, also relating to 'communication.' She, however, became visibly upset. Her diary gave me no indication of the depth of emotional significance involved in the situation. This was due, in part, to the way she chose to portray the event. She downplayed the emotional severity of the event in an attempt to minimise its importance and because of this I underestimated the emotional implications of questioning her on it in the follow-up interview. It was during this poignant moment that I came to fully understand the impact my research may have on the emotional well-being of some of the women.

Although the methods used in this research afford women with a certain degree of freedom to reflect on aspects of their home-life which are important to them, it would be misleading to suggest that participants retain total control over the knowledge produced. I recognise the inevitable power that I hold as author of this thesis (England 1994). Ultimately, I choose what to include and exclude. Below, I discuss how I went about analysing and presenting the findings.

Analysis and presentation of findings

The process of analysis has been ongoing and continually developing throughout this research. Because participants' involvement consisted of four phases I felt it was crucial to start analysing the data after each stage in order to ask more pointed questions and to maximise time spent with participants. In many ways, the initial stages of coding and analysis began as I transcribed each couples' joint interview. I listened to the audio recordings of each interview and then transcribed verbatim. I attempted to complete the transcription of an interview before another began, however, this proved to be challenging at times because of the various phases of research that were occurring simultaneously. I tried to transcribe each interview as early as possible so that I could easily recall the situational information that the interview was embedded in. Upon completion, full copies of all transcripts were printed. I also photocopied each diary for ease of coding and used highlighters to identify themes.

Immersion in the interview material was my primary goal (Dunn 2005). Detailed and repeated readings of the transcripts and of the diary entries allowed me to

identify themes, commonalities and differences in participants' experiences. I spent a lot of time looking over participants' photographs both in preparation for the follow-up interviews and also in an attempt to access different types of knowledges than those produced by language and words.

I used Kitchen and Tate's (2000) procedure for analysis which comprises three interconnected stages: description; classification; and connection.⁵⁶ The first stage – description – involves the initial transcription of the material and detailed annotations. In order to annotate the transcripts and the diary entries I jotted down initial ideas in the margins and also searched for key terms such as 'we', 'us', 'I', 'privacy', 'home', 'house', 'love', 'romance' and 'shopping', which I identified with a highlighter.⁵⁷ This stage allowed me to gain a comprehensive understanding of the empirical material. As I began to identify recurrent themes I plotted them on a mind-map⁵⁸ which I stuck to the wall in my university office (figure 8). Over a period of two or three weeks I constantly worked on this mind-map adding information and ideas until I got to the point where I was writing examples on the poster and analysing them. This mind-map has remained on my wall for the entire time I was preparing and writing the thesis and as the research developed so too did the mind-map. I grouped the initial themes that were emerging under four headings: multi-scalar, homemaking, subjectivity and power, and love.

⁵⁶ I did not use a computer software package, such as *NVivo*, for data analysis. Longhurst (2001 137) notes: "such programs do not do the analysis for the research, but merely aid analysis." I collected and transcribed all the data myself, so I was extremely familiar with the material and I wanted to remain 'engaged' with the data. I realise there may have been some benefits in using a computer software package, but in this situation, felt it most appropriate to conduct all stages of analysis 'by hand' in order to remain sensitive to the details of participants' lives. See Peace and van Hoven (2005) for a useful discussion of the pros and cons of using qualitative analysis computer software.

⁵⁷ See appendix 9 for an example of how I analysed interview transcripts.

⁵⁸ A mind-map is a technique for brainstorming where ideas are arranged in a non-linear format on a poster. Research is messy, complex and rarely follows a logical or linear format. This mind-map is a reflection of this and displaces the dominance of positivist masculinist methodologies.



Figure 8: Photo of the mind-map in my office

The second stage – classification – requires the categorisation of information using a coding system. Transcripts, diaries and photographs were coded into separate, but sometimes overlapping, themes and I cross-referenced the diary entries and photographs with the interview transcripts to tease out both the consistencies and tensions between and within interviews and diary entries. I had a pre-determined set of categories and also created new codes as I read and considered the texts. I used the initial thematic codes – multi-scalar, homemaking, subjectivity and power, and love – as a starting point and developed sub-categories. For example, under ‘homemaking’ I grouped data into the categories of ‘material’ or ‘imaginative’ and under the category ‘multi-scalar’ I grouped some of the data into ‘home-spaces-beyond-home.’ These categories were not exclusive and I found that much of the data overlapped. The coding process was organic and constantly changed as my interpretations of the data

matured. Kitchen and Tate (2000) point out that the process of creating coding categories is ongoing as ideas are developed and refined.

In the final stage – connection – I was concerned with identifying relationships and associations between the themes and relevant literature. Quotations that represented the themes, commonalities and inconsistencies were identified and grouped together in electronic computer files.

As well as becoming intimately entangled in participants' lives through the interviews, diary entries and photographs, I also wanted to examine if their understandings and experiences of heterosexuality, love and home adhered to, or departed from, dominant media representations. I compiled a folder of homeware brochures, advertisements for home goods, newspaper clippings, and took out subscriptions to two popular New Zealand lifestyle magazines: *New Zealand House and Garden*; and *New Zealand Your Home and Garden*. I have also kept an eye on a variety of New Zealand home-improvement television shows such as *Mitre 10 DIY Disaster*; *Mitre 10 Dream Home*; and *My House My Castle*. My analysis of this media has been guided by Rose's (2007) discussion of discourse analysis of visual images because I am interested in examining the relationship between "visual images, verbal texts, institutions and social practices" (Rose 2007 146). In the final section of this chapter, I discuss the interpersonal dynamics of intimate research relationships.

Intimate research relationships

Feminist geographers have spent a great deal of time contemplating relationships between place, power, subjectivity and positionality in qualitative research (England 1994; McDowell 1992; Moser 2008; Rose 1997). Current feminist writing on research relationships emphasises the ways in which researchers and informants can understand across 'difference' and fail to connect through 'sameness' (Mullings 1999; Valentine 2002). This recognition of the way in which research relationships are constructed through embodied interactions has encouraged researchers to think about the ways in which

emotions shape, and are shaped by, research encounters (Bennett 2004; Bondi 2005b; Longhurst *et al.*, 2008; Widdowfield 2000).

Geographers are also beginning to think about the importance of 'the body' when conducting qualitative research. Crang (2003) points out that although there is now a sustained critical geographical scholarship on 'the body' these arguments have been slow to filter through into discussions of methods and methodology. Researchers often position themselves in relation to age, 'race', gender and so on, but fewer accounts actually "unpack the body as an active agent in making knowledge" (Crang 2003 499). Longhurst *et al.*, (2008) also pick up on this oversight and hence attempt to use 'the body' as an 'instrument of research.' They push for others to begin to think about what it means to use the body as a tool of research. This has encouraged me to think not only about how my age, gender, sexuality and 'race' informs my research but also how other aspects of my embodied subjectivity, such as emotions and feelings, intersect to constitute my position in this research.

In what follows, I reflect critically on the interpersonal dynamics of intimate research relationships. I begin by discussing the researcher-researched relationship and explore some of the ethical dilemmas I encountered during the course of this research. Throughout, I examine the place of emotions – participants' and my own – in the research process. Following this, I critically discuss my embodied subjectivities and the role these have played in the construction of geographical knowledges. In doing so, I challenge the idea that research is neutral, objective and disembodied (Dowling 2005; England 2006; McDowell 1997; Moss 2001).

Friendships and research interactions

Although it is sometimes beneficial to draw on existing social networks and friendships when conducting qualitative research on sensitive or intimate topics (Avis 2002; Browne 2003; 2005), I decided that I did not want to interview people

with whom I had an existing friendship.⁵⁹ Given the intimate nature of the research topic I was concerned that too much personal involvement would prohibit me from collecting and disseminating research data to the best of my ability. Put simply, I did not want risk damaging friendships for the sake of research. This is not to say, however, that excluding pre-existing friends from the research rid the process of potentially exploitive power relations and ethical dilemmas. On the contrary, it created a whole host of issues that I had not previously considered, particularly in relation to negotiating the complexities of friendships that arose as a result of research interactions.

Some scholars, including anthropologists (Crick 1992; Hendry 1992; Newton 1993), and geographers (Hall 2009), have described how they became friends and intimates with their participants during the course of ethnographic research. Over the course of this research I have become friends with several of the women who participated. I suspect that our friendships developed partially as a result of our research interactions. Other circumstances, including sharing wider social networks, have also been influential. A particularly important factor contributing to the development of these friendships was that I was asking these women to share deeply personal and private stories about their life with me, and in turn, I was sharing deeply personal stories about my life with them. It was almost as though we skipped the 'pleasantries' which typify the initial stages of a friendship and quickly became close friends. The development of these friendships influenced the research dynamics in numerous ways.

There were a number of challenges in negotiating the complexities of intimate research relationships. Learning to manage the various ways in which the boundaries of research and everyday life, and research relations and social relations blur was particularly challenging and at times caused me a lot of anxiety and distress. As friendships formed, much of what we talked about over a glass

⁵⁹ Some of the participants were acquaintances and were part of wider social groups but I would not have considered them to be 'friends'. Like Browne (2005 49) I use the term 'friend' to denote "women I would meet regularly in social settings and we considered each other to be 'friends.'"

of wine in the weekend was similar to what was discussed during the interviews. I became increasingly aware of the ways in which the boundaries between the 'field' and the 'social' can blur and at times I found it difficult to distinguish what I knew as a result of being the 'interviewer' and what I knew as a result of being a 'friend.'⁶⁰ I also became increasingly concerned about issues of confidentiality. Given that a lot of leisure time spent with friends often involves talking about *other* friends I found myself continuously monitoring what I could and could not talk about. On one occasion I discussed some of my concerns with Melissa, whom I became particularly friendly with, and she confirmed that she had also thought about the ways in which our interactions as researcher/researched/friend blurred. Browne (2003) suggests that social relations beyond formal research processes and spaces can be important in negotiating power relations in qualitative research. This conversation with Melissa, and the many that followed with her and some of the other participants, worked to establish a unique dialogical research relationship between me and participants which challenges the boundaries of formal research spaces.

I also became increasingly aware of the depth of information I was beginning to share about my life with participants, particularly those who were 'strangers.' Research relationships based on reciprocity and trust are encouraged by feminist researchers (England 1994; McDowell 1992; Valentine 1997b) and I believe my willingness to share my own experiences, stories, dreams, problems, desires and hopes contributed to the conversational dialogue and personal narratives about love and home that characterised the interviews. At the same time, I felt uneasy about the amount of deeply personal information I shared with some participants. Moreover, I cannot know the extent to which participants talked about this research with others and if they shared my stories with their friends. Unlike research participants, there is no confidentiality clause which ensures

⁶⁰ Browne (2005) points out that this type of research and the use of friends in research are often likened to participant observation. I did not conduct participant observation in this research. I was careful to include only information respondents had given me specifically for the purposes of this research and if I was unsure whether it was appropriate to use a particular idea/quote/event I confirmed with participants before including it.

researchers' personal stories remain private. Listening to some of the interviews and re-reading the transcripts the amount of personal information I shared with some participants makes me cringe. Yet, when the interviews were taking place I was not embarrassed at sharing my stories and instead enjoyed talking about my own experiences, thoughts and intimacies. Throughout the various stages of the research, participants and I shared a lot of laughter and I personally gained a lot from the process. Talking with these women not only provided an enormous amount of qualitative data but it also helped me to work through some of my own issues with regards to my own relationship. This research has indeed been a collaborative process based on intimate research relationships where participants and I were co-constructors of knowledge.

Up until this point I have been discussing the interpersonal dynamics of intimate research relationships that occur during face-to-face encounters. Yet, a large component of this research has involved participants considering and reflecting on their lives in isolation, that is, when they were writing in their diaries and taking photographs. In asking participants to think about the intimacies and intricacies of their relationships and home-life I was prompting them to consider things they had potentially not thought of before. Melissa reflects on this particular outcome of the research on her feedback form: "I don't think the diary or photos caused negative effects but it really made me think through and process some emotions that are quite difficult to deal with, like questioning my relationship" (feedback form 15 July 2008). This raises some ethical questions in relation to participant support. While I was able to, at least, lessen potentially negative emotional outcomes during face-to-face interviews by being a sensitive, attentive and empathetic listener (Bondi 2003), I was unable to provide the same type of emotional support during the diary-writing and photography exercises. In an attempt to minimise potentially negative effects, I kept in regular contact with

participants throughout their week of participation and offered support where I could.⁶¹

The location of the interviews was also important in constructing intimate research relationships. Elwood and Martin (2000) suggest that research locations provide researchers with the opportunity to make observations which can lead to richer and more detailed information than that gathered from the interview content alone. Most interviews, particularly those that were conducted with the couples, were conducted in participants' own homes.⁶² Consistent with feminist geographers' claim that place is crucial to the construction of knowledge (Longhurst 1996; McDowell 1998; Valentine 1997b), holding the interviews in participants' homes influenced the research outcomes. It seemed that home, for most people, provided a familiar, comfortable environment which I think led to the relaxed and easy rapport which dominated the interviews (Bennett 2002; Longhurst 1996).⁶³ In discussing their experiences and uses of their homes, respondents were able to draw on the memories and meanings embedded in material objects and domestic spaces and used them to aid discussion. Likewise, I was able to point to certain spaces or material objects and used them as prompts to assist the interview process.⁶⁴ In this way, participants' homes worked as "spatial prompts" (Gorman-Murray 2006c 45) and encouraged a closer consideration of their often taken-for-granted homemaking practices. In the next section, I offer an explanation of my positionality. I discuss how my embodied subjectivities and positionality as an 'insider' contributed to the construction of intimate research relationships.

⁶¹ As well as providing support by way of listening, I also created a list of support services that I had ready to pass on to participants if they wanted to talk through some of the issues raised by the research questions.

⁶² Some of the follow-up interviews were held in my office at university.

⁶³ I am aware that this rationale assumes and reinstates idealised notions of home as safe and secure. Home, for those people who are subjected to domestic violence for instance, is not necessarily a secure space. Bearing this in mind, I gave participants the option to conduct the interviews in any location that suited them. Most participants chose to hold them at their houses.

⁶⁴ This research practice may be likened to participation observation. As mentioned earlier, however, I did not use participation observation in this project particularly during encounters outside the 'formal' spaces of the research.

Positionality

Feminist geographers have long advocated for an acknowledgement of the situatedness of knowledge production (England 1994; McDowell 1992; Rose 1997; Valentine 2002). They have forcefully critiqued the idea that knowledge is neutral, objective and rational and have instead argued convincingly that all knowledge is local, partial and embodied. This has prompted recognition of the importance of researchers' positionality. Critically reflecting on the entanglements of age, gender, class, sexuality, 'race' and so on and the ways in which these inform the research and the type of knowledge produced is one way to be sensitive to the power relations inherent in the research.⁶⁵ In order to challenge false notions of 'objective neutrality', I am explicit in my positioning throughout this thesis.

My position is partial, fluid and constantly changing. I am a 26 year old, able-bodied, highly educated, Pākehā woman of working class background. I identify as heterosexual and I am currently in a long-term monogamous relationship. My partner and I jointly own a house where we live together with a flatmate. I am also a PhD student and a feminist geographer. The entanglement of all of these subjectivities (and others) constitutes my position in this research. It influences the research interactions and my understandings of them. The combination of these subjectivities means I occupy complex, multiple and at times, contradictory subject positions, particularly in relation to my politics as a heterosexual women who seeks to challenge heterosexual privileges. I write from a particular political and theoretical perspective as a feminist poststructuralist geographer and from a personal location as a woman in a heterosexual relationship. My embodied subjectivity is intimately connected with my research and research practice and I 'live' my research on a daily basis.

Longhurst (2009) rightly points out that many aspects of a researcher's embodiment remains absent in reflexive accounts of positionality. I am aware

⁶⁵ Although being sensitive to and acknowledging power relations in research interactions does not remove them entirely from the research process (England 1994).

that there are many other markers of my subjectivity that would have influenced the research encounter, for example, my appearance, my personality, my hobbies, my class and family background, my aspirations for the future, amongst many other things. In acknowledging and engaging in 'different' kinds of positioning, I hope to "convey an embodied subjectivity that is shifting" (Longhurst 2009 432). In saying this, I am also cautious of the fact that it is nearly impossible to account for every facet of my subjectivity and the ways in which these intersect in complex and sometimes contradictory ways to constitute my subjectivity at different times and in different places (see also Gibson-Graham 1994; Moss 1999).

My location as a woman in a heterosexual relationship and as a feminist geographer have, at times, proved particularly difficult to negotiate and reconcile and this has impacted upon both my research practices and personal life (see also Jackson 1996). England (1994 86, emphasis in original) notes: "that the research, researched *and* researcher might be transformed by the fieldwork experience." Throughout this research I have grappled with finding a suitable manner in which to understand the numerous ways heterosexuality is implicated in the subordination of women without conflating the institutionalisation of heterosexuality with (my own) heterosexual practice, experience and subjectivity. Like Jackson (1995b 11), I want to problematise "heterosexuality without damning myself as a failed feminist." In identifying my heterosexuality I am not only making explicit my sexual subjectivity but I am also claiming a specific political position. "To name oneself as heterosexual is to make visible an identity which is generally taken for granted as a normal fact of life" (Jackson 1995b 19). Jackson (2001) notes 'heterosexual feminists'⁶⁶ have been slow to account for their own heterosexuality in their research, while lesbian scholars have produced an abundance of work on heterosexuality. She cautions 'heterosexual feminists' about silencing their sexuality in their research because it "may unwittingly contribute to perpetuating the heterosexual norm and

⁶⁶ The term 'heterosexual feminist' is problematic because it defines feminism in relation to heterosexuality, yet as Jackson (1996) points out, there appears to be no suitable alternative.

‘otherness’ of homosexuality in relation to it” (Jackson 2001 87). In asserting my heterosexuality there is, however, also the risk of asserting heterosexuality’s privileged position. This is not my intention. In this thesis, I am explicit in my sexualised subjectivity in order to challenge ontological accounts about the presumed ‘naturalness’ of heterosexuality.

As a heterosexual woman attempting to undermine institutionalised heterosexuality, I occupy a paradoxical position. On the one hand, my heterosexuality affords me a privileged social and political status. On the other hand, my politics as a feminist geographer who seeks to problematise taken-for-granted assumptions about the naturalness and normality of heterosexuality marginalises me. A prime example of the paradoxical spaces I occupy can be found in various ways I have been represented in the local media.

In February 2008 my partner – Choppy – and I were front-page news (figure 9).⁶⁷ The newspaper article, titled: “They’re just like a couple of six-year-olds” describes our initial meeting and the subsequent development of our relationship. The article was the newspaper’s ‘feel-good’ feature to mark leap year (Choppy and I are both born on the 29th February 1984). The newspaper article and photo celebrates institutionalised heterosexuality, normative notions of love, and reproduces heteronormative gendered roles and spatial relations. For the article, Choppy and I were photographed at our house in various poses, yet the editors of the newspaper decided to use the photograph with me sitting on his lap. I am hugging him and the position of my body means that it is possible to see my engagement ring. We look happy and content and according to some friends and family, very much ‘in love.’ The article, photograph, and our relationship was interpreted by readers in specific heteronormative ways.

⁶⁷ Choppy has given his consent for the image to be included in this thesis.



Figure 9: Newspaper article featuring my partner and I. Photographed by Carey-Ann Morrison

A month later I was awarded a Tertiary Education Commission Bright Future Top Achiever Scholarship.⁶⁸ The awarding of this scholarship, which is funded by taxpayers, was controversial and my work was subjected to some negative media attention.⁶⁹ Figure 10 is a collage of the various newspaper articles that were printed over the following few weeks. This was a difficult time for me, and my family, as I was unaccustomed to this type of negative attention. The validity and usefulness of my research was questioned, with one editorial claiming that “taxpayers would be far better served if the research topics that attract sizeable grants also produce some value to society. Ms Morrison’s chosen topic is weak and unnecessary” (*Waikato Times* 2008). A study on the homemaking practices and relationship activities of heterosexual couples is, according to the editorial, of no use to society. This comment left me with a sense of just how important it is to make heterosexuality explicit, both in the academy and in popular

⁶⁸ See the following website for scholarship details and background (<http://www.tec.govt.nz>).

⁶⁹ Attempts by the popular press to belittle and condemn the research of feminist geographers on gendered and sexed embodiment at the University of Waikato have been noted elsewhere (Longhurst 2001; Johnston 2005b).

discourse. The media treatment of my research clearly demonstrates the heteronormativity of media spaces in and of Hamilton. Those in the media, and beyond, were – and perhaps still are – unable to see the ways in which heterosexuality is normalised in the spaces, interactions and policies of everyday life. They also continue to oppose the idea that the subjectivities and spaces of heterosexuality and home are a legitimate topic of academic enquiry.



Figure 10: Collage of newspaper articles in response to my research. Compiled and photographed by Carey-Ann Morrison

This thesis, then, is as much an academic journey as it is a personal one. It has helped me come to terms with my own embodied subjectivities and place(s)-in-the-world but at the same time it has also made me question them. This ongoing reflection, I think, has been invaluable for my research. Moreover, my position as a ‘young’ heterosexual woman has given me a unique vantage point from which to explore other ‘young’ women’s everyday experiences of heterosexual love and home.

My 'insider' position means I share a degree of sameness with participants. Participants and I had some common experiences and I think, partly as a response to these similarities, respondents were more forthcoming in inviting me into their homes. At the same time, I do not want to romanticise my 'insider' status. Being an insider does not automatically guarantee that the interviewer and interviewee will share common experiences, positions and opinions (see Valentine 2002 for an account of differences experienced across shared sexualities). The interviewer-interviewee relationship is effected by a complex array of intersecting axes of difference including 'race', ethnicity, class, dis/ability, age, gender, politics and so on which means that the research relationship and the way each person is positioned in relation to the other is constantly shifting. My position(s) in relation to the interviewees and the interviewees' position(s) in relation to me were neither readily defined nor apparent. Rather, they unfolded during the course of the research encounter. Valentine (2002 120-121) suggests that: "Both researchers and interviewees directly or indirectly claim points of sameness or difference during interviews based not only on knowledge which is exchanged during these conversations but also on what is read off from each others' performances." In my study, research encounters tended to be based on a premise of sameness. Participants presumed a shared set of experiences and circumstances based on gender, sexuality, and 'homemaker' status. This, I suggest, contributed to the construction of intimate research relationships.

It is important to note, however, that notions of sameness and difference can operate at the same time (Valentine 2002). My position in this research was unstable and changing. Throughout, I refashioned my subjectivity to suit the time and place by emphasising some, and minimising other, axes of difference and sameness (see also Johnston 2009; Valentine 2002). I used my body as a key research tool and this contributed to the development of intimate research relationships (Bain and Nash 2006; Longhurst *et al.*, 2008). My position as a woman in a heterosexual relationship seemed to be the defining feature in most of the research interactions. This is perhaps to be expected given that when

conducting research on sexualities it is often assumed that the researcher and the researched share the same sexual subjectivity (Johnston 2009). Given the topic of study, I suspect that there was also the presumption that I was 'in love' and that I was interested in 'matters of the home'. First face-to-face meetings would have confirmed these assumptions for many participants given that I wear an engagement ring which marks my subjectivity in an institutionalised, even normative, way.

At times my engagement ring and engaged-status was a source of shared experience with participants yet at other times it served to mark my difference from them (see also Johnston 2009). In some interviews where marriage was openly condemned as an effect of patriarchy, I felt as though my engagement ring signified my failure as a feminist and I found myself hiding my ring. In these situations, my body served to mark my difference from these women. It represented the paradoxical space I occupy as a woman in a heterosexual relationship and as a feminist geographer critiquing institutionalised norms of heterosexuality. In other situations, I used my engagement ring to connect with participants, for example, I complimented Angie on her engagement ring and I mentioned to Kylie in an email that I was engaged, to which she responded: "after the interview we can get rid of Luke and talk about weddings hah ah ah ah [laughter]" (personal email correspondence 13 May 2008). These women assumed that because I was engaged I shared a similar enthusiasm for wedding-planning and marriage, which I do not. In these situations certain aspects of my subjectivity were maximised, by me and participants, whilst other parts were minimised.

I made a conscious decision to remain silent about certain parts of my subjectivity. In many situations I did not 'reveal' my position as a feminist poststructuralist and my desire to challenge hegemonic norms about people and place. Johnston (2009) suggests that silences and omissions can be important in constructing research relationships. More often than not, I did not tell participants about my background because I was aware that some women may be wary about having their relationship 'judged' as unequal or exploitive. At

times, I certainly felt as though some women were in relationships that, at times, worked to disadvantage them. For the most part I chose to remain silent in these situations. I did not think it was 'appropriate' for me to push participants to consider their relationship in this way, nor did I want to deconstruct their ideas about their sexual and gendered subjectivities and spaces in face-to-face situations.⁷⁰

Summary

In this chapter I discussed the methodological theory and practice deployed in this research. I used a combination of qualitative research methods informed by feminism in an attempt to create an embodied, emotionally situated and partial geography of heterosexual love and home. The project design was created with the intent of providing participants with a space to reflect on their relationships and everyday experiences of home. I have made a space for embodiment and emotions – participants and my own – to be acknowledged in the research process. In doing so, I have disrupted rational, disembodied, and masculinist research epistemologies.

I used a combination of 'couple' interviews, solicited diaries and self-directed photography, follow-up interviews, and evaluation questionnaires. This combination of methods allowed for the emotional, embodied and material complexities inherent in everyday life to emerge. Couple interviews are useful in the way they provide insights into both the topic under consideration and also into the continuities and contradictions which constitute the production of shared subjectivities and homes. Solicited diaries and self-directed photography have the potential to add a further layer of complexity to the information gained

⁷⁰ I cannot, however, account for the more subtle ways that I may have challenged or deconstructed participants' narratives through, for example, the communicative nuances of body language and gestures. Moreover, I am aware of the complexities involved in encouraging increased levels of consciousness and self-awareness in research encounters. Indeed, there are questions surrounding how much, we, as researchers 'should' prompt participants to consider their positionalities, viewpoints and opinions (see for example McDowell 1998; Valentine 2002), particularly when they are directly opposed to our own or are discriminatory or derogatory in some way.

from couple interviews because they allow for the production and documentation of different 'ways' of knowing and being in the world based on embodiment and emotionality. Whilst diaries and photographs are important objects of analysis in and of themselves, the data gained from them can be further enhanced by discussing their content in a follow-up interview. Follow-up interviews are valuable for filling in gaps, eliciting further discussion and contextualising information and photographs.

An important goal of this research methodology was to provide participants with control over their accounts and the knowledge produced. An essential part of this research process was therefore to gather participants' thoughts, opinions and suggestions on the methodology used in this project. Evaluation questionnaires provided valuable insights into the strengths and weaknesses of this research design. They have helped contest hegemonic, masculinist and elitist notions which claim academia as the primary site of knowledge production.

In order to further challenge notions of disembodied objectivity, I have attempted to situate myself in the research process. I reflected on the interpersonal dynamics of intimate research relationships and the ways in which my embodied subjectivities influenced the research encounters and outcomes. In doing so, I have made a further space for embodiment and emotions to be acknowledged in the research process. In the chapters that follow, I draw on empirical material to discuss participants' homemaking practices and relationship activities at the scales of body, dwelling and household and beyond.

CHAPTER 5

Body

This chapter focuses on gendered and sexed bodies as important sites of homemaking. It looks at the space of the body and the body in space. In doing so, it provides an embodied account of domestic space focusing on the numerous ways heterosexual bodies and home spaces are constituted through performance and practice. Drawing on feminist poststructuralist notions of the interconnectedness between materiality and discourse (Butler 1990; 1993; Grosz 1994; Probyn 2003), I continue to argue that the gendered/sexed body and home are mutually constitutive. Bodies cannot be divorced from experiences of places and spaces (Longhurst 1997b; Nast and Pile 1998; Rose 1993). In order to further sexed and gendered perspectives on home (Gorman-Murray 2007a; Johnston and Valentine 1995) and understandings of heterosexuality in specific places (Hubbard 2000; Johnston 2006; Phillips 2006; Robinson *et al.*, 2004), it is useful to think about the ways in which home is constructed in and through the body. In this chapter, and the thesis as a whole, I argue that the heterosexuality of homes and bodies ties together to produce an invisible everyday 'norm' of homemaking. This chapter makes visible these normative practices by focusing on the scale of the body.

In recent years there has been an upsurge of geographical interest in 'the body'. The socio-political structures that surround bodies and spaces are increasingly being critiqued and scrutinised. Feminist geographers, in particular, have picked up on the importance of including embodied experiences in geographical discourses and have shown that a "focus on the body can prompt new understandings of power, knowledge and social relations between people and place" (Longhurst 1997b 496). Longhurst (2001 18) suggests geography is currently in the midst of a "body craze". Indeed, there are numerous studies on a variety of bodies and the spaces they occupy, including: working bodies (McDowell 2009); pregnant bodies (Longhurst 1997b; 2008b); fat bodies (Colls 2007; Longhurst 2005b); body builders (Johnston 1996); aged bodies (Hugman 1999); and sexed and gendered bodies (Bain and Nash 2006; Bell and Binnie

2000; McDowell 1995). This work has been important for undermining hegemonic, masculinist and disembodied geographical discourse which have served to mark the body as Other in geography. Crucially, the discipline of geography is now largely based on the understanding that people's experiences of space and place are embodied, and more specifically, sexually embodied (Johnston and Longhurst 2010). Sexual embodiment and sexually embodying knowledge calls into question the masculinist separation between the mind and the body.

Some geographers have paid attention to the relationship between corporeality and home. Gorman-Murray (2008b) explains that a key focus of the work on homemaking is the relationship between home, domesticity, and other categories of subjectivity such as 'race', age, class, gender, sexuality, dis/ability and so on (see for example Gorman-Murray 2006b on gay men's experiences of home; hooks 1991 on African-American women's experiences of home; Johnston and Valentine 1995 on lesbian's experiences of home; Warrington 2001 on women's experiences of domestic violence). Moreover, the multi-scalarity of home has been considered. Traditionally, geographers have paid a great deal of attention to other scales of home such as community, nation and globe (Blunt and Dowling 2006). However, less attention has been directed to the scale of bodies, especially the materialities of sexed bodies. There is little explicit knowledge about the shifting relationship between corporeality and domestic space⁷¹, particularly in relation to the everyday bodily practices and embodied emotions of heterosexuality. The heterosexual body has been somewhat absent in geographical discourses of home.

As the unmarked norm, the heterosexual body is often assumed to be the subject of most studies of home. Yet, the materialities of heterosexual embodiment and the ways in which homes become heterosexualised through

⁷¹ Some geographers have examined domestic space as explicitly embodied, such as Longhurst *et al.*, (2009), Gorman-Murray (2006b) and Thomas (2004). In this work, the body is invoked as an important site of emotional and social experience. For the most part, however, the specificities of embodiment and home are largely unexamined, particularly in relation to heterosexuality.

performance and practice have been largely overlooked. I offer a means to re-theorise geography of sexualities and home by fleshing out the 'loving heterosexual body' and making it explicit in the production of geographical knowledge. Discussing bodies and home in this way challenges the historical privileging of the conceptual over the corporeal in the production of masculinised and disembodied geographical knowledge. The attention given to corporeal specificity in this chapter (and the thesis as a whole) makes for a more sexually embodied geography.

This chapter, then, provides an in-depth investigation into the ways in which homemaking practices occur at the site of the body. It begins by examining love as a discursive construction and lived experience. I draw on feminist and sociological literature on love (Ahmed 2004; Jackson 1993a; 1993b; Johnson 2005) and add a specifically geographical perspective to this by considering the role of place in relation to notions of love. I argue that the ways in which couples, and women in particular, talk about love reproduces the hegemony of romantic heterosexual domestic life. I then move to consider a multiplicity of material homemaking practices at the site of the body. It is argued that heterosexual physical intimacy contributes to the construction and lived experience of home. The intersections of heterosexuality, physical intimacy, domestic spaces and objects of love are examined. This section makes up the bulk of the chapter. Finally, drawing on notions of 'dirt' (Campkin and Cox 2007a), I examine the ways in which homes become embodied through the presence of domestic and corporeal dirt. Love is paradoxically tied up in notions of dirt. Domestic 'dirt' contributes to the construction of couple's subjectivities and shared experiences of space. Throughout, I reflect on the ways in which a variety of homemaking practices at the site of the body reflect heterosexual love and couples' subjectivities at home.

Locating a language of love and home

This section examines the ways in which participants talk about love and home. It aims to show that "sexuality is not just about who you are or what you do, but

where you are and what you feel” (Kawale 2004 577). It is argued that domestic space is not heterosexualised through physical behaviour alone. Instead, it is shown that emotions, feelings and embodied sensations, and the ways in which they are talked or not talked about, is a performance that normatively heterosexualises home. I focus on love as it takes place at the site of the body and I look at how embodied emotions become embedded in homemaking practices. Foregrounding the role of love in homemaking requires focusing attention on the body itself as it shapes and is shaped by domestic space. Love, as it is talked about in the context of heterosexual relationships, is one of the ways that homes are normatively heterosexualised. The language of love draws on a discourse of biology which legitimises heterosexuality as the ‘natural’ and ‘normal’ form of sexuality because love itself is taken to be ‘natural’.

Poststructuralist theorists argue that language matters (Jackson 1999; Sue Jackson 2001; Johnson 2005); a view that I share. Language matters because it creates reality and helps to give meaning to the world. Language does not simply reflect or categorise the world. Instead “meaning is constituted within language, not by the subject that speaks it. Meaning does not exist prior to its articulation in language” (Johnston and Longhurst 2010 9-10). Importantly, scholars have shown that emotions, including love, rather than simply being an internally felt sensation, are also constituted through discourse, representation and language. Jackson (1999 115), for instance, argues:

Love, like all emotions is not directly observable. We can, in the end, analyse only the ways in which it is talked and written about – the discourses around romantic love which circulate within our culture – but these I would argue construct our experiences and understanding of love.

In this way, the language used to talk about love creates a framework from which couples, and women in particular, are able to make sense of their subjective experiences of love and home.

In this thesis, poststructuralist concepts are used to think through love’s complexities and contradiction, embodied feelings and emotions, because

poststructuralist thinking rejects the idea that there is one truth or reality. It allows for a multiplicity and plurality of experiences and meaning. Poststructuralism also provides the space to acknowledge the partial and subjective nature of qualitative research. I am not seeking to uncover some universal truth. The narratives presented in this thesis are by no means universally experienced and I do not claim to provide a definitive account of heterosexual love and home. Rather, I offer a selective and in-depth reading of a small group of women and their partners who live in Hamilton, New Zealand.

The word 'love' is a loaded term. It is imbued with a multitude of emotional, social, sexual and political meanings which makes it a many-layered and context-specific concept. Love does not mean the same for everyone, everywhere. There is no single, subjective meaning or definition of love (Hendrick and Hendrick 1992; Johnson 2005; Schäfer 2008). Love, as it is understood, experienced and articulated in this research, is tied up in 'racialised', class-based and gendered power, discourse and bodies. It is conceived within a hegemonic Western model which makes the whiteness and heterosexuality that produces it seem invisible (Giddens 2006). In most Western societies, love is deemed to be mutual and physical attachment and desire between two, presumably oppositely sexed, bodies. Love is often made socially and legally acceptable and recognisable through marriage. Many people, in Western industrialised societies, take this life experience for granted as a 'normal' part of the white, heterosexual life cycle. After all, it seems "natural for a couple who fall in love to want personal and sexual fulfilment in their relationship, perhaps by marrying and/or starting a family" (Giddens 2006 204). Yet, as Giddens's (2006 204, emphasis in original) explains: "Beginning a long-term partnership, or starting a family, with someone who you have fallen in love with is *not* an experience most people across the world have." It is not my intention here to trace the development of love in modern Western societies.⁷² Rather, I make the point that it cannot be taken-for-granted that love is a 'natural' part of heterosexual life. Love, as it is currently

⁷² In addition, this has been done elsewhere. See, for example, Illouz (1997) for a discussion of the changing beliefs about love from Victorian society to modern capitalism.

constituted, is shaped by a complex array of culturally and historically specific influences and contexts and intersects with 'race', class, gender and other categories of social difference in complex ways.

Love is often described as one of the most significant facets of contemporary life in Western society (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 1995; Giddens 1992). It dominates popular culture and infiltrates, arguably, almost every space. "Western popular media suggests that love plays a vital role in constructing everyday – and extraordinary – social, sexual, and spatial relations" (Johnston and Longhurst 2010 51). In addition, love has a language base that is historically constituted. For example, the *Oxford English Dictionary* traces the origins of the word 'love' back to the 12th Century (*Oxford English Dictionary* 2010). There is also an endless supply of magazines, self-help books, television and radio programmes, to name a few, which aim to teach people how to love 'properly'. It would seem, then, that there would be an extensive set of words and discourses available to draw on when attempting to provide a definition of love. Yet, participants had difficulty talking about the *meaning* of love. When I asked them the question 'what is love?' or 'how would you define love?' many remarked that it was an 'odd' question and had difficulty putting it into words.

It's a weird question, isn't it? (Kylie, joint interview 19 May 2008).

I am not sure of how to explain it in terms of a deficit (Debbie, joint interview 09 May 2008).

That's a tricky one ... (*laughing*) ... Like the last question wasn't hard enough ... So I don't really know what love means to me (Donna, first interview 17 October 2008).

I think for me, oh jeeze, I thought I had prepared myself ... for me I would think it would be just having, I don't really know, I don't know, you know, since you've asked me straight out, I don't know if I can answer it (Sheree, joint interview 30 April 2008).

Participants' responses suggest that despite the enduring and overwhelming presence of love in the spaces of everyday life, there is ironically a 'lack' of language available to describe and express the feelings and sensations of love. Perhaps this is to be expected given that love is often talked about as something that is irreducible to words. Johnson (2005 26) notes: "The problem seems one of language; the language of the heart seems to resist the rationalist descriptions of any activity which attempts to impose explanation upon it." As a subjective experience, love is commonly thought of as set of individually felt emotions and bodily sensations that resist description.⁷³ Romantic convention suggests that "love is in essence indefinable, mysterious, outside rational discourse" and because of this its "meaning is held to be knowable only intuitively, at the level of feeling, and cannot be communicated in precise terms" (Jackson 1999 100). Talking about love as an embodied experience beyond rational discourse is an iterative performance that gives it the appearance of being 'normal'. The hegemony of love as indefinable, essential and beyond language is an effect of the repetition that hides the heteronormativity that produces it.

Perhaps love is deemed to be difficult to put into words because is it understood as taking place within our bodies. Johnson (2005 24) explains: "love is often conceived as a universal property of human existence, a force of power inside the body, which is natural, innate, and struggling for expression." The body is the primary site at which sensations, feelings and emotions associated with love unfold. Given that embodiment is the closest and most immediate of geographical spatial scales the feelings associated with love are therefore taken to be unique, individualistic and biological. Crucially, love is seen as one of the most 'natural' and basic forms of human experience. Discourse of nature and naturalness relegate love to the realm of the irrational and unknowable. As an

⁷³ Ahmed (2004 124) draws attention to collective love, where she explores the ways in which "the pull of love towards an other, who becomes an object of love, can be transferred towards a collective, expressed as an ideal or object." For example, love can be understood as producing a heterosexual ideal where some bodies move towards and other bodies move away from. Ahmed (2004) suggests that those who fail to live up to the norm, in this instance anyone who deviates or 'moves away' from monogamous heterosexual couplehood, work to affirm the ideal.

unknowable biological experience, love is deemed to be beyond the need for, or possibility of, discussion.

Yet it is not just the participants in this study who find it difficult to put love into words. In the emerging work on emotions, several geographers have highlighted their own inability to communicate affective dimensions of people and place (see for example Paterson 2005; 2006). They have found it difficult to articulate spatial dimensions because “emotions are never simply surface phenomena, they are never easy to define or demarcate, and they [are] not easily observed or mapped although they inform every aspect of our lives” (Bondi *et al.*, 2005 1). Across the social sciences, many scholars (Jackson 1999; Johnson 2005), geographers included, have had difficulty locating a language of love. Not having the words to speak about love and the spaces associated with love means that love has tended to be pushed to the margins of geographical research. As Johnston and Longhurst (2010) note, feminist geographers have long been engaged in interrogating issues of sexuality and space, but have yet to undertake a study on love.

Perhaps this lack of interest in love can be, as Jackson (1999; see also Johnson 2005) suggests, attributed to an untheorised essentiality of love. Jackson (1999) makes the point that many social scientists have uncritically accepted the idea, that as an emotion, love cannot be easily communicated, thus taking for granted what, she suggests, is part of the social construction of love. Most studies of love have ignored that which is irrational, unpredictable and incommunicable – aspects of love which are deemed to be tied to the body – in favour of examining institutionalised expressions of heterosexual love – romance, marriage and home. It seems, then, that geographers and other social scientists are also subject to love’s mysteries. Scholars, me included, cannot exist outside contemporary discourses and performances of love, romance and sexuality. Love is something that both sceptics and romantics can succumb to. As Jackson (1995b 50) notes: “It is not necessary to deny the pleasures of romance or the euphoria of falling in love in order to be sceptical about romantic ideals and wary of their consequences.” Crucially, love needs to be cast within a critical

framework that holds on to its pleasures and pains, connections and contradiction. Such a perspective will allow for an acknowledgement of love as an embodied experience and a social construct.

Whilst participants have difficulty answering questions about the meaning love, they find it far easier to explain how love *feels*.

[Love is] warm and cuddly ... it's almost like having a cuddle with them, it's like that inside when you think about them (Rose, joint interview 23 April 2008).

[Love is] comfortable, cosy, like being high-on-life. It's a nice feeling, warm and fuzzy (Angie, first interview 30 April 2008).

[Love is] happy, warm, cosy, comfortable, exciting, lots and lots of positive things going on (Ruby, joint interview 15 May 2008).

Some participants understand love by gauging it against particular bodily feelings and sensations.⁷⁴ Words related to bodily temperature and condition, such as 'hot' and 'flushed', are common in accounts about how it feels to be in love (Johnson 2005). These metaphors corporeally materialise emotions and help give meaning to the experience. Johnson (2005 31) argues: "the set of emotions and feelings associated with romantic love are, whilst experienced inside the body, also socially ordered outside of it." He makes the crucial point that "the 'outside' construction of love becomes incorporated and inscribed to form an 'inside', a bodily corporeality which becomes an interiority of the sociality in which it is situated" (Johnson 2005 31). In other words, bodily sensations and emotions, while experienced *in* and *through* the body, are confirmed and given meaning through language and discourse.

⁷⁴ There are a number of publications within cognitive studies, for example, that have begun to unpack the physiological processes and sensations of emotion (see for example Lane and Nadel 2000). Unlike this work, however, I am not attempting to explore the 'science' of bodily emotions. Rather, I am focusing on the ways in which these sensations and embodied experiences are given social and cultural meaning within specific discursive frameworks.

One of the common ways that love is produced through language is through discourses of 'chemistry.' "When people talk about love, they use metaphors, such as 'chemistry', and an associated lexicon of words such as 'spark' and 'click', as frameworks in which to explain their own heterosexual practice" (Johnson 2005 36). The language of chemistry is one of the main means through which love and heterosexuality are normatively inscribed. Chemistry between two oppositely sexed and gendered bodies signals the 'natural' processes of sexual attraction and desire and (re)produces profoundly biological accounts of love. For example, Sophia suggests: "[love is] the butterflies in your tummy. It is just chemical" (joint interview 24 April 2008). The language used to describe love as a biological, chemically-driven process is overtly heterosexualised. "Sexual chemistry, and the practice which departs from it, is imagined as the *basis* for a love relationship, and this ... is built around heteronormative ideas about species reproduction" (Johnson 2005 39, emphasis in original). Understandings of sexual desire as 'biologically innate' are deeply entrenched in common constructions of love. They are central to the principles of heterosexual intimacy. The language of love therefore works to legitimise heterosexuality as the normative form of sexualised subjecthood because love is bound up with ideas about 'natural' and innate reproductive instincts.

The language of love, I have found, is also intimately tied up with the spatial imaginary of home. Words used to describe how love *feels*, such as 'comfortable', 'belonging', 'warm', 'safe', 'secure', 'nice', 'happy', 'content', 'peaceful' and 'relaxing' are also used when describing what home *means*. Home, then, is talked about in emotional terms and love is described as intrinsically spatial. Linda, for example, sums up the relationship between love and home, saying: "love feels homey" (follow-up interview 29 April 2008). Love is deemed to produce a feeling or sense of home, and the feelings of home are constituted through love. Heterosexual emotionalities are mapped onto the sexual spatialities of home. Davidson and Milligan (2004 523) contend: "The articulation of emotion is ... spatially mediated in a manner that is not simply metaphorical." For participants in this research a 'house' becomes a 'home' when it is bound up

with emotional attachments to their partner and being ‘in love’ produces positive and idealised feelings of ‘homeliness’.

As the above discussion demonstrates, participants talk about love in relation to positive feelings, emotions and sensations. In specifying love in positive terms, not only are participants explaining what it is, they are also explaining what it is not: love is positive, therefore it is not negative. The following table (figure 11), using the participants’ own words mentioned in the previous paragraph, demonstrates the point:

Love <i>Is:</i>	Love <i>Is Not:</i>
Comfortable	Uncomfortable
Belonging	Excluding
Warm	Cold
Safe	Dangerous
Content	Constraining
Peaceful	Distressing
Relaxing	Irritating

Figure 11: Love and Home Is/Love and Home is Not

In other words, love is differentiated from hate. Love and hate are therefore posited as mutually exclusive and exhaustive categories. Relationships are, seemingly, founded upon love, not hate. Within this hegemonic framework, it is presumed that it is not possible to feel love and hate simultaneously. Yet, as Ahmed (2004 50) explains: “Hate ... cannot be opposed to love.” Instead, love and hate are relational. In the same way that the Self requires the Other (Grosz 1989; Rose 1993), love requires hate from which to distinguish itself. This means that love cannot exist without hate as the Other. Love is made up of seemingly positive emotions and feelings, such as happiness and pleasure, but it is also a source of hurt, disgust, and shame. Indeed, Probyn (2005 2-3) suggests: “Being shamed is not unlike being in love ... shame emerges as a kind of primal reaction to the very possibility of love – either of oneself or of another.”

This project is about love. It is also, then, about hate, shame, fighting, emotionally charged discussions and negotiations. Participants occasionally make references to hate and homemaking but on the whole the ways in which couples, and in women in particular, talk about love reproduces the hegemony of white romantic heterosexual domestic life. What they do not talk about – what is left unsaid – also contributes to dominant constructions of heterosexual love and home. Silences, absences and omissions are important in research encounters. Hyams (2004 109) argues: “silences are full of meaning and ... researchers as facilitators have a tendency to (dis)miss them.” Ho (2008 493) makes the point that: “what is not verbalised also performs signifying work through the metaphor of silence.” She asks whether it is “possible to ‘read’ into what is not verbalised” which then raises questions about “interpretation, language and meaning” (Ho 2008 493). I read the silences and omissions around hate and homemaking as reproducing prevailing ideologies about heterosexual love and home. Love, as it is commonly understood, is a hegemonic emotion that serves dominant interests. It, as Ahmed (2004 124) points out: “is crucial to how individuals become aligned with collectives through their identification with an ideal, an alignment that relies on the existence of others who have failed that ideal.” In other words, in leaving the ‘darker’ side of domestic life unspoken couples, particularly women, align themselves with the ‘ideal’ form of heterosexual love and home; one that is coherent, consistent, stable and fixed, both literally and symbolically. Participants’ ability to align themselves with ideal notions of heterosexual love and home is enabled through the premise that others, in acknowledging the emotional highs *and* lows of their relationship, fail the ideal (Ahmed 2004).

In focusing on the ways in which love is or is not talked about I am not attempting to show that bodies and places are simply “fleshless linguistic territories” (Longhurst 2005c 94). Bodies have an undeniable materiality that cannot be neglected when considering the relationship between heterosexuality, love and domestic space. In the next section, then, I explore the everyday

geographies of physical intimacy. In doing so, I link the materialities of heterosexual bodies and homes with the spaces and objects of love.

Making love, making home: domestic heterosexual intimacies

Physical affection is a common expression of love. Touching and being touched is often deemed important for producing feelings of connection and closeness and for strengthening the emotional bond between lovers (Morrison 2010). For most people, home is where they choose to and/or are able to be physically intimate with their partner(s). People can touch each other at home in ways that they cannot in public. In this way, the performative geographies and boundaries of the body are organised differently in 'public' and 'private' spaces. As a 'private' space, home is the primary location where certain sexual practices, pleasures and people are normalised and legitimatised. This means that home, both materially and imaginatively, is deemed to be the 'natural' and 'normal' place for physical intimacy and sexual activity. Heterosexuality, as an institutionalised and normalising discourse, has made home a key site of heterosexual 'lovemaking'. Johnson (2005 53, emphasis in original) contends that the notion of 'making love' brings sex and love together in a productive and purposeful way: "Sex actually does *make love* because it operationalises love in an intimate setting." Likewise, intimacy between loving, monogamous heterosexual couples is the 'typical' framework for intimacy at home. The practices of heterosexual physical intimacy in the loving spaces of home are bound up in discourses of normality, morality and appropriateness.

Despite the growing interest in the emotional, social and sexual relationships which constitute and are constituted by home, geographers have had little to say about the role of physical intimacy in homemaking. Most work on homemaking, even that which discusses its intimate character, does not look at the ordinary practices and routines of embodied sexual experience and the ways in which these may reflect and/or refract sexuality at home (although see Gorman-Murray 2007a; Robinson *et al.*, 2004). Physical intimacy and affection, irrespective of the desiring subject, is a series of touches, feelings and embodied sensations.

Heterosexuality itself is, at one level, about sex: sexualised bodies touching; touching bodies sexually. Heterosexual subjectivities are wrapped up with the embodied experiences of oppositely sexed bodies and gendered desires. As such, it seems untenable to separate heterosexual subjectivities from the embodied practices of physical intimacies. Yet, much of the work on heterosexuality focuses on its institutionalisation and how it affects the construction and lived experience of feminine (Jackson 1999) and masculine (McDowell 1995) subjectivities, as opposed to heterosexuality as a set of sexual experiences, practices and gendered desires. The work that does look at the sex in heterosexuality focuses primarily on non-normative or what are often deemed to be 'deviant' forms of heterosexuality, such as prostitution (Hubbard 1997; Hubbard and Whowell 2008). The focus of much of this work is on the consumption practices and processes of heterosex and the moral contours surrounding heterosexuality and sexualised spaces. Little has been said, however, about the everyday geographies of heterosexual love and physical intimacy and their relational character in regards to domestic things, people and places.

Physical intimacy is emphasised as important to participants' relationships and to their experiences of home. Home is the primary space of physical intimacy and time spent at home together touching physically and feeling emotionally is deemed important for constructing a shared subjectivity and sense of home. Home continues to be a key site of physical intimacy and affection for heterosexual couples, despite the relative 'freedom' they have to express love and intimacy in public.

The types of physical intimacy participants most often talk about are everyday and one could argue 'normative,' expressions of affection such as kissing, cuddling, holding hands and sex. Lizzy and Zane, for example, share simple intimate moments when they are together at home:

Lizzy: Little things [are important] like Zane will go to work early,
 early, early, and I'll just stay in bed and so he will just give

me a quick kiss before he goes to work every morning. Just little things like that I think are important and then he'll go to bed early and then I'll come to bed and give him a kiss even though he is asleep, just little things like that I think are important.

Carey-Ann: To the everyday?

Lizzy: Yeah, that's quite cool, like just the mundane stuff. Everyday [things] but [it's] still a nice little routine that we have (joint interview 22 April 2008).

Lizzy and Zane are in their late 20s. They have been in a relationship for approximately six years and have lived in their current house, which they jointly own, for approximately two years. Lizzy emphasises the centrality of “little”, “mundane” and “everyday” intimate activities and domestic routines to the sustenance of their relationship. In the process, she points to the ways in which the enactments of everyday intimacies can become domestic routines. Household routines, according to Gorman-Murray (2006a), are particularly significant for the construction of couples' shared subjectivities because they narrate and materialise notions of self in domestic space. Many participants make the point that because physical affection is an everyday part of living it can sometimes be forgotten about and taken-for-granted. This is perhaps unsurprising given that many ordinary homemaking practices often go unnoticed in the context of everyday life (Blunt and Dowling 2006). Physical intimacy and affection is indeed a homemaking practice often considered a ‘normal’ part of life, particularly when couples live together and see each other on a regular basis. Lizzy goes on to explain that physical affection is one of the main ways that she and Zane express love for one another:

Carey-Ann: What other ways do you express love for each other?

Lizzy: Hugging all the time, we hug a lot and we kiss a lot and um, I don't know, we do lots of things, holding hands.

Carey-Ann: So is physical affection important?

Lizzy: Yeah, we won't sit on the couch and pash [passionately kiss] all night but you know a kiss on the head and a kiss on the hands and the tapping and rubbing and patting on the leg when we are just lying there. And because we didn't see each other for so many years just being able to touch somebody else is nice (follow-up interview 05 June 2008).

For Lizzy, simply being able to be near Zane is an important part of being in a cohabitating relationship. From the outset it was clear that it was not the types of physical intimacy, such as kissing, hugging, sex and so on, that are important. Rather, it is the ability to be physically close and to be able to touch and feel each other's body in tangible and 'real' ways. As Lizzy's account demonstrates, this is particularly true for couples who have spent time living apart.⁷⁵ Lizzy and Zane are well aware of the importance of being able to touch one another physically given that they lived in a long distance relationship for several years. Lizzy explains they had to work hard to maintain their relationship whilst living apart. During this time, daily phone calls were central to the maintenance of their relationship.⁷⁶ Although geographical distance did not mean that Lizzy and Zane's relationship failed, living apart affected and informed their sense of home and feelings of love and emotional belongingness. Lizzy and Zane were able to maintain a degree of intimacy during this time by talking regularly on the phone but still desired the physical intimacy that can only be formed and fostered through spatial proximity, touch, living together and sharing the ordinary practices and mundane spaces of home.

⁷⁵ Sociologists are observing an increase in the number of couples who are choosing to live separately. Levin (2004) terms this organisation of domestic relationships as 'LAT-relationships', where couples are 'living apart together', each having a separate residence. This research suggests that it is possible for relationships to be sustained over distances, however, this does not negate the fact that living separately means people are not able to perform embodied (touching) intimacies.

⁷⁶ Walsh (2009) makes the point that despite developments in communication technologies, like the internet, which enable relationships to be conducted over geographical distances, questions still remain about the success of these technologies in sustaining couple relationships.

Like Lizzy and Zane, Angie and Cooper, who are in their late 20s, have lived in a long distance relationship. They have been together for approximately nine years, during one of which they were married and bought their first house. Living apart, for Angie and Cooper, was emotionally distressing and caused a variety of practical difficulties. Because of the time they spent living apart they are careful not to take touch and physical affection for granted. Angie recounts in detail the story about how they met explaining that a mutual friend introduced them and they began chatting over the internet. Their relationship developed in the 'virtual' world⁷⁷ and it was not until a few months later that they met in 'person'. At this time, they were living in different cities but when the opportunity arose for them to move in together, they eagerly took it.⁷⁸ Below, Angie considers physical intimacy as an ordinary part of everyday living:

I think we are quite affectionate and we cuddle and kiss a lot but we're also quite sexually physical. I don't mean having 'sex' but our daily interactions and a lot of our jokes we have together. Cooper grabs my bum and smacks it a lot. He also likes to grope my boobs a lot and depending on my mood I mostly like it (diary entry 09 May 2008).

At our follow-up interview, Angie reiterates that she enjoys the sexualised nature of their daily interactions. When I asked her to talk in more detail about the type of touch she likes she reflects on the differences between her everyday experiences and those portrayed in the media. She says:

Angie: Because the portrayal of physical affection on movies, with couples, with the man touching [a woman's] curves or just coming up and kissing her neck that's often on movies and stuff, and his hand, his hand is always there [holds the side

⁷⁷ It is important to note, however, that 'virtual' and 'real' worlds are not separate and distinct rather they overlap and intersect in a variety of ways (Crang *et al.*, 1999).

⁷⁸ There is a burgeoning body of work which seeks to explore the ways in which love affects and informs migration processes and transnational lives (Frohlick 2009; Gorman-Murray 2009; Mai and King 2009; Walsh 2009).

of her face intimately and delicately] and it's like well that doesn't usually happen. I mean it's more like a grab (follow-up interview 19 June 2008).

Angie has trouble trying to explain how Cooper's sexual advancements are an expression of love. She is quick to assure me that the word 'grab' is not a suggestion that Cooper is physically violent. She does, however, have difficulty finding the words to capture the emotional significance of the gesture whilst also demonstrating that her everyday experiences of heterosexual intimacy do not always necessarily accord with the romanticised and idealised depictions common in the media. Importantly, however, this disjuncture between what she experiences on an everyday basis and that portrayed in the media does not mean that she is unhappy or dislikes the way that Cooper touches her:

Angie: I think I like it how it is. I mean sometimes he will touch my face and like do more softer, intimate kind of things, rather than sexual things but um, that would be nice too, but yeah I like it how it is ... it's not aggressive, it sounds like [I'm suggesting that] groping is like [aggressive]. It's not always like (*she makes aggressive sounding noises*). It's often in a nicer kind of way (follow-up interview 19 June 2008).

For many women in this research physical affection plays an important part in constructing their gendered subjectivity and sense of self. Angie, for example, suggests that consistent and regular acts of physical intimacy are important for their relationship. In her diary, she reflects on the importance of feeling sexually desired: "I know Cooper loves me no matter what and he loves my body which makes me feel good, no matter how big or small I get" (diary entry 10 May 2008). Research shows that when women talk about their intimate lives they often stress the need to feel sexually desirable and attractive to men (Bartky 1988; Schäfer 2008; Valentine 1999c). Hegemonic discourses suggest that sexual attraction and activity is important for verifying the existence of love (Johnson

2005). Interestingly, many women talk about how they would feel if their partners stopped showing affection, or if, for whatever reason, the level of intimacy in their relationship reduced. Debbie, for instance, says: “if I felt that Robert wasn’t attracted to me sexually then I would have a lot of difficulty staying in the relationship” (follow-up interview 04 June 2008). There seems to be a common sentiment amongst women participants that if their relationships were to become unstable – and physical intimacy was deemed to be an appropriate indicator of this – so too would their sense of home and feelings of belonging.

Domestic spaces of heterosexual intimacies

Several women talk about physical intimacy in spatialised terms. They specify particular spaces in their home where they are more and less likely to be physically intimate. Participants’ conceptions and experiences of physical intimacy connect with normative notions of love and home. The spaces of home and the everyday practices of heterosexual love and physical intimacy are mutually constitutive and defining but by no means is this relationship simple or straightforward. The complex entanglements of physical intimacy and home arise from the multiplicity of heterosexual practices, routines, places, gendered and ‘raced’ bodies and subjectivities. Social imaginaries and political discourses constitute the home, and in particular the ‘marital bedroom,’ as an important site of heterosexual physical intimacy, materialised in the architectural design of many contemporary Western homes. Yet, little overt consideration has been paid to the multifaceted ways heterosexual intimacies and homes are entangled.

For couples who live by themselves, they have the ‘freedom’ to be physically intimate anywhere in their house.⁷⁹ This means that their bedroom – as a

⁷⁹ The politics and spatial dynamics of physical intimacy are influenced by housing tenure, for example, whether couples live by themselves or with flatmates. For couples who do not live with flatmates they are able to be physically intimate in typically ‘public’ spaces of the home, such as the kitchen and lounge, because it is unlikely anyone will see or interrupt them. I discuss the links between sexual expression and living situation in more detail in chapter 7.

normative space of intimacy – does not take on as much significance as popular notions of love and home might suggest:

Carey-Ann: Is your bedroom your special shared space?

Donna: Not really [any] more than the rest of the house. I guess because we live just the two of us and like um, it's just another room in the house. It is the room that we mostly have sex in and do those intimate things but that doesn't really make it feel any different (first interview 17 October 2008).

Instead, ordinary spaces of home, like the kitchen, laundry, hallway, lounge and bathroom are referred to as important spaces of intimacy where they regularly touch and are touched by their partners. These typically non-sexualised spaces often facilitate sexual touch. Angie, for instance, explains, in reference to one of her diary entries, that Cooper touches her in nearly every room in the house:⁸⁰

Carey-Ann: Does this, Cooper 'groping and touching' you, happen all over the house or in more private spaces?

Angie: No, it happens in the kitchen, the lounge, the hallway, the dining room, the bathroom... (follow-up interview 09 June 2008).

Angie went on to tell me that when she is doing simple household tasks Cooper will often touch her: "If I was standing doing the laundry, even he would come up behind me, but it's not always necessarily sexual, a lot of the time he will come up and cuddle me or give me a kiss, but often it is sort of sexual" (follow-up interview 09 June 2008). Angie simultaneously performs housework and sexwork. She is doing the laundry at the same time that she is doing, whether she chooses to or not, heterosex. In a sense, Angie is supplying Cooper with 'services.' McDowell (2009 125) terms the unofficial, privatised, naturalised, and

⁸⁰ Angie also talks about spaces where sexualised touch does not happen. I discuss this further on in the chapter.

unpaid 'services' most women provide at home as "relational services" which include "love, sex, affection, solace when weary, basic nursing care." In a sense, the 'services' Angie offers – cleaning and sex – are the same services that some women provide for money (McDowell 2009). The crucial difference here is that she is providing these services for love. McDowell (2009) notes that discourses around what constitutes work, namely that work is waged labour, excludes work that is undertaken in the home for love. She makes the point that:

Millions of women, as well as many men, labour within their homes to ensure the social reproduction of their household. Meals get made, cleaning and child care are undertaken ... household members are also the recipient of a range of services including care, comfort, counselling, sex and entertainment (McDowell 2009 27-28).

When sex is bound up with notions of love it is not considered domestic work. This means that the 'sex services' Angie provides Cooper are always and everywhere available. When at home, Angie's body is spatially open and accessible (Valentine 1999c), a point I discuss further in the next section. Under prevailing ideologies of heterosexual love and home, Angie is not able to 'shut up shop' (although her narratives discussed early suggest that she may not want to) even when she is busy doing other household tasks.

Not all couples have the freedom to be able to choose where they are physically intimate. The domestic spaces of physical intimacy are influenced by a variety of factors including housing tenure and living situation, as well as the material design of houses. Marie, for example, explains that the layout of their house influences her sex-life. Marie and Paul are in their late 20s and rent a house with three other flatmates. They have been in a relationship for nearly five years and moved from Europe to study in New Zealand a couple of years ago. She says:

Marie: At the moment our former [flatmate] is actually crashing on our couch and I mean we are really good friends but that's the thing, whenever there is someone in the lounge sleeping we can't really have sex because the walls are really thin and I mean, I dont think we're prudish or

anything but I think he would feel uncomfortable and so I feel uncomfortable (follow-up interview 15 May 2008).

Figure 12 is a picture, taken by Marie, of Paul sitting in their dining room. From the picture it is possible to see where their bedroom is in relation to the dining room and the lounge. To the left of Paul is the lounge and their bedroom is on the right. Their bedroom is only accessible from the dining room and from the picture it is possible to see that the bedroom door has glass panels. Marie and Paul have thus had to take the additional measure of hanging a curtain on the door to block the view.



Figure 12: Photo taken by Marie of Paul sitting in their dining room playing the guitar

The material design of their house impacts on Marie's emotional and sexual embodiment. Marie feels uncomfortable having sex in their bedroom because the close living quarters means that people in adjacent rooms, particularly the lounge, may be able to hear (and see) them having sex. Even though Marie and Paul's bedroom walls provide some spatial and visual privacy they do little to mask the intimate sounds of sex; the "the ululations of satiation, uttered during solo or shared sexual activity and the accompanying sounds of squeaking mattress springs or banging headboards" (Gurney 2000a 40). Instead, their privately situated sexual acts transmit into the public spaces of home and enter the sound space of others. Hegemonic discourses of home normalise the bedroom as the appropriate space of sex. When the sounds of sex escape the

confines of the bedroom, however, the act becomes a source of intimate intrusion for others. Noise ignores visual and physical borders and affects people in profoundly material ways. This shows one of the ways that the sounds of sex can permeate space and dissolves the public and private boundaries that surround home (Gurney 2000a).

Figure 13 is a drawing from Donna's diary that shows the 'spatiality of love' in the house she shares with her partner, Mark.

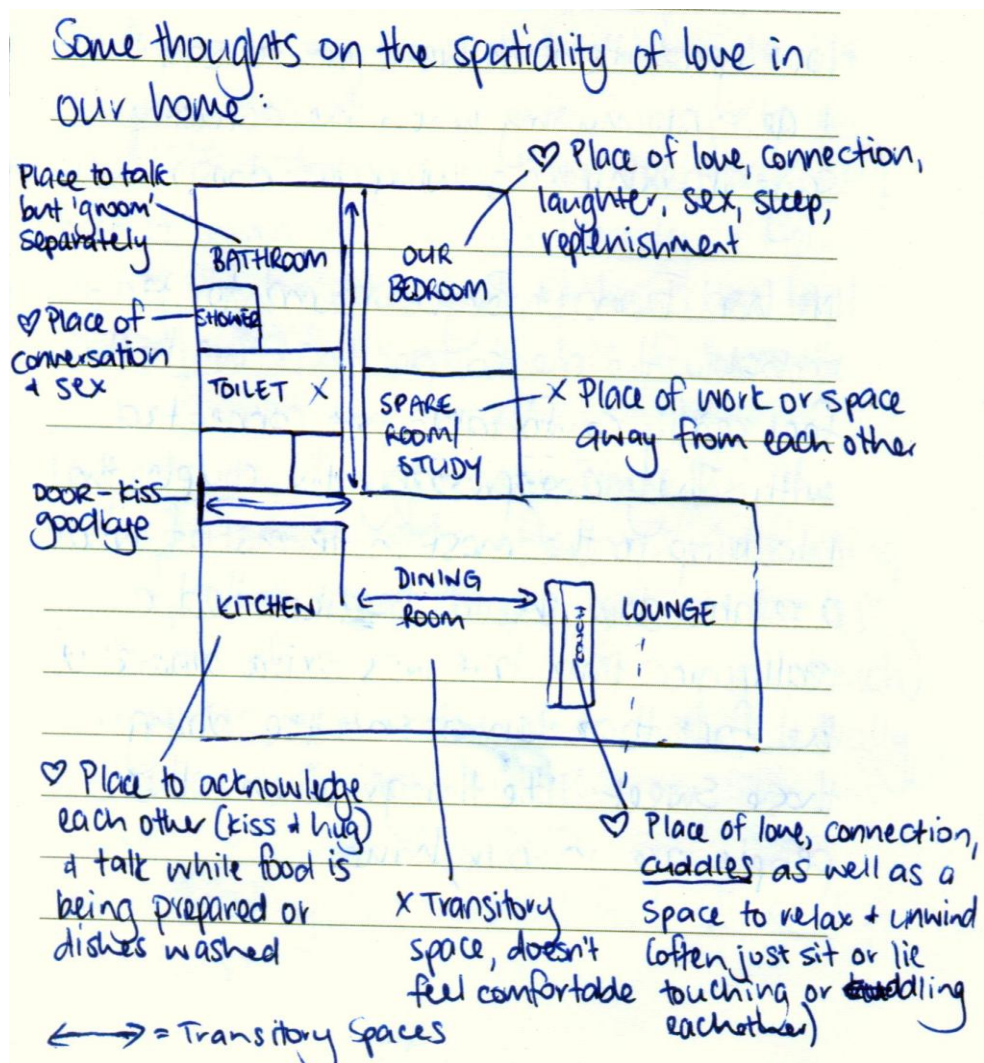


Figure 13: Drawing by Donna of the spaces of love in their home (diary entry 17 October 2008)

Home, for Donna, takes on particular significance as a site of physical intimacy and affection because it is one of the only spaces where they are able to be physically intimate, even in simple ways. Donna and Mark have been together

for three years. Two years into the relationship Donna moved into Mark's rented house. Donna and Mark have chosen, for the most part, to conceal their relationship because of the circumstances under which they met (Donna was a student and Mark a university employee). They are concerned that their relationship will be read by others as 'inappropriate' and as such have chosen to tell only close friends and family. Because they do not conform entirely to the heteronormative relationship-ideal, Donna and Mark do not feel comfortable showing affection towards each other in public spaces.

Donna's drawing is an interesting depiction of their love-life and is useful for exploring the micro-geographies of heterosexual intimacy and home. The drawing represents visually some of the ways in which participants demarcate their houses into spaces of love and physical affection. Home is not a uniform space of love. Intimacy is performed, and love is materialised, in participants' houses in a variety of ways and through numerous embodied practices. Donna's drawing shows that through shared intimate use, domestic spaces and household objects often become imbued with meanings of emotional importance. Participants use different areas of home in different ways with the result being that specific spaces take on certain meanings and significance. The kitchen in Donna's and Mark's house, for instance, as seen in the drawing, is where domestic work blends with domestic intimacy. For Donna, the kitchen is: "[a] place to acknowledge each other (kiss and hug) and talk while food is being prepared or dishes washed" (diary entry 17 October 2008).

Linda also talks about the kitchen as a space of physical intimacy.⁸¹ Linda and Jeff are in their late 20s and live by themselves in rented accommodation. They moved to New Zealand a couple of years ago for educational opportunities. Linda explains that the act of cooking together is significant for her relationship with

⁸¹ Feminist scholars have shown that the spaces and activities of cooking and eating are deeply embodied and visceral (Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy 2008; Longhurst *et al.*, 2009; Probyn 2000). Research also suggests that food often plays an important part in the initiation and negotiation of sexual intimacy. Valentine (1999c 166) shows that the sensual pleasures of eating are often likened to those of physical intimacy: "Biting, licking, sucking and chewing are all bedroom as well as dining-room practices."

Jeff primarily because it is a shared activity (see also Gorman-Murray 2006a). She also notes that cooking dinner together often facilitates the time and space for them to have sex. Linda says: “sometimes I am like ‘ok dinner is cooking, it’ll be half an hour, let’s go, now’s the time [to have sex]” (follow-up interview 29 April 2008). Although Linda’s comment could be interpreted in a way that points to the chore-like aspects of sex – she ‘fits’ it into her busy domestic schedule – Linda actually describes a time when she actively seeks out the time-space for sex and works it into her everyday homemaking practices. For Linda and Jeff, cooking together is a domestic activity which facilitates domestic intimacy. In this way, the everyday practices of physical intimacy and affection are intimately tied up with the processes and spaces of everyday living.

From Donna’s drawing it is also possible to see that she considers their couch to be a significant space of love, intimacy and physical affection. On the drawing she notes that the couch is: “a place of love, connection, cuddles as well as a space to relax and unwind (often just sit or lie touching or cuddling each other)” (diary entry 17 October 2008). Reimer and Leslie (2004 193) assert: “Furniture is tactile as well as visual, and items such as sofas and beds may be explicitly tied to notions of shared intimacy in the home.” In our first interview, Donna explains that she has had sex on the couch: “there have been a few intimate things on the couch, but it’s just uncomfortable ... it has like hard bits and the material hurts and it rubs if you’re naked and stuff” (first interview 17 October 2008). Donna does not enjoy having sex on their couch because the fabric sticks to her skin (figure 14). The tactility of body-furniture relationships influences the practices and sensations of physical intimacy. Through everyday use Donna and Mark’s couch has come to be imbued with meanings of love, intimacy and emotion. It therefore acts as a material marker of their intimate heterosexual relationship, shared subjectivity and love for one another.



Figure 14: Photo taken by Donna of their couch

It is important to note, however, that the memories, meanings and subjectivities embodied in domestic objects are neither fixed nor static. Domestic objects represent the ongoing construction and consolidation of subjectivities over time and in different domestic spaces. Noble (2004 239-240) makes the point that household objects can bear the presence of others: “An enormous and neverending variety of relations and people are sedimented in and mapped through objects.” Donna and Mark inherited the couch from Mark’s parents and as a result, it represents a mixture of meanings and subjectivities, which extend beyond immediate time and place. This adds another dimension of intimacy to the couch that Donna does not find particularly appealing: “there are pictures of Mark as a baby on that couch. He was potentially conceived on that couch!” (first interview 17 October 2008). Blunt and Dowling (2006) explain that inherited furniture can act as material representations of family. The couch acts as a material marker of the changing social and *sexual* relations within Mark’s family. It is a material reminder of Donna and Mark’s sex-life but it also represents Mark’s parents’ experiences of heterosex. Robinson *et al.*, (2004) note that home as a site of legitimate heterosexuality is inherently contradictory because it is both a site where intimate practices of heterosex are normalised but it is also a

space where sexual activity must remain hidden from others. Donna and Mark's couch makes visible generational and familial practices of heterosex that otherwise would remain invisible.

Angie also refers to the couch as a significant space of love and intimacy. Angie considers sex to be a very important part of her relationship with Cooper. During our interviews, she spoke at length about spaces, other than their bedroom, in which they have sex:

Angie: We have had sex in the lounge and in the kitchen and the dining room and we christened the spare bed and on his desk ... like the lounge, the couch is quite good, because you can hold on and sit, and you can get good leverage ... you can get good leverage and do different positions ... if we are watching T.V, we might just be in the lounge and do it [have sex] there, so, yeah, but it's usually a height thing. Either the kitchen bench, it's a little bit too high, so like his desk is a good height, kind of thing and for him standing and stuff like that (follow-up interview 30 April 2008).

Domestic material objects facilitate Angie and Cooper's sex-life. In this instance, sexuality is located within the fabric of their everyday life, both materially and metaphorically, and is enmeshed in typically non-sexual materialities of home such as the computer desk and the kitchen bench. Angie and Cooper's intimate homemaking practices differ from some studies on the geographies of non-normative sexual practices and space (see Gorman-Murray 2007a; Herman 2007) where participants purposefully alter their domestic space to suit dissident sexual lives. Instead of installing sexual accoutrements, like suspensions points for example, Angie and Cooper use their ordinary household goods and spaces to provide for their heterosex life.

Angie and Cooper's intimate homemaking practices could be understood as being tied up with their 'raced' subjectivities. As New Zealand-born Europeans they appear to have no reservations about having sex on the kitchen bench and

seem to enjoy it as a way of adding excitement to their homemaking and relationship activities. This intimate practice could, however, be read by some as culturally inappropriate. For many Māori it is tapu⁸² to sit on or have sex on benches, tables or any other surface where food is prepared or eaten (Meed 2003). Angie and Cooper's whiteness means that they do not think about the ways in which their sexual practices might transgress cultural norms. I am not suggesting that Angie and Cooper's intimate homemaking practices are 'wrong' or indecent. Rather, I use the point to illustrate the ethnic differences and cultural tensions that make up homemaking and performances of love in New Zealand. Heterosexual couples in New Zealand are not a homogenous group. Their intimate homemaking practices are diverse and varied and are influenced by a range of factors, including different 'racialised' discourses and ideological systems.

Angie does go on to point out, however, that there are spaces within their house where she thinks it would be inappropriate to be physical intimate. For Angie, the toilet is not a space of physical intimacy.⁸³ When I asked her to explain why she does not like to be physically intimate in the toilet she replies: "because I think it's gross. I mean you do unhygienic stuff in there" (follow-up interview 19 June 2008). In many New Zealand houses toilets are in a small room of their own, as opposed to being incorporated into the bathroom. This means that the space of the toilet is associated with very specific bodily acts. In other words, the space of the toilet is typically not used for anything else apart from the disposal of bodily wastes. Longhurst (2001) makes the point that toilets and bathrooms are considered to be sites/sights of abjection. Toilets, in particular, are potential sites for bodily contamination: "It is impossible to ensure that there are no leakages across the boundaries between inner and outer worlds in toilet/bathrooms"

⁸² Tapu is defined as "forbidden; inaccessible; not to be defiled; sacred; under restriction" (Reed 2001 74). Tapu is a concept through which Māori identify that which is sacred and deserving of respect.

⁸³ Although it needs to be acknowledged that meanings, values and uses of spaces are fluid and contestable, for example, public toilets often facilitate cruising and public homosex (Brown 2008).

(Longhurst 2001 66). Similarly, Gurney (2000b 66), drawing on Douglas' (1966) conception of dirt (which is discussed further in the final section of this chapter), argues the toilet is "a marginal and dangerous place because it is representative of our embodiment and our pollution." It is likely that Angie chooses not to be physically intimate in the toilet because of social disquiet surrounding bodily fluids, dirt and spaces of defecation. It seems that she does not want to blur the boundaries of bodily intimacy and spaces of abjection, which would, perhaps, undermine the appropriateness, cleanliness and sanctity of their 'lovemaking' practices.

Although home, in the sense of a physical dwelling, is the primary space of physical intimacy and affection, participants also mention feeling 'at home' in other spaces. These spaces allow participants to feel comfortable performing their relationship in physically intimate ways. Donna, for instance mentions that there are a few other places in Hamilton, apart from the house she shares with Mark, where she feels comfortable expressing her love for him physically.

Donna: [At home] we can be cuddly and all of that kind of thing that we are not really [able to do] anywhere else, even despite the fact that, um, you know that [our relationship] is kind of secret, and on top of that it feels like in Hamilton there is this space that we can occupy and just be ourselves and there are other spaces like my grandparents' houses and my dad's house and but like this place [referring to their house] would definitely be the most [important] (first interview 17 October 2008).

Not only does Donna feel 'at home' in the house she shares with Mark but she also feels 'at home' in her grandparents' and dad's house. This shows that home and being 'at home' is indeed more than simply the house in which we live. It is important to consider the body, love and heterosexual intimacies in relation to home as constituted through other spaces, such as the backyard, gardens, local streets, clubs, cars, and virtual spaces such as text messaging. Thinking about the

geographies of love in this way furthers geographical understandings of heterosexuality and domestic space as a diverse set of embodied practices and experiences.

For many participants, text messaging is an important way of staying intimately connected throughout the day. Although no participants talk specifically about sexually explicit text messaging⁸⁴, they do refer to text messaging as a simple way of performing love and intimacy at a distance. Debbie, for example, writes about text messaging in her diary: “while apart we almost always check in with each other via phone or text (diary entry 10 May 2008). Rebecca also reflects on text messaging in her diary, writing: “I kept getting texts from Tim and it was really cute” (diary entry 10 April 2008). Sheree took a photograph of a text message that Alex had sent her but the quality of the photograph was poor so I have not included it. Sheree and Alex are in their early 20s and they have been in a relationship for nearly nine years. In our follow-up interview Sheree discusses the significance of these simple intimate gestures. She says:

Sheree: A text that, it was a you know, 'cause Alex always texts me like in the morning to ... because he leaves so much earlier [for work] than me, I don't usually get it until I have usually arrived at work and it's just usually like 'see ya, have a good day at work, see ya when you get home' and um, so I thought that would be just a good example of those little, subtle things (follow-up interview 09 June 2008).

Cupples and Thompson (2010) argue that cell phones, and text messaging in particular, trouble many dominant binaries including absence/presence, proximity/distance, public/private. In this way, text messaging can be understood as a means by which the boundaries of home may be disintegrated

⁸⁴ Cupples and Thompson (2010) note that text messaging can provide teenagers, particularly young women, with a communicative means to be more sexually assertive in their heterosexual interpersonal relationships.

and bodily boundaries of love may be extended. Text messaging enables new forms of intimate heterosexual homemaking beyond the dwelling.

The experiences discussed thus far fit typically normative depictions of physical intimacy and home. Yet, participants talk about types of touch and forms of bodily intimacy, which, at first, do not necessarily seem to be premised on erotics, sex or other normative notions of love and physical intimacy, but which are equally important to their relationship. When attempting to understand the geography of sexual lives it is important to be aware of the multitude of intimate practices, performances and experiences.

Doing touch differently

Geographers are beginning to consider the diverse ways people negotiate sexual subjectivities and space. Increasingly, it is acknowledged that it is not just sexual, but a variety of personal relationships – friendship, kinship, communities – which provide intimacy in a progressively globalised world (Bell and Binnie 2000). Moreover, there are numerous studies on different ways of ‘doing’ intimacies including: non-monogamous relationships (Robinson 1997); non-cohabitating relationships or families (Holmes 2004); and intimate relationships via the internet (Valentine 2006). Respondents in my research emphasise the importance of different ‘types’ of touch and different ways of ‘doing’ intimacy and as such challenge heteronormative discourses which render sexual intercourse as the ‘essence’ of heterosexual love and intimacy (Gavey *et al.*, 1999; McPhillips *et al.*, 2001). This section highlights some of the diversity of heterosexual experience. It focuses on a multiplicity of intimate heterosexual practice and troubles idealised and romanticised notions of heterosexual love. In doing so, it encourages a re-working of the politics of intimacy and undermines monolithic and inflexible versions of heterosexuality.

In our follow-up interview, Linda explains that, as opposed to sex, she prefers the kind of intimacy that comes from touching in different ways:

Linda: I do this really gross thing. I squeeze the blackheads [similar to pimples] on his nose (*laughter*) ... I know my sister does it and I know my mum does it, I know we all do it, but we just don't talk about it. But I definitely do this and this is part of cuddle-time and for some reason [Jeff] loves it. I think it is because he has my undivided attention and I am right in his face squeezing these things. So I squeeze them and then I show him (*laughter*) (follow-up interview 29 April 2008).

This exchange highlights many points. First, home is both public and private (Blunt and Dowling 2006). Home facilitates Linda and Jeff's intimate practices because, at the most 'basic' level, it is a private space. They can do things with each other – like squeezing blackheads – which they may not necessarily be able to do elsewhere. Home therefore facilitates their relationship because they can be physically intimate in this way without fear of condemnation from others. This confirms Johnston and Valentine's (1995 99) claim that home, as a private space, allows people to "escape the disciplinary practices that regulate our bodies in everyday life." At the same time, home is also a public space because it is deeply connected with ideologies and practices that define socially and culturally appropriate forms of home, love, relationships and heterosexual intimacies. Certain intimate practices, namely (hetero)sexual intercourse, are idealised in public discourse (Gavey *et al.*, 1999; McPhillips *et al.*, 2001). Stevi Jackson (2001 86) argues: "We all learn to be sexual within a society in which 'real sex' is defined as a quintessentially heterosexual act, vaginal intercourse, and in which sexual activity is thought of in terms of an active subject and passive object." The dominance of these discourses means that forms of touch and bodily intimacy other than the conventional practices of kissing, cuddling and heterosex remain hidden. Normative heterosexual intimacies continue to dominate representations of love, in both popular and academic discourse. As Linda points out, however, referring to homemaking activities and practices of love that are

often deemed inappropriate or too embarrassing to talk about, “we all do it, but we just don’t talk about it” (follow-up interview 29 April 2008).

Angie similarly notes that although she talks about the intimacies of sex with her friends, like the mechanics of how to give a “good blowjob” (follow-up interview 19 June 2008), she would never tell her friends about the other ways she and Cooper touch each other. She says:

Angie: I like putting my face in his tummy. I like putting my nose in his, like it sort of goes in his belly button and I like pushing it in there, 'cause it's nice and squishy. It's not big ... it's kind of nice and soft and squishy. But I wouldn't do that in front of somebody else, or like go to my friends 'oh yeah, you know, I put my face in his belly button' (follow-up interview 19 June 2008).

Melissa also feels embarrassed about one of the ways Peter expresses physical affection. Melissa and Peter are in their early 20s. They have been together for approximately three years, two of which they have lived together. She says:

Another thing [Peter] does, which is him showing physical affection but which can sometimes annoy me (and is a bit embarrassing), is that he has a thing about touching my ears! He is really obsessed with them and if we are watching TV or even over dinner he will reach out and start kind of fondling my ears. It is a bit weird but I have gotten used to it and I don't so much notice it anymore, well not until someone looks at us in a strange way if we are in public. He likes it when my ears are cold. He kind of rubs them to warm them up. I don't mind it sometimes, but sometimes he will get my hair caught up with my ear and it is really annoying or he will do it when I just need my space and the last thing you want when you want some personal space is someone fondling your ears. I realise that it is his way of showing affection and if I have been away from him for a few days he

always gives me a big hug and then will grab my ears and say he has missed them. It is a weird thing he does but now I kind of like that it is our weird thing (if that doesn't sound too weird) (personal email correspondence 16 October 2009).

This example, and the others, trouble idealised and romanticised notions of heterosexual love and intimacy. They highlight a diversity of intimate experience beyond heterosexual intercourse. Physical intimacy, in its various forms, contributes to the construction and lived experience of home and undermines monolithic and inflexible versions of heterosexuality. As Melissa points out, however, physical affection is not always a source of relationship consolidation. The discussion so far has highlighted the importance of physical affection, in a variety of forms, for facilitating intimacy between couples. Yet, touch, when it occurs in inappropriate ways or spaces can be annoying and intrusive.

Valentine (1999c) makes the point that sexual relationships often provide people with seemingly open access to their partners' body. "Sexual relationships give us some claim to, or rights over, another person's body – particularly to look at it, touch it and comment upon it. In the eyes of a sexual partner our bodies are a spatially open location" (Valentine 1999c 173). Take, for example, domestic violence and rape, which is a prime example of the ways in which sexual relationships seem to confer ownership rights over the body of another (Warrington 2001). Whilst no participants allude to any instances of domestic violence several women do talk about domestic situations when they felt annoyed about, or intruded upon, by their partners' touch. Physical affection is not always a positive aspect of love nor is it always enjoyed:

Angie: Often if we have had a fight, and if I am mad at him, I want him to stay away from me and he will purposefully, I don't know if, well that's what I don't understand, because we have been together for so many years, I will often be like 'I just want to be alone for a little bit' or not even by myself, but 'just don't touch me for a bit' and he will keep coming.

So I have to physically move away or go in my room, and I say to him 'just go watch TV and just stop, stop, stop touching me because I am mad' (follow-up interview 19 June 2008).

Confinement is a reoccurring image in women's account of their lives (Rose 1993; Young 1990). The need for more space is common in women respondents' discussions about the less-than-positive aspects of physical intimacy. They explain that touch, when it is not wanted or asked for, can be restrictive and spatially limiting. Melissa, talks about touch in more detail and explains that she sometimes feels annoyed at Peter when he tries to cuddle her if she is busy doing household chores:

Peter is quite touchy feely ... He probably shows more physical affection than I do, always lots of kisses and light touches and he is quite huggy. It is really nice but at times I can be really intolerant, like if I am cooking dinner or tidying up and I turn around and he is standing behind me wanting to give me a hug I get a bit mad and tell him to move [because] I am busy. Which, when I think about it now, is kind of mean and I should take 30 seconds out of what I am doing to have a hug or a kiss but when I am busy I don't think about it like that I just think he is getting in the way or being a pain (personal email correspondence 16 October 2009).

Like Angie's experiences discussed earlier, Melissa performs housework and sexwork. She feels bound by the norms and conventions of heterosexual love and home to provide Peter with domestic 'services.' In this instance, Melissa is the one doing the housework and it is Peter who wants to touch and be touched by her. Melissa feels guilty about denouncing his intimate advances but finds Peter's touch, in these situations, confining and restrictive. The same can be said in relation to Rose's comment below, where she explains Joseph tries to cuddle her when she is cooking. Rose is in her early 20s and Joseph is in his early 30s.

They have been together for approximately two years and bought a house together one year into their relationship. She says:

Rose: It's a bit of a joke really, but in some ways I feel like, not that I am saying I want more space, but if I am doing the dishes, I've got someone cuddling me from behind. It's not like I get space when I'm in the kitchen (*laughter*) ... everywhere I walk it's like [he is there cuddling me] (*laughter*) (joint interview 23 April 2008).

Rose feels as though she needs more space when she is in the kitchen with Joseph. In these situations, Joseph intrudes upon the space of her body and the space her body occupies. This impingement serves to restrict her movement and ability to complete the domestic chore she set out to do. Her ability to perform housework effectively is compromised by Joseph's desire for her to perform sexwork. Touch, in this time and place, then, is not positive. Rose is quick to point out, however, that this does not mean that she wants Joseph to stop being physically affectionate. Likewise, Ruby is apprehensive about telling Taylor to stop kissing and cuddling her even though she sometimes finds it irritating. She writes about this in her diary: "we had sex at bedtime and Taylor carried on cuddling and kissing for ages after. It got quite annoying but I didn't say anything as I appreciate that most men just roll over" (diary entry 22 May 2008).

It is interesting that these women chose not to say anything to their partners about how they were feeling and instead sacrificed their own comfort for the sake of love and physical affection. Perhaps they do not want to offend their partners. However, I also suspect that these women are accepting of such experiences under the guise of love. Normative discourses of love and intimacy encourage an erosion of bodily boundaries. The experiences discussed in this section suggest that women's bodies are spatially open and available in nearly every room of the house and at any time of the day or night. Some women participants appear to accept the erosion of their bodily boundaries and loss of corporeal freedom because this is what they perceive love and intimacy to be

about. In other words, they accept these types of intimate advancements because love serves to morally validate their partners' access to their bodies and personal space. It seems to give their partners some claim to the space of their body and the spaces their body occupies. As feminist geographers have long argued, the control women have over their own bodies is restricted by men in a way that is rarely true of men by women (Valentine 1999c; Women and Geography Study Group 1984).

In the next section, I move to discuss the everyday geographies of corporeal and domestic dirt. I argue that these ordinary practices of home play an important part in the production of love, couple's shared subjectivities, and home spaces.

Corporeal and domestic dirt

Another useful way of examining the body as an important site of homemaking is by exploring the everyday geographies of corporeal and domestic dirt. By this, I mean it is possible to look at the various ways in which homes become embodied spaces of love through the presence of bodily remnants, odours, noise, individual possessions, and domestic mess. These ordinary and taken-for-granted aspects of home are everyday experiences for many people. Yet, this feature of everyday living has not been reflected upon in any great detail in the geographies of home literature. This omission is perhaps part of a legacy of masculinist and positivist thinking within the discipline where certain topics have been deemed too personal, too objective, too mundane to warrant 'serious' academic attention.

In this section, then, I argue that the presence of corporeal and domestic dirt is an important constituent of home that materialises love and shared subjectivities in domestic space. It is not simply a 'mundane matter' that should be 'cleaned up' and removed from the home and from academic discourse. As Longhurst (2009 432) points out: "banal does not necessarily imply that which is intellectually uninteresting and unimportant. The banal ought not to escape attention or be sidelined as domestic, feminine and Other." If geographers are to better understand the multiple ways home and love are performed and lived on a daily basis they need to take heed of the numerous ways that subjectivities can

be materialised in domestic space. One fruitful avenue is to explore the ways in which corporeal and domestic dirt materialises love and heterosexual relationships in domestic space.

Dirt has been described as “matter out of place” (Douglas 1966 35). Conceptually, dirt is that which transgresses established boundaries and borders and disrupts dominant belief systems. At an everyday material level, dirt “refers at once to the mundane matter under our finger nails, down our toilets, on and under our streets” (Campkin and Cox 2007b 1). Dirt is thus a theoretical concept and everyday experience and it is also that which “slips easily between concept, matter, experience and metaphor” (Campkin and Cox 2007b 1). Notions of dirt are explored in relation to a variety of topics (see for example the edited collection by Campkin and Cox 2007a) and have been used as a way for understanding and confronting inequalities and marginalities based on gender, ‘race’, ethnicity, age and class (Sibley 1995b). Home has been a central locale for exploring the materialities of dirt and cleanliness. A particularly large corpus of work draws on notions of dirt as a way of looking at domesticity and gendered labour in relation to reproductive work (see for example Bridget Anderson 2000; Gregson and Lowe 1995). Yet, the relationship between dirt, home and bodies has not been fully explored. Drawing on, and moving beyond, traditional discussions of the gendered divisions of labour in the home, I use notions of dirt to explore the body as an important site of heterosexual love and homemaking.

Some scholars have sought to examine the complexities surrounding corporeal dirt and home. Gurney (2000b 55), for instance, argues: “there are important, but hitherto unexplained, relationships between home, the presentation and impression management of the body and attitudes towards corporeal dirt.” He suggests that homes ‘accommodate’ bodies and in doing so they allow for the “storing, processing and management of corporeal dirt” (Gurney 2000b 55). According to Gurney (2000b 55), home is where “we may drop the Goffmanesque mask that attaches a socially constructed decorum to ‘dirty’ elimination activities such as defecation, urination, menstruation, flatulence, vomiting and expectorating.” Likewise, Pink (2004) explores the everyday

materialities of dirt and cleanliness in Spanish and British homes. She looks at the ways in which gendered subjectivity is articulated through people's relationship with their 'sensory home'. Pink (2004) makes the point that dirt and cleanliness can be aural, tactile, olfactory and/or visually embodied experiences. Geographical work on corporeal dirt and home is particularly limited. Longhurst (2001) provides one of the only explicit examinations of the relationship between dirt, home and bodies by focusing on white, heterosexual, able-bodied men and bathrooms. Responding to this literature, I explore the ways in which corporeal and domestic dirt can contribute to the construction and lived experience of heterosexual love and home.

In our first interview, Donna raises an interesting point about the relationship between embodiment and home. She explains that a positive aspect of being in a cohabitating relationship and sharing a living space is that "there's the influence of each other everywhere" (first interview 17 October 2008). In this instance, Donna is referring to the corporeal and domestic dirt that Mark leaves around the house. Mark's individual possessions, domestic mess, bodily remnants, odours and noise, constantly work to reinforce the space as shared. This means that in Mark's absence he is still 'felt' because his embodied presence is materialised in the space. Donna considers this to be a positive aspect of cohabitation because the mess Mark leaves around the house is the only material signifiers of him and their relationship.⁸⁵ In our follow-up interview, Donna considers this point in more detail explaining that Mark's embodiment is present in their home because he leaves newspapers on the floor (figure 15), leaves facial hair in the bathroom (figure 16), and folds and puts away their bathroom towels in an untidy fashion (figure 17). The images are annotated with Donna's descriptions.

⁸⁵ Donna and Mark employ a range of home management strategies to disguise their relationship, such as refraining from having 'couple photographs' in the main areas of their house. I discuss this in more detail in the chapter 6.



Figure 15: Photo and caption by Donna: "Newspapers on the lounge floor. It is a rare occurrence indeed that the floor can actually be seen!"



Figure 16: Photo and caption by Donna: "Hairs in the bathroom. Every time Mark shaves he gets little bits of hair everywhere, and they keep escaping from their secret hair hideout for weeks to come! So annoying, as I'm the one that cleans the bathroom"



Figure 17: Photo and caption by Donna: “The towels. Folded messily. But at least they’re folded. (Actually as I look at that photo now, I think it’s kind of cute!)”

Sibley (1995b 94) rightly makes the point that the negotiation of dirt and cleanliness in the home can be a source of tension: “the threat posed by dirt and disorder, if it is attributed to one partner ... may contribute to tensions between members of families.” Donna’s initial reason for taking the photographs was to highlight the unequal division of domestic labour in their house. When she looked at the photographs for the first time (she took them with her own digital camera) she felt annoyed because, as she indicates in her annotations, she is the one who generally does the domestic cleaning. On reflection in the follow-up interview, however, Donna begins to view the photographs and the photograph content more positively. The significance of Mark’s corporeal and domestic dirt to their *joint* homemaking venture means that she overlooks the gendered power imbalance that is imbued in the photographs. This may be a tactic, for both of our benefits, to disguise Mark’s lack-lustre involvement in undertaking household chores. By reframing Mark’s behaviour in such a way that minimises his lack of involvement and maximises the pleasure she gains from viewing his attempts at folding the towels, for instance, she is able to recast their relationship in presumably more equitable terms. This reframing allows her to

appreciate the photographs as representations of their love, homemaking practices and shared subjectivity as a couple.

Despite feminist interventions over the past two decades, the politics of domestic labour remain highly gendered. The discursive and material consequences of the public/private, work/home, culture/nature, productive/reproductive, and man/woman binaries still shape the lives of women (and men) (Domosh and Seager 2001; McDowell 1999). While research suggests that men are contributing more to domestic life by way of housework (see for example Bianchi *et al.*, 2000), women continue to be responsible for the bulk of domestic labour (McDowell 2009). Women, like Donna, are appreciative of – “at least they’re folded” – and even look fondly upon – “I think it’s kind of cute” – their partner’s half-hearted attempt at housework under the pretence of love. To me, this is just one instance that again, reinforces the ongoing power differences and gendered division of domestic labour. It points to the ways in which domestic divisions are sustained through discourses of love (discussed more in chapter 6).

Debbie also constructs her partner’s domestic and corporeal dirt in a positive light. Debbie is in her mid 20s and Robert is in his early 30s. They live together, along with three flatmates, in a house owned by Debbie. They have been together for four years. Debbie writes about an occasion where Robert left a mess in the kitchen in her diary, explaining:

[I am] home alone, [and] just cleaning up and getting ready for bed, Robert has cleaned up but he’s left dishes, if anyone else left encrusted egg in one of my pots I’d be spitting tacks [really angry], but I really don’t mind, just seeing a little bit of him around [is] kind of comforting. I must have it bad! (diary entry 14 May 2008).

Debbie finds the mess left by Robert “comforting” because in his absence it reminds her of him. His embodied presence is materially manifest in their home through his domestic dirt and Debbie likes this aspect of living together. She

jokes that her tolerance for Robert leaving “encrusted egg in one of my pots” is because she is in love – “I must have it bad” – and she would not react so favourably if one of her flatmates left the mess. Ruby similarly explains that she overlooks some of Taylor’s ‘annoying’ habits because she loves him. Married couple Ruby and Taylor are in their late 30s. They have been together for approximately 10 years and recently moved to New Zealand from the United Kingdom. Ruby says: “like even when [Taylor] is doing something that annoys me I can normally always see the reason why he is doing it and appreciate the reason why he is doing that but it’s still annoying” (follow-up interview 14 July 2008). She provides a couple of situations to demonstrate the point: “he’ll have a shower and then carry the towel into the bedroom and then as far as he is concerned it just disappears [implying that she has to pick it up and put it away] ... he [also] cuts his toenails on the bed and puts them in a pile that is all neat and tidy and then puts them in the bin” (follow-up interview 14 July 2008). The humorous and light-hearted way that Ruby talks about these situations shows that she also looks fondly upon Taylor’s “annoying” personal grooming habits.

Angie is the only woman to talk about her individual possessions as domestic mess, albeit in the context of shared use. She notes that when her underwear is lying around the house, as opposed to hidden away in their bedroom, it is a material reminder of her everyday intimacies with Cooper:

Angie: Sometimes like, um, I might take my bra off if we are just mucking around in the lounge. Like it will end up in the lounge for a few days so things like that, obviously you have got to try and hide them [from visitors].

Carey-Ann: Are your bras uncomfortable?

Angie: No, just if [Cooper] wants to have a grope [of her breasts] or something. And I just take it off, so yeah ... it’s not because of comfort. It’s if [Cooper] wants to have a play or just mucking around or whatever (follow-up interview 19 June 2008).

Angie feels uncomfortable about the assumptions people would make if they saw her underwear lying around the house. In other words, she does not want people to know that they have sex in the lounge. For the time that her underwear is in their lounge, however, it is a material symbol of her body, their intimate homemaking practices, love, and their shared subjectivity as a couple. It is only when there is the possibility of visitors seeing her discarded underwear that it is read as 'dirty.' It becomes a representation of sex acts beyond the 'appropriate' spaces of the bedroom.

Whilst these experiences point to some of the more light-hearted moments of sharing a living space, discussions with other respondents show that home, as a shared space, is not always a constant source of love and relationship consolidation. For some participants, corporeal and domestic dirt works as an unwanted reminder of their partner.

Sophia and Alec are in their late 20s. They are both tertiary education students and live by themselves in rented accommodation. Here, Sophia talks about needing to leave the house after she and Alec have had an argument because she feels as though she cannot escape him: "sometimes it is not enough for me to just be alone at home, I need to get away because even though I am alone at home, he is still there" (Sophia, follow-up interview 12 June 2008). Unlike Donna, Debbie, and Ruby, who construct corporeal and domestic dirt as a positive aspect of shared living and as a material signifier of love and their relationships, Sophia finds it intrusive. When she wants to be 'alone' at home she needs to leave the house because Alec's embodied presence – clothes, individual belongings, personal hygiene products – reinstates the space as shared. Similarly, Scott's personal belongings and domestic dirt impinge on Kimberly's ability to experience space as her own. Kimberly and Scott are in their late 30s. They have been together for approximately seven years, and live in a house owned by Kimberly. Scott explains that Kimberly does not like it when he leaves a "big mess" in the shed because he is "invading it, even though we do share it, I am monopolising it by spreading my stuff around. There isn't a line down the middle,

but it just can't be her space when it's covered in my stuff and vice versa" (joint interview 01 April 2008).

These examples show that corporeal and domestic dirt works to materialise love and couples' subjectivities in shared domestic space in complex and often contradictory ways. This is important for showing that a variety of embodied practices work to produce heterosexuality and home. It challenges monolithic, fixed and romanticised notions about the relationship between heterosexuality, love and domestic space.

Summary

The body is an important site from which to discuss the construction and lived experience of home. In this chapter, it has been argued that gendered and sexed bodies need to be foregrounded as important scales of homemaking. In recent years, the body has received considerable attention by geographers interested in the mutually constitutive relationship that exists between subjectivities, spaces, and places. Indeed, the discipline of geography is now largely based on the understanding that people's experiences of space and place are embodied, and more specifically, sexually embodied (Johnston and Longhurst 2010). Arguing for corporeal specificity, this chapter has presented a variety of ways in which home and love are constructed and lived at the site of the gendered and sexed body.

The language used to talk or not talk about love and home gives important insights into the ways in which domestic space can be heterosexualised through emotions, feelings and embodied sensations. Participants find it difficult expressing love in language. This is because love is constructed – by participants and wider social discourses – as being resistant to verbal description. Love is deemed to be a biological desire and experience which situates it beyond the need for, or possibility of, rational discourse. Whilst not denying the fleshy materiality of 'bodies that feel love' it is the socially constructed meaning of love as biologically 'innate' that allows participants to reflect upon, and give meaning to, their experiences. Love is talked about in terms of particular bodily feelings and sensations and as being tied up with the spatial imaginary of home. Overall,

the language used or not used to talk about love and home constructs an idyllic image of heterosexuality. It reproduces dominant constructions of heterosexual love and home.

Following this, I discussed the intersections of heterosexuality, physical intimacies and home. There has been very little geographical work that explores the relationship between sexuality, intimacy and domestic spaces and objects of love. Participants' ideas about, and everyday experiences of, physical intimacy are entangled with normative notions and spaces of love and domesticity. However, this relationship is by no means simple or straightforward. The complex intersections of physical intimacies and home reflect and materialise a multiplicity of heterosexual experiences, practices, routines, gendered and 'raced' bodies. This section attempted to capture a diverse range of intimate heterosexual experiences in order to highlight the multifaceted nature of heterosexual love and home.

Finally, I considered the everyday ways that homes become embodied spaces of love through the presence of corporeal and domestic dirt. Corporeal and domestic dirt may be considered mundane matter but it is this very banality that makes it crucial for understanding the production of heterosexuality, love and domestic space. Corporeal and domestic dirt materialise love and shared subjectivities at home, with both positive and negative effects. They provide a useful way for examining the body as site of homemaking.

This chapter, then, has shown that heterosexual bodies that love and the home spaces they occupy are constituted through embodied performances and practices. I have sought to provide an embodied account of home that takes into account a multiplicity of heterosexual experiences in order to challenge asexual and aspatial notions of heterosexuality.

Jumping scales, the next chapter uses dwelling as a platform from which to think about the homemaking practices and relationship activities of 14 young heterosexual couples. It looks at the materialities of heterosexual love within the space of the dwelling. As mentioned earlier, I am not attempting to reify these

scales as fixed entities. Instead, I use them as a way of thinking about the multiple ways heterosexuality, love, and domestic space are mutually constituted.

CHAPTER 6

Dwelling

In this chapter, I draw attention to the role of domestic spaces, activities, routines and objects in the ongoing production of heterosexuality and home. By focusing on the material, tangible and visible articulations of heterosexual love within and to the dwelling, I denaturalise and de-essentialise heterosexuality and its resulting spatial relations. The everyday material practices of heterosexuality and home are a means by which love is constituted through performance and practice. The aim of this chapter, then, is to provide an in-depth and critical examination of the ways in which the discourses of love are inscribed on to the materialities of home.

The chapter is divided into three sections. In the first section, I examine issues of privacy and the negotiation of domestic space between cohabitating couples beyond flatmates. Idealised notions about love and companionship are embedded in the design of houses and impact on couples' ideas about privacy in the private sphere. In the second section, I look at the ways in which a range of domestic activities, such as watching television, DIY and romance, are used to facilitate the construction of heterosexual relationships and home. It is argued that couples maintain unequal domestic labour practices through discourses of love. In the third and final section, the links between homemaking, subjectivity construction, and domestic material objects are examined. Gendered and sexed subjectivity, power and privilege is embodied, reflected, materialised and made 'invisible' in the arrangement of household objects. This chapter offers a deeper understanding of the connections between heterosexuality, love and the materialities of home. It focuses on a broad set of uses, experiences and material constructions of dwellings.

'Privacy in the private sphere'⁸⁶

Home is important to the construction and consolidation of intimate relationships (Gorman-Murray 2006a). The 'basic' provision of home – that it is a material space of love where two individuals can come together in a joint life project – is what makes domestic space crucial for relationship consolidation. Research shows that designated 'living' areas, like the lounge, kitchen, dining and living room, play a central role in the formation of couple's subjectivities and family life (Gorman-Murray 2006a; Munro and Madigan 1999). Munroe and Madigan (1999) make the point that idealised notions about companionship, shared interests and joint activities are embedded in the design of many houses. Normative discourses of home reproduce assumption about living areas as the primary place where couples will want to spend their leisure time together. Indeed, living areas are deemed to be important spaces of love within the dwelling. Living areas are where "separate routines become a joint habit of doing domestic chores together, conversing, sharing the day's event, relaxing" (Gorman-Murray 2006a 157). Reimer and Leslie (2004 201) note, however, that: "The home is not, of course, a singular uniform space." With this in mind, it is important to look at how domestic space is organised, and privacy negotiated, in the context of cohabitating couples. Creating a 'shared' living space is not always an easy task. At times, it is fraught with complexities and aggravations. Conversations about the negotiations of domestic space reveal tensions, inconsistencies and contradictions in the construction of 'public' shared and 'private' individual spaces.

Like Munroe and Madigan (1993; 1999 109), I seek to "disaggregate" the household unit. I hence consider issues of privacy and the negotiation of domestic space between cohabitating couples. Munroe and Madigan (1999 109) argue: "Most discussion[s] of privacy in the home [have] focused on the relationship between the household and the outside world." Young (2005b) similarly notes that personal space is an important concept of privacy, yet, it has

⁸⁶ I borrow this phrase of Munro and Madigan (1993).

not received much scholarly attention. There is little geographical work which explores the ways in which privacy is negotiated between cohabitating couples.⁸⁷ Most geographical work on privacy in the context of cohabitating coupledom focuses primarily on the performance of intimacy in public space. Gorman-Murray (2006a), for example, highlights the importance of home as a private space for gay and lesbian couples because it is a primary location where they are able to freely perform same-sex intimacies. Privacy *of* the home is, however, not the same as having privacy *within* the home (Johnston and Valentine 1995). Focusing on the negotiation of privacy between couples draws attention to the ways in which notions of public and private operate simultaneously at multiple scales of home. A reworking of the public and private binary reveals and teases out the contradictions inherent in idealised notions of companionate love and home.

Conversations with participants about the demarcation of individual private spaces reinforce gendered divisions of home (Johnson 1992; Munro and Madigan 1999; Valentine 2001). On the one hand, most men in this research either had, or felt a strong need for, personal space. They claimed ownership of spaces, like the garage or the computer room, where they could retreat, be alone, and relax in private. On the other hand, most women did not have private spaces for their own exclusive use nor did they claim to want them. The following statement, made by Taylor, demonstrates both of these elements: “I need to have a little bit of space that’s mine but I don’t think you feel like that at all, do you [talking to Ruby]? (joint interview 15 May 2008). Likewise, Lizzy and Zane talk about the gendered demarcation of their house:

Carey-Ann: You mentioned your shed – do you have individual
[personal] spaces [talking to Zane]?

⁸⁷ Gorman-Murray (2006a) does discuss the importance of creating separate personal spaces within the context of shared domestic space, but this is not explicitly considered in relation to the negotiation of privacy.

Zane: I do have a space but it is mostly because there is heaps of dangerous stuff in there and it's really messy and stuff and I kind of know where everything is. But I mean Lizzy [goes in there], like we hang the sheets up and stuff in there, so I mean Lizzy comes in, she can come and talk to me.

Carey-Ann: Would you classify it as a masculine space?

Lizzy: It's a man space. It's got all your tools in there and wood, and that's about it. I'd love to go in there and tidy everything up but I am not allowed to do that.

Zane: Why do you want to go and tidy everything up?

Lizzy: So that it is tidy.

Carey-Ann: And what about having spaces for you [talking to Lizzy]?

Lizzy: I think the rest of the house is my whole space really.

Zane: Yeah, but not yours exclusively.

Lizzy: I don't need any space. I don't have any space.

Zane: No you don't really (joint interview 22 April 2008).

Both Lizzy and Zane acknowledge that the garage is Zane's personal space – "it is a man space" – and that Lizzy has no space of her own. Zane is indignant towards the idea proposed by Lizzy that, perhaps, the entire house is her space – "not yours exclusively." He feels disadvantaged by the thought that Lizzy has control of the entire house and overlooks the differences in privilege and power he has by actually being able to claim a specific space as his own.

Feminist scholars have convincingly argued that women often lack personal space at home (Johnson 1992; Madigan *et al.*, 1990; McDowell 1983a; Munro and Madigan 1999). "In one sense a woman controls the whole house; but in another she may feel she owns nothing personally but her side of the wardrobe"

(Whitehorn, 1987 cited in Madigan *et al.*, 1990 632). Consider, for example, the following comment:

Sheree: I have taken over all the wardrobes in the house. Like Alex has got his set of drawers and his wardrobe and then I've got my set of drawers and then my wardrobe in the next room that I put my work clothes in, and the wardrobe in the far [bedroom] has got all my other clothes in [it]. So that's probably my space – the wardrobes (joint interview 30 April 2008).

Several women respondents negate their lack of personal space by claiming ownership of the entire house. Ironically, they claim ownership of general living areas, like the lounge, whilst simultaneously noting such spaces are also shared.

Angie explains:

Angie: I sort of feel like the rest of the house is mine, because [Cooper] has got there [points to the computer room]. So I can go wherever I want anyway because he is usually working or he is playing computer games. When he is in his space, I can have the rest of the house. So the rest of the house is mine in a way, [that is] when he is in [the computer room]. I think of it like that. Obviously you can't spend every second together. You do have to have your [own] space. I am usually in the lounge doing stuff in here if he is on his computer, so I guess it's more my space, but it's a joint space as well (first interview 30 April 2008).

Dominant norms and conventions of heterosexual love and home ensue that women, in particular, suppress their own need for private space in order to maintain idealised values of home as a uniformly shared space of love. Within this framework, individual subjectivity and experience is often subsumed within the household unit. It is possible to see the entanglements of the cultural construction of love with companionate ideologies of home. Jackson (1999 115)

argues: “love is often thought of as a merging of selves, it presupposes the prior existence of two distinct selves.” In this way, normative notions of love and of home allude to the disintegration of individual subjectivity in order to produce a collective subjectivity. Women, in particular, find it difficult to reconcile their need for individual self-expression and space with the requirements of being in a relationship. Take the following diary entry, for example, where Debbie reflects on the internal conflict she experiences as part of being in a cohabitating relationship:

So I’m lonely for him [when Robert is not at home] but there’s an enjoyable feeling too of being without him as he takes up so much of my focus and energy when he is here that having time without him, completely without him, is a feeling of almost relief and freedom. It’s the spaces apart that allow us to be how we are when we’re together. Before Robert took the night shift job, and we did spend every evening together, it was a little stifling and I was torn between my desire for my own space and identity and my desire to spend every minute with him. The conflict was mainly for me between my own desires and I resented him a bit for being so home-bound. Now, the time we spend apart helps to make the time together more special (diary entry 11 May 2008).

Many participants in this research have internalised companionate ideals of love and home to such an extent that they feel like they no longer require personal space.

Linda: I don’t think we have individual space. Not only because the house is small, [but] we just don’t have privacy for some reason. It’s just who we are. Like we are always in the kitchen together, you know [we are] crammed right into the kitchen together, [we] couldn’t wait until the other one was out of the kitchen. And sharing the

bathroom too, it's always like, we're both in [the bathroom] together (joint interview 16 April 2008).

These processes of internationalisation could be described as the affects of disciplinary power and regimes, systems of self-surveillance and the normalising gaze (Foucault 1976). Foucault's notion of surveillance as controlling and disciplining the body has been taken up by feminists in order to theorise women's acquiescence to, and collision with, patriarchal standards of femininity, discussed in more detail further on in the chapter (Bartky 1988; Bordo 1989; 1990). The following description of modern power by Foucault (1980 105) requires 'minimum expenditure for maximum return' and is organised primarily by the principle of discipline:

There is no need for arms, physical violence, material constraints. Just a gaze. An inspecting gaze, a gaze which each individual under its weight will end by interiorising to the point that s/he is her/his own overseer, each individual thus exercising his surveillance over and against, her/himself. A superb formula: power exercised continuously and for what turns out to be at minimal cost.

The power of normative notions of companionate love and home is such that participants unwittingly practice self-regulation and policing. The gaze constitutes their bodies through heteronormative relations of discursive power.

Although most women participants stress that they do not need individual spaces, their everyday practices of home suggest otherwise. Instead of designating individual rooms to particular individuals, couples employ various strategies at a range of scales within the dwelling to give a sense of privacy within shared home spaces. Participants use techniques, such as engaging in separate activities, as a way of creating personal and private space without compromising dominant assumptions about heterosexual love and cohabitating coupledom. Donna wrote about this in her diary:

Mark is reading the *Sunday Star Times* [newspaper] on the lounge floor in the afternoon. [This is an] interesting example of how the lounge can act as a space of connection (usually the

couch) as well as a space [away] from one another (usually the floor) (diary entry 19 October 2008).

Kylie and Luke also talk about their lack of privacy but suggest that spaces change depending on who is using it, the time of occupation, and the activity undertaken. Kylie and Luke are in their mid 20s and they have been together since 2004 and married since 2007. They live together in rented accommodation but recently purchased a house they will eventually move in to. Kylie says:

Kylie: I don't think we really have personal or private spaces. I think I have heard of a lot of people [who] have like bigger houses and they have like their room or the wife might have her sewing room or the husband might have his workout room but at the moment the way we have our house set up it's just everything is the same. I think the only exception would be where the computer is [located]. That becomes a private space purely because it's a one person activity, for the most part ... sometimes I am cooking and Luke comes and hovers around and I am just like 'can you leave the kitchen?' [talking to Luke] because at that point in time I guess that is my space, even though [I said] before that [domestic space] was just all the same and whatever but [at] that point in time it's my space that I am working with and I don't want him to be in it because he is in the way (joint interview 19 May 2008).

Rose similarly notes that it is their engagement in individual activities within typically shared spaces which allows them to enjoy time away from one another:

Rose: If [there was] anywhere that we would actually have our own space, if not sort of physically, it's [when we are] in our own little bubbles. [For example] you'd be playing computer games [talking to Joseph] and I'd be watching TV and even though we're in the same room I think that's

probably the biggest time apart because our attention is actually on other things (joint interview 23 April 2008).

The materiality of houses impacts on the negotiation of privacy within cohabitating relationships. Open-plan living is increasingly becoming a popular housing form in New Zealand. Most newly constructed houses contain a large, combined kitchen-dining-living area and it is commonplace for older houses to be renovated in order to incorporate open-plan living. Open-plan living areas are often termed 'informal living areas' and are increasingly understood as the 'heart' of the home (Cieraad 2002; Dowling 2008; Madigan and Munroe 1999). As such, they are instilled with and reflect dominant assumptions and ideologies about living areas as primary spaces of love. The creation of open-plan living initially served to free women from their isolated position in the kitchen and reintegrated them with the rest of the family (Cieraad 2002; Havenhand 2002; Johnson 2006b). Today, open-plan living spaces are imbued with norms about family togetherness, informal living and entertainment, and indoor/outdoor flow.⁸⁸ Familial and informal meanings of open-plan living resonate strongly with New Zealand homemakers. For participants in this research, open-plan living means that bodies are always on display; they are constantly within sight and reach of other bodies. Privacy amongst partners in living areas is thus rarely achieved. Here, Rose and Joseph reflect on the layout of their house in relation to issues of privacy:

Rose: I think for us, because of the layout, like there is only two of us [living here], so we don't need that kind of separate area or separate space for the kids for the different areas of the family. I feel like the house is just one big room, like

⁸⁸ Indoor/outdoor flow is a specific housing design which refers to blurring the material boundaries between inside and outside living. Leonard *et al.*, (2004 102) note access to indoor and outdoor space is considered "a right" by New Zealanders and as such indoor/outdoor flow is deemed to be "imperative to today's living, despite the fact that New Zealand's temperate climate and relatively high rainfall and windy conditions ... are not always conducive to dining or socializing outdoors."

especially this area here [referring to the open plan lounge, dining and kitchen area].

Carey-Ann: It works well?

Rose: Yeah, it means we can [either] be in the kitchen or in the living room and still be together, you [talking to Joseph and indicating the kitchen] can be here [with me in the lounge] and still be together because we don't need to be in separate rooms and we don't go to our separate room to be apart (*laughter*).

Joseph: Or time out or anything.

Rose: But whereas if you have kids I think it is quite important to have that space.

Joseph: Separate space.

Rose: That space for the kids to play in and you know. The space for the kids to have their own space when they're getting older as well. [The house] would need to be adapted if we ever wanted to have kids (joint interview 23 April 2008).

Munroe and Madigan (1993) argue that children's need for privacy within the home is well established. Perhaps unsurprisingly then, Rose and Joseph emphasise the space requirements of households with children. In their conversation there is no sense that adults may require some degree of privacy or individual space within home. The association of domestic privacy with children may account for why these participants do not feel they need individual space within the dwelling.

It is important to note, however, that not all participants think privacy in the private sphere is unnecessary. Moving in together and sharing a living space requires a reconstitution of individual privacy to suit the requirements of shared living. One condition of coupledness, love, and sharing a living space is that

partners are afforded with a degree of freedom to break the boundaries of individual privacy. As mentioned in the previous chapter, sexual relationships often provide people with seemingly open access to look at (and touch) their partners' body (Valentine 1999c). Some women respondents feel particularly uncomfortable with the degree to which the boundaries of privacy are eroded in cohabitating relationships. They emphasise their need for privacy and individual space in the context of individualised bodily management acts. These women do not want their partners to see them going to the toilet, applying make-up, removing body hair, and so on.

Ruby: When I do my defuzzing, like shaving and plucking and all that kind of stuff, I don't let [Taylor] see me like that, I don't think, I think he would just laugh at me, I don't think he would think anything of it.

Carey-Ann: Do you mean if you have wax on [your face]?

Ruby: Yeah, I kind of go in the bathroom and wait out the 10 minutes, um, so yeah, I don't let him see me do that (follow-up interview 14 July 2008).

It is useful to draw on feminist literature about the societal regulations and disciplinary practices of femininity in order to understand the gendering of domestic privacy (Bartky 1988; Black 2002; Black and Sharma 2001; Bordo 1989; 1990).⁸⁹ Feminists have shown that women's bodies are continually subjected to unobtainable norms of femininity through such things as media representations. This means that women are encouraged to enter continuous processes of self-monitoring and discipline (Foucault 1976). The pressure to practice self-surveillance is such that even in the 'private' spaces of home, presumably away from the gaze of others, women still feel the need to adhere to idealised feminine norms. Women respondents' need for individual privacy at home

⁸⁹ This thesis does not allow me the space to be exhaustive in my description and analysis of this literature; in addition this has been done elsewhere. For more information on feminist interpretations of Foucault's work refer to key texts by Bartky (1988) and Bordo (1989; 1990).

demonstrates the extent to which norms of femininity pervade Western culture and infiltrate the 'private' domain(s) of home. The way that women feel about and manage their bodies is intimately connected with their awareness of the sexual gaze of men, in general, and their partners, in particular.

This section has focused on the links between domestic space, love, and heterosexuality with particular attention directed at the negotiated creation of private spaces within the dwelling. In the next section, I move to consider the couples' *use* of domestic space.

Loving everyday living: domestic routines and activities

Gorman-Murray (2006a 151) makes the point that the use of domestic space "when it is shared with a significant other" is interesting because it highlights the negotiated and potentially problematic process of combining two individual daily routines to produce a third, shared routine. It is important to look at the routine uses of shared domestic space because subjectivity is produced by, and grounded in, daily habits and activities (Gorman-Murray 2006a; Young 2005a).

When questioned about the use of domestic space participants stress the significance of ordinary habitual homemaking activities and routines to their everyday lives. Regularity, consistency and repetition play an important part in these participants' everyday geographies of heterosexual love and home. Take, for example, Debbie's diary entry:

I don't think much of our behaviour towards each other is technically spontaneous, most of it is based on tried and true methods, finding 'what works' for each other and what helps us to avoid conflict or hurting each other, what we can do within our sphere of influence without compromising our own boundaries too much to make each other happy. We base a lot of our relationship on routines. I love it. I love the clockwork of our lives together. I love the predictability of it (diary entry 09 May 2008).

Regularly sharing a meal, sitting down to watch television, and doing home maintenance together are just some of the activities which work to establish a shared subjectivity, sense of home and feelings of love. Underlying these practices are idealised heteronormative notions about love, companionate activities, negotiated decision-making, and shared subjectivities. Such mundane geographies are crucial for understanding the production of heterosexual bodies and home spaces. Binnie *et al.*, (2007) remind us that it is important to appreciate the extraordinary in ordinary life. This section, then, reflects on ordinary habitual homemaking practices and the role they play in the construction and consolidation of love, heterosexual relationships and home.

At our couple interview, Rose reflects on the process of establishing a sense of belonging in a new house. Here, she talks about creating shared daily habits and explains that such routines are significant for making a house feel like a 'home':

Rose: When we moved in here, all of a sudden something that I had absolutely no interest in before, suddenly I was interested in ... like making our own little patch of garden and growing our own vegetables and setting up our own routines, like the compost bin [for example]. Things like that which seemed really irrelevant before [moving in together] and then when we started doing them together [they became important]. [Ordinary homemaking routines] are part of a home I suppose yeah, [and I became] a bit more interested in it ... [moving in together] brought up, I guess, the mundane tasks of the day which meant even sort of paying the bills and putting out the rubbish was exciting for me, for the first couple of weeks because it was like 'hey, we are putting out our own rubbish' (joint interview 23 April 2008).

When Rose and Joseph first moved in together the novelty and romanticism of sharing a house and making a life together transformed the mundane and

ordinary into the extraordinary. Love’s transformative ability has been noted (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 1995; Jackson 1995a). Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995 175), argue for instance, love: “offers itself as a way of escaping the drudgery of the daily grind, giving normality a new aura; stale old attitudes are tossed aside and the world seems suffused with new significance.” For Rose, love transformed ordinary homemaking routines, like putting out the rubbish, into material expressions of their new life together. Rose’s enthusiasm for ordinary homemaking routines was not curbed once she and Joseph were established in their new house and the initial novelty had worn off. Instead, the formation of other habitual activities of love came about as a result of daily living. In fact, many of the most significant shared homemaking practices are the result of incidental acts of everyday life. Take, for example, Rose and Joseph’s weekly ritual of checking on their watermelon (figure 18).



Figure 18: Photo taken by Rose of their watermelon

In our follow-up interview, Rose refers to the photo of the watermelon to reflect on the development of this particular shared routine. She explains:

Rose: This is one of the best things we have ever grown in our garden. We didn’t even plant it, it ... just started growing

out the front from us spitting watermelon pips off the front [porch] and we were so excited when we saw the first little watermelon ... and for months we have been watching it grow.

Carey-Ann: Where was it?

Rose: It was just outside, down the front [and] just off the porch. So it was kind of like a weekly ritual. We would kind of go out after breakfast on a Saturday morning and check the watermelon (follow-up interview 28 May 2008).

Gorman-Murray (2006a) makes the point that ordinary objects of home often symbolise shared routines and represent couples' shared subjectivities. Indeed, as I discuss further in the final section of this chapter, some domestic objects can be understood as material embodiments of love. Rose and Joseph's watermelon, for example, embodies the memories and loving emotions imbued in this particular shared homemaking activity.

For some couples, watching television together is an important shared homemaking ritual. The television has been identified as an important cultural symbol of family life and shared living (Valentine 2001). Many couples talk about coming together in the evening to watch their favourite TV programme. Angie and Cooper, for instance, enjoy watching re-runs of *M*A*S*H*⁹⁰ and sit down together to watch it every night before they go to bed. She says: "they [*M*A*S*H* episodes] are only like 20 minutes and it almost puts us to sleep now, it's like our thing we have to do" (follow-up interview 19 June 2008). Lizzy similarly explains: "[we like] watching TV because we watch certain programmes every week, we watch it together. And then we talk about it, like things like that" (joint interview 22 April 2008). For Sheree and Alex, sitting down to watch their favourite television programme is a way for them to spend time together, relaxing and unwinding from work, without having to engage in conversation

⁹⁰ *M*A*S*H* is a medical comedy/drama set during the Korean War. It follows the fictional lives of doctors and nurses based in an American surgical camp.

(figure 19). Sheree explains: “right now I am writing here while our cat cuddles with Alex and [we are] getting our 5.30[pm] dose of *Home and Away*.⁹¹ Again, another good way to unwind from work, hang out together without having to talk” (diary entry Wednesday 2009).



Figure 19: Photo taken by Sheree of her and Alex watching TV together

Both Linda and Donna share stories with me about the importance of spending time with their respective partners completing the crossword in the *Hamilton Press*.⁹² They both chose to represent the significance of these shared activities in the form of a photograph. Donna emailed me a copy of the photograph she had taken of a completed crossword, which included a detailed description of the photo (figure 20), and Linda took a photograph of Jeff sitting at the dining room table working on a crossword (figure 21).

⁹¹ *Home and Away* is a popular Australian drama sitcom set in the fictional town of Summer Bay.

⁹² The *Hamilton Press* is a free local newspaper delivered to all Hamilton residents every Wednesday.



Figure 20: Photo and caption by Donna: “A completed crossword. Working on crosswords is one of the things we do together in our home (although we don’t often manage to complete the *Hamilton Press* one!) Yeah, I know we’re geeks, but it’s nice to work on and achieve something together.”

Linda discusses the significance of the photograph in our follow-up interview, explaining:

Linda: Every Wednesday we get the *Hamilton Press* and there is the stupid crossword in it. It’s like the easiest crossword there is, but I am terrible at word games, but Jeff loves them ... so we started doing this crossword that comes every week, every Wednesday, and it’s just kind of turned into this thing that we do. It comes at lunch time and we used to go home for lunch, and we would eagerly await the paper and get it out and try to do it over the next week and then check our answers when it came the next week. And sometimes we can do it all and sometimes we can get only get one or four words or something. I don’t know

[why we like it], it's just something that we do. Either we slowly work at it over the week and usually I read it out and he tells me the answers and I write the answers in, so it's all in my handwriting, but really it is Jeff who does it all. And sometimes he will just take them and do them and I will be like 'oh you did the whole crossword without me' and he will be like 'oh, oh, sorry I just knew the answers' and sometimes maybe I will do it. But it is always on the kitchen table and we will eat dinner on the crossword and we will put our plates on either side of it and just work at it over dinner or something, it's kind of nice (follow-up interview 29 April 2008).



Figure 21: Photo taken by Linda of Jeff doing a crossword

In both these examples, the crosswords symbolise Linda's and Donna's respective relationships because they embody the emotional work invested in shared homemaking activities. Linda's description of the crossword, which seems to be underscored by her own sense of inadequacy, gives the impression that she supports Jeff in a leisure activity and that he is skilled at it, as opposed to it being

an activity they equally invest in. Nevertheless, these activities are important to the development of their relationships and work to constitute their love. The crosswords are simple task that they can, as couples, work on and enjoy together.

Food and cooking is another theme that arose in relation to shared activities. Research shows that food plays an important part in the production of home, the construction of 'family' subjectivities, and in the negotiation of gender roles and relations (Valentine 1999a). Sharing a meal together – usually around the dinner table – is typically deemed to be an effective way of fostering familial cohesion and inclusion. Ahmed (2006) makes the point that dining room tables are kinship objects and are one of the places within the dwelling that heterosexuality – bodies, subjectivities, institutions – is brought into being. Marie believes that sharing meals at the dinner table with her partner Paul works to strengthen their relationship. She says:

Paul got up earlier than I did because he normally does/prepares coffee. We did meet for lunch together, as usual. For me, having food together or cooking together is very important as it means we are having 'quality time' together to talk about the day or not [talk] (diary entry 18 April 2008, emphasis in original).

Marie had their flatmate take a photo of her and Paul sitting at their dinner table eating brunch (combined breakfast and lunch) (figure 22) in order to highlight the centrality of this activity to their relationship. Here, she reflects on the photo and what it represents:

Marie: We're having brunch together on a Saturday or Sunday morning. Normally we prepare the food together. Paul takes care of making coffee and the eggs. However, I'm pretty sure this time I didn't contribute anything, but that's ok (follow-up interview 15 May 2008).



Figure 22: Photo taken by Marie and Paul's flatmate of them enjoying brunch together

As mentioned earlier, Linda and Jeff also enjoy cooking as a shared activity. Like Marie and Paul, they do not consider it to be a chore and take pleasure in making food together and for one another. Below is a photo taken by Linda of Jeff preparing dinner for them both (figure 23).



Figure 23: Photo taken by Linda of Jeff preparing dinner

Linda reflects on the photo in our follow-up interview, explaining:

Linda: We really like food and we really like preparing food for one another, with one another, and so we kind of visit [each other in] the kitchen and we do it everyday. But dishes go along with dinners, right, so every night we make dinner and every night we do dishes and it's just part of our little domestic routine (follow-up interview 29 April 2008).

Research shows that women continue to be responsible for the choosing, shopping for, preparing, cooking and clearing away of, home based meals (see for example Valentine 1999a; 1999d). Yet, in both examples, Linda and Marie emphasise the point that cooking is a shared activity. Valentine (1999d 496) explains that food consumption is one of the main ways that subjectivities are produced, articulated and contested: "people can ... employ food as a way of constructing stories about themselves within wider multiple plots of family, work, institutions, nation and so on." Both of these couples use cooking as a reference point to highlight the equitable nature of their relationships. They use food consumption practices as a way of constructing their shared subjectivities as compatible couples who are in loving, equitable relationships.

Two couples talk about the significance of shared DIY and home renovations activities to the sustenance of their relationship.⁹³ DIY and home renovations have been described as 'exceptional,' as opposed to habitual homemaking events (Gregson 2007), thus locating such practices outside the realm of everyday life. For couples who are engaged in home renovations, however, DIY is very much part of everyday living. Home renovations can go on for years and more often than not DIY projects are never completely finished. It is certainly not uncommon for people to live in a state of renovation for several years.⁹⁴ My own

⁹³ Housing tenure influences the extent to which respondents are able to alter the material design and layout of their house. I reflect on this in more detail in chapter 7.

⁹⁴ The creation of a television programme dedicated to exploring the lives of New Zealanders living in a constant state of home renovation attests to the prominence and cultural acceptability

experiences of home improvements are ongoing and incomplete. Renovating our kitchen, for instance, took several months during which time we lived with multi-coloured walls and cupboard doors, exposed electrics, and unpolished floors (three years down the track there are still holes in the floor and the floorboards are yet to be polished!). As such, DIY is very much part of our everyday living. It also continues to be an important shared homemaking activity. Importantly, such DIY-practices materialise our shared subjectivity as a couple. Indeed, Gorman-Murray (2006a 158) explains: “renovation decisions are underwritten by and represent shared identities.” The link between DIY and shared subjectivity construction can also be seen in Lizzy and Zane’s ongoing home renovation projects. At the time of our couple interview, Zane was fixing a large window in their lounge (figure 24). Here, Zane talks about their ongoing home renovation projects:

Zane: There’s a series of renovations going on, in a material kind of way, to make [the house our own], putting our own stamp on things and doing things how we want them to be done ... just so it suits us, so the house suits us. It feels like we are a part of the house physically ... we’ll do some renovations or something and we are spending time together doing that and deciding on colours, all that stuff, and painting together. That’s quite cool (joint interview 22 April 2008).

of this way of living. Although no longer screening, ‘Mitre 10 DIY Rescue’ was a popular lifestyle television programme that set about ‘improving’ the lives of ‘ordinary’ New Zealand families by completing unfinished home renovations projects. The premise of the show was that New Zealand men often begin home renovation projects without sufficient skills, knowledge, tools and time to complete the task. The website suggests the show intends to “rescue the wives of hammer-happy husbands from their own DIY disasters” and in doing so “educate New Zealand husbands on how to perform DIY in style” (Television New Zealand 2000). In each episode a talented team of builders (men) would set about completing various unfinished DIY projects. Along the way, light-hearted banter between the professional builders and the unsuccessful DIY-er and conversations about why the “long-suffering wife ... put up with the DIY catastrophes for the most of her marriage” provided viewers with some insight into the lives of New Zealand families (Television New Zealand 2000).



Figure 24: Photo taken by Lizzy of Zane working on the window in their lounge

It is important for Zane and Lizzy to feel physically connected to their house. Changing and adapting the material design of the structure helps to give them a sense of belonging and strengthens their emotional ties to the house. Home renovations mean that their relationship is literally built into the material design of the house. The changes to the house reflect, and allow them to observe materially, the development of their relationship. Zane notes that through *shared* physical labour their sense of connection and belonging to the house is materialised further. In our follow-up interview, however, Lizzy explains that in this particular instance DIY was not a shared activity: “that’s Zane fixing the house. [The photo represents] his love for me because he makes our house” (follow-up interview 05 June 2008). For Lizzy, Zane’s ability and willingness to work on their house is a material expression of his love for her. Often when Zane is doing DIY work around the house, Lizzy will be “just mucking around, doing

nothing, sometimes I will sit there and chat, making tea” (follow-up interview 05 June 2008). Clarke (2001) notes that for much of the twentieth century DIY has been associated with men’s home-based work thereby establishing a binary relationship between feminine ‘home-making’ and masculine ‘making home.’ Lizzy constructs their relationship in this way by highlighting their gendered ‘homemaking’ and ‘making home’ practices. This reinforces heteronormative notions about men and women as complementary opposites (Valentine 1993a).

Zane also notes that time spent together selecting the colour of the paint and then painting the house is an important shared activity. For some of the couples in this research, colour schemes seem to be a particularly significant material representation of shared living (Gorman-Murray 2006a). Kimberly and Scott, for example, talk about the importance of jointly choosing a colour scheme for their house. Deciding on a colour was one of the first things they did as a ‘couple’ to make Kimberly’s house into ‘their’ home, a topic I discuss in more depth in chapter 7.

Kimberly: The other thing that we have done, together, the house was all one colour. [The same colour] that is in the kitchen, but we’ve painted [the lounge/dining room] together and our bedroom and yeah, and I think every time we have done something like that together we have become, [the house] has become more ours, hasn’t it? [Speaking to Scott] [Scott agrees] (joint interview 01 April 2008).

Colour schemes are often viewed as representations of a couple’s compatibility and ability to compromise. The final product – painted walls – is deemed to embody negotiated design decisions and seemingly signifies shared physical and emotional labour through time spent painting. Painted walls, however, do not give any indication of the actual process of choosing a colour scheme, which I know can be fraught with problems, disagreements, and arguments. It took Kimberly and Scott 46 test pots to choose a colour they both liked. This revelation alone highlights the potentially contested and problematic nature of

shared living and homemaking. It undermines idealised and romanticised notions about love, cordial decision-making processes, and shared homemaking practices.

Discussions about the use of domestic space draw attention to the materialities and actualities of everyday experience. Re-privileging the mundane and banal in everyday life is crucial for understanding the mutual constitution of people and places (Binnie *et al.*, 2007). Yet, such ordinary geographies remain peripheral in most sexuality and space scholarship. In order to further geographical understandings of heterosexuality, attention needs to be directed to the ordinary activities, practices and performances of home. A further dimension of home that has been noted but little explored by geographers and other social scientists is the ways in which discourses of love map on to performances of home.

Domestic performances of love

For some of the couples in this research, domestic labour is deemed to be a practical expression of love and is intimately tied to material homemaking routines and activities. Ordinary practices of home, such as cooking dinner, washing the dishes, and lighting the fire, are everyday practices of home through which heterosexual love and home are produced and consolidated. An examination of the practicalities and performances of love as 'home practices' encourages a re-working of gendered power relationships within heterosexual relationships, even if such a re-working is fraught with contradictions and contestations.

As noted earlier, popular culture is saturated with discourses of love and romance. From an early age young women, in particular, are bombarded with idealised images of love and romance (Jackson 1993a; Sue Jackson 2001). Women are instructed from a variety of sources, including fairy tales, television programmes, movies, music, magazines, popular or high art, on the 'ideal' proceedings of heterosexual relationships. As Jackson (1993a) notes, however, the process of internalising romantic narratives is not one of passive

enculturation. Indeed, some of the women in this research are aware of, and highly critical about, the role that love and romance can play in the production of inequitable gender relations. Nevertheless, they still find pleasure in love and its shortcomings. As Jackson (1995a 56) points out: "Romantic ideals can be deeply embedded in our subjectivities even when we are critical of them." Women participants draw on popular discourses of love and romance and use them to develop their own expectations, and shape their subjective experiences, of being in a relationship. In doing so, they both confirm and resist social normativities of heterosexual love and home.

When asked about their ideas on love, Debbie and Robert talk about their relationship in terms of practicality and reciprocity. Throughout the interview process they continually emphasise the practical nature of their relationship, as demonstrated in the following excerpt:

Carey-Ann: How important is romance in your life?

Debbie: We're just kind of like more practical people, like I would rather someone make me breakfast everyday for six months than took me to dinner and told me I was beautiful.

Robert: Yeah and we'd rather save candles for more important moments like when there is no electricity (*laughter*) (joint interview 09 May 2008).

Debbie and Robert believe that it is their realistic views and expectations of each other and their relationship that ensures the smooth running of their lives together.

Carey-Ann: What does love and being in love mean to you?

Debbie: It's a lot easier [than past relationships] and it seems to be based on a lot more practical stuff too. Like we clean the house for each other and we go for a run and we cook

dinner and we make each other cups of tea and it's not really about anything up here [points to the sky] or idealistic or anything, it's just honest and it's 'I'm too tired to do that and or you're stinky and I want to watch the rugby or whatever', we're not trying to make it this big huge thing (joint interview 09 May 2008).

Many participants view their past relationships as turbulent and unpredictable; as structured and fuelled by romantic narratives of passion, emotional irrationality and lust, described by one participant as "giddy love" (Linda, follow-up interview 29 April 2008).⁹⁵ They, in comparing past and present relationships, view many of their earlier experiences of love as unrealistic and situated outside of everyday life. Love, as they experience it in their current relationships, however, is founded upon more practical expressions and tied up in performances of home. Locating love within the realm of the everyday works to legitimatise it as more authentic, realistic and enduring. Rose also reflects on love and everyday living, explaining:

Rose: Before we moved in together I thought we got on pretty well. [I thought we would] probably be okay living together but now that we do have to do those daily tasks I guess, and mundane daily living together, I think yeah it's all part of it. Love is taking out the rubbish and love is you know cleaning the house, and cooking for each other and having dinners together (joint interview 23 April 2008).

Rose makes the point that love is constituted in and through mundane activities and routines of daily life. The connection between everyday practices of home and intimate heterosexual relationships has been touched on by sociologists and critiqued by feminists. Jamieson (1999 485), for instance, shows that for some couples who live together "love and care as expressed by a more practical doing

⁹⁵ See Johnson (2005) for a discussion about the differences between 'lust' and 'love' and how they influence the discourses of heterosexual intimacy.

and giving is as much the crux of their relationship, as a process of mutually discovering and enjoying each other.”⁹⁶ Feminists are wary of such assertions, particularly when it is women who are doing the majority of the loving/caring/cleaning (McDowell 1999; 2009). Several women took photographs of their partners doing household chores or because of issues surrounding anonymity, of the end result, such as a clean kitchen. It is emphasised that these actions are physical expressions of love. For some women, the photos captured ordinary events, in that their partner’s participation in domestic labour was an everyday occurrence. For others, the photos captured the extraordinary. It was difficult to unpack the motivations behind men’s domestic performances of love. Some of the women participants were unsure about whether their partners’ domestic acts were done ‘out of love’, out of a desire to be ‘rewarded’ with sex for ‘behaving’, or out of an attempt to increase and improve their profiles in this research. At times, I was also unsure about their motivations. Nevertheless, women participants took pleasure in their partners performing domestic acts of love. Kylie, for example, explains that in winter Luke gets out of bed early in the morning to light the fire (figure 25) and to make them porridge (figure 26). Kylie reflects on these homemaking activities in her diary:

A freezing cold morning today – which led to Luke proving how much he loves me by getting up at 5am to light the fire!!! So nice of him ‘cause it must be horrible to get up [so early]. [Especially] the last few mornings with the frosts. He has got up early to light the fire and then come back to bed. What a nice boy 😊 (diary entry 10 July 2008).

⁹⁶ In arguing that love can be expressed through practical expressions and performances, Jamison (1999) challenges Giddens’ (1992) notion of the ‘pure relationship’ whereby mutual self-disclosure is seen as the basis of intimacy.



Figure 25: Photo taken by Kylie of the fire that Luke lit



Figure 26: Photo taken by Kylie of porridge prepared by Luke

Rose also decided to take a photograph of a clean kitchen (figure 27) because Joseph had risen from bed early in order to tidy it before she got up. This is something that he will often do for her. She says:

Rose: I can't remember the exact situation now but I think that I was just feeling really blah, like I didn't want to do anything and it might have even been a weekend, either morning, it looks like morning because the curtain is open, and yeah just waking up and having everything tidy and done, I was just like 'oh thank you so much.' I guess it means, now we don't have to spend the morning cleaning, we can do something else (follow-up interview 28 May 2008).



Figure 27: Photo taken by Rose of the kitchen after it was tidied by Joseph

For Angie, love is about the small domestic chores that her husband, Cooper, might do for her. Cooper does not do them on a daily basis, which for Angie makes them all the more special. She explains:

Angie: I think it's like the little things, that are love for me, and I think for most women it's kind of like that. It's the things you tend to take-for-granted, like the little things he might do for you ... I think it's more 'oh he put the toilet seat down', kind of things like that. Doing things that surprise me. Like [Cooper] might, sometimes he might make the bed and I'll think 'oh that's nice' and he'll do it really nice.

Like on Mondays he doesn't work and I usually do, so when I come home I think it's really nice when he's done things like got dinner ready or cleaned the house or things like that, done things that I haven't asked or expected and he's done them because he knows those are the things I would like done and that means I don't have to do it. Because, men, when it comes to housework they usually have to be told so (first interview 30 April 2008).

The way in which Angie experiences Cooper as caring and loving reproduces unequal gender relations. Radical feminists (de Beauvoir 1972; Firestone 1972) have long argued that it is love which serves to bind women to exploitative heterosexual relationships. For Angie, ideals of love are tied up with traditional gendered roles and domestic chores within the home and she takes her experiences to be common to all women in heterosexual relationships. During the interview, however, it was obvious that Cooper's homemaking acts, like occasionally making the bed, were really important to her. Angie takes these seemingly banal actions as material expressions of Cooper's love for her because he is attempting to make her life easier. She has not had to ask or instruct him to do the tasks, which she notes is what usually happens. Ruby expresses a similar sentiment. At the time of the couple interview Ruby was not in paid work and considered herself to be a 'homemaker.' Ruby and Taylor are aware that they conform to traditional gendered roles and reject, at times, that this is how life should be organised but accept that it works for them. Ruby explains:

Ruby: You [talking to Taylor] provide by obviously sorting out all the bills and debts and doing all the banking and all of that stuff and obviously bringing home the money, and I provide for you a clean tidy house and meals and blah blah blah and all of that, and that kind of affection and caring and that providing are the same, they are different expressions but the same meaning (joint interview 15 May 2008).

Research suggests that the strategies heterosexual couples use to construct themselves and their partners as mutually caring often reproduces gendered inequalities (Jamieson 1999). Ruby draws on narratives of love which overlook the everyday differences in power and privilege by representing their relationship in terms of complementary gifts – Taylor’s wage is an expression of care for her and her housework expresses her love for him. The language Ruby uses to describe housework as an expression of her love for Taylor – “blah blah blah” – devalues the time and effort she puts into maintaining their home. Feminists have long argued that women’s domestic work has been under-recognised and undervalued within masculinist, patriarchal market-based economies (McDowell 2009). From the time of our couple interview to the time of our follow-up interview, Ruby entered the paid work-force. I asked her in our follow-up interview about the effects starting paid work has had on their domestic arrangements:

Carey-Ann: Do you like things how they are now, with you being the main homemaker as well as working? Would you like things to be divided more evenly?

Ruby: No, 'cause I would feel guilty. 'Cause obviously I only work, well I do my voluntary work as well, so I don't actually know whether to include that in, but with my voluntary work I do 36 hours whereas [Taylor] does 40 hours, so I am kind of assuming, well there is my extra four hours. I think I would feel bad if he was coming home from work getting changed and pulling the Hoover [vacuum cleaner] out and start Hoovering [vacuuming] around. I would probably feel bad about that (follow-up interview 14 July 2008).

Like women world-wide, Ruby’s domestic work load did not reduce once she entered the paid work force (McDowell 2009). She is not, however, concerned about the differences in power and privilege which still exist in her relationship. Instead, she explains that she would feel guilty if it was Taylor, not her, who had

to do the chores around the house. This shows the extent to which notions of love, and in this case, discourses of familial duty continue to inform social constructions of femininity and domesticity. Housework is not only Ruby's 'duty' because she does fewer paid work hours than Taylor – 36 hours per week compared to Taylor's 40 hours – but, as she pointed out earlier, it is her way of expressing love for him.

Some women explain that their partners use domestic performances of love as a way of apologising. Ironically, men were usually apologising for their lack of involvement in domestic labour. Take, for example, the following diary entry, by Lizzy:

While I was folding [the washing], [Zane] kept asking if there is anything he can do. After I had finished everything I said to him 'I don't want to spend the rest of my life doing your damn washing. Don't just sit there asking if there's anything you can do when you can see for yourself what needs to be done. You know how to fold clothes and put them away, so do it. I shouldn't have to tell you what needs to be done around the house!' He sulked for a little while, but then apologised which is good. He is making his own sandwiches for lunch tomorrow and is making me one too, so that must be his way of saying sorry (Lizzy, diary entry 28 April 2008).

When reading over this diary entry I gained a strong sense of the anger and frustration Lizzy was feeling. The diary entry is imbued with meanings and emotions, not only in her choice of words but also in the way in which it is written. By this, I mean that her actual writing style changed as the diary entry progressed. At the start of the diary entry her writing is tidy, straight and legible. As she recounts the situation her writing becomes messier and less easy to read. I suspect that in relaying the story her writing pace increased as she re-lived some of the emotions she was writing about. Her changing writing style, therefore, embodies her changing emotions.

Other women were ambivalent about labelling ordinary practices of home as material expressions of love. They rightly make the point that underlying the notion of love as a performance of home is the assumption that such domestic activities remain their responsibility. In their Australasian based study on the meanings and values of housework for middle-class 'Generation X' men (men born during 1965-1979), Singleton and Maher (2004 230) found that while men were "both cognizant and approving of feminist discourse of equity, their actual practices suggest otherwise. Gen X men are 'compliant helpers' in the household rather than being equally responsible." A similar pattern emerged in this research whereby men, out of 'love' as opposed to seeing housework as their responsibility, 'help' their partners around the house. As Kylie aptly puts it: "it's still the women's role and you're [men] helping out with [domestic chores] ... it's still that idea that men are now being nice enough to help you out and understand" (joint interview 19 May 2008). Nevertheless, using love as a means through which to distribute more evenly domestic labour within their home is one of the ways that women participants re-work gendered power relations. As Jackson (1993b 212) notes: "love tames and transforms the beast: love has the power to bring him to his knees." Whilst transforming the "beast" in everyday life may not result in radically different changes to the gendered structure of home, bringing "him to his knees" may, at least, mean he has the opportunity to scrub the kitchen floor.

Women are faced with love's inconsistencies, ambiguities and contradictions on a daily basis. Attempting to make sense of their embodied positionalities and experiences through often competing discourses can mean it is difficult for heterosexual women to reconcile different facets of their subjectivities.⁹⁷ Lizzy expresses particular uncertainty about her position in and role at home. She says:

⁹⁷ These tensions are certainly part of my everyday geographies. Throughout this thesis I have constantly battled with trying to figure out where I 'fit' within these discursive frameworks.

Lizzy: I say things to [Zane] like ‘this is why I need to do the washing because it then means that I am a good housewifey girl for you’. It’s like, if the house is messy, I feel like it reflects on me as the homemaker and that’s why I need the house to be tidy ... but then I don’t know if that’s because I love him or because people who are looking in will think ‘oh Lizzy’s not a very good housewife, poor old Zane’ (follow-up interview 05 June 2008).

Research shows that women are often concerned about how others will judge them as homemakers (Domosh and Seager 2001; Dowling 2008; Munro and Madigan 1999). Munroe and Madigan (1999 116), for instance, argue: “Women expect to be judged to some degree on the way their homes are kept and are anxious that they should not be classed as ‘dirty’ or not ‘respectable’.” Lizzy is unsure about whether she is motivated to do domestic chores by love or by expected gendered performances of home. It is interesting that Lizzy has thought about the tensions she experiences prior to participating in this research. This indicates that she is conscious of the challenges involved in attempting to reconcile her positionalities at home. For some of the other women, however, it was not until we actively talked about love in relation to gendered roles and domestic labour in the interviews that they became aware of their conflicting positionalities. Debbie, for instance, realises during our couple interview that preparing and cooking meals for Robert may be a sign of gendered differences and expectations of home as opposed to an expression of her love. The point at which she recognises this is when Robert relays a story about her bringing him breakfast in bed. She says:

Debbie: I’m starting to feel real guilty aye (*laughter*), I am just like ‘oh God’.

Robert: What’s wrong?

Debbie: I don’t know. Just in terms of like the food thing it’s real, it’s become real pronounced, like I make you breakfast,

bring you breakfast, [I ask you] 'do you wanna cuppa [cup of tea]?' I bring you a cuppa.

Robert: It's good though (*joking*).

Debbie: It's good for you (*laughter*).

Carey-Ann: Yeah, but then again those, are those expressions of love? [Debbie and Robert agree].

Debbie: Yeah and I haven't thought about it as a thing that I don't agree with or anything like that. I think it's only looking at it in the abstract, if somebody was telling me about their relationship and they told me that they did the kind of things that I do I would kind of be like 'and he does for you what?' But in my situation I know that Robert does a lot for me (joint interview 09 May 2008).

Debbie masks the discomfort she feels in this situation with laughter. She makes the point that this description of their relationship gives the impression that there is a gendered power imbalance in their relationship. She is, however, quick to manipulate the image she is constructing of their relationship. She goes on to suggest that both she and Robert put an equal amount of time and effort into expressing their love for one another other through performances of home.

These accounts show that domestic performances of heterosexual love both subvert and reassert inequitable gender relations of home. Importantly, women participants do not feel disadvantaged in their relationship or as though they are not receiving enough love. Understanding love as a product of homemaking allows women to feel valued and cared for, whilst simultaneously ensuring the continuation of power imbalances within heterosexual relationships.

Up until this point, I have focused solely on the ways in which women participants affect, and are affected by, normative notions of love. Yet, the discourses of love and romance are available to both men and women. While

research continues to show that it is women who are deeply implicated in the (re)construction of romantic discourses of love (Jackson 1993a), it would be misleading to suggest that men are not affected in some way by prevailing ideologies of heterosexual love and home.⁹⁸ The following excerpt highlights the close association between men, masculinity, heterosexual love and the practices of home.

Carey-Ann: What about the negotiation of domestic chores? You kind of split it up between the two of you?

Jeff: Yes, I, um, do a lot of things around the house because, you know, it was instilled in me as a kid that I should be a gentleman and chivalrous and all of that and I think that is an important thing for me to think about and keep thinking about in terms of making this relationship work. It's very easy for me to do the dishes, it takes like 10 minutes, and that's one thing I can do that then Linda doesn't have to do and it's kind of a gentlemanly thing if you like, you know at a stretch ... if there is stuff that I think I should do, just because that's what a gentleman would do it, then I will do it. So that's usually where I am coming from (joint interview 16 April 2008).

Jeff positions himself as a man who is caring, sensitive, loving, and attentive to his partner's needs. He could, then, be located within discourses of romantic masculinity. Allen (2007 139) explains that men who take up and enact a romantic form of masculinity, as opposed to hegemonic forms, are deemed to be "more caring, thoughtful, and emotionally responsive, and subsequently, more likely to meet women's needs in heterosexual relationships." In mapping the characteristics of chivalry, gentlemanliness, and romance on to the practices of home, Jeff constructs himself as a more thoughtful and sensitive partner. His

⁹⁸ There is, however, a growing recognition of the role romance plays in the construction of heterosexual masculinities (Allen 2007; Redman 2002).

homemaking practices do not, however, offer a direct challenge to the gendered normativities and power relations of domestic labour. In other words, Jeff *helps* Linda out with domestic chores because he is a sensitive and loving partner.

When identifying domestic activities that are important for consolidating their relationship, some participants make reference to the practices of romance. Nearly all of the respondents talk about their home as a primary site of romance. It is important to explore the home as a key site of heterosexual romance because home is the point at which public and private notions of romance intersect. Indeed, the discourses and practices of romance blur public and private boundaries of home. I contend that romance is an important homemaking activity. Romance, as it is constituted within the dwelling, contributes to the production of heterosexual relationships, gendered subjectivities and domestic spaces. Romance can be understood as one of the ways that heterosexual bodies that love, and the domestic spaces they occupy, are brought into being.

Romancing the everyday

Romance is a particular codification of love (Bell and Binnie 2000). It is a highly scripted practice, set of ideas, experiences and actions (Jackson 1999). Ideas about love and romance mediate intimate heterosexual practices (Johnson 2005). For example, dominant discourses of love and romance often encourage a departure from the ordinary, everyday and mundane processes of everyday living. Jackson (1993b 211) argues: "Being in love in some way places the lover outside the mundane, everyday world." Love and romance are also normatively tied up with rituals of leisure and consumption outside of the home. Illouz (1997 119) suggests: "romance is opposed to dailiness, routine, and taken-for-grantedness. Romance represents an excursion into another realm of experience in which settings, feelings and interactions are heightened and out of the ordinary." Romance, then, is often about escaping the mundaneness of everyday living. For instance, sharing a meal together at a restaurant is a typical example of a romantic leisure experience. Valentine (1999c 166) explains:

Dining out is an escape from the mundane routines of cooking and washing up. It provides an opportunity to enjoy 'luxury' rather than everyday foods and is a performative experience in which dressing up and the spectacle or sense of atmosphere and occasion can be as much a part of the meal as the food itself.

Geographers are yet to examine the home as a site of heterosexual romance. Studies on romance have focused on: women's experience of romantic fiction (Jackson 1993a; Tukachinsky 2008); romance and tourism (Jacobs 2009; Johnston 2006); and romance and masculinities (Allen 2007; Redman 2002). The focus of much of this work is on romantic events, interactions and subjectivities that take place outside the realm of everyday life, for example weddings. Redman (2002) argues, however, that romance is an everyday practice. Romance is highly ubiquitous, invading every aspect of daily life, while at the same time it is deemed to be opposed to everyday experience. Romance is "routinised, [yet it] also seek[s] to puncture and escape the more mundane qualities of everyday life" (Redman 2002 56).

The relationship between place and romance is complex and contradictory. At times, participants consider home to be a key site of romance because it is private, intimate and cosy. Yet, at other times, participants associate romance with public spaces, such as restaurants, because they are situated outside of everyday living. Often the characteristics and boundaries which separate public and private sites of romance are blurred. The romantic dinner at home, for instance, sometimes uses elements of romantic restaurant rituals – nice food, soft lighting, background music and nice clothes – as demonstrated in the following excerpt:

Carey-Ann: What about if you were going to have a romantic night in?

Jeff: We have got plenty of candles. And it would probably still be centred around dinner.

Linda: It would be food and maybe a movie ... we would draw all the curtains and light some candles and yeah, just forget about the TV (joint interview 16 April 2008).

If Lizzy and Zane were going to have a romantic night, it would involve having “dinner with the fire ... so in winter we change [the furniture] around and make it a lot cosier, bring the house nice and close” (Lizzy, joint interview 22 April 2008). Figure 28 is a picture of their lounge when it is organised to facilitate a romantic evening at home. For Lizzy and Zane, winter time and the associated spatial arrangement of their furniture around their fire is romantic because it is “cosier.” In this instance, their amorous homemaking activities conform to dominant images of romance and home.



Figure 28: Photo taken by Lizzy of their winter furniture configuration

Rose and Joseph raise several interesting points about romance as it is constituted within the dwelling. In the story that follows, they talk about romance changing over time, the blurring of public and private practices of romance, and the importance of spontaneity for fostering romance.

Carey-Ann: What about romance, how important is romance in your life? Well, first of all what is romance for you, like what would you do for a romantic night in?

Rose: I think it becomes less important as time goes on, like we sort of became busy. But we did, especially when we first

bought the house and stuff, we'd have candle lit dinners and things like that

Joseph: But even like when we do sit down at the table and have a glass of wine and just a nice dinner, that's romance on one level.

Rose: The best nights we've had haven't had that much forethought and planning, that sort of thing.

Joseph: [When we] just cut off, watch a DVD or something.

Rose: Or the best nights have been just having dinner and having a glass of wine and the next thing you know it is 10 o'clock and you have been talking all night, that sort of thing. And it wasn't because so much effort went into the planning, it was more just spontaneous I guess. The moment of it (joint interview 23 April 2008).

Rose, and many of the other participants, describe love as changing over time. The initial stages of love are talked about as exciting, intense, all-consuming and highly romantic. Love's intensity and novelty, however, is deemed to wear off over time as the routinisation of daily life sets in. When they first moved in together, Rose and Joseph were more likely to have conventionally romantic moments, like candle-lit dinners, because, as mentioned earlier, the romanticism of owning a house together elevated typically ordinary practices of home to new, idealised heights. As time went on, however, Rose and Joseph's practices of romance at home changed. Romance came to be aligned with more mundane homemaking practices, such as simply sharing a meal together at the dinner table, as opposed to normatively romantic rituals.

These exchanges show that for some of the couples in this research romance is not about escaping the drudgery of daily living. Rather, as Redman (2002 73) suggests: "even where romance seeks to over-leap the boundaries of the ordinary it is insistently being pulled back towards them." In this research, home

and the ordinary practices of daily living are intimately entwined with practices, performances and expectations of heterosexual romance.

The point is also made that some people are 'naturally' more romantic than others. Taylor, for example, says to his partner, Ruby: "you're not naturally romantic, are you?" (joint interview 15 May 2008). Taylor makes this assertion in relation to Ruby's supposed lack of knowledge about romance and recounts a story about a failed romantic activity in order to demonstrate the point. Traditional discourses of love, gender and sexuality suggest that women are more likely to be romantic than men. Women are also often negatively associated with the body. They are typically deemed to be more nurturing and expressive, because they are 'in touch' with, and ruled by, their emotions. Jackson (1993a 46) argues:

Being constituted as feminine involves girls in discourses of feelings and emotions, and more specifically the culture of romance, from which boys are more often excluded or from which they exclude themselves in order to affirm their own maleness.

Many participants, however, particularly women, actively worked to undermine the presumably natural association of women, emotions, and romance. Marie and Paul, for example, stress that Paul is the romantic person in their relationship while Marie is unequivocally not romantic. Marie explains: "Paul ... is quite romantic and I think in some ways he is more the feminine side in our relationship, especially when it comes to romance and these things (follow-up interview 15 May 2008). By claiming that Paul takes on the role of the feminine in their relationship, Marie, in her attempt to unsettle heteronormative discourses of love and romance, unwittingly works to re-establish them by aligning femininity with discourses of romance. In our follow-up interview, Marie refers to one of her photos to highlight Paul's romantic nature (figure 29).



Figure 29: Photo taken by Paul of a romantic domestic activity

Here, she talks through the description she has written about the photograph:

Marie: We're both eating Paul's home-grown strawberries. It was his idea to take a picture while kissing and eating the strawberries. I found this idea quite cute even though I'm not very romantic myself. The kiss ties into Paul's idea of showing 'romantic' things together (follow-up interview 15 May 2008).

Discourse is central to constructions of power and discursive meanings can be both empowering and oppressive (Barnes and Duncan 1992). Discourse, then, can encourage resistances to, and non-conformity of, stereotypical performances of gender (Butler 1990; 1993). Marie attempts to disrupt common-place notions of femininity and romance. On the one hand, she refuses to be associated with gender-normative frameworks of romance. On the other hand, her resistance is fraught with inconsistencies and contradictions. Marie does not consider herself to be a 'romantic person', yet she takes pleasure in Paul's idea to photograph

them kissing with strawberries in their mouths. This romantic activity, in the end, conforms to dominant images of heterosexual love and romance.

Stereotypical performances of gender are powerful. It is important, therefore, to remember that even for those women who actively resist traditional notions of romance and femininity, they may also be unwittingly engaging in, and contributing to, social and cultural norms about heterosexual love and romance. Take, for instance, the following conversation between Debbie and Robert. As mentioned earlier, Debbie does not prescribe to a commercialised and idealised notion of romance. She prefers practical expressions of love, like those tied up in performances of home, over normatively romantic gestures, such as receiving flowers.

Carey-Ann: How important is romance in your life? How would you define romance?

Robert: I'm a slack romantic. How many times have I bought you flowers? [speaking to Debbie]

Debbie: Twice, but both times it's when you have done something wrong. They weren't 'expressions of love' flowers.

Robert: They were [I've] fucked up flowers (*laughter*).

Debbie: Yeah, pretty much (joint interview 09 May 2008).

The point being made here is that 'romanticism' and 'realism' can coexist at different levels of couples' subjectivities. Debbie is annoyed that the only time Robert has bought her flowers is when he has been trying to apologise. Debbie is located within a discursive framework which specifies appropriate norms and behaviours of heterosexual love and romance; norms which Robert, in this instance, has failed to live up to. Whether Debbie is aware of it or not, she both challenges *and* engages in normative constructions of romance, love, and gendered roles and relations in her daily life. As Jackson (1993b 209) argues: "It is much easier to refuse to participate in romantic rituals, to resist pressures

towards conventional marriage, to be cynical about ‘happy every after’ endings than it is to avoid falling in love.”

This section has focused on a range of domestic activities participants used to facilitate the construction of love, heterosexual relationships and home. Closely related to the creation and use of domestic space is the accumulation and arrangement of meaningful objects in that space. In the final section of this chapter, I consider the ways in which household objects make gendered and sexed subjectivity, power and privilege both ‘visible’ and ‘invisible’.

Domestic material objects

Scholars across various disciplines are becoming ever more attentive to the relationship between people, places and things. Central to this body of work is the link between processes of subjectivity construction and everyday material encounters. This line of thinking has been influential in the homemaking literature. Home has been identified as a particularly rich environment from which to explore the relationship between people and goods (Gregson 2007; Reimer and Leslie 2004; Valentine 1999a). There are several studies which explore the ways in which the processes of subjectivity construction are materialised in domestic objects (Gorman-Murray 2008a; Miller 2001; Noble 2004; Young 2005a). One aspect of homemaking which is little developed in earlier works is the role of domestic material objects in producing heterosexual love and relationships, bodies, subjectivities, privilege, power and homes. In this section, I seek to address this lacuna by providing a focused, nuanced and critical exploration of the links between ordinary household goods, heterosexuality and love.

Discussions about the resolution of individual objects in shared domestic space reveal that houses are predominantly decorated by women participants with possessions they owned prior to moving in with their partners. The possessions they acquired, such as linen, dishware and kitchen appliances, were typically accumulated in preparation for the ‘inevitable’ time when they would fall in love

and become homemakers.⁹⁹ Kylie, for example, explains that the house she shares with her husband Luke is mainly decorated with objects she purchased when she was younger, prior to their relationship. Here, she reflects on the point in her life when she became “interested” in household goods, homemaking and domesticity:

Kylie: About the time you started getting interested in Briscoes pamphlets¹⁰⁰, it’s kind of like ‘oh that’s good. I’ll need that one day’ [referring to products in the pamphlet]. There is always that kind of mentality of, like I was quite young in my 20s, like my sister got married when I was quite young, so I had the mentality that I’ll be married and I will have my own house and I will need this kind of stuff. So it’s kind of that collecting thing, like things for your home (joint interview 19 May 2008).

As a young woman, Kylie assumed that she would ‘naturally’ follow the typical heterosexual life/love path of marriage, home and family. Becoming interested in the Briscoes pamphlet signalled a ‘coming-of-age’ as she began preparing for the time that she, like her sister, would need homeware items to fulfil her role as homemaker. In the end, the pre-purchasing of household goods worked in her, and her husband’s, favour because Luke “didn’t really have anything, he didn’t [have any household goods]. He had like a box ... he just moved in with his clothes” (Kylie, joint interview 19 May 2008). Kylie and Luke’s experience is not uncommon. Indeed, a pattern emerged whereby men seemed to contribute little by way of household goods to the initial material constitution of home. Scott, for

⁹⁹ The tradition of young women acquiring homeware goods in preparation of marriage and homemaking has a long history. The ‘Hope Box’, or the more commonly used in term in New Zealand and Australia, ‘Glory Box’ is typically a chest or set of drawers that young women are given, usually by their mothers, for the storage of household items. The *Oxford English Dictionary* (2010) explains that the Hope or Glory Box is a chest or box in which a young woman collects articles for a home of her own and in the event of marriage.

¹⁰⁰ Briscoes is a chain of homeware outlets in New Zealand. They offer a range of household goods including: bedroom and bathroom accessories; indoor and outdoor furniture; home furnishing such as curtains; home appliances and dishware at a range of prices. Briscoes regularly deliver pamphlets in the mail listing their special offers (www.briscoes.co.nz).

example, points out that he only had “nine smallish boxes” because he didn’t own “much stuff” (joint interview 01 April 2008). Linda and Jeff note that Linda has “lots of things” whilst Jeff “doesn’t have many things” (joint interview 16 April 2008). Likewise, Angie explains that the house she owns with Cooper is decorated mainly with objects she owned prior to their relationship. Below, she attributes this particular home decorating practice to gendered differences and the ‘natural’ homemaking roles and subject positions men and women take up:

Angie: I probably care more where things go and I like things more than [Cooper] does. [Cooper] doesn’t actually have things ... because guys don’t usually have trinkets or ornaments or stuff like that, apart from books, or those things ... I guess, so most things ... are my things that I had when I came into [the relationship] (first interview 30 April 2008).

Lizzy and Zane’s house is also decorated primarily with Lizzy’s possessions. In their couple interview, they reflect on the process of combining their individual goods when they purchased their first home:

Lizzy: Most of [the household items are] mine. Zane sort of thinks that I just put his things in boxes in the shed (*laughter*) and I just found out this afternoon [that this] was a bit of an issue. You can bring out whatever you want [speaking to Zane].

Zane: I don't really have much stuff. I put my hackie sack¹⁰¹ up on the shelf and I see it’s not there anymore. You know (//)

Lizzy: (//) But a lot of the things [in here] when you look around, a lot of the furniture’s mine.

¹⁰¹ A hacky sack – or footbag – is a small material ball usually filled with plastic beads or sand that is used in a game which requires players to keep the hacky sack off the ground by any means necessary without using their hands.

Zane: It's all yours but (//)

Lizzy: (//) But it is ours now kind of thing. You didn't really have that much stuff [before we moved in together] because you were pretty transient.

Zane: It doesn't really worry me too much, like to have my stuff out. I don't really have things so I mean if Lizzy likes to put out stuff then that's fine. Like, I mean, I've got a photo of my family over there, but I didn't put it out. Lizzy put it out. So I think it's more whatever she decides.

Lizzy: But it is not because I'm stomping on you and putting you in your place, it is just because I like doing things like that (joint interview 22 April 2008).

Domosh and Seager (2001 1) make the point that the association of home and femininity is not an abstract concept but instead impacts on the structuring of society and space in very real ways: "women themselves seem to derive more from their domestic life than do men." Mansvelt (2005) similarly suggests home furnishing and decorating is a particularly important homemaking activity for women because it is one of the key ways they are able to make a mark on the surrounding environment. Homemaking is a particularly important part of Lizzy's gendered subjectivity. Lizzy manages the material space of their home, which she says gives her a great deal of personal pleasure and enjoyment. Within a culture of companionate love and coupledness, however, it is generally expected that homemaking will be a joint venture where both partners (appear to) have an equal stake in the material constitution of domestic space. This means that Lizzy is torn between acknowledging the power she has over the material arrangement of their house and portraying homemaking as a collaborative effort grounded in love. From the above conversation, it seems that Zane is excluded from having a say in how the room is organised. Yet, he is not completely absent from the space. Even though Lizzy removes his personal possessions, in this instance the hacky sack, from the lounge she replaces it with one of Zane's family

photographs. It seems that for Lizzy, family photographs, which embody notions about home as a loving familial space, fit more closely with her ideals of home than a hacky sack does.

In our follow-up interview, Lizzy and I talk about the relationship between domestic objects and relationship consolidation. The conversation is sparked by a photograph she took that shows their individual tertiary education degrees sitting side-by-side on the mantel piece in their lounge (figure 30).



Figure 30: Photo taken by Lizzy of their tertiary education degrees above their fire place

Lizzy explains that the reason she took the photo is to demonstrate that she thinks, as a couple, it is important to celebrate their individual achievements. Importantly, it was Lizzy that decided to display their degrees in this way.

Carey-Ann: Who decided to put them on the mantel piece?

Lizzy: Me. I'm like that ... and so I grabbed [Zane's degree] one year and I just did them both [framing her and Zane's degree] at the same time and [Zane] really appreciated it. He really, really appreciated it, and like I didn't think it was

that big of a deal, but he got quite emotional about it because he had never really celebrated it (follow-up interview 05 June 2008).

This example points to the close association between household goods, love and heterosexual relationship consolidation. Their individual degrees represent individual selves but also materialise their subjectivity as a couple. Lizzy and Zane's shared subjectivity is further materialised by the photograph of them as a couple that sits between their individual degrees. Photographs are indeed a significant material consolidator of home-based subjectivities (Gorman-Murray 2006a; 2008a; Rose 2003; 2004; 2010).

'Couple photographs'

I use the term 'couple photographs' to denote the type of photos that most heterosexual couples have in their house; the photographs displayed on mantelpieces, fridges and TVs that show happy 'in love' couples at leisure, cuddling, kissing or holding hands. 'Couple photos' are similar in their content and meaning to 'family photos'.¹⁰² Family photos "almost always show only family members at leisure" (Rose 2004 550) with paid and unpaid work "erased in favour of images of affective family unity showing nothing of family tension or conflict" (Rose 2003 6). In my experience, 'couple photos' rarely show domestic labour, chores or disturbances and they usually signify an important heterosexual event such as engagement parties and weddings. In these instances, 'couple photographs' reproduce hegemonic and idealised notions about home as a space of heterosexual love.

Many women shared stories with me about their 'couple photos' and what they represent. The relationship between women, photographs and domesticity is

¹⁰² The majority of the feminist literature on women, domesticity and photography focuses on 'family' photographs. Rose (2003 6) notes that "family photos appear to be part of a closed and limited understanding of domestic space which conflates the domestic with the familial." For the majority of participants in this research it was the presence of children which denoted a 'family' and because none of the couples had children they did not talk about their photos as 'family photographs'. When 'family photos' were mentioned by participants, it was in relation to their parental families (mother, father and siblings).

well-established. Rose (2003 8) argues: “it is women, and only women, who undertake this family [or couple] photography work.” Drawing on Munroe and Madigan (1999), Rose (2003 8) suggests that women’s role in managing photographs within the home is part of their “traditional responsibility for domestic order.” This certainly seemed to be the case in my research. Several women spoke about the importance of displaying ‘couple photos’ in order to materially represent their love and shared subjectivities within the dwelling. There has been little work which explores women’s relationship with photography and home in the context of couple relationships.¹⁰³

Rose (2003) argues that photographs are more than simply texts. Instead, she explains photographs are objects and “are things to which things are done” (Rose 2003 7). Rose (2003) suggests what is done with photos – how they are arranged, displayed and viewed – is key to understanding the production of home space. Here, Melissa talks about the photographs she has arranged on the top of the television in their lounge:

Melissa: I think that area [pointing to the photos on the top of their television] with all the photos of our families and our friends [is important] and that to me is what our relationship is about. It’s about us, but it’s about all that other stuff, all our family [members] ... I really like the photos around the house [and they] mean more to me about our relationship and who we are than anything else we’ve got (joint interview 18 April 2008).

Rose (2003) notes the arrangement of family photographs into groups articulates familial relationships which are stretched across, and sustained over, time and space. For Melissa, it is the arrangement of their photos on top of their television which most accurately symbolises their relationship. As Young (2005b 156) suggests:

¹⁰³ Although see Gorman-Murray (2008a) on lesbian couples’ use of photos at home; and Luzia (2009) on lesbian parents and photography.

home is an arrangement of things in this space, according to the life habits of those who dwell in it ... homemaking [is] the activities of endowing things with living meaning, arranging them in space in order materially to facilitate the projects of those to whom they belong, and activities of preserving these thing, along with their meaning.

The combination of Melissa's and Peter's individual family photographs with their own 'couple photographs' represents a merging of their lives. Melissa identifies as Māori and explains that her conception of home extends beyond her current house and her relationship with Peter to include friends, whanau and her marae.¹⁰⁴ Johnston and Longhurst (2010 18) explain that in Māori culture "there is an emphasis on the collective, that is, the family and community rather than on the individual." Melissa's conception of home and her relationship as extending beyond her and Peter as a couple and beyond the boundaries of their dwelling contrasts with many of the New Zealand-born Pākehā respondents, for whom home seemed to be very much contained within the dwelling and related to them as individuals within a relationship. Melissa and Peter's photo arrangement, however, extends their home and relationship to include other family members in different times and spaces beyond the dwelling. In this context, photographs demonstrate one of the ways that domestic space and family ties extend beyond the dwelling to include other people and places (Blunt and Dowling 2006).

Like Melissa and Peter, Kylie and Luke's television acts as a stand for some of their favourite photos (figure 31). In our follow-up interview, Kylie talks about the importance of displaying and arranging photographs at home. She says:

Kylie: That [arrangement on the TV] is a couple of our random wedding photos and that's our engagement photo and a trip to Melbourne and stuff and I guess that is just kind of the home setting as well and it's like you know, you put up your pictures and framed things that you like and people

¹⁰⁴ Marae is defined as "traditional Māori gathering place" (Reed 2001 42). Marae are key material sites and cultural symbols of tribal groups' (iwi) 'raced' subjectivities.

can come over and see them and I guess it's like an expression, I guess it's an expression of yourself but also memories that you would like to keep and stuff (follow-up interview 15 August 2008).



Figure 31: Photo taken by Kylie of their television which acts as a stand for some of their favourite photos

Wedding photos are referred to by some participants as particularly important material representations of their relationships.¹⁰⁵ Wedding photos, perhaps more than any other kind of 'couple photograph', materially represent heterosexual love. Johnston (2006 192) suggests: "While no wedding works as a transparent window into social structures, they may be, however, powerful markers of a couple's 'normality', morality, productivity and 'appropriate' gendered subjectivities." The same can be said about wedding photographs. They capture the "public performance party piece of heteronormativity" (Johnston 2006 192).

¹⁰⁵ Of the 14 couples who participated, five are married.

Wedding photography has been explored in relation to romanticised notions of heterosexual love particularly in the context of destination weddings (Ching Chan and Simin 2007; Otnes and Pleck 2003). Yet, scholars have been slow to account for wedding photography in the context of heterosexuality and homemaking. I am interested in the performative nature of wedding photography; what they 'say' about heterosexuality, love and home, as well as what is 'done' with wedding photos – how they are arranged, displayed and viewed at home – after the ceremony (see also Rose 2003; 2004). Otnes and Pleck (2003 16) point to the link between women, wedding photos and home, suggesting:

Women not only shape and mold their identities in part by retaining and reliving special memories, but also decorate their homes as shrines to weddings and kin relations. Wedding photographs, originally intended to prove status and formality, have become ways for a couple to encapsulate and enshrine their romantic feelings for each other, preserving the magic for all time.

For Kylie, the act of looking at their wedding photographs is particularly important. Kylie makes a point of looking at their wedding photos and takes pleasure in doing so. She explains:

Kylie: For me I really like [to look at] our wedding photos ... like not all the time, not obsessive or anything but every now and again I will get, um, our wedding photos and just flick through them and have a look at the album and stuff like that and I think that is something important for me to have (joint interview 19 May 2008).

It is important for Kylie to be able to look over their wedding album and to reflect on and remember their wedding day.¹⁰⁶ “[Wedding] photos both provide the bride and groom with tangible evidence that they had their day to shine as the stars of their social network and provide them with a means of reviving their belief in ‘happily ever after’” (Otnes and Pleck 2003 18). Kylie is careful to point

¹⁰⁶ It is also interesting to note that Kylie sent their wedding photos in to a prominent New Zealand bridal magazine. They were accepted and subsequently included as a special feature.

out, however, that she does not spend too much time looking at them – “like not all the time, not obsessive or anything.” For some of the women in Rose’s (2004) study the large number of photographs they took of their family was a source of embarrassment. Many joked about their compulsion to take photographs as a “kind of pathology” (Rose 2004 554). Kylie’s response can be read in a similar way. She does not want to seem as though she is fixated on, or obsessed with, their wedding photos. Nonetheless, it is impossible to deny the importance of their wedding photos to her gendered subjectivity and conception of self. For Kylie, their wedding photos are imbued with, and represent, numerous significant emotions and events – their love for each other, the time and effort (mainly she) put in to organising the wedding, the coming together of their two families, and their religious beliefs. These ‘couple photos’ work to naturalise heterosexuality by capturing them performing a supposedly ‘normal’ and ‘natural’ aspect of love.

Angie also reflects upon the reason she took photos of their wedding photographs. Figure 32 is a photo of their wedding album and guest book, which are usually stored away in a chest but were brought out and arranged to be photographed for this research, and figure 33 is a photo of her favourite wedding photo. She explains:

Angie: I’ve obviously looked at [the wedding album] more than [Cooper] has (*laughter*). I sit there studying it.

Carey-Ann: Did you two put [the album] together, or was it the photographer that did it?

Angie: No I did it. Like I pretty much sort of did it and choose all the photos and then asked Cooper is there, was [there] any ones he wanted [to include], or any ones he didn’t like and things like that and then he helped with the layout ... and I spent heaps of time on it, but I am really glad, like I am really glad with the way that it came out (follow-up interview 19 June 2008).

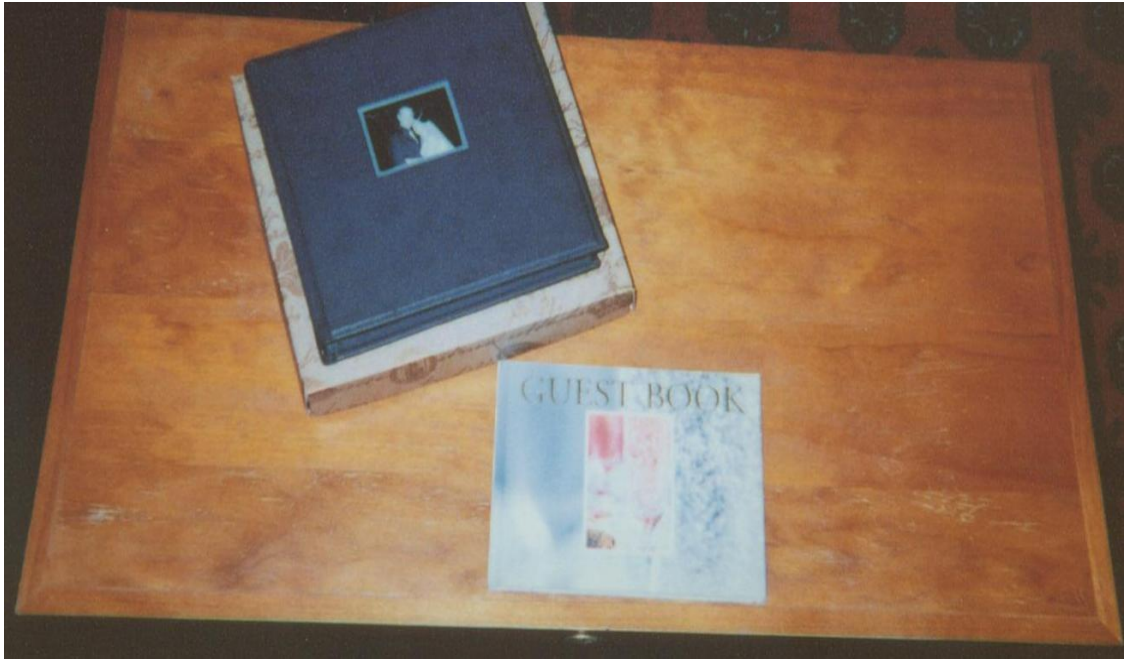


Figure 32: Photo taken by Angie of their wedding album



Figure 33: Photo take by Angie of her favourite wedding photo

Again, the strong association between femininity and wedding photos is evident. Although Cooper contributed to compiling the wedding album, it was Angie who invested the time and energy choosing, organising and arranging, and eventually looking at the photos. Angie goes on to talk about her “favourite photo from our wedding” which now hangs above their bed. She explains: “this is my favourite and yeah I just wanted to take a photo of it because I love it and it’s like our wedding day and it means a lot to me” (follow-up interview 19 June 2008). The love Angie feels for Cooper extends to the photo in which they are captured performing love in an institutionalised and naturalised way. These accounts resonate with much of the feminist literature on women and photography. They continue to show that photographs, and in this case, wedding photographs, are important signifiers of heterosexual love, coupledness and home.

Thus far it has been argued that participants, particularly women, use photographs as a way of materially representing and performing love, cohabitation and the merging of two lives. For Donna and Mark, however, it is these very heteronormative statements that they attempt to hide. As explained earlier, Donna and Mark have chosen to reveal their relationship to only family and close friends. I asked Donna about the kinds of home management strategies they employ to disguise their relationship. She explains: “the main thing would be not having any photos in the main living area” (first interview 17 October 2008). Johnston and Valentine (1995) have similar findings in relation to lesbians’ experiences of home. They note that many participants would change the performance of their home and disguise their sexual subjectivity and lesbian relationships. For Johnston and Valentine’s (1995) participants, ‘public’ areas of home, particularly living and dining rooms, were most often modified to accommodate the presence of visitors. In a similar way, Donna and Mark’s ‘public’ areas of home have been modified to hide their relationship. Walking around Donna and Mark’s main living areas, it is nearly impossible to spot any material markers of Mark’s gendered and sexed embodiment, apart from the men’s shoes at the front door. All of the photographs are of Donna, either by herself or with friends and family. This means that not only is Mark ‘invisible’ in

the main areas of the house, so too is their relationship. The one room in their house where their subjectivity as a couple can be clearly identified is the study because it is where they have combined some of their individual possessions, including photographs.

In addition to using household goods to materialise love and shared subjectivities, some participants use their material belongings as a way of maintaining a sense of individuality within shared domestic space.

Material markers of individual embodiment

As mentioned earlier, dominant discourses of love and home instruct couples to minimise difference and individuality in favour of sameness and collectivity. Cultural norms governing intimate relationships often encourage couples to “subsume difference in a joint life project” (Putnam 2006 148). However, many participants stress the importance of maintaining a sense of self within a cohabitating relationship. Marie, for instance, explains that at the start of her relationship with Paul she was “scared” about “losing” herself and since then she has been determined not to “identify” herself through their relationship (joint interview 17 April 2008). One of the main ways participants uphold an individual sense of self within their relationships is by keeping some of their individual possessions separate and distinct. Young (2005b 157, emphasis in original) considers the relationship between domestic material objects and individual subjectivity in the context of shared domestic space, suggesting:

When dwelling space is shared, home is the space in which we dwell with the things that are *ours*. The shared space and the shared things give us material support for living together. Even where space is shared, however, there is often a distinction between my things and our things, and each person often has spaces of his or her own for keeping the things that are hers and engaging in activities that are hers or his.

Gorman-Murray (2006a) similarly notes that home provisions, such as maintaining individual objects and spaces, can ensure the well-being of couple relationships. It is important to note, then, that although combining personalised

domestic objects is often seen as a way of materialising love and cementing shared subjectivities at home, it is simultaneously understood as a way of forming and fostering individual subjectivities.

Rebecca and Tim have been in a relationship for just over one year. They are both university students and flat together in a house which they share with three other people. When they first moved in together they, for the well-being of their relationship, made a joint decision to have their own bedrooms, as opposed to sharing one. Rebecca and Tim use their respective bedrooms as personal spaces where they are able to house their personal possessions. This is because their relationship is “still quite young” (Rebecca, joint interview 09 April 2008) but also because they think it is important for them to have a space in which to retain their gendered and individual selves within the context of a cohabiting relationship. Rebecca describes herself as “really girly” (see figure 34 for a picture of her bedroom) and Tim as “really, really boy-ish” and this is reflected in the arrangement of domestic objects in their respective bedrooms.

Rebecca: I’ve got dangly butterfly things and Marilyn Munroe things all over my walls and just heaps of pink everywhere.

Carey-Ann: And [are] your ‘boy-ish’ qualities like posters and that everywhere?

Tim: Yeah, like Marilyn Manson posters all over the walls and clothes all over the floor (joint interview 09 April 2008).

Rebecca and Tim perform hyper-feminised and hyper-masculinised¹⁰⁷ subjectivities and these gendered attributes are materially embodied in their individual bedrooms. Gorman-Murray (2006a) suggests that the creation of separate spaces for cohabitating heterosexual couples is different from that of gay and lesbian couples. He makes the point that the partition of domestic space

¹⁰⁷ Although it could also be argued that Marilyn Manson is gender transgressive. He frequently wears heavy make-up, but in a way that creates an aggressive and over-the-top persona, and it could be argued that his name is a parody of Marilyn Munroe.

for heterosexual couples is gendered and largely based around domestic labour, whereas the gay and lesbian couples in his research maintained separate bedrooms which were “gender-neutral” and concerned primarily with “identity work” (Gorman-Murray 2006a 164). Rebecca and Tim’s homemaking practices differ from heteronormative notions of home. Their separate bedrooms are gender-specific and are designed as a space for individual retreat and growth as opposed to domestic labour. Rebecca notes that they have “two very different styles” (joint interview 09 April 2008) and as such, it is easier for them, and hence beneficial for their relationship, to have their own bedrooms. Their homemaking practices unsettle dominant assumptions about heterosexual love and home which posit men and women as complementary opposites. They resist heteronormative homemaking practices.



Figure 34: Photo taken by Rebecca of her bedroom

For some of the couples in this research, CD and DVD collections are particularly important material markers of individuality. Several couples talk about their different tastes in music and explain the significance of retaining a sense of autonomy through domestic material objects. Here, Kimberly reflects on the symbolism inherent in their individual CD racks:

Kimberly: There are two CD racks (*laughter*). And we both sort of came into the relationship with them, really aye? [talking to Scott]. And there is no real reason why we should have two CD racks and why our CDs shouldn't be together, but they are a bit kind of symbolic of these, we have a bit of living as two kind of separate people trying to find a way to come together, aye? [talking to Scott] (joint interview 01 April 2008).

Scott and Kimberly talk about their relationship as an on-going negotiation where they are continuously “rubbing against each other and pulling in different directions and back together again” (Kimberly, joint interview 01 April 2008). This negotiation is materially articulated in their home. Their individual CD racks symbolise their ongoing attempts at retaining separate subjectivities whilst simultaneously trying to consolidate their relationship and subjectivity as a couple.¹⁰⁸

Donna also talks about the meanings imbued in the CD rack in her house. During our first interview, Donna and I walked around their lounge and she showed me which objects belong to her and which belong to Mark. Our discussion centred mainly on their CD and DVD collections. They have hundreds of CDs and DVDs and their CD rack contains both of their music tastes. Importantly, however, their respective CDs are stored separately; Donna's CDs are at one end of the rack and Mark's are at the other. Here, Donna explains why their CDs are stored in this manner:

Donna: Part of the reason I think [our CD collections are] still separate is like [common] sense in a way. Like if something happens [to our relationship], like we are not at that committed phase where we are really going to merge our things like that (first interview 17 October 2008).

¹⁰⁸ In chapter 7, I offer a detailed discussion about Kimberly and Scott's on-going relationship negotiations.

Thompson (2007) explores meanings of home in the wake of heterosexual relationship breakdown. She reflects on the emotions experienced during the collapse of a relationship and suggests that the demise of a relationship is often mirrored in the physical environment. At this point in their relationship, Donna views it as impractical to combine their vast CD collections because they are “not at that committed phase.” She thinks that if they were to combine their CD collections and decided, for whatever reason, to separate, the breakdown of their relationship would be most obviously materialised in the division of their CDs.

Donna, and many other respondents, draw attention to the importance of material objects in the production of shared home space and subjectivity construction. In the next section, I look further at these processes and extend current theorisations by exploring the links between household goods and the narration of heterosexuality as a sexual subjectivity.

Material markers of embodied heterosexuality

While participants find it easy to talk about objects which symbolise their love relationships, they have difficulty pin-pointing objects which narrate heterosexuality as a sexual subjectivity. Indeed, they encounter problems articulating heterosexuality, full-stop. Johnston (2003) also found this in her study on gay pride parades where she used questionnaires, which were distributed to people watching the parade on the roadside, to examine the ways in which pride parades are constructed as tourist events. Johnston (2003) reports that many respondents who identified as heterosexual misspelt the word ‘heterosexual’ writing either ‘Hetro’ or ‘Hetrosexual’. She offers an explanation for this mistake, suggesting: “heterosexuals are not often asked to think about their sexuality, state their sexuality, or spell their category of sexuality” (Johnston 2003 135). Valentine (1996 149) similarly argues:

whilst sexual dissidents are constantly aware of the performative nature of identities and spaces, heterosexuals are often completely oblivious to this because they rarely have to be conscious of, or examine their own performativity.

Prior to participating in my research, most participants had never been asked to think about or examine their heterosexuality and how it is performed and materialised in the spaces and objects within their houses. In this study, most references to heterosexuality as a sexual subjectivity are implicit rather than explicit. Several respondents question the definition of heterosexuality, with most understanding it as sexual desire and attraction for someone of the opposite sex, as opposed to a sexual subjectivity or social institution. Kylie, for example, asks: “is [heterosexuality] just not your sexual orientation and therefore you are that because you’re in a straight relationship?” (joint interview 19 May 2008). Similar to other feminist scholars (Richardson 2000; Robinson *et al.*, 2004; VanEvery 1996), I take heterosexuality to be an institution as well as a sexual subjectivity and as interconnected with all facets of life. Participants’ inability to express heterosexuality as a sexual subjectivity is indicative of wider societal attitudes which continue to assume heterosexual relations as normative and ‘natural’ and therefore beyond the need for discussion. Hockey *et al.*, (2007 2) have similar findings and suggest that:

heterosexuality *per se* is barely ‘realised’ in their [participants’] accounts. It is what interviewees are telling us *about* – but without it being foregrounded, as either a concept or an identity. In that power inheres in heterosexuality, these stories therefore contribute politically mediated understandings of what it means to be heterosexual.

It has been argued that the pervasiveness of heterosexuality is such that it is everywhere and nowhere (Binnie 2001). Heterosexual material markers of sexual subjectivity are not placeless. They are, however, so normative, mundane and taken-for-granted that they often go unnoticed in the context of daily life. They form the background of domestic heterosexual life (Ahmed 2006). Lizzy, for example, explains: “we had never really thought of our house as a ‘heterosexual house’” (feedback form 16 July 2008). In this research, objects which identify heterosexuality tend not to be hidden away from visitors, as often happens within gay and lesbian homes (Elwood 2000; Johnston and Valentine 1995; Kirby and Hay 1997). Yet, the everyday, domesticated nature of such objects ensures

they remain invisible. Participants' inability to articulate heterosexuality through their domestic material objects normatively heterosexualises homes and works to reproduce heterosexuality as an unmarked and invisible category.

One of the ways respondents attempt to conceptualise objects within their home as possible material reflections of heterosexuality is through gendered norms. Paul sums this up:

Paul: But if you looked for [objects through which heterosexuality can be identified], I think there would be items and arrangements and things that you could identify with a certain gender.

Carey-Ann: So could you provide an example of the items, arrangements or anything specific?

Paul: Well, for instance, all the shoes out there [in the entrance way]. All the girls' shoes [referring to Marie's shoes]. There is about two pairs of my shoes and then there's about 20 pairs of Marie's shoes (joint interview 17 April 2008).

Valentine (1996) explains that it is not only through the performance of heterosexual desire that heterosexual space is produced, but also through the performance of gendered subjectivities. Repetitive performances of femininity and masculinity produce assumptions about 'normal' behaviour for men and women at home which congeal over time to produce the appearance of 'normal' gendered articulations of heterosexual home space. Paul's reference to the norms of femininity and masculinity, whereby it is 'normal' for women to own several pairs of shoes and for men to own only a few pairs, suggests that this is a standard materialisation of the gendered specificities of heterosexual homes.

Melissa and Peter also attempt to think through their heterosexual subjectivities and how they might be materialised in their home. Below, Melissa talks about the types of items which make their heterosexual relationship visible:

Melissa: When people first come in [to the house] it would be the shoes and stuff, because Peter's shoes are usually outside. Peter's shoes are huge. Then my high heels are usually out there or my boots or something like that and then it would probably be photos or clothing that would be lying around. [It] might be books and magazines that are lying around as well, that type of thing (joint interview 18 April 2008).

Again, it is the norms of femininity and masculinity that produce and perform heterosexuality. Melissa makes the point that Peter's shoes are usually outside so when people come to their house they will make assumptions about the social and sexual make-up of the house.¹⁰⁹ Melissa and Peter go on to discuss their heterosexual subjectivities further by referring to their differing tastes in movies:

Peter: Maybe also my DVDs too, some of them, 'cause [there are] action ones down there that girls wouldn't watch. I don't know.

Melissa: Yeah, actually that whole DVD rack is probably quite a good example of feminine versus masculine.

Carey-Ann: Are [the DVDs] actually [separated]?

Melissa: Oh we tried ... but the DVDs are all mixed up now.

Peter: [I have] more comedy ones.

Melissa: He has action and comedy, and then I have obviously all my kind of romantic comedy type stuff in there as well.

Peter: Yeah, I only like comedy and action kind of movies, like funny movies.

Carey-Ann: *Dirty Dancing* compared to *Borat*?

¹⁰⁹ Interestingly, a common piece of advice for women who live alone is to leave a pair of men's shoes outside the front door to give the impression that a man is in residence, which will then hopefully, reduce the risk of intruders.

Melissa: That is such a contrast (*laughter*) (joint interview 18 April 2008).

Melissa and Peter suggest that men tend to like action and comedic genres while women typically like romantic comedies. Dominant constructions of masculinity and femininity are materially embodied in Melissa and Peter's preferred movie genres and reflect conventional heterosexual norms. These performative aspects of gendered subjectivity discursively produce and spatially materialise heterosexual bodies and relationships in home. However, this is not in a way that is necessarily explicit. Instead, heterosexuality is implied through the combination of gendered norms and differences. Their heterosexual identifying objects are an effect of the repetition of gendered norms and therefore form the background for their domestic life.

Everyday household objects and possessions such as movies, magazines, clothing, shoes and personal grooming and/or hygiene products are most commonly referred to as material indicators of heterosexual bodies, subjectivities and relationships. These objects are deemed to most clearly signal the embodied presence of a man and a woman living together.¹¹⁰ Crucially, it is the arrangement of their personal items *together* which materialises heterosexual relationships. Rose sums this up when she explains that it is a combination of certain gendered possessions in certain domestic spaces which materialises her heterosexual relationship with Joseph. Here, she uses the example of 'his' and 'hers' razors side-by-side in the shower (figure 35) to discuss symbols of domesticated heterosexual coupledness:

Rose: We bought that [razor holder] specifically to fit to the wall so we could have the two [razors] and it's one of the things I look at when I am in the shower because it is right there at eye-level and its always ... I know it's very gendered –

¹¹⁰ There are obvious problems with this essentialised conceptualisation, particularly in relation to the underlying heteronormative assumptions about the socio-sexual make-up of homes. This understanding assumes 'coupledom' and ignores other possibilities of home, for example, flatting which I discuss further in chapter 7.

boy/girl – and they are the exact same brand as well, which we thought ‘oh look at us, we are just [so cute]’ and [Joseph] always used to buy that brand and I used to buy a different brand [of razor] and then he would rave about how good his brand was and so then we ended up doing the same thing, so I think it shows how influenced we are by each other (follow-up interview 28 May 2008).

Rose makes the point that their razors are coded as feminine and masculine. Rose’s razor is pink and is contoured to be suggestive of a woman’s body. Joseph’s razor has straight lines and is a combination of green and metallic colouring. Their razors are explicitly gendered and are stored *together* in a specially designed ‘his’ and ‘hers’ holder.



Figure 35: Photo by Rose of their razors in the shower

It is useful to think about this specific homemaking practice with Longhurst’s (2001) study on men bodies and bathrooms in mind. Longhurst (2001) draws attention to the unintended transmission of bodily fluids through personal hygiene products, such as razors. The men in her study used individual stands for their razors to create individual space in the bathroom. Longhurst (2001 73)

explains: “The razor stands take away the threat of sharing – the inadvertent transferral of whiskers, blood, shaving cream.” Rose’s photo of their razors side-by-side in the same stand implies that bodily contamination, in the way described by Longhurst (2001), is not an issue for them. This, and the other examples, show that the reproduction of home space as heterosexual occurs in subtle, mundane and repetitive ways. Ordinary household objects, like razors, shoes, and DVDs, thus often go unnoticed as markers of heterosexual subjectivity.

In our couple interview, Debbie and Robert refer to a piece of art work as a domestic object which suggests that their house is occupied by a heterosexual couple (figure 36). Debbie says: “the artwork, it’s all pretty heterosexual, you’ve got the traditional male and female” (joint interview 09 May 2008).



Figure 36: Photo taken by Debbie of a piece of art

Likewise, Melissa talks about their snow-globe (figure 37) as both important to their relationship and as a signifier of heterosexuality. She comments on the heteronormative gendered characteristics of the birds in the snow-globe: “there’s one bigger and there is one little bird” (joint interview 18 April 2008). These images represent the intersections of heterosexuality and ‘race’. Figure 36

is a Māori representation of a man and a woman. The phrase “aroha ki te tangata” roughly translates as ‘love to the people’. Figure 37 is a snow globe of the New Zealand bird, Pūkeko.¹¹¹



Figure 37: Photo by Melissa of their snow-globe

In order to understand the significance of these ‘raced’ and heterosexualised household objects it may be useful to look historically at Māori sexuality. Aspin and Hutchings (2007; see also Hutchings and Aspin 2007) argue that the processes of colonisation, which mapped Christian paradigms of heterosexual monogamy and normative gendered roles and relations, on to Māori sexuality have had a profound impact on the ways in which Māori express their sexuality within contemporary New Zealand. “The imposition of a colonialist view of sexuality has meant that traditional views and understandings of Māori sexuality have become blurred, misinterpreted or lost completely” (Aspin and Hutchings 2007 421). Harris (cited in Johnston and Longhurst 2010 16) similarly makes the point that: “In the language of our ancestors there was no pronoun distinguishing gender such as he or she, there was ia.” Colonising forces have downplayed the importance of Māori sexual diversity and difference and have

¹¹¹ Although Pūkeko, or Swamphen, is commonly classified as a native New Zealand bird it actually arrived from Australia and established itself in New Zealand around 1000 AD. Pūkeko have traditionally been held in high esteem by Māori because of their colouring. For Māori, the colour red symbolises nobility and righteousness (Troup 2009).

imposed Western heteronormative models of gender on Māori socio-sexual relations. Perhaps, then, Melissa's snow-globe and Debbie's picture can be interpreted as domestic material manifestations of colonialism. Longhurst (2008a 384) argues: "In living 'down under' one becomes quickly aware that 'race', ethnicity and culture are important categories of subjectivity that cannot be disentangled from local, regional, national and international politics."

While ordinary household objects, and the practices surrounding them, may be viewed as banal, uninteresting, and unimportant they are actually significant homemaking practices which produce heterosexual bodies and home space in numerous ways. These examples show that, once again, heterosexuality and domestic spaces are materially constituted through ordinary practices and performances of home.

Questions about domestic material markers of heterosexuality prompted participants to examine their own performativity of sexuality and space and encouraged some thought-provoking discussion. Nevertheless, many respondents remained ambivalent about the heteronormativity of home. Some participants even went as far as to suggest that they do not own any objects or possessions that are heterosexual. Failing to notice heterosexuality as a form of sexual subjectivity ensures the continued naturalisation of heterosexuality. This unawareness of heterosexuality as a sexual subjectivity parallels other dominant social identities, such as masculinity, able-bodiedness and whiteness (Dyer 1997; Hockey *et al.*, 2007; Kimmel and Messner 2004). These characteristics afford some participants privilege but often remain unrealised and invisible. Scott, for example, cannot think how the possessions in his home may represent his sexual subjectivity. He explains: "I guess my answer is no. I don't think we have anything overtly heterosexual ... I don't want to burst your bubble" (joint interview 01 April 2008). Scott's inability to articulate his normative sexual subjectivity could be understood as reinforcing the "ubiquitous" and "placeless" nature of men's heterosexual embodiment (Binnie 2001 107). Thomas (2004) rightly points out, however, it is not the pervasiveness of heterosexuality which undermines its spatial imperative. Rather "ubiquity masks the production of straight spaces and

subjects” (Thomas 2004 774). Scott’s normative subject position makes his performances of heterosexuality and home ‘invisible’.

In attempting to materially define their heterosexual subjectivities some participants draw comparisons between heterosexual and homosexual homes. These participants (re)construct the material and imaginative spaces of home as contingent on dualisms such as masculine/feminine, heterosexual/homosexual, public/private and mind/body. Homosexuality is hence constructed in binary opposition to heterosexuality. Homosexual bodies and homes are constructed as the Other by which heterosexual bodies and homes are distinguished. Indeed, the Self requires an Other in order to exist (Grosz 1989; Rose 1993). Although many participants said that they have never been into a “homosexual house” (Rose, joint interview 23 April 2008), they try to imagine how their houses would be different if they were in a homosexual relationship. Scott, for example, attempts to envisage how he would modify the house to suit him if he were in a gay relationship but cannot think of any suitable changes because: “a bedroom is a bedroom, a toilet is a toilet, [and a] bathroom is a bathroom. I could leave the [toilet] seat up all day. That would be cool. That [having to put the toilet seat down] is heterosexual (*laughter*)” (joint interview 01 April 2008). Whilst Rose, pointing to sexual stereotypes, suggests that there are certain ‘features’ of a homosexual home which make it easy to identify. She explains:

Rose: [I’m] trying to think if I was in a homosexual relationship, like there probably would be a few things that would set people off and make them think that I was gay. [This is] because there are a few more defining things [about homosexuality] that I would be able to think of, because they would be stereotyped ... whereas we [heterosexuals] don't have very many stereotypes apart from the housewife kind of situation (joint interview 23 April 2008).

Rose suggests that performances of gay domesticity are easier to identify than heterosexual performances. Homosexuality is positioned as the visible marked

category – “there are a few more defining things” – and heterosexuality is deemed to be the invisible unmarked category. According to several participants, art work featuring naked bodies are clear material indicators of homosexuality. Linda, for example, jokingly points out: “we don’t have a big statue of a penis or anything” (joint interview 16 April 2008), suggesting gay men decorate their houses in this way. Kimberly talks about the ‘homosexual imagery’ in the houses of her lesbian and gay friends, noting:

Kimberly: Our lesbian friends have kind of ceramic naked women images in their house and our male, gay friends have bronze sculptures of the torso and we don’t, I don’t know if our sexuality is overtly on display, do you? [Speaking to Scott] (joint interview 01 April 2008).

Donna similarly distinguishes her house and the material possessions in it from that of her gay and lesbian friends: “I mean we don’t have pictures of bodies up which is probably like both of them do, like Steve has attractive man posters and Sarah and Jackie had some hot women pictures” (first interview 17 October 2008). Cartesian dualisms underlie much of Western thinking. Western rationalist thinking deploys a separation between mind and body which affords supremacy to the mind. Certain people have come to be negatively associated with corporeality.¹¹² Sexual dissidents, in particular, are constructed as Other and are thus aligned with the body. This negative association may account for participants’ explanations of an essentialised relationship between homosexuality and embodiment.

Cresswell (1996) makes the important point that it is difficult to get people to recognise normative geographies until they are transgressed. Some participants joke about ‘being gay’ when they identify some of their own household objects as potential material markers of homosexuality. Angie, for example, notices the

¹¹² See Longhurst (2001) for a detailed discussion of the Cartesian dualism that renders some people as ‘tied to their bodies’ and the implications this has for geography.

possible ways a small statue of Michelangelo's David transgresses heteronormative notions of home:

Angie: There are like no overtly sexual objects [in the lounge]. But last night, I was like 'oh [Micheangelo's] David's up there [on the mantelpiece]', and I was like 'well that is probably more of a gay thing' (*laughter*). I saw that last night and thought 'hey, maybe that is not so heterosexual' (individual interview 30 April 2008).

In recounting this story, Angie highlights the complex politics of sexual embodiment and space. If the statue of David was in a house occupied by a gay male couple it may be read as a symbol of sexualised gay masculinity but because it is in the house of a heterosexual couple, the body is not read as *sexed*. The statue of David, for this couple, is sexually disembodied and instead represents shared memories of a trip to Europe.

Summary

Homemaking practices at the site of the dwelling have been the focus of this chapter. I have attempted to make visible the links between discourses of love and homemaking practices by focusing on the material, tangible and visible articulations of heterosexual love within and to the dwelling. The examples discussed in this chapter speak to the various ways home and the processes of subjectivity construction operate in everyday life.

Issues of privacy and the negotiation of domestic space between cohabitating couples were discussed first. There is little geographical work which explores the ways in which privacy is negotiated between cohabitating couples. I sought to expose and examine the contradictions inherent in idealised notions of love and home which suggest couples do not need privacy in the private sphere. Dominant norms of heterosexual love and home encourage couples, and women in particular, to suppress their own need for private space in order to maintain an appearance of home as a uniformly shared space of love. Discussions with

participants about the negotiated creation of shared domestic space reveal, however, that gendered divisions of home are strong and ongoing. On the one hand, men in this research have space for their own personal use and tend to emphasise their need for privacy. Women, on the other hand, do not have space for their own exclusive use and claim not to need it, except when it comes to bodily management acts and upholding heteronormative forms of femininity. They employ a variety of tactics, such as claiming ownership of the entire house and engaging in individual activities, to create privacy without compromising dominant assumptions about heterosexual love and cohabitating coupledness.

In the second section, I focused on a range of domestic activities, such as watching television, cooking and eating, DIY, and romance, in an attempt to understand the negotiated and potentially contested nature of heterosexual shared subjectivity and household formation. I argued that idealised heteronormative notions about love, companionate activities and shared subjectivities underlie joint homemaking practices. On the whole, couples maintain unequal domestic labour practices through discourses of love. Domestic labour is viewed by many women participants as a practical expression of love. Underlying the notion of domestic performances of love, however, is the assumption that domestic labour remains women's responsibility. It was also argued that women are faced with competing and conflicting discourses of heterosexual love and home on a daily basis and that their lived experiences both subvert and reassert inequitable gender relations within the dwelling.

The final section examined the links between heterosexuality, love and homemaking through an exploration of domestic material objects. I focused attention on the ways in which gendered and sexed subjectivity, and power and privilege are both materialised and made 'invisible' in the arrangement of household objects. While there is a growing literature on the links between domestic material objects and subjectivity construction, much remains to be said about the role of ordinary household goods in producing heterosexual relationships, bodies, subjectivities, privilege, power and homes. The women who participated in this research are primarily responsible for the material

constitution of home and gain pleasure from this aspect of homemaking. They tend to contribute more by way of household goods to the initial make-up of the dwelling and also take more of a role in arranging goods, such as 'couple photos', within domestic space. Material belongings are also used as a way of maintaining a sense of individuality within shared domestic space. Cultural frameworks encourage couples to minimise individuality in favour of collectivity so using personalised goods, such as CDs, is one way of maintaining an individual sense of self within dwelling. While material goods are deemed to be tangible performances and representations of love, they are not considered to be material markers of heterosexuality. It was argued that the domesticated, taken-for-granted and mundane nature of (hetero)sexually identifying objects makes heterosexuality – bodies, subjectivities, power, and privilege – 'invisible'. Participants were unable to articulate their sexual subjectivity through their domestic material objects which works to reproduce heterosexuality as an unmarked and invisible category.

In chapter 7, I move to explore households' and homemakers' connections to wider relations of social, cultural, political and economic power beyond the dwelling. I do so with the aim of dissolving the public and private boundaries that surround home.

CHAPTER 7

Household and beyond

This chapter shows that the household, as a set of social and spatial relations, is connected to broader societal structures that exist beyond the physical dwelling. It aims to dissolve the public and private boundaries that surround home. Blunt and Dowling (2006 27) argue: “home is neither public nor private, but both. Home is not separated from public, political worlds but is constituted through them: the domestic is created through the extra-domestic and vice versa.” Imaginaries and materialities of home are connected to and constitutive of broader social, cultural, political, and economic structures. Power is manifested within, across and beyond the boundaries of home (Mansvelt 2005). In order to understand the creation of home it is therefore crucial to look at the ways in which the domestic spaces and subjectivities of heterosexual bodies are produced within and through wider relations of power. In this chapter, then, I focus on homemaking practices and relationship activities as connected to socio-spatial relations that operate within the household and beyond.

The first half of this chapter explores issues of housing tenure. Home ownership and renting are the dominant forms of housing tenure in New Zealand. Attention is firstly directed at the link between home ownership and the consolidation of heterosexual love. I present two in-depth examples which highlight the gendered power dynamics of home ownership in the context of heterosexual relationships. I then move to consider the potentially contested and negotiated nature of ‘flatting’. Flatting means that relations of social power need to be managed between partners and amongst flatmates. The second half of this chapter considers the role of consumption in relation to heterosexual love and home. Consumption, in this context, is used to refer to the decisions around, and acquisition of, domestic goods.¹¹³ Consumption and the production of social

¹¹³ Reimer and Leslie (2004 188) define ‘home consumption’ as the “purchasing, acquisition, and display of furniture and other domestic goods”. In this chapter, I focus solely on the purchase and acquisition of household goods in order to demonstrate the links between the household and relations of power *beyond* the dwelling. In chapter 6, I discussed the ways in which household goods are used and appropriated *within* the dwelling. In structuring my argument in this way I do

relations within the household are connected to consumption practices and subjectivity formation in spaces beyond the dwelling, and vice versa. The practices of consumption work to establish couples' subjectivities because the purchased objects, while perhaps needed for the functioning of everyday living, embody the emotional work invested in joint homemaking decisions. The practices of household consumption also highlight issues of gendered power and control in cohabitating heterosexual relationships.

Housing heterosexuality: housing tenure in New Zealand

Historically, home ownership has been:

connected to class power – in terms of who was enriched by its provisions and gained most from its accessibility – to a particular gendered order which enshrined the nuclear family through the social and financial processes of acquiring the home, the moral connotations of such a residence and the productive domestic labour conducted within it (Johnson 1992 41).

Housing tenure is reflective of, and contributes to, the distribution of power in Western societies. In most societies people are required to pay for the physical structures they live in. Patterns in housing tenure, especially the significance of home ownership, are associated with social divisions and have cultural purchase in Western capitalist systems (Blunt and Dowling 2006). Blunt and Dowling (2006 90) contend: "how a dwelling is paid for is related to, and influences, identities of class, gender, 'race' and other social divisions." Housing tenure connects households and homemakers to wider relations of power. Similarly, housing tenure shapes power relations within households.

Dowling (1998 474) notes that research into the meanings of home ownership has been slow to take into account the "specific characteristics, social relations and cultural meanings of a place." It is important to address the context of housing tenure in New Zealand because location and place-based characteristics

not intend to portray consumption as fixed to the momentary act of purchase. I agree with Crewe (2000) that consumption is an ongoing process and it extends far beyond the point of purchase.

shape and maintain the formation of specific social subjectivities. In other words, place matters to housing.

In New Zealand there are two main ways of paying for housing: home ownership and renting.¹¹⁴ Perkins and Thorns (1999) suggest that issues surrounding housing tenure are central to homemaking in New Zealand. Home ownership, supported by public policy¹¹⁵ and social discourse, remains the dominant form of housing in New Zealand. Dupris and Thorn (1998 42) summarise the historical context of home ownership in New Zealand, explaining:

the Depression brought with it a fear of insecurity that, as time went on, took on near mythical proportions ... The prime role played by housing in the attempt to establish a society protected from the influences of external events can be analysed as a means of attaining security. A major response to the insecurity that accompanied the Depression was that the home became the symbol of continuity, reliability and constancy: all features of human existence that were undermined in the Depression. It also became the spatial context in which the routines of daily life were carried out, as well as a solid base from which feelings of identities could flourish.

As outlined in chapter 2, ownership is deeply entrenched in New Zealand's social imaginaries of home and has consistently been used as a way to aid in the creation of 'model' citizens (Perkins and Thorns 1999; 2003). Home ownership has been deemed an effective way of producing socially, culturally and economically appropriate and productive citizens because those "buying a house are presumed to be properly capable of making home, of creating a place that is secure, comfortable and welcoming" (Blunt and Dowling 2006 93). Home ownership assumes specific social subjectivities.

¹¹⁴ People rent houses from private landowners, intermediary rental agencies and from a government advisory corporation: Housing New Zealand Corporation (www.hnzc.co.nz).

¹¹⁵ For example, KiwiSaver is a state initiated savings scheme which encourages New Zealanders to save towards their retirement. The voluntary savings scheme, lead by the fifth Labour Government of New Zealand, came into fruition in July 2007. KiwiSaver is made up of government, employer and employee contributions. The main purpose of the KiwiSaver fund is for retirement savings, however, a one off withdrawal can be requested to assist with the purchase of first homes (www.kiwisaver.govt.nz).

As well as being presumed to be based around the heterosexual nuclear family and its associated gender relations, normative notions of home are dependent on particular classed and racialized imaginaries. In particular, home in these imaginaries is one that is white and middle class (Blunt and Dowling 2006 116).

In New Zealand, Māori tend to have less access to home-ownership than non-Māori (Housing New Zealand Corporation 2007; Murphy and Urlich Cloher 1995). Māori face a range of obstacles in terms of attaining home ownership, including: “low income, high debt levels, inability to access finance, rising property prices, high mortgage and interest rates and a lack of home ownership information” (Housing New Zealand Corporation 2007 8). In chapter 2, I explained that during the 1950s and 1960s, the state attempted to make available housing to a wider proportion of New Zealanders through the introduction of subsidised loans and mortgage programmes. Yet, as Murphy and Urlich Cloher (1995 326) explain, the emphasis on homeownership favoured a white, colonial model of housing:

Whilst pursuing policies that encouraged home ownership based on a British model (single family dwelling on freehold property purchased with a mortgage), the state helped to create a system which was in many ways inimical to the housing aspirations of Māori communities.

Māori have tended to be excluded from idealised notions of home in New Zealand. Instead, households made up of middle-class, Pākehā, nuclear families living in suburban houses dominate images of home.

While ownership remains the dominant and ideal form of housing in New Zealand many people live in rented accommodation. This living arrangement is sometimes termed ‘flatting’ and is, in some instances, deemed socially acceptable. Perkins and Thorns (1999 128) explain: “Other forms of housing tenure, particularly renting, have been seen as morally acceptable for members of society who are not yet fully fledged.” People rent houses for numerous reasons and flatting takes on a variety of forms. For example, many young New Zealanders live in rented accommodation after leaving their parental house. This is often their first experience of living independently of their parents. Renting is also often seen as a stepping stone for entering the housing market with some

people living in rented accommodation so they can save money for a deposit on a house. Of course, not all people have the ability to choose the form of housing they live in with social disadvantage becoming even more pronounced for those people renting houses from the state (see also Blunt and Dowling 2006).¹¹⁶ In this research, no participants were renting accommodation from Housing New Zealand Corporation, which is the main state funded housing agency in New Zealand. Participants who live in rented accommodation therefore exercise a degree of power and agency in their housing choices.

Gorman Murray (2006a) alludes to the possibility that housing tenure influences cohabitating couples' material practices of home. He notes that the differences between how owner-occupiers and renters in his research perceive the material significance of domestic space are minor. I agree with his contention that housing tenure does not undermine the importance of domestic spaces and practices to the construction of couples' subjectivities. 'Home', regardless of housing tenure (and sexual subjectivity), is important to the construction and consolidation of couples' relationships.

Home ownership and relationship consolidation

Of the 14 couples involved in this research, four jointly own their house.¹¹⁷ Rising living costs mean that it is increasingly difficult for young New Zealanders to purchase their first home. Yet these couples, who are all in their 20s, are financially able to sustain regular mortgage repayments. In this sense, they represent a privileged few. These participants stress the connection between ownership and feelings of emotional belongingness. The links between home ownership and emotional wellbeing have been documented (Christie *et al.*, 2008;

¹¹⁶ In 2006, about 12 percent of the Māori population rented houses from Housing New Zealand Corporation. This compares to two percent of the Pākehā population (Pfitzner *et al.*, 2009).

¹¹⁷ Kylie and Luke own a house together but do not physically live there. At the time of the couple interview they were in the process of sorting out a suitable time when they could move in. Lizzy and Zane own two houses, one is the place where they live and the other is an investment property. At the time of our couple interview, Sheree and Alex were living in rented accommodation but were negotiating the purchase of their first house. Two women participants own the houses that they share with their partners. I discuss their experiences of home ownership further on in the chapter.

Searle *et al.*, 2009). The attainment of home ownership, for example, is viewed as contributing to personal autonomy and ontological security (Dupuis and Thorns 1998) and is deemed to be as much about emotional and affective returns as it is about financial investment. Houses are objects that people “fall in love with and build emotional relationships around” (Christie *et al.*, 2008 2302). Participants suggest that the houses they live in feel more like a ‘home’ because they jointly own them. Angie explains: “[the house] does feel like home, I guess because our stuff is here and we own it and it’s a nice feeling. I think it’s definitely different after renting for so many years, it’s nice” (first interview 30 April 2008). Angie took a photo of their house (figure 38) in order to demonstrate the extent to which home ownership is linked to her conception of home, love and to relationship with Cooper. She explains: “that is just because it is our first house and we bought it together” (follow-up interview 19 June 2008).



Figure 38: Photo taken by Angie of the house she owns with Cooper

The strong sense of connection home owners feel to their houses may be due to the financial safety home ownership can afford (Blunt and Dowling 2006). More so than that, joint home ownership provides emotional security and stability (Christie *et al.*, 2008). At a material level, joint home ownership, perhaps more so

than any other possession, embodies normative notions of heterosexual love and signifies a joint life venture. Not only does it confer “prestige through its use as a display of wealth” (Madigan *et al.*, 1990 638), but it also represents relationship permanency and stability. In this sense, joint home ownership is an institutionalised and material expression of heterosexual love.

My own experiences affirm the link between home ownership and relationship consolidation. Given the financial responsibilities of home ownership, the decision to purchase a house together marked our dedication to one another and the relationship. For me, the enormity of this financial obligation is more symbolic of our commitment to each other than the social status of being ‘engaged’. Rose and Joseph express similar sentiments. Joseph remarks: “because a house is a big thing, it is quite a dangerous step to take I suppose” (joint interview 23 April 2008), referring to their decision to purchase a house together and the implications it may have for them financially and emotionally. Rose also considers the implication of buying a house together, writing in her diary: “we bought a house together about a year ago. It was the need to have our own space that took us to that level of commitment so soon” (diary entry 24 April 2008). In our couple interview, Rose, Joseph and I spent a considerable amount of time talking about the significance of home ownership to their conception of home, love and to their relationship. They explained that their initial decision to purchase a house together was purely a financial one because neither of them could afford to buy one separately. Here, they note that home ownership was approached as a joint business venture:

Joseph: Yeah we took it like ... if we buy the house as business partners, take that approach.

Rose: Yeah and if [our relationship and living together] doesn’t work out...

Joseph: I think it was just easier to take that approach than kind of put down that hard commitment of buying a house together (joint interview 23 April 2008).

At the time of our couple interview, Rose and Joseph had been in their house for approximately one year. Since moving in, the emotional attachments they feel towards the house have strengthened and they no longer view it as simply a business deal. They now feel a strong sense of connection to the house and believe that the success of their relationship is influenced, in part, by their decision to purchase the house. Rose explains:

Rose: Not to say that we wouldn't be in a happy relationship, if we weren't in this house. But I think in some of the houses [we looked at buying] I don't think we would be as happy as we are and that would have impacted on our relationship as well (joint interview 23 April 2008).

Rose and Joseph are extremely happy living in their current house. They are in love with each other and they are in love with(in) their house. The love of their house is, however, more than simply how they feel about the physical dwelling. As Christie *et al.*, (2008 2307) explain: "it is also about choosing a spatial idea, a place in which to identify with a particular image or lifestyle." Rose and Joseph live in an older house that has been renovated. It has polished wooden floors, a modern kitchen and a large open-plan living area which is marked out by a combination of modern and traditional looking furniture. It is close to the city centre. Their house seems to represent who they are and what they want to achieve. They are upper-middle class, educated young professionals. The spatial ideal and lifestyle they have chosen to live reflects the patterns, subjectivities and practices of urban living, gentrification and increasing levels of affluence (Bondi 1991; 1999; Valentine 2001).

Since moving out of their respective parental homes and living in rented accommodation, it is their current house that most closely aligns with idealised notions of home.

Joseph: It's more of a home feeling here since we bought the house, opposed to like flatting situation [where you have] got everyone else to deal with or think about I suppose.

Rose: Yeah, it is the first time that it's really felt like home I think, since you lived with your parents and you get a bit older (joint interview 23 April 2008).

Christie *et al.*, (2008) explain that the love of a house is often emotionally driven by the status and identity that ownership brings. For Rose and Joseph, purchasing their house together was a rite of passage that marked their transition into the adult world. It signified their subjectivity as financially stable and emotionally capable adults. In addition, and as alluded to earlier, their house has come to symbolise their love and shared subjectivity as a cohabitating couple. It is no longer simply a jointly owned commodity.

Carey-Ann: Are there any particular objects or possessions that you think truly represent your relationship and shared identity as a couple?

Joseph: Probably the house.

Rose: Yeah, if anything, I mean everything else is just kind of objects. Yeah, everything else is pretty much replaceable. [It] could be it or another object that does the same job as it. The house and, I guess, the space around the house. That part defines us as 'us' really because it's the only place we've ever lived in together that has felt like home together (joint interview 23 April 2008).

Rose and Joseph's house is an object which is imbued with meanings and emotions specific to their relationship. Gorman-Murray (2006a) notes that the emotional work involved in the process of choosing a new house together becomes embedded in the actual dwelling. The house is a particularly important object to Rose and Joseph because it symbolises their joint decision to purchase it. They each invested emotional energy and money into establishing a material space of love where they could facilitate the ongoing development of their

relationship. The house therefore embodies their willingness to invest in each other.

Rose: I mean because it is a joint decision, we both decided that we wanted to live in this house before we moved in. It wasn't one of us renting [and] the other one moving in with them. It was such a joint thing. I feel that we have both got an equal stake in it I suppose.

Joseph: Yeah, which makes things easier. That can be difficult as well. [There can be] difficulties if somebody owns the house and then you moved [in]. We've seen that before (joint interview 23 April 2008).

Rose and Joseph raise an interesting point. They note that couples can experience problems when one person owns the house and their partner moves in (see also Gorman-Murray 2006a). This suggests that unequal financial investment can result in an imbalance of power which can lead to problematic partnership inequalities. The negotiation and re-distribution of power between newly cohabitating heterosexual couples is particularly interesting when it is explored through a gendered lens.

Home ownership continues to be gendered (Dowling 1998; Gabriel 2008; Madigan *et al.*, 1990; Winstanely 2000). Johnson (1992 42) argues:

Home ownership remains the dream rather than the reality for the autonomous women. Women most readily acquire housing as members of a heterosexual family unit. The inequitable gender order is thereby expressed and reinforced in the housing market.

On average, single women are likely to be poorer than single men. They are therefore less likely to be able to raise the money for a deposit on a house, be granted a mortgage, or afford the regular mortgage repayments (Madigan *et al.*, 1990). Kimberly and Debbie, however, purchased the houses they now live in with their respective partners prior to forming relationships. Housing tenure has influenced their relationships and has shaped the gendered power dynamics

within their households. Both couples express similar sentiments about the problems they encountered when they first cohabitated. Their experiences make up the next section.

Making it 'our' home – Kimberly and Scott

When Scott first moved in with Kimberly, she found it difficult to allow him to feel any form of connection to, and ownership of, the space. Kimberly was torn between the emotional instability of losing control of her home and individual subjectivity, and her desire to welcome Scott into her space in order to make it 'their' space. She explains:

Kimberly: I have worked really hard for what I have got and really wanted to hold on to that and [the house] sort of represented my independence and security as well ... so it's been really hard. That's been quite hard for me to kind of let go of my, my ownership ... not that I have ever, I've always said this is our home, but I've been the one that has kind of controlled [it] (joint interview 01 April 2008).

Kimberly's experience of home ownership fits patterns in the housing market where more financially secure, professionally and educationally trained, upwardly mobile women are in the position to become home owners (Bondi and Christie 2000). It is evident that Kimberly is proud of buying a house and considers it to be an accomplishment. Home ownership affords her with financial independence, security, safety and freedom. It also materially signifies her abilities as an astute woman who is able to support herself. Home ownership connects Kimberly with broader economic and political structures and cultural ideologies associated with housing and provides her with an important reference point for her gendered, sexed, classed and 'raced' subjectivity. As an educated, middle-class Pākehā woman, Kimberly has more opportunity for homeownership than most Māori women (Ministry of Women's Affairs 2001). Not long into her relationship with Scott, however, Kimberly realised that in order to facilitate and maintain their relationship she needed to adjust how she understood home

ownership. Here, she reflects on the conflicting emotions she experienced when Scott moved in: “[the house is] a very separate asset that I own, and um, but, that was a real issue, about how this house becomes our house, when it is actually, physically mine” (joint interview 01 April 2008). Kimberly shifts between talking about home ownership as a simple matter of finances to home ownership as symbolic and imbued with meaning and emotional significance. In practical terms the house is an asset; a commodity that provides her with financial security. It becomes clear, however, that home ownership is much more than that. Instead, it represents an integral part of her embodied subjectivity.

The following example clearly demonstrates the problems Kimberly encountered in attempting to re-constitute her house as a shared space. When asked to speak about the importance of individual spaces to their experiences of home, Scott makes several references to a shed which he describes as “my shed.” Half way through the interview Kimberly responds to his claim of ownership, saying:

Kimberly: And, yeah, that actually really annoys me, because, um, I garden and there is a lot of my stuff [gardening tools] in [the shed] and yeah ... so I get really annoyed when [Scott] says ‘my shed’ because actually I think ‘it’s my shed’ but it is our shed and um both our leisure [space] and the things that are important to us sort of happen in there, but for some reason, for some blokey reason about needing to say it’s ‘your shed’ (joint interview 01 April 2008).

The difficulties Kimberly encounters in attempting to reconcile the changing social relations and power dynamics of sharing a living space with Scott are materialised in the way that they talk about the negotiation of domestic space. Kimberly suggests that Scott’s need to claim ownership of the shed is “for some blokey reason”, thus negating his individual need for space and self-expression to a simple matter of gendered norms and spaces. Yet, as Gorman-Murray (2008b) argues, just as home is important for women’s sense of self, it is also a crucial site for the construction of masculine subjectivities. Scott explains that he also

felt uneasy and unsettled when he first moved in with Kimberly and had difficulty feeling comfortable and at home in “Kimberly’s house” (joint interview 01 April 2008). Claiming ownership of the shed, then, seems to be a particularly important way for Scott to affirm his heterosexual masculine subjectivity in the context of feeling out-of-place in “Kimberly’s house.”

Scott’s dislocation can, in part, be attributed to his material surroundings. Given that Kimberly had moved in to the house before him, she had already made the decisions about how it would be decorated. In this way, Kimberly’s power and control is materialised in decisions about home décor. Reimer and Leslie (2004 202) make the point that: “Inhabiting or occupying another person’s furniture may be profoundly disorientating for those who have not had a say in the creation of the space.” With the death of a family member, Kimberly inherited several “family treasures and antiques” (Kimberly, joint interview 01 April 2008). These possessions are particularly important to Kimberly because they help her to feel a sense of connection to her family. At the same time, however, the inherited goods exacerbated Scott’s feelings of unease. Scott explains:

Scott: We inherited all this furniture. All of these antiques came and before that we didn’t have any of that stuff and [the house was] sparse and at the start I felt that, that had re-excluded me. [The house] became Kimberly’s again. It was like my stuff kind of got overwhelmed, but now I love that stuff, you know, I can’t imagine living without these (joint interview 01 April 2008).

Initially, the presence of inherited goods damaged Scott’s sense of home and belonging. He stresses, however, that shared daily use helped to remake his relationship with the material objects. Now, as Scott points out, he “can’t imagine living without these things.” Nevertheless, the inclusion of inherited family furniture is one means by which Kimberly’s family values, morals and practices are materially (re)constituted. Ahmed (2006 86) points out that:

when we inherit, we also inherit the proximity of certain objects, as that which is available to use, as given within the family home. These objects are not only material: they may be values, capital, aspirations, projects and styles ... which means we inherit ways of inhabiting and extending into space.

For Scott, the implication of living with Kimberly and her family heirlooms is that he has taken on many of Kimberly's family values. This, in turn, has shaped the ways he inhabits and extends into space; it has influenced his sense of home and belonging.

Scott: In a sense I guess I have derived my sense of space from Kimberly's family more than from my own ... in some way Kimberly's family values are becoming mine. I am not just a blank slate that is being painted over, I am still me and we are still our own people but at the same time I think that her home – family-home – plays a bigger role in our home than mine does, definitely I think, do you think that is fair? [speaking to Kimberly] [Kimberly agrees] (joint interview 01 April 2008).

Noble (2004 245) explains that material objects “capture the interweaving of subjectivities because they exceed their materiality and their location in time and space; and they exceed their materiality because they objectify the relations of familial and interpersonal life.” The inherited family goods exceed their materiality as Scott appropriates, and is subsumed within, Kimberly's family values. This does not mean that he has no values of his own. Rather, it demonstrates the extent to which domestic objects are imbued with particular spatial ideals and norms. It also highlights the ability of domestic goods to connect homemakers to social relations and familial values beyond the dwelling.

One of the ways that Scott developed a sense of belonging in his new home space was to contribute his physical labour to the general upkeep of the house. As a full-time student, Scott is unable to assist Kimberly financially. He explains:

Scott: Kimberly owns the property and I contribute my labour and my money towards rent and, and like I really enjoy putting half my money into a tin of paint or buying bits and pieces because it helps me to feel a sense of ownership, because I need to do that so I feel it's an equal relationship ... one of the things I do to justify my existence is to have her come home to a tidy house ... to come home to a mess would just be not fair, so I was always aware, when I have time to, I always make sure the place is good for when she gets home. Dinner is cooked sometimes and she would come home and I would be doing my bit, doing my share and like doing the bathroom and the shed I was just doing my best, because I couldn't financially buy things (joint interview 01 April 2008).

Scott uses domestic and physical labour as a way of ensuring equality in their relationship. It validates his position in their household and makes him feel as though he is contributing to making their life together. This is an important reversal of traditional gendered domestic power. It is usually women who have less money to contribute to the joint household. Domestic labour is often an inevitable and expected way for women to 'pull their weight' around the house, even if they have other responsibilities such as part-time work and parenting. The difference between Scott's homemaking practices and those of the majority of homemakers who are women is that Scott *chooses* to perform these tasks; he does them "when I have time", for example, "dinner is cooked sometimes." For a lot of women, domestic labour does not feel like it is a choice and failing to contribute to the household in this way can have very real material and emotional effects and consequences.

Another way that Kimberly and Scott have dealt with the changing social relations and power dynamics of their household has been to rework the material spaces of home. For Scott, this involved changing the physicality of the space. Scott talks about rebuilding the outside shed and explains that this

particular home renovation project was important for helping him to feel a sense of belonging. He says: "I just couldn't contribute any money but I could fix [the shed] up and that and make the space useable and it was fantastic for me" (joint interview 01 April 2008). Madigan *et al.*, (1990) note that men typically claim the prestige of adding monetary value to houses through structural renovations and changes. This did not seem to be Scott's intention. Instead, he was more concerned with feeling a sense of belonging and equality within his relationship. In this way, the shed symbolises his physical labour, embodies the emotional work he invested in creating the space, and materially signifies his sense of home.

Making it 'our' home – Debbie and Robert

In 2006, Debbie and Robert met through a New Zealand dating website. After dating for a couple of months they decided that they would live together in the house Debbie had purchased a few years back. Home ownership, for Debbie, is not only about the financial security it affords but it also gives her the power to control the space in which she lives. She says:

Debbie: I think the difference [between renting and owning] probably is in terms of the influence, like for me, the influence that you have, like I can kind of make a lot more of a decision about what goes on in my house (joint interview 09 May 2008).

Like Kimberly, Debbie was concerned about making Robert feel welcome. Here, she explains that it was not until Robert felt at ease suggesting possible material changes to the design and layout of their house that he truly began to feel 'at home':

Debbie: You probably didn't feel like this was home until you kind of started doing things, like being able to say how things were and moving the room and stuff like that and being

able to change things [talking to Robert] [Robert agrees]
(joint interview 09 May 2008).

Like Scott, Robert's sense of connection and belonging was tied up in gender normative homemaking practices. He began to feel comfortable in "Debbie's home" (Robert, joint interview 09 May 2008) once he built an outside shed. He states: "I think it was the woodshed, definitely the woodshed ... I whacked down the old woodshed and put up another one" (joint interview 09 May 2008). Debbie makes a similar comment in her diary when reflecting on a photo (figure 39) she took of Robert: "pulling down [the] hedge in [the] backyard was a big part of Robert feeling like a part of the house" (diary entry 10 May 2008).



Figure 39: Photo taken by Debbie of Robert in the garden

For Robert and Scott, it was not until they saw their heterosexual masculine subjectivities reflected in the form of physical labour and embodied in a typically gendered space – the outside shed – that they began to feel 'at home' in their respective partners' houses. The ability to feel 'at home' by affecting change to housing structures beyond the house highlights the ways in which conceptions of home can be inclusive of spaces and objects beyond the physical dwelling.

In our follow-up interview, Debbie and I talk about the material changes Robert made to the house in more detail, this time in relation to their bedroom:

Carey-Ann: How did Robert change the furniture around to feel more at 'home'?

Debbie: ... my room, I used to have, like the bed wasn't where it is, it was right over in the corner and a whole lot of stuff was different and he [phoned] me one day and was like 'oh can I move stuff around and you can put it back if you don't like it?' And so he kind of, um, I think I had it more like a single-person's room.

Carey-Ann: I was going to say, did he move [the bed] into the middle [of the room] so he could get around it?

Debbie: Exactly and so we didn't have to climb over each other ... also, a 'his' and 'hers' space was kind of delineated. Like I have got the side with the wardrobe which is kind of closest to the door and he has got all his stuff there [points to the photo] ... so we have really kind of created a bit of [individual] space as opposed to kind of theoretically sharing space, but not really. It is still kind of being in someone's room and I think that's how it has been for me until him, because I just had a man staying in my room. Whereas [Robert's] kind of actually claimed that space and I think I am quite pleased and surprised that he has kind of been strong enough to do that because I don't think that ... many partners, have been able to do that. So that is probably a big part of the permanency of the relationship or the permanency that the relationship has gained (follow-up interview 04 June 2008).

Changing the position of the bed most clearly marked the growth of Debbie and Robert's relationship. The original location – in the corner of the room – allowed access to only one side of the bed. Moving the bed into the centre of the room changed the feeling of the space; it began to feel like a 'couple's' room as

opposed to an individual person's room. It materially signified the permanency of their relationship because it made visible both of their sleeping needs. These changes also made life easier for Debbie and Robert, both in terms of bed access and through the creation of individual 'his' and 'her' spaces.

As well as talking about changing the layout of their bedroom, Debbie and Robert reflect upon the importance of combining their personal goods to create shared domestic space. Gorman-Murray (2006a) explains that the process of combining personalised goods is an important way for newly cohabitating couples to generate a shared subjectivity in shared domestic space. He argues: "Because the accumulation and arrangement of such [domestic] objects is frequently a joint decision between partners, the material microgeography of domestic space can tellingly narrate a shared identity and reflect the development of the relationship" (Gorman-Murray 2006a 158). Gorman-Murray (2006a 160) suggests the juxtaposition of previously owned and personalised objects in the home materialises a new shared subjectivity by "symbolically bringing two lives together." He demonstrates this process anecdotally: "My books are combined with your books, my CDS with yours; my sofa sits next to your coffee table" (Gorman-Murray 2006a 152). Figure 40 is a photo of Debbie and Robert's bedroom. It shows that Debbie's teddy bear is combined with Robert's posters, rugby balls and basketballs. For Debbie and Robert, reconfiguring the bedroom as a shared space by combining their normatively gendered personalised domestic goods, was important for renegotiating potentially unequal power relations associated with housing tenure.



Figure 40: Photo taken by Debbie of their bedroom

The process of replacing individual goods with items belonging to each other is another homemaking practice which allowed Debbie and Robert to generate a shared sense of space and to materialise their love for one another.

Debbie: You got rid of your bed and we've got my bed. I got rid of my TV and we've got his TV and you know, you [speaking to Robert] definitely put your stamp on things in that kind of sense, it became a lot more [shared], and the way that the [bed]room was decorated really changed.

Carey-Ann: Could you elaborate on those changes?

Debbie: I took a lot of my stuff down and we put up stuff that was his.

Robert: Yeah I've got [rugby] league posters in the bedroom.

Debbie: Yeah it just made it a bit more balanced (joint interview 09 May 2008).

Gregson (2007 29) makes the point that it is not just the acquisition of goods that is important for subjectivity construction but also the processes of sorting, replacing, ridding and abandoning things:

what is rid, that is displaced, moved along ... is shown frequently to be a means of using physical absences in things to make present the social relations of love, care and devotion that sustain living in proximity, together, under one roof.

The absence of some of Debbie's possessions in favour of some of Robert's possessions makes visible their love relationship. Adapting the materiality of home is one way that Debbie and Robert were able to re-constitute domestic space as shared. It has allowed them to negotiate the distribution of power within their relationship which came about as a result of unequal financial investment in home ownership.

It is important to be aware that shared households do not always and everywhere consist solely of heterosexual 'couples.' Shared living takes on a variety of forms and it is common for cohabitating couples to live with others in shared accommodation. In the next section, I discuss the sexual politics and spatial dynamics of flatting.

Flatting: the dynamics of shared living

In New Zealand, the term flatting refers to a particular social make-up and way of living. Flatting is a collective household arrangement where between approximately two and eight people (often aged 18 – 25) share a rented house, flat or apartment. Members of the household are referred to as 'flatmates.' Flats are sometimes made up of friends who move into a rental property and 'flat together' but often 'flatmates' are found through local advertising. Advertisements for flatmates typically follow a pattern whereby rent and living costs, gender and age of occupants, as well as the 'type' of flatmate desired – for example, tidy, quiet, sociable – is specified. It is not common practice for sexuality to be identified. Whereas households looking for gay or lesbian flatmates often specify this outright, for those advertisements that do not refer

to sexual subjectivity, it tends to be taken-for-granted that occupants or possible occupants will be heterosexual.¹¹⁸ In a flat, household members generally have equal access to communal areas of the home, such as the lounge, kitchen, dining room, and the household usually divides up living costs and rent. Sometimes food is shared and often flatmates are allocated cooking nights as well as cleaning roles. More often than not gendered norms influence the division of domestic chores within heterosexual flatting situations. Many young New Zealanders flat because it reduces living costs.

Flatting is typically deemed to be a temporary form of housing and flatmates are relatively transient; they come and go and are generally easily replaced. During the time my partner and I have owned and occupied our house – around four years – we have lived with five different flatmates. They have, for numerous reasons, moved out and relocated. When they were living with us they were very much part of the household but, crucially, they were not a part of our ‘home’.

Of the 14 couples interviewed, five live with flatmates. Three of the couples are owner-occupiers who rent out spare bedrooms and the remaining two couples live in rented accommodation. The power dynamics which constitute this type of shared living give further insights into the multiplicity of heterosexual subjectivities and collective household formation. Flatting means that relations of social power must be negotiated and managed between partners as well as amongst flatmates. This type of living arrangement can have significant implications for cohabitating heterosexual couples. Geographers are yet to consider the impact flatting can have on the construction and performance of heterosexuality, love and home.¹¹⁹

Research suggests that economic constraint is the primary reason for shared living (although see Kenyon and Heath 2001). For the five couples who live with

¹¹⁸ Participants did not discuss the sexual subjectivities of their respective flatmates.

¹¹⁹ Sociologists, however, have noted the impacts, both positive and negative, shared living can have on heterosexual couples’ relationships (see for example Heath and Kenyon 2001; Kenyon and Heath 2001).

flatmates, their decision to flat is primarily based on necessity as opposed to choice. Couples who are renting accommodation share a common desire for home ownership. While they perceive their current houses to be 'home for now' there is still the presumption that ownership is the ultimate marker of 'home', love, and of relationship development. They seemed to take it for granted that home ownership would, at some point in the future, be attainable. This perhaps reflects participants' classed positions, where despite varying levels of education and training, they all have confidence in their future earning power and ability to purchase a house. For owner-occupiers, the money gained from renting out spare bedrooms helps to subsidise mortgage repayments. Living with flatmates is described by owner-occupiers as far from an ideal situation but is seen as a temporary solution until they are able to afford to live on their own. The two couples who flat in rented accommodation are both tertiary education students. Flatting is a common living situation for many tertiary education students because it is affordable and usually offers high levels of sociability.

Couples usually spatially dominate flats. The 'master' bedroom is typically assigned to couples, whilst single flatmates are designated the smaller 'children's' bedrooms. There is certainly an element of practicality to this spatial arrangement, yet, it also highlights the dominant position couples hold in imaginaries and materialities of home. While the nuclear family continues to be the 'ideal' embodiment of hegemonic notions of home, heterosexual couples are also deemed to be an appropriate form of home. Couples are typically imagined to be in the process of 'becoming'; they are constructed as moving progressively towards nuclear family life.

Debbie and Robert's experience of flatting is a good example of the ways in which couples socially and spatially dominate flats. Prior to Robert moving in, Debbie shared her house with several flatmates. During this time the household was based on a typical communal form of flatting with everyone having equal access to shared living spaces. When Robert moved in, however, the spatialities and power dynamics of their household changed. Now, as a result of Debbie's position as home owner and as the only 'couple' in the household, their

relationship physically and materially dominates the house. It is their photographs and artwork which are displayed in the main living areas. They often “hog the lounge” (Robert, joint interview 09 May 2008) when watching DVDs and they have the final say in decisions regarding the structure and organisation of the household. Debbie spent some time considering the spatial implications of flatting in her diary, writing:

More and more I have begun to feel like, as opposed to a truly communal environment, I think of the house, kitchen etc as mine, and [our flatmate] as an invasion of it, consciously or subconsciously she must feel that and it must affect her living situation. Personally, I don't think I enjoy living with her anymore, I feel sad thinking about her going, but I feel irritated and odd thinking about her staying. I feel like I relax around Robert in a way I don't around our flatmate (diary entry 12 May 2008).

Debbie alludes to the possibility that her flatmate is also affected by power relations in their flat.¹²⁰ Indeed, lack of agency is a common complaint made by people who live with couples. Here, Kylie recalls a previous experience of flatting with a couple:

Kylie: The flatmates, they were a married couple so I always kind of felt, not that we were against each other, but it was always two on one and like I didn't feel like I could have, um, like my friends over for dinner. Like I would wait until they went away for the weekend or something, you know, but they kind of dominated (joint interview 19 May 2008).

Paradoxically, however, couples who live with flatmates frequently feel as though they do not have access to the space and privacy needed to facilitate

¹²⁰ It might have been useful to have interviewed flatmates who live with couples. Given the transient nature of flatmates, however, this could have proven difficult.

their relationship. Flatmates tend to be viewed by couples as an invasion and a nuisance. All of the couples involved in this research, regardless of housing tenure, prefer to live on their own. They feel that having their own space, without the interference of flatmates, is crucially important for the ongoing development of their relationship. While flatmates are 'in' the house they are not considered part of the 'home'. They are, in a sense, beyond the household. Melissa, for instance, compares past and present living situations and suggests that living on their own has been beneficial for her relationship with Peter. At the time of their involvement in this research they had only lived in their current house for a few months. Melissa says:

Melissa: It's been interesting because ... we had flatmates before we were here in this place, and then before that we were living with [Peter's] father, so just it being our own space is really important. So not having anyone else living with us or having any of their stuff or living in someone else's space. So just having our own physical space is actually quite important and makes a difference (joint interview 18 April 2008).

Melissa goes on to explain that flatmates inhibited their everyday experiences of home. Living with flatmates meant that their ordinary homemaking practices, such as having a meal together and dealing with relationship issues, were under constant surveillance. She says:

Melissa: We struggled [living with flatmates]. It was good with flatmates for a while, but just being able to sit down and have dinner just the two of you, as opposed to you and your flatmates or if things aren't going [well], if you're busy and you're a bit stressed out, not to have the stress of other people watching in on that (joint interview 18 April 2008).

Likewise, Rose and Joseph explain that the living arrangements of previous flatting situations meant that they were unable to have a meal together. This inability to share ordinary practices of home put a strain on their relationship.

Rose: I remember back when we were living in separate houses, we never got to have dinner just the two of us [when I was living] at my old house. We'd wait for your flatmate to go out so we could have the house to ourselves [talking to Joseph].

Joseph: We'd have a nice dinner and then [our flatmates would] all come home.

Rose: Yeah, they'd come home half way through and we would be like [sigh] (*laughter*).

Joseph: And you would feel awkward because you are at their table.

Rose: Yeah and you thought you had to get out of the way (joint interview 23 April 2008).

In their study on the ways in which household members negotiate the boundaries of privacy and intimacy in shared accommodation, Kenyon and Heath (2001 631) found that:

'Quiet nights in', such as watching a video together or having a romantic dinner for two, were virtually impossible to achieve without complicated advance arrangement with other residents, and achieving time alone for any significant length of time could often only be managed by retreating to bedrooms.

Rebecca and Tim similarly explain that they would never consider having a romantic dinner at home because they live with so many people. They have lived in their current flat, which they share with five flatmates, for two months. Tim says:

Tim: I suppose we wouldn't have a romantic night in, it would be a romantic night out and then come back and just be in her room [Rebecca agrees]. When we do that we go out somewhere, do what we do and then come back [home] (joint interview 09 April 2008).

For couples living with others in a flatting situation, the negotiation of privacy within home is an issue of central importance, particularly with regards to intimate sexual expression. Given that home is typically constructed and experienced as a 'private' space away from the 'public' world, home, for many people, is a key site of intimacy and sexual expression.

Feminist geographers have shown that the public/private binary that surrounds home does not hold (Blunt and Dowling 2006; Duncan 1996). Home as a private space continues to be subject to exterior, and in the case of flatting, interior monitoring and controls. Home is not always a site of sexual freedom (Gorman-Murray 2008c; Johnston and Valentine 1995) even for those who occupy normative socio-sexual positionalities. For participants who live with flatmates, home space does not necessarily facilitate intimate sexual practices. The sexual politics and spatial dynamics of flatting means privacy can be difficult to negotiate. In flatting situations, privacy is contingent upon a variety of things including power relations, spatial proximity, the design and structure of the dwelling, and various other functions which disintegrate the public/private boundaries of home (see also Herman 2007).¹²¹ Here, Marie talks about their living situation and how flatting influences their sex-life:

Marie: Sometimes you know [you] just feel like having sex ... but maybe there are other people sitting in the lounge, or you know even if you would like to have sex in another place [in the house], but you know that people are coming back,

¹²¹ At this point, I think it is crucial to reiterate that participants do not have children. Research shows that the negotiation of privacy within home space is potentially more complex for households with children (Dowling 2008; Munro and Madigan 1993).

you can't really get into it because people might [see/hear] ... it is really obvious [if we left and went into our bedroom] and I mean, not that I mind, but then on the other side I do 'cause it's just, then it's not spontaneous anymore. It's a bit constrained and it is not so much fun (follow-up interview 15 May 2008).

The distribution of power through equal access to all communal parts of the house means that Marie does not have the time and space to freely perform her sexuality. Living with other people means that there is a constant possibility that their time-space for sex will be interrupted. Marie enjoys the spontaneity of intimacy and in this way, the creation of time-space for sex is just as important as the sex-act itself. The intimate pleasures that drive Marie's sexual practices are, in part, spatial. In her diary, Marie considers the make-up of their household and the impact it has on the dynamics of their sex-life in more detail, writing:

It's Saturday today. After sleeping in, Paul and I went to the Farmers' Market to have a look at what it's like. Afterwards, Paul and I prepared lunch, another thing which is an important and relaxing thing to 'do' since we met. Usually, when we are at home we make love afterwards. But flatting doesn't always make it very easy because as a couple, you don't have as much space as [is] sometime[s] needed. It's hard to explain what I mean. But the love felt at home is influenced by the flatting situation! (diary entry 18 April 2008).

Marie and Paul change their usual Saturday routine to accommodate the presence of their flatmates. She suggests that these homemaking rituals – preparing and eating lunch together and then having sex – are important to the ongoing development of their relationship. In addition to the problems associated with the material design of their house, which I discussed in chapter 5, the spatial dynamics of flatting means, however, that they do not have the space – both aurally and physically – to have sex. Marie feels as though their

sexual needs are not being spatially met. This demonstrates further the mutual constitution of heterosexuality and home and the ways in which bodies within the dwelling are subject to social norms beyond the house. Wider societal discourses on sexuality infiltrate the boundaries of home and mediate Marie's corporeal experiences and understandings of domestic space. She is located within a specific cultural context which ties notions of heterosexual intimacy to spaces of domestic privacy.

Sheree has also experienced the fragility of public-private distinctions of home. Sheree and her husband, Alex, have lived by themselves for several years but when they recently purchased their first house they decided to get a flatmate in order to help with the increased costs associated with their mortgage. Below, she considers a time when she heard her flatmate having sex:

I think the example that first comes to my mind is the whole issue over [our flatmate] getting it on in his room. It did feel like it invaded my space as I was lying in bed and it was one of those 'can't help but listen' scenarios. I think if we rented the house, so therefore the room wouldn't be 'mine' as in 'owner' then maybe I wouldn't have felt so weird, like he was doing it in MY room. I've had flatmates in rented houses before that have been 'vocal' and this didn't seem to be a hassle, just hard to go to sleep and kinda funny lol! [Laugh out loud] ... I think it's also maybe to do with the thought of other people engaging in intimacy that you don't usually think about, like being naked, this kind of thing is out of the ordinary yet images flood into your head whether you want them to or not (personal email correspondence 11 February 2009, upper-case in original).

Sheree links the unease she feels at hearing their flatmate having sex to home ownership. In previous flatting situations, where they have not been owner occupiers and flatmates have had the freedom to exercise the same degree of power and agency, incidences of overheard sex have prompted amusement as

opposed to discomfort. Home ownership means that although the bedroom is not her space in the sense that it is not where she sleeps and stores her possessions, it still 'belongs' to her. As a result, she feels as though her space – physical, material, and aural – has been invaded. She also notes that it is the “thought” of her flatmate engaging in sexually intimate actions which makes her feel uneasy. Hearing his intimate sounds of sex conjures up an array of associated images which she does not usually think about. It is thus a combination of the intimate sounds of sex, the images in her head, and her position as owner occupier which makes Sheree feel uncomfortable.

Just as houses are consumed, they are also sites of consumption. In the second half of this chapter, I move to discuss the everyday geographies of household consumption and the role it plays in the mutual constitution of heterosexual love and home.

Consuming love: domestic consumption and heterosexual relationships

One of the ways that the public/private boundaries of home are disintegrated is through the consumption of household goods. Valentine (2001 87) suggests that the consumption of domestic objects increases the “permeability of domestic boundaries” because it links household members to wider social, economic and political structures. Similarly, Miller (2001 1) points out: “It is the material culture within our home that appears as both our appropriation of the larger world and often as the representation of that world within our private domain.” Participants’ consumption processes and patterns give insights into the links between subjectivities, love, space, place and power at the site of the household and beyond.

Jackson and Thrift (1995) note that the processes of consumption are integral for furthering understandings of people and place. Geographers understand consumption as more than simply the purchasing and use of goods and services. Instead, they examine consumption as a productive act and as a set of social practices which (re)make gendered, sexed, ‘raced’, and classed subjectivities and spaces (Del Casino 2009). Consumption, then, is a “productive and reproductive

social practice caught up in the everyday politics of social identity” (Del Casino 2009 231). Increasingly, geographers are directing their attention to the ways in which the specificities of particular spaces and scales of consumption are implicated in the processes of subjectivity construction (Crewe 2000).

Early studies into the sites and spaces of consumption have had a spatially narrow focus, looking primarily at ‘spectacular sites’ such as the department store, shopping mall and theme park (Crewe 2000; Jackson and Thrift 1995). Recent work in geographies of consumption, however, is characterised by a focus on the mundane, ordinary and everyday. Particularly significant here, is the growing body of work which identifies home and the domestic sphere as an important site of consumption (Marston 2000; Reimer and Leslie 2004; Valentine 1999a). While geographers have long been interested in the consumption of housing they are beginning to explore the processes of household consumption. Buying a house is not an everyday practice, but shopping for home goods is. There is now a range of studies across the social sciences which question the ways in which household goods are appropriated in the everyday spaces of the home. Notable examples include: domestic food consumption (Bell and Valentine 1997; Longhurst *et al.*, 2009; Valentine 1999a); household furnishings (Cieraad 1999; Miller 1998; Reimer and Leslie 2004); and home shopping (Clarke 1997; Kitchin 1998). While it was over a decade ago that Leslie and Reimer (1999) made the claim that the links between the practices of home consumption and subjectivity construction are under-examined empirically, I suggest that there is still much more research to be done.

The decision to set up home together is an important aspect of many relationships (Kemmer *et al.*, 1998). Indeed, moving into a house together often represents the creation of a shared subjectivity as an in-love, cohabiting couple.¹²² Acquiring household goods is a particularly important part of

¹²² I agree with Gregson’s (2007) claim that ‘moving in’ to a new house is more than simply the actual ‘moment’ of occupation. ‘Moving in’, according to Gregson (2007 34) is a “stretched out temporal process” which is never fully complete. This perspective allows for an understanding of homemaking and subjectivity construction as ongoing and incomplete.

consolidating heterosexual love relationships, joint subjectivity construction and home production. The links between domestic consumption and collective household subjectivities have not been thoroughly explored by geographers. Reimer and Leslie (2004) note that studies into the specificities of consumption have focused primarily upon the creation of self as opposed to joint subjectivities. However, as Valentine (1999a 492) points out, in relation to food consumption processes, the home is:

a site of individual, but also collective (household or 'family') consumption, where the goods purchased and the meaning and uses ascribed to them are negotiated, and sometimes contested, between household members.

Miller (1998; 2001) makes a number of important contributions to understanding domestic consumption as a collective, rather than individual act. Miller (1998) sees commodities as the material culture of love and argues that far from being an individualistic expression of self, the practices of consumption are in fact a practice oriented towards others. He makes the point that: "There are many conflicts between agency expressed by the individual, by the family, the household, and not least ... the house itself, that make the private more a turbulent sea of constant negotiation rather than simply some haven for the self" (Miller 2001 4). Household consumption affords a unique opportunity to examine the relationship between gendered and sexed bodies, love and objects because it is a space of both individual and collective consumption, where the goods purchased and the meanings and emotions embedded in them are negotiated between partners.

Shopping together and jointly purchasing objects to decorate a house is a means by which love is constituted through practice and is a specific act of homemaking. Nearly all participants, especially women respondents, express excitement about choosing house décor together as a couple. Sheree for instance, explains that she enjoys shopping together with Alex for household goods:

Carey-Ann: Going out and shopping together to buy things to make your home, is that important for your relationship?

Sheree: Yeah, that's what I was going to say ... like being able to share the excitement of 'oh let's go TV shopping'. And even things like 'oh let's go drier shopping' or 'washing machine shopping.' Things that I never thought I would have got excited about [when I was younger and before my relationship with Alex] (joint interview 30 April 2008).

Sheree links the purchasing of household goods to relationship growth. She describes domestic household consumption as exciting because it symbolises the development of their relationship. In this way, shopping for household items is represented as a material marker of the decision to create a life together. Lizzy and Zane similarly note that joint home consumption is an exciting aspect of homemaking:

Carey-Ann: So do you think there are any particular objects that symbolise your shared identity?

Lizzy: The stuff we bought together like the couches, [the] kitchen stuff, like all that sort of thing, like stuff you buy together I think is, what's the first thing we ever bought together? [Was it the] the blender? [Talking to Zane].

Zane: Yeah, we got a blender.

Lizzy: Like four years after [we started] going out we bought a blender and then a house ... it's exciting [buying household goods]. It is really exciting, like because it makes you feel grown up, and to have a nice lounge suite [it means] I've really grown up (joint interview 22 April 2008).

Here, Lizzy and Zane articulate domestic consumption as a symbol of ageing. Del Casino (2009 215) explores the construction of adulthood in relation to everyday

practices of consumption, noting: “it is through the practices of consumption that mid-life adults reproduce themselves and others (children, friends, colleagues) as particular types of aged subjects.” Del Casino (2009) concludes that the spaces and practices of consumption are deeply entwined with aged-based practices, like buying a house and goods for it. Bell (2009 116) similarly suggests that: “‘settling down’, or ‘living together ... are markers of maturity, of adulthood.” Lizzy constructs her desire to purchase certain household goods as symbolic of the transition from ‘childhood’ to ‘adulthood.’¹²³ She suggests that there are certain household objects, like a “nice lounge suite” for instance, that may not have been purchased when she was younger.

For Rose and Joseph, shopping for household goods when they first moved into their house together further cemented their subjectivity as a couple. Rose explains:

Rose: I think part of it is the commitment of buying something together and when you go out and look at a fridge and a couch or something like that, it is actually that feeling of we’re buying this together. It is kind of like a statement we’re going to be together to use this thing, and otherwise it would be pointless buying it and having to split it up I guess six months later. So it is that little bit scary, little bit exciting kind of statement I guess, the commitment of it (joint interview 23 April 2008).

Rose uses the very act of shopping for domestic objects to mark the development of their relationship. She suggests it is a “statement” which demonstrates to others – family, friends, and other shoppers – that they are committed to the relationship and to making a home together. The “statement” Rose refers to could be understood as a reference to the ubiquitous socio-sexual

¹²³ I use these terms tentatively given that age, like gender, sexuality and ‘race’, is socially constructed with expectations about young and old bodies, and what they can and cannot do, differing across time and place (Del Casino 2009; Valentine 2001).

love story whereby a young man and woman fall in love, move in and make a home together. In this way, Rose and Joseph's, as well as the two other couples', home consumption practices reproduce the domestic spaces of heteronormativity. 'Appropriately' gendered and sexed roles and subjectivities are mapped on to their bodies, their consumption practices, and on to the spaces they occupy. These examples reiterate the privileged lives of some young, middle-class, heterosexual couples. The spaces of domestic consumption are taken-for-granted as spaces of heterosexual love and relationship consolidation. The mundane social practices and performances in 'public' spaces of consumption, such as homeware stores, reproduce specific sexed and gendered subjectivities and spaces.

Shopping for household goods, then, can be understood as a 'public' performance of heterosexual coupledom. 'Public' spaces of home consumption are markers of heterosexual couplehood (although see Gorman-Murray 2006a). The production of social relations in 'public' spaces of domestic consumption is connected to the processes of subjectivity formation within the home, and vice versa. The everyday practices of consumption are a means by which people reproduce themselves and the places they occupy (Del Casino 2009). 'Public' spaces of domestic consumption or 'home spaces beyond home' reinforce critical geographical knowledges about domestic space as multi-scalar (Blunt and Dowling 2006).

Home spaces beyond home

Several participants talk about 'home spaces beyond home'. Angie, for example, shares a story with me about their shopping practices at home renovation stores when she and Cooper moved into their first house. In their study on DIY practices in New Zealand, Mackay *et al.*, (2007 2) found that "first-time owner-occupiers were among the most ardent DIY practitioners; this enthusiasm was particularly notable in their rich descriptions of buying and then 'transforming' their first house into a home." Angie expresses similar enthusiasm for shopping for household goods. Here, she explains that the act of shopping together, when

they first moved in to their house, was a particularly important way of developing their relationship:

Carey-Ann: How do you use your home to strengthen and maintain your relationship?

Angie: When we first moved in [to our current house] we were at Bunnings [a large warehouse which sells 'home improvement' products] like every weekend, getting little things and we would forget things and go back and we were looking at all the stuff that we could do. So we would go and look at things, and I mean we would even go and look at things that we already had to see what else [was available], like we have a nice bathroom but we went and looked at other ones to see and we quite like doing things like that and dreaming about things together and we often talk about if we built a home together how things might be and where things might be and stuff like that (first interview 30 April 2008).

Angie discusses domestic consumption as an utterly shared project through her constant reference to "we." In total, the word "we" appears 12 times in this quote. There is no sense that she likes shopping for household goods more than Cooper or that she makes more of the decisions about what to purchase. Homemaking, in this situation, is constructed as a uniformly shared task.

The shopping centre Angie refers to – Bunnings Warehouse – is a large home renovation complex. Mackay *et al.*, (2007 3) note that the creation of the "one-stop home improvement superstore", such as Bunnings Warehouse, has been one of the most significant DIY-industry developments in New Zealand. The Bunnings Warehouse website claims to have "the widest range of home improvement products" and stocks a range of goods including tools for professional tradespeople, advice and services for DIY-ers, as well as homeware goods like kitchen appliances and home furnishings (Bunnings 2009). Home

renovation stores, like Bunnings Warehouse, bridge the gap between hardware shops, which are typically deemed to be masculine spaces, and homeware shops, which are traditionally associated with women. Indeed, home renovation shops provide heterosexual men with a space where they are able to engage in processes of home consumption without transgressing acceptable notions of heteronormative masculinity.¹²⁴ Similarly, women are increasingly entering these spaces, and engaging in 'making home' activities, which have been typically constructed as 'masculine.' Bunnings Warehouse, for example, offers a 'lady's DIY night' which claims to be able to "give you the confidence and ammunition to tackle those 'odd jobs' around the house" (Bunnings 2009). These consumption spaces produce an environment where corporeality is socially, sexually and discursively produced.¹²⁵ The 'cultural' environment of home renovation stores inscribes and constructs the 'natural' materiality of bodies that love and/to shop. Conceptualising home renovation shops in this way affords an opportunity to document the performative corporealities within such spaces giving further insights into the homemaking and subjectivity construction processes of heterosexual couples in spaces beyond the dwelling.

Bunnings Warehouse and other such home renovation stores are becoming increasingly popular places of heterosexual domesticated coupledness.¹²⁶ Despite the apparent diversification of normative notions of home to include a range of sexual subjectivities, practices and activities, in particular gay men in relation to

¹²⁴ See Mansvelt (2005) for a brief discussion on the gendering of domestic consumption. Using examples from the UK and New Zealand, she demonstrates the link between masculinity and household 'tools,' such as lawn mowers, rather than household 'appliances' which are constructed as feminine and associated with the domestic sphere. She draws on Scanlon's (2000) work to argue that certain household 'tools', like barbeque equipment, allow men to engage in domestic processes of homemaking without compromising their heterosexual masculinised subjectivity.

¹²⁵ Home renovation stores attempt to cater for a wide variety of shoppers and this means that the materialities of such spaces often reflect the perceived subjectivities and needs of shoppers. For example, it is not uncommon to see children's play areas in home renovation stores. Cafés are also becoming a regular fixture in many of these stores.

¹²⁶ There are three major home renovation companies operating in Hamilton: Bunnings Warehouse (www.bunnings.co.nz/); Mitre 10 Mega (www.mitre10.co.nz/); and Placemakers (www.placemakers.co.nz/).

home design and styling (Gorman-Murray 2006d), home renovation stores continue to be spaces of heteronormativity.¹²⁷ On any given weekend, Bunnings Warehouse is filled with mainly (young) heterosexual couples shopping for a variety of household goods. I can certainly attest to this as more often than not my partner and I are in Bunnings Warehouse on Saturday mornings! On a personal note, this time spent shopping together is important for our relationship as we make joint decisions about the creation of our home. It also demonstrates the ongoing centrality of home to the production of normative heterosexuality in Hamilton. When partners shop together for household goods their heterosexual relationships, power and privilege are constituted and consolidated through spatial practices. In these instances, consumption spaces and notions of home, homemaking and relationship activities continue to be normatively heterosexualised.

Clearly, there is a socio-economic dimension to household consumption. I am aware that I am focusing on people who have the ability to choose what goods come into their homes and to control their material constitution. Consumption is indeed a practice that reinforces social and spatial differences and inequalities (Del Casino 2009). Given participants' relative affluence, visiting home renovation stores and shopping for household goods is a pleasurable shared leisure activity. This stands in stark contrast to the homemaking activities of poorer households. Several of Bondi and Christie's (2000 338) participants, for example, found that economic constraint restricted their lifestyle choices, and lack of money severely affected their ability to perform even the most basic homemaking practices: "Most women highlighted the severity of their plight by discussing the lack of money available to buy food for their families ... Money for clothes, pocket money for children, trips or days out, were all not-existent."

¹²⁷ The discursive power operating in these spaces may also exclude certain bodies based on age, dis/ability, 'race', ethnicity, culture and so on. For example, all the signage in Bunnings Warehouse is in English despite the cultural and ethnic diversity of Hamilton. Sibley (1995b) notes that exclusionary practices in the spaces of everyday life play an important role in understanding the ways in which power is exercised in society because such practices are often taken-for-granted as an ordinary part of daily life. He uses the example of white, middle class family consumption in large British shopping malls to demonstrate the ways in which the Other is excluded.

Shopping for household goods, which may not be necessary for the functioning of everyday life but make houses easier and more 'attractive' to live in, is a lifestyle choice and practice of middle-class home owners. It is an expression of middle-class subjectivity (Clarke 2001).

Housing tenure also influences home consumption practices. Participants who discuss DIY as a form of homemaking and consumption typically own their houses. Clarke (2001 28) explains: "the representation of home decorating as a widely accessible, playful and celebratory leisure pursuit has become commonplace but it remains implicitly tied to property ownership." Indeed, in New Zealand there is a strong association between home ownership and home decorating (Leonard *et al.*, 2004).

Idealised discourses about heterosexual love and shared domestic space penetrate the boundaries of home and encourage households to portray homemaking as a shared and negotiated task. Reimer and Leslie (2004 197) make the point that couples "often construct apparently uniform narratives" when discussing how they choose household goods. Many couples in this research narrate home consumption as a uniformly shared project. Compatibility in the context of home design and décor is deemed to be instrumental to expressing and consolidating love.

Compatible couples

Miller (1998) suggests that for heterosexual couples who present themselves as relatively egalitarian it is important to emphasise a commonality of taste in domestic furnishings. Several participants speak to the centrality of cordial and negotiated decision making in relation to domestic consumption and their subjectivity as a couple. Angie, for example, points out that one of the main reasons why she and Cooper are compatible and make a "good couple" is because they are able to make decisions *together*. She says:

Angie: We pretty much usually decide on things, we make a lot of joint decisions together ... I think we are quite a good

couple in that way, I don't know what other couples are like, but we make a lot of decisions together really, we kind of discuss it and go 'oh what would be good' and things like that (first interview 30 April 2008).

Angie stresses the egalitarian processes of shopping together for household goods. As noted earlier, she narrates home consumption as a shared venture and intimates that they come to joint decisions easily. Lizzy and Zane also reflect on domestic consumption as a completely shared process. Here, they explain that household items, which are specifically used for shared homemaking activities like DIY, are chosen together:

Lizzy: With lots of things like paint, all the renovation stuff as well, then we'll go together. Nine times out of 10, [we will] pick things together aye [speaking to Zane]? And the one time you did pick the handles in the shower by yourself you had to take them back because they were ugly.

Zane: Yeah, they were.

Lizzy: But things like that are definitely a joint decision (joint interview 22 April 2008).

For Lizzy and Zane, domestic objects represent their subjectivity as a couple and speak to their suitability and compatibility. The one time Zane attempts to shop on his own he purchases "ugly" shower handles which suggests a division in their shared consumption and household design tastes, but even this is a way for Zane and Lizzy to portray consumption as a unified project. After purchasing the handles, Zane concedes that they were ugly and they both agree that Zane had made the wrong choice. Lizzy and Zane erase a possible point of difference in order to re-establish this particular consumption practice as grounded within joint decision making. For these two couples, then, as well as many other respondents, their ability to make decisions together and their joint provisioning

strategies are important expressions of their shared subjectivity as a compatible couple in love (Miller 1998).

For some participants who are not in the position to shop for household goods, because of financial or housing tenure conditions, shopping together as a couple is something they aspire to when they move into their 'ideal home.' 'Ideal homes' exist somewhere in the near to distant future. They connect couples to houses and homemaking practices beyond the dwelling. Clarke (2001 28) contends:

'ideal homes' conjured up by middle-class home owners, are not just trivial fantasies about a perceived aesthetic style or associated social aspiration, rather they offer an idealized notion of 'quality of life' and an idealized form of sociality. Furthermore, these daydreams directly inform the construction, provisioning and aspirations of the lived home, allowing the occupants to begin to actualize beyond the limitations of their particular domesticity.

Ideal homes assume specific dwelling structures and household relations (Blunt and Dowling 2006). Joint processes of home consumption are an important constituent of idealised notions of home. Spending time together thinking, talking about, and looking at household items for their 'ideal' home is an important activity which, for some couples, consolidates their love and facilitates their shared subjectivity. Donna, for example, explains: "I think if we moved into a new place that would also be part of the consolidating home, like making the decisions together and joint purchases but we don't really have that much [household stuff] yet" (first interview 17 October 2008). Given that Donna and Mark feel like they are unable to publically perform their coupledness in many everyday spaces, ordinary homemaking activities, such as shopping together, take on particular significance. Donna writes about this in her diary, explaining:

[We] spent time together looking at houses for sale online. First time we've really done that! Went for a drive and none of the houses looked that great but we're planning on going to three

open homes¹²⁸ in the weekend to get a sense of what we like and what it'll cost us. Again, I'm enjoying the feeling of working together for our future, with the added excitement of being able to really create a home together. I think our current place, although definitely a home, still feels a bit like a flat with a mosaic of 'stuff' around the place. Creating a new home together will be like setting up a definitive foundation for our future (diary entry 20 October 2008).

Several respondents, particularly women participants, discuss their hopes for the future highlighting what they consider to be an 'ideal' or 'dream' home.¹²⁹ Sophia, for instance, shares the following story with me about her dreams for the future with her partner, Alec:

Carey-Ann: When you do get your 'dream home', and when you go shopping for [goods to go in] your 'dream home', do you think that those kinds of activities are going to be important for your relationship?

Sophia: Oh doing it together, I would like to do it together, not me going and buying curtains alone, because I would like to integrate our tastes which would make the home so much more homely. Like it would be ours. Even though, let's say, I would pay for the lounge suite, but I know that both of our tastes [are included because] we agreed on it (joint interview 24 April 2008).

¹²⁸ Open homes are a selling technique used by home owners and real estate agents. In an open home, potential buyers are able to enter and view the house.

¹²⁹ The desire to own a 'dream house' is deeply embedded in New Zealand's social imaginaries of home. TVNZ (Television New Zealand) has tapped into this cultural phenomenon with the television show *Mitre 10 Dream Home*. *Mitre 10 Dream Home* challenges two young (heterosexual) families to design and renovate two relocated houses. At the end of the series, one family wins their 'dream home' and the other family has a chance at bidding for their house at auction. The television series is very popular and is in its 10th season.

Sophia stresses the importance of shopping together for goods like “curtains” when they move into their “dream home.” What is particularly interesting, however, is the way she slips between her own desires and their aspirations as a couple. *She* wants to shop together with Alec and *she* wants to integrate both their tastes, but for the good of *their* home. She thinks that shopping together will make their home more “homely.” Sophia views joint provisioning and integration of their individual tastes as a homemaking practice which will consolidate their love for one another and turn their house into a home.

Similarly, when I query married couple Linda and Jeff about their shopping dynamics and whether or not they will change when they move in to their ‘dream home’ they both talk about the importance of shopping together. In their current house, which they rent, they follow normatively gendered consumption patterns. They explain that Linda does most of the shopping for household furnishings because she likes to shop and Jeff does not. They both envision, however, that shopping will be a joint project when they move in to their ‘dream home’, which of course, they will jointly own.

Carey-Ann: And so do you think that when you ... get your ‘dream home’, do you think ... going out and shopping together and deciding on things, do you think that is going to happen? And if it does happen will it be [an] important part of your relationship?

Jeff: We will go out [shopping] together.

Linda: Yeah we will definitely do it together. It won’t be like, if you want to be stereotypical, like the wife will go shopping and do these things. We will definitely do it together (joint interview 16 April 2008).

Further discussion reveals why Linda and Jeff place such importance on shopping together as a homemaking activity beyond their current dwelling. When they

married in 2005 they did not register for wedding gifts.¹³⁰ Since that time, Linda has been particularly curious as to what they will do when the time comes for them to buy household goods together. When I ask them what they think will happen when they do shop for goods for their 'dream home', Linda becomes animated and visibly excited. She repositions her body on the couch so she is facing Jeff and takes the opportunity to direct the conversation at him rather than me.

Linda: I always wonder what we are going to do. Because when we got married we didn't register, so we didn't get gifts, we just got money, because we had been living together and it was a bit like ...

Jeff: And we didn't have a house for all these things.

Linda: But I've still always wondered if we were to register for something, what would we agree on? Because we kind of have different tastes on a lot of things.

Jeff: What would end up happening is we would start with, we would eventually find ourselves starting with the kitchen things, just because we could agree on that.

Linda: But even the pattern on the china, would we agree?

Jeff: But on actual items we would need. I'm not fussed, usually, about what patterns are on what or whether they all match.

Linda: I'm fussed.

¹³⁰ See Otnes and Pleck (2003) for a useful description and history of the wedding register. They suggest the registry combines "rationality and efficiency with wish fulfilment and desire, the registry systematically enables guests to find gifts for the couple. The registry is used as a guide to purchase gifts for the shower and the wedding; guests who attend showers are expected to give two sets of gifts, although the shower gift is usually thought of as less expensive than the wedding present" (Otnes and Pleck 2003 75).

Jeff: I know (*laughter*) (joint interview 16 April 2008).

In this exchange fractures appear in the narration of a uniform subjectivity. On the one hand, Jeff suggests that they would find common ground on kitchen equipment because they both share a love of cooking. Linda, on the other hand, is unsure about whether they would see eye-to-eye because she is concerned or “fussed” about form – the “pattern on the china” – whilst Jeff would direct his attention to function – “actual items we would need.” Linda and Jeff show that household consumption is not always a uniformly shared project. Instead, it can “be a site of contestation, even for couples who emphasize the shared projects of homemaking, or stress that compromise between two people is necessary” (Reimer and Leslie 2004 201).

Reimer and Leslie (2004 198) argue: “it can be difficult to unpack potential differentiations between individually directed and family-orientated home consumption.” One of the ways that it is possible to distinguish between individually and jointly desired household objects in the context of cohabitating heterosexual couples is through conversations about the gendered divisions of household consumption.

She likes, he likes: gendered divisions of household consumption

The socially constructed relationship between gender and household consumption has been examined by geographers (Leslie and Reimer 1999; 2003). Gregson and Crewe (1998 83) argue, for instance, in relation to second-hand car boot consumption: “men and women sell different things, they buy different things and they even look at different things.” When prompted to talk about their household shopping practices, some participants highlight the gendered differences and power dynamics in joint household consumption processes. Kylie and Luke, for example, note that they have differing levels of interest in household consumption:

Luke: Practical housey stuff [Kylie] will just buy because I wouldn't have a clue [what we need]. Well I might have a bit of a clue but probably not that good.

Kylie: But you don't really have an interest [in homeware] or know what we need either. [You don't know] if we need a new roasting dish or not.

Luke: Yeah, [I'm] just not that interested (joint interview 19 May 2008).

Kylie and Luke essentialise household consumption as a feminine practice. This is perhaps unsurprising given that the role of the consumer is often constructed as a feminine one (Domosh and Seager 2001; Dowling 1993). Dowling (1993 295) argues: "Consumption, defined as activities surrounding the purchase and use of commodities, is central to the lives of women and the constitution of femininity." Kylie goes on to explain that she is the one who is primarily responsible for the day-to-day household provisioning and this includes shopping for food:

Kylie: We will usually go to the supermarket together but I think that I am usually in charge of the decision process, he is the trolley pusher ... I usually do that and the packing it all [at the supermarket] and stuff, but which is weird, because now that I think about it, when we get home I am the one that usually has to unpack it all and put it all in the cupboard, I guess where I want them (follow-up interview 15 August 2008).

Kylie enjoys the power she maintains over what they purchase – "I am usually in charge of the decision process" – and dismisses Luke's position as the "trolley pusher" to assistance. She views this division of labour as benefitting her. Domosh and Seager (2001) note the association of femininity with material goods and consumption is, in some instances, a source of power for women. Kylie is seemingly in a position of power because she gets to decide what they

purchase and what they will eat. However, the control she has over their consumption practices beyond the dwelling works to disguise Luke's non-involvement in domestic chores when they return home. Her power is thus nested within a layer of unequal gendered domestic labour. When Kylie realises that their seemingly joint home consumption practices may not necessarily be in her favour, she re-works the power imbalance in an attempt to recast herself in a position of power. She does this by pointing out that she gets to decide where to put the newly purchased food goods on their return home.

For Donna, grocery shopping is not a shared activity and instead she does the weekly food shop by herself. This revelation came up in relation to a question I asked about their dinner-time routine.

Carey-Ann: So what usually happens at meal-time?

Donna: I think one of the reasons that I often cook is that I am often home before Mark is and also because I do the food shopping I kind of have it in my head what we have and there is a few meals that I make regularly and I will always make sure we have got the ingredients when we, when I go shopping.

Carey-Ann: So you go shopping by yourself?

Donna: Yeah I go by myself.

Carey-Ann: Why? Why is that?

Donna: I think it's partly the not wanting to be seen together ... I would say that's the main reason. I don't mind going by myself, like I am fine with it but I thought it would be kind of nice if every now and then we could go together (first interview 17 October 2008).

Donna employs a common tactic whereby she negates unequal domestic labour practices to a matter of coincidence; she is usually home first so she does the

majority of the cooking. This unequal division of domestic labour within domestic space flows on to effect their domestic consumption practices beyond the dwelling. In addition to being the only one in their household who knows what they require from the supermarket, their concerns about being seen together in public means that Donna does the grocery shopping alone, without the help of Mark. Donna gives the impression that Mark's lack of involvement in this particular homemaking practices is not an effect of gendered divisions of home. Rather, it is a necessary measure they, as a couple, need to take in order to ensure their relationship remains closeted. Donna is not the only woman participant who does the grocery shopping on her own; grocery shopping is also Angie's responsibility:

Angie: Big items are always done together but smaller stuff is usually done by me. And I tend to do the [grocery] shopping as well ... [Cooper] doesn't like shopping so (//)

Carey-Ann: I like shopping (//)

Angie: Yeah I like it too. But sometimes [Cooper] comes and I like it when he comes, and when he comes he doesn't mind it but he doesn't like to come every time. But I usually go with my friend who doesn't have a car. I suppose it is a chore. I haven't thought about it like that before.

Carey-Ann: So you're not going shopping by yourself?

Angie: Yeah, it's usually kind of like a fun thing, [my friend and I] usually go and have a coffee and then go and do the [grocery] shopping. So it's usually a thing we do every week which is a fun thing to do. So I don't mind doing it. I hate having to bring it all home and unpack it (*laughter*) but the looking and the buying and the choosing, that's fine (*laughter*) (first interview 30 April 2008).

Angie uses Cooper's dislike for grocery shopping as a reason for his minimal input. I suspect that Cooper does not enjoy grocery shopping because he views it as a chore. Angie also considers the possibility that grocery shopping is a chore. She does, however, negate the chore-like aspects of grocery shopping by turning it in to a social outing with a friend.

Both Donna and Angie would like it if their respective partners joined them occasionally on the weekly shopping trip. Their partners' involvement would most likely make the task easier and potentially more enjoyable. As discussed earlier, many participants use and experience the act of shopping as a performative practice of love. It seems that Donna and Angie would like the opportunity to use grocery shopping as a means through which to constitute and consolidate their relationships and shared subjectivities as couples.

Lizzy and Zane's shopping practices also give insights into the gendered power dynamics of household consumption. Here, they note that when it comes to buying new household goods, Lizzy has the control over the financial parameters of their decisions:

Lizzy: Zane wants to get a new TV but we've just bought all the kitchen [equipment], like we were just paying off the kitchen appliances, like the dishwasher and the big things, and I said 'well after everything is paid off, in like five months, we can get a TV.'

Zane: Pretty much [what happens is] I ask if we can buy something and Lizzy says yes or no (joint interview 22 April 2008).

Traditionally, it has been men who have had power over household finances. Madigan *et al.*, (1990 637) explain "women are more likely to be poor ... they are likely to share unequally in the power over household finances." It seems that Lizzy, however, is the one who has control of their daily finances. Like Lizzy, Rose

also has the power to agree to or decline Joseph's requests for new household electrics.

Joseph: Yeah, stereos and things like that I ask Rose how much I am allowed to spend. [I ask her] what's the most I could spend on a stereo or what's the, where's the line?

Rose: And then he'll go a couple of hundred [dollars] above it (joint interview 23 April 2008).

It is significant that the purchasing of some household goods requires negotiated decision making between partners whilst others do not. It is suggested by many participants that 'large' purchases – TVs, stereos – need to be shopped for and purchased together. Everyday household consumption, however, is deemed not to require the same level of shared input. The different consumption practices suggest that certain domestic objects are valued more than others and this reflects gendered values of home. The fact that more expensive, large leisure goods, which are normatively associated with men, require negotiated decision making between partners suggests they have a high level of value attached to them. It seems, however, that household goods typically associated with women – "practical housey stuff" (Luke, joint interview 19 May 2008) – have little worth attached to them implied by the unequal levels of emotional and economic investment. In his study on shopping and gender relations, Miller (1998 22) similarly found that women tend to be:

largely responsible for the basic provisioning of the household, while men tended to be responsible mainly for extra items that were of particular interest to themselves, but were relatively unimportant in, for example, provisioning of children.

The discursive relationship between femininity and household goods and appliances, and masculinity and household electronics, is (re)produced in homeware media such as pamphlets, magazines and television advertisements. They assume white young heterosexuality (figure 41). Of the homeware pamphlets I collected, only two images deviate from the white young

heterosexual norm; one pamphlet features a non-white heterosexual couple and the other includes an older white heterosexual couple.



Figure 41: Collage of white, young heteronormative media material. Collated and photographed by Carey-Ann Morrison

The gendering of household goods by media outlets has important implications for the ways in which subjectivity is fashioned through home consumption. Leslie and Reimer (1999 415) suggest: “Current ideas about interior decoration both reinforce traditional notions of family and femininity and reconstitute them.” A television advertisement for Harvey Norman,¹³¹ for instance, reminds viewers that they have got “something for her” and “something for him.”¹³² The phrase “something for her” is supported by an image of a bedroom suite and the phrase “something for him” is linked to a large screen television. Madigan and Munroe (1996) argue that it is no coincidence that men are the target for home-based leisure products. The association of men with household goods, such as

¹³¹ Harvey Norman is a large retailer of electrical, computer, furniture, entertainment and bedding goods. Harvey Norman has stores in both Australia and New Zealand (www.harveynorman.co.nz).

¹³² The advertisement screened at 9.29pm on Saturday 21st February 2009 on TVNZ channel 2.

televisions and stereos, reflects a gendered division of labour in which home still functions as a place of rest and play for men and work for women.

Everyday household consumption, then, continues to be highly gendered. Women respondents do most of the buying of everyday household items. They tend to be more concerned with creating a loving home space through domestic consumption than their partners. As Chapman (2001 144) suggests, however: “women are neither necessarily powerless nor intrinsically dissatisfied in the domestic sphere, and are tenacious in maintaining their control over that domain.” Women participants have control over everyday household consumption but also retain much of the power over large domestic purchases, even though the process requires shared input between partners. Domestic consumption is experienced positively by women respondents and is seen as a pleasurable aspect of homemaking. This is despite that fact that, in some instances, it contributes to the reproduction of inequitable domestic gender relations.

Summary

This chapter has sought to dissolve the public and private boundaries that surround home. It has drawn on, and contributed to, geographical arguments about the multi-scalarity of home. Home, as a spatial imaginary, extends far beyond the physical dwelling (Blunt and Dowling 2006). Indeed, homemaking practices can operate simultaneously within and across multiple sites and scales (Gorman-Murray and Dowling 2007). The focus of this chapter has been the connections between the household and homemakers, and wider social discourses, ideologies, activities, and spaces of home.

In the first half of this chapter issues of housing tenure were explored. Housing tenure is a means by which households and homemakers are connected to wider relations of power. Tenure divisions are sustained through, and help to (re)make, gendered, sexed, ‘raced’, classed, and aged subjectivities. Housing tenure also shapes material and imaginative homemaking practices and relationship

activities within the dwelling. Home ownership and flatting are the dominant forms of housing in New Zealand, each with their own complex set of socio-spatial power relations. In this section, I provided an in-depth, nuanced and critical analysis of the multifaceted ways housing tenure can impact on the construction and lived experience of heterosexual love and home. Particular attention was paid to the spatial negotiation strategies involved in shared living.

The everyday processes, spaces and subjectivities of household consumption made up the second half of the chapter. Household consumption is a useful lens through which to explore the multi-scalarity of home because it highlights the linkages between homemakers and social, economic, and political societal structures. The purchasing and acquisition of household goods is a material practice of love and contributes to the formation of couples' shared subjectivities. The spaces of household consumption, particularly home renovation stores, provide an environment for couples to publically perform love through joint homemaking activities. Home renovation stores, the bodies occupying and using such spaces, stretch the boundaries of home between 'public' and 'private' spaces. Moreover, wider idealised discourses about heterosexual love infiltrate the boundaries of home and encourage heterosexual homemakers to narrate home consumption as a uniformly shared task. This means that individual bodies that love and/to shop can be absorbed and seemingly lost within presumably shared consumption practices. Ruptures, fractures and tensions in the recounting of shared subjectivities emerge through gendered divisions of household consumption. The practices of everyday household consumption give insights into issues of gendered power and control in cohabitating heterosexual relationships.

CHAPTER 8

The Home Straight

The heteronormativity of geographical discourse means that the relationship between heterosexuality, love and home is often taken-for-granted as 'natural' and 'normal' and as such is poorly researched and not well understood. Dominant discourses of home (re)produce a monolithic version of heterosexuality that is founded upon static notions of reproduction, domesticity, monogamy and love. This research probes these epistemological and ontological assumptions. Feminist poststructuralism generates a framework for conducting a critical reading of the competing discourses, social imaginaries and embodied experiences of heterosexuality, love and home in contemporary society.

Drawing on the lived experiences of 14 heterosexual couples, and an in-depth examination of women in these couples, who live in Hamilton, New Zealand, this research presents a small snapshot of the diversity of heterosexual love and domestic experience. It is argued that the domestic spaces and subjectivities of heterosexuality are continually and mutually reproduced through everyday homemaking practices. Making the constitutive relationship between heterosexuality, love and home explicit is a political move that denaturalises and de-essentialises heterosexuality and its resulting spatial relations.

An important focus of this research has been to bring love into dialogue with heterosexuality and home. A gendered politics of knowledge construction has excluded love from much geographical discourse. It was argued that in order to understand more fully the relationship between subjectivity and domestic space for young heterosexual couples, and in particular young women in heterosexual relationships, spatialised and embodied concepts of love need to be considered. This argument has been made with the intent of offering a means to re-conceptualise the gendered and sexed body in geography. A project on 'bodies that love' disrupts the hegemony of traditional masculine, disembodied and rational knowledge.

This research has built on existing feminist geographies by examining the socio-spatial practices which produce heterosexual home space and by exploring how subjectivity and love are spatial processes. My intervention into the geographical discourses of heterosexuality, love and home has provided a space in which to challenge the heteronormativity of the geography discipline. This thesis addressed three main research objectives. First, it analysed how heterosexual couples use their homes to constitute and consolidate their sexual subjectivities and interpersonal relationships. Second, it explored the ways in which homemaking practices both confirm and contest the heteronormativity of home. Third, it considered the ways in which notions of love produce normative heterosexual femininities and spatialities of home. By focusing on heterosexuality's performative power and iterative nature, this thesis has aimed to challenge aspatial and asexual discourses of heterosexuality. This aim has been addressed throughout the theoretical, methodological and analytical sections of this work.

The research design has important implications for geographical research and epistemology. Feminist, poststructuralist and geographical theories on 'the body' have been used as a way of bringing together and extending four areas of work: geographies of home; geographies of sexualities; geographies of emotion; and sociological and feminist literature on love, romance and intimacy. A feminist poststructuralist framework provided me with the theoretical tools to problematise discursive constructions of heterosexuality, love and home. This theoretical framework holds on to the materialities of sexed bodies whilst acknowledging that bodies are always and everywhere situated within discursive and ideological systems and spaces (Johnston and Longhurst 2010). By identifying heterosexuality as a component of embodied subjectivity, I have undermined the notion that heterosexuality is incorporeal, mess and matter-free. Making gendered/sexed and sexualised bodies – the participants' and my own – explicit in the production of geographical knowledge politicises heterosexual love. It removes it from the realm of the 'natural' and unknowable.

Sexually embodying knowledge is one way to articulate resistance to disembodied, masculinist and heteronormative concepts in and of geography.

The politics of my research methods have intersected in numerous ways with feminist and poststructuralist debates. I have sought to disrupt the privileging of rational, disembodied, scientific ideologies and research practices that have dominated the discipline. I drew from four interconnected phases of qualitative feminist-inspired research: 'couple' interviews; solicited diaries and self-directed photography; follow-up interviews with women; and evaluation questionnaires. These methods helped create an embodied, emotionally situated and partial geography of heterosexual love and home. In order to challenge further notions of disembodied objectivity, I situated myself in the research process. I reflected upon the ways in which my embodied subjectivities have influenced the research encounters and outcomes. In the process, I have made a space for embodiment and emotions to be acknowledged in the research process.

The notion of scale was used as a framework for examining the homemaking practices and relationship activities of heterosexual couples. It was also used as a way of ordering the thesis content. I have been guided by Johnston and Longhurst's (2010) assertion that geographical scale is a useful way of exploring the relationship between sex, bodies and space. Moreover, geographers have shown that home, as a concept and a lived experience, is multi-scalar (Blunt and Dowling 2006; Gorman-Murray and Dowling 2007). Bringing the two arguments together, then, I explored the mutual constitution of heterosexuality, love and home at three specific spatial scales. The set of scales used in this thesis are not meant to be read as a coherent spatial structure nor are they meant to represent a definitive account of the multi-scalarity of heterosexual love and home. Instead, they offer one way, out of many, of understanding the production and lived experience of heterosexual love and home space.

This thesis focused on three overlapping and interconnected sites: body, dwelling, and household and beyond. Each scale represents a unique geography of heterosexual homemaking practices and relationship activities. The specificity

of each scale helps to contest aspatial and asexual notions of heterosexuality by locating it at specific sites of home.

The 'smallest' scale – body – was used as a platform for examining the closest and most immediate of homemaking practices. This chapter builds on and extends current geographical theorising on home by focusing explicitly on the relationship between heterosexual embodiment and domestic space. Geographies of home have not looked specifically at the scale of the body. By foregrounding corporeal specificity as an important constituent of home, this chapter (and the thesis as a whole) destabilises masculinist and disembodied geographical discourses.

Love, as it is talked about, understood, expressed, and felt by participants in this research, is thoroughly essentialised as instinctive, natural, essential, and compelling. I argued that this language of love relies on a discourse of biology which legitimises some forms of heterosexuality – domesticated monogamous relationships – as the 'natural' and 'normal' form of sexuality. Biological accounts of love legitimise heterosexuality as the normative form of sexualised subjecthood because love itself is taken to be 'natural'. The ways in which couples, and women in particular, talk about love reproduces the hegemony of romantic heterosexual domestic life. They construct love as a product of home and suggest that home is constituted through love. Conceptualising love in idealised terms leaves little space for the 'darker' side of domestic space to be acknowledged. References to domestic arguments and disturbances were rare. Participants align themselves with the 'ideal' form of heterosexual love and home. In doing so, they reproduce notions about heterosexuality and home as coherent, consistent, stable and fixed.

Hegemonic discourses of love normalise the home as the appropriate space of physical intimacy and affection. The practices of heterosexual physical intimacy, when they take place in domestic spaces of love, are bound up with discourses of normality, respectability and appropriateness. Findings suggest that home, for heterosexual couples, continues to be the primary space of physical intimacy and

affection despite wide-spread acceptance of public performances of intimate heterosexual coupledness. Home, then, takes on numerous meanings of emotional significance and represents shared intimate moments. The embodied practices of physical intimacy shape, and are shaped by, imaginaries and materialities of home. I argued that despite commonly held assumptions about the homogeneity of heterosexual intimate practice, the relationship between physical intimacy and home is varied, complex and multifaceted. In other words, heterosexual love is expressed in a variety of normative and non-normative forms of intimate touch. Likewise, different areas of home are used to facilitate intimate heterosexual practice in different ways. The practices of physical intimacy are important when thinking about the relationship between heterosexuality, love and domestic space. They work to both produce and undermine widely held notions about appropriate forms of love and intimacy in relation to home spaces.

Love, as it is expressed in this research, is also tied up with notions of 'dirt'. Corporeal dirt and domestic mess contributes to the construction of couples' subjectivities and shared home space. Bodily remnants, odours, noise, individual possessions, and other domestic mess constantly establish homes as shared and embodied spaces. The presence of corporeal dirt and domestic mess produces both positive and negative effects, gendered divisions and power relations of home. I argued that it is important to explore the diverse ways in which home is made and remade at the level of the body. The geographies of corporeal and domestic dirt provide a means for understanding the multiple ways in which heterosexual bodies are constructed and lived at home.

The second scale – dwelling – was used to provide an in-depth and detailed micro-geography of heterosexual love and daily domestic living. It focused on what heterosexual couples have and do within and to their homes. I argued that discourses of love shape, and are shaped by, the materialities of home. Building on existing geographies of home literature, this chapter focused on the material, tangible and visible articulations of heterosexuality and love within and to domestic space. Focusing on a broad set of uses, experiences and material

constructions of dwellings allows for a deeper understanding of the links between heterosexuality, love and the materialities of home.

Research on home often draws attention to the relationship between the household and the 'public' world and the ways in which home is constructed and experienced as a 'private' space. Privacy *of* the home, however, is not necessarily the same as having privacy *in* the home (Johnston and Valentine 1995). Idealised notions about love, companionship and the centrality of shared living areas are embedded in the design of houses and impact on couples' ideas about privacy in the private sphere. These norms encourage couples, particularly women participants, to suppress their own need for privacy in order to maintain an appearance of home as a uniformly shared space of love. Conversations about the demarcation of space reveal that home continues to be gendered. Men tend to emphasise their need for personal and private space while women downplay their individual needs. A variety of tactics, such as claiming ownership of the entire house and engaging in individual activities, are used – primarily by women participants – to create privacy without compromising dominant assumptions about heterosexual love and cohabitating coupledness.

I also argued that the use of domestic space narrates love and heterosexual relationships. I made a case for considering the mundane and banal in everyday life. It was argued that the everyday geographies of heterosexual love and romance are intimately tied up with the processes and spaces of everyday living. Idealised notions about heterosexual love, companionship, and shared subjectivities underlie shared homemaking practices. Ordinary homemaking routines and activities, such as cooking, cleaning, watching television, gardening, DIY, as well as romantic rituals, are deemed to be performative practices of heterosexual love. Couples tend to maintain unequal domestic labour practices and divisions through discourses of love. Their homemaking practices within the dwelling are entwined with normative notions of heterosexual love. They both challenge and reaffirm inequitable domestic gender relations.

Closely related to the creation and use of domestic space is the acquisition and display of meaningful household objects. Research shows that domestic material objects and the processes of subjectivity construction are intimately connected (Gorman-Murray 2008a; Miller 2001; Noble 2004; Young 2005b). Yet, there is little geographical work on the links between domestic goods, love, heterosexual bodies, power and privilege. Findings reveal that the process of combining individual objects in shared domestic space is normatively gendered. Women contribute the majority of household goods to the initial make-up of home and retain ongoing control over its material arrangement and constitution. In addition, I found that certain domestic objects, like 'couple' photographs for instance, are material symbols of love. Such objects are used by participants to consolidate, and sometimes hide, heterosexual relationships in shared domestic space. At the same time, household goods, such as CDs and DVDs, act as important material markers of individuality within the dwelling. While the links between domestic goods and love are clearly identified, participants are unable to draw connections between heterosexuality as a sexual subjectivity and domestic material objects. Mundane and taken-for-granted normatively gendered household items, such as clothing, movies and personal grooming products, materially signify heterosexuality. It is the ubiquitous nature of these objects, however, that means they often go unnoticed and unremarked upon, in both popular and academic discourse. Objects that identify heterosexuality are an effect of the repetition of gendered norms. As such, they tend to form the background of daily domestic life. Heterosexuality is therefore seemingly and ironically 'invisible' in terms of material domestic objects in most participants' houses.

The 'largest' scale – household and beyond – was used as a way of drawing attention to the permeability of boundaries that surround home. It showed that the household, as a set of social and spatial relations, is connected to broader social, cultural, political, and economic structures that exist beyond the physical dwelling. A key focus of this chapter was to dissolve the public and private boundaries that surround home. This is because home, despite widely held

assumptions, resists binary classifications. It is neither public nor private but a complex mixture of both (Blunt and Dowling 2006). In focusing on the ways in which heterosexual subjectivities, love, home and homemaking are bound up with, and reflective of, wider relations of societal power, this thesis builds on feminist and geographical arguments about home as multi-scalar. It provides an in-depth, focused and nuanced examination of homemaking practices within the household and beyond.

The ways in which housing tenure links households and homemakers to wider processes of social power were explored. In many Western societies, patterns in housing tenure, especially the cultural significance of home ownership, are intimately connected to the production of social divisions and inequalities. Housing tenure shapes material and imaginative homemaking practices and relationship activities. Ownership is the dominant form of housing in New Zealand and is tied to idealised – heterosexualised and ‘racialised’ – notions of home. This research has revealed that joint home ownership is used to materially signify heterosexual couples’ love and the stability and ‘success’ of their relationships. It is intimately bound up with shared subjectivity construction and relationship affirmation. The negotiation of gendered power between heterosexual partners and the ways in which it both resists and confirms heteronormative notions of home were explored. Gendered power is embedded, both materially and metaphorically, within shared domestic space and home ownership. Unequal financial investment in home ownership means that the organisation and use of domestic space requires ongoing negotiations between partners.

Flattening is the second most common form of housing in New Zealand. For couples living in a flattening situation, social power must be negotiated between partners as well as amongst flatmates. The dominance of the ‘heterosexual couple’ to the construction and lived experience of flattening affects the spatial distribution of power and material arrangement of shared domestic space. Findings reveal that couples tend to spatially dominate flats. They maintain a monopoly over communal living areas and stake claim to the largest – ‘master’ – bedroom. At

the same time, I discovered that couples feel intruded upon by the presence of flatmates and unable to perform even the most mundane of homemaking practices and relationship activities. Negotiating the boundaries of privacy and intimacy in flatting situations is influenced by the spatial dynamics and distribution of power which constitute this living arrangement. As a result, the intimate practices of heterosexual shape and are shaped by the spatial dynamics of flatting.

Consumption similarly disintegrates the boundaries of home and connects household members to wider social relations and structures (Valentine 2001). The links between household consumption and shared subjectivity formation is understudied in geography. Consumption practices and subjectivity formation in spaces beyond the dwelling are constitutive of the production of social relations within the house. Houses are typically sites of shared living and subjectivity construction. They provide an interesting locale from which to explore the practices of consumption (Valentine 1999a).

I argued that the purchasing of household goods can be thought of as a performative act of love. When partners shop together for household goods, their heterosexual relationships, power and privilege are constituted and consolidated through spatial practices. Jointly purchased household objects, whilst contributing to the material constitution of home, embody the emotional work invested in joint homemaking decisions and materially signify love. The act of shopping itself is a 'public' performance of coupledom. Likewise, 'public' spaces of home consumption, for example home renovation stores, can be understood as markers of middle-class heterosexual couplehood. 'Public' spaces of household consumption and the bodies occupying and using such spaces, shape and are shaped by the 'private' spaces of home. I also found that idealised discourses about heterosexual love and shared domestic space infiltrate the boundaries of home. Households are encouraged to narrate home consumption as a uniformly shared task. The ability to jointly decide, with little or no disagreement, about the material make-up of home is a performative expression of compatible, loving and shared subjectivities. The pervasiveness of this

discourse was evident in that it was sometimes difficult to untangle individual bodies that love and/to shop from shared practices of consumption. Gendered divisions of household consumption do, however, undermine the stability of couples' shared subjectivities. Men and women in this research like different household objects and shop for different things. The meanings attached to, and the shopping practices surrounding, different household objects reinforces gendered norms of home.

The geographies I have conveyed in this thesis aim to challenge the essentialised relationship between heterosexuality, love, and home by opening it up to social and political scrutiny. By challenge, I do not mean to ignore the fleshy materialities of heterosexual bodies that love and the ways in which they affect, and are affected by, the domestic spaces they occupy. Nor do I mean to suggest that the heteronormativity of home, love, and geography has been completely undermined or transcended. Discourses which maintain the naturalisation and normalisation of heterosexual love are continually (re)produced and sustained through a variety of social, cultural, political norms and institutions. Rather, I hope the arguments I have made in this thesis encourage further questions about heterosexual specificity, the feelings and emotions of bodies that love, and the mutually constitutive relationship that exists between heterosexuality and home.

This research is part of a growing international and interdisciplinary literature on gender and sexuality, intimacy and emotions, domestic space, housing and homemaking. It is applicable to a range of global audiences and academic communities. It makes a theoretical and empirical contribution towards feminist, social, cultural, embodied and emotional geographies by providing an explicitly heterosexualised perspective on love and home. In addition, it extends literature on intimate and familial life beyond geography by addressing issues of space and place. This research forges a new way of understanding the relationship between heterosexuality, love and domestic spaces and thereby produces some useful possibilities for future research. To conclude, I offer a few lines of geographical enquiry to build on the present thesis.

Future research

Despite recent suggestions that there is a considerable body of work which explores the geographies of heterosexuality (Hubbard 2007), I suggest that more still needs to be done *empirically* in order to understand the plurality of normative *and* non-normative heterosexual experience. Challenging traditional models of heterosexuality as essential, 'normal', aspatial and asexual requires paying increased attention to the role of emotions like love, comfort, belonging and intimacy, as well as hate, anger, fear, and dislocation, in shaping the relations between people and place. To this end, more empirically-based research needs to explore the intersections of emotions, heterosexuality and space. Robinson *et al.*, (2004 417) argue: "At present many of these [past studies on heterosexuality] have a relatively underdeveloped empirical base, particularly with regard to those aspects which are linked with the emotions: intimacy, faithfulness, commitment, personal privacy and independence." Emotions felt in and through the body shape people's experiences of place. Yet, they play an under-recognised role in sexuality studies. I think that notions of emotional embodiment can help to better understand heterosexuality as a spatially located and embodied experience.

Western social relations continue to be organised around institutionalised heterosexuality. Normative notions of heterosexuality significantly impact on the ways in which people emotionally form and experience intimate interactions and relationships, irrespective of their sexual subjectivity. Heteronormativity is a construct that, as well as repressing non-heterosexuals, imposes a particular form of sexed and gendered identification on heterosexual men and women. Scholarship on the regulation of immoral or 'scary' heterosexualities (Bell 2006; Herman 2007; Hubbard 2000) shows how the heteronormativity of social space is fostered and sustained through highly emotional responses to those heterosexual practices deemed abnormal and perverse. In contrast, less has been said about the ways in which conventional heterosexualities are emotionally affected and informed by the mores of institutionalised heterosexuality. Conforming to, or transgressing from, the heteronormative ideal

can create a variety of emotional anxieties and responses. It is these sensuous dimensions of sexual embodiment that can add to geographical understandings of normative *and* non-normative heterosexuality.

Researchers working on the geographies of heterosexuality and home might also benefit from taking heed of Valentine's (2007) discussion of the links between feminist geography and intersectionality. This approach demands paying attention to how all people and place relationships are influenced by shifting combinations of gender, sexuality, class, ethnicity, 'race', age, and so on that take place within specific hegemonic cultures and dominant socio-spatial power relations. By exploring the variations brought about by the differing intersections of social difference, a more nuanced appreciation of the spaces and embodied subjectivities of heterosexuality may be realised. Here, I offer three axes of difference that may be usefully brought into dialogue with discussions of heterosexuality and home: age; 'race' and ethnicity; and masculinity.

Geographers have been slow to explore the diverse geographies that occur across the life course (Del Casino 2009; Hopkins and Pain 2007). This thesis has focused on the homemaking practices and relationship activities of couples aged between 20-40 years. Yet, New Zealand has an ageing population (Statistics New Zealand 2006b). This means that access to suitable home-care facilities will be a growing concern for many New Zealanders in the near future. I think a further avenue to explore would be the ways in which older people's homemaking practices and relationship activities change as they move through different home spaces in the latter years of their life.

Age and ageing affects people's experiences of home. 'The home' and other 'types' of home, such as residential care facilities, have been identified as having the greatest spatial significance and emotional impact on the experiences of ageing (Del Casino 2009; Kearns and Andrews 2005). Research has been conducted on the ways in which declining health, mental and physical abilities can compromise older people's experiences of home (Dupuis and Thorns 1996), people's experience of care assistance in their own homes (Dyck *et al.*, 2005), the

experience of relocating to nursing homes or retirement villages (Hockey 1999), and the impact a death of a loved one can have on how older people in heterosexual relationships experience home (Hockey *et al.*, 2005). In addition, research has looked at the creation of home spaces for older gay men and lesbians (McHugh and Larson-Keagy 2005). What is less developed, however, is knowledge about the relationship between heterosexuality, old age and homemaking.

The sexualities of older people are a particularly understudied area in geography. For me, when thinking about the links between heterosexuality, home and old age, questions arise about the ways in which the sexualities of older people are expressed and addressed in residential care homes. Geographers are yet to explore this topic, although it has been addressed by medical researchers and practitioners (Low *et al.*, 2005). Issues of privacy are also a potential area of interest. How do spaces of residential care provide heterosexual couples with a suitable and private 'home space' where they are able to sustain their intimate geographies? Older people's sexuality is devalued in contemporary Western societies. They are often constructed as sexually inactive, un-desiring and undesirable. Yet, research shows that people remain sexually active in the latter stages of their life (Marsiglio and Donnelly 1991). In order to fully understand the diversity of heterosexual experience more attention needs to be directed to the multiple ways home is experienced and constructed across the life course.

Issues surrounding 'race' and ethnicity have been introduced briefly in this thesis. In New Zealand, ideal imaginaries of home continue to be dominated by representation of Pākehā couples and families. Further study on heterosexuality in conjunction with 'race' and ethnicity would be fruitful for reconfiguring dominant conceptions of home in New Zealand. Corporeal analyses of 'race' and ethnicity would present further challenges to representations of the naturalness of heterosexuality. Feminist and postcolonialist theories provide useful frameworks for exploring issues of gender, sex, sexuality in relation to 'race' and ethnicity.

Johnston and Longhurst (2008) identify the intersections of sexuality with postcolonialism, indigeneity, 'race' and racism as a defining feature of Australasian geographies. They make the crucial point that "in Australia and New Zealand our colonial histories and postcolonial everyday spaces mean that matters of 'race' brush against matters of sexuality in all contexts" (Johnston and Longhurst 2008 252). A number of scholars from 'down-under' have produced work on the intersections of sexuality and 'race' (August 2005; Hutchings and Aspin 2007; Johnston 2005a; Malam 2004a; 2004b; 2006; Maori Sexuality Project 2008; Underhill-Sem 2001). This work has been important for undermining the domination of white, colonial, masculine and heterosexual knowledge in geographical discourse. There are, however, endless possibilities for exploring spatialised issues of 'race', ethnicity, indigeneity and colonialism, particularly in relation to the lived experience of heterosexuality and home. Doing so, would resist and contest assumptions about the naturalness and normality of heterosexuality.

Blunt and Dowling (2006 112) argue: "there is a paucity of research on masculinity and home." Gorman-Murray (2008b) similarly claims that the complex relationship between masculinity and domesticity is under-theorised and not well-understood. This extant gap in the literature is perhaps to be expected given that home is normatively conceptualised, and typically experienced, as a feminine site. Yet, as Gorman-Murray (2008b 368) argues: "Home ... is also a key site for masculine identity work." The focus of this thesis has been primarily on women's experiences of heterosexual love and home. However, in the process of doing this research I have gained insights into some of the diverse ways men in cohabitating relationships construct and live heterosexual love and home.

Home provides the spatial context to both confirm and resist hegemonic masculinities. In relation to hegemonic heterosexual masculinity, men's domestic subjectivity is typically constructed as the 'breadwinner' or the 'provider' (Chapman 2004). Yet, as Smith and Winchester (1998; see also Gorman-Murray 2010) show, home can also generate opportunities for men to create alternative

heterosexual masculinities. In their Australian study of men's changing cultural practices at work and home, Smith and Winchester (1998) highlight the ways in which home provides men with a space to challenge work-based hegemonic models of masculinity. According to Smith and Winchester (1998), home can be a space where men are able to be emotionally engaged and expressive. Likewise, Pink (2004), in her study on the ways in which Spanish and English men and women practice housework and home decoration, argues that men's increasing engagement with domesticity reveals how the practices of home can act as modes of conformity and resistance to conventional discourses of gender.

In order to further understandings of the multiple processes of masculine subjectivity formation at home it may be useful to draw inspiration from the new research on 'romantic masculinities' (Allen 2007; Redman 2002). This small, but growing, corpus of work understands romance as a resource through which men are able to move beyond traditional scripts of hegemonic heterosexuality. In this work, romance is deemed to be facilitative of new modes of masculinity based on emotions, care, love, and sensitivity. Romance, love and intimacy were openly discussed by the men who participated in my research. These conversations gave me a sense of the significance they attribute to their intimate lives and intimate geographies. The scope of this research did not, however, allow me to go into any great detail about the gendered differences and continuities of love, romance and sexual intimacy. Combining 'new masculinities of home' with 'new masculinities of romance' could add an important dimension to geographical studies of home, gender, and sexuality. It would challenge hegemonic discourses of love, gender and sexuality which negatively link women to the body, emotion, irrationality, love and home, and positively link men to the mind, stoicism, rationality, and work.

To sum up, this thesis has examined critically the diverse ways in which heterosexual love, relationships and subjectivities are constructed, practised and negotiated in domestic settings. It has shown that homes are sexualised spaces, in particular heterosexualised spaces, but not in the sense that they are pre-given, 'natural' or 'normal'. By focusing on the specificities of heterosexual

bodies that love and their relationship with domestic spaces, I have problematised dominant notions about heterosexuality and have resisted masculinist and disembodied geographical discourses. This thesis contributes to current geographical understandings of home, sexuality, and emotions by exposing and teasing-out the co-constitution between heterosexual bodies, love and domestic space.

APPENDIX 1: Email to participants about filling out an evaluation questionnaire

Dear Diary-writer

I hope all is well and once again, thanks so much for participating in my research! I thoroughly enjoyed meeting and talking with you about your experiences of love and home.

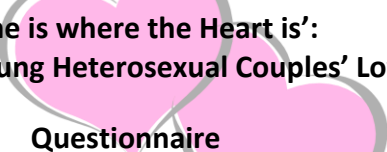
I thought it would be beneficial to talk to you about your experiences of taking part in my research. I am particularly interested in your ideas/comments about completing the diary and taking the photos. If you have time, I have attached a small questionnaire for you to fill out. Your answers can be typed on the computer and then emailed back to me, or if you prefer, you can write your answers and I will provide you with a pre-paid envelope.

If you decide to fill out the questionnaire, as with your involvement in the other phases of research, your answers will be confidential and anonymity guaranteed.

Thanks and I look forward to hearing back from you!

Carey

APPENDIX 2: Evaluation questionnaire



**'Home is where the Heart is':
Emotional Geographies of Young Heterosexual Couples' Love in and of Homes
Questionnaire**

A large part of this project has been to use new and innovative research methods. The use of diaries and photos in examining the everyday experiences of heterosexual love and home, like the one you have recently completed, are not often used by researchers. I hope to demonstrate that diaries and self-directed photography are valuable research tools. Your feedback as to how it worked for you will help me to consider the method more carefully and advocate for its best possible use in future studies.

I would greatly appreciate it if you could spend 10 minutes completing the questions below. Write as little or as much as you like and feel free to leave any questions out that you do not want to answer.

Name (optional):

1. Before participating in this research had you thought about your experiences of home, love and being in a relationship in the ways that the diary and photography process required you to?
2. Do you think the process of keeping a diary and taking photos was of any personal gain to you? Has it affected your daily life in anyway? If yes, can you tell me about this:
3. Did the process of keeping a diary and taking photos cause you any distress or have any negative effects on your life? If yes, and you feel comfortable doing so, please tell me about this:
4. Tell me about the difficulties you had, if any, in completing the diary and taking the photos. For example, was it time-consuming? Did you find it difficult to think of things to write about and things to photograph?

5. Do you think keeping a diary and taking photos for a period of a week gave an accurate reflection of your everyday experiences of being in a relationship? Why/why not?
6. Did taking the photos help you express your everyday experiences of being in love? Why/why not?
7. Where and when did you write your daily diary entries? Did you share these with your partner or did you keep them to yourself?
8. Do you think the three phases of research – joint interview with your partner, diary and photos and follow-up interview – complimented each other? Could I have done anything differently?
9. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about the diary and photo process that might help me when I am writing about it as a method which can be used to examine experiences of love and home?

Thank you for your time!



APPENDIX 3: Recruitment poster

'Home is *Where* the Heart is'

Everyday Geographies of Young Heterosexual Couples' Love
in and of Homes



Hi, my name is Carey-Ann Morrison and I am a doctoral candidate in
The Geography, Tourism and Environmental Planning Department
at the University of Waikato.

I am carrying out research on young heterosexual couples' experiences of 'love
and home' in Hamilton. I am seeking participants aged between 20-40 years who
identify as heterosexual, who live with their partner and who do not have
children.

**So if this sounds like you and you would like to participate or just want some
more information....**

Call me (Carey-Ann) on xx xxx xxxx extn. xxxx or email me at
xxxxx@waikato.ac.nz

I look forward to hearing from you!

APPENDIX 4: Information sheet



'Home is where the Heart is'
Everyday Geographies of Young Heterosexual Couples' Love in and of Homes
Information Sheet

My name is Carey-Ann Morrison and I am a Doctoral Candidate in the Department of Geography, Tourism and Environmental Planning at The University of Waikato. My supervisory panel consists of Associate Professor Lynda Johnston and Professor Robyn Longhurst.

Aim

The purpose of this doctoral study is to examine young heterosexual couples' experiences of home, and in particular explore young women's experiences and perceptions of 'love' and 'romance'. The premise of this research is that home is not simply a physical space where people live; it is a place where important relationships, emotions and identities are formed and fostered. This idea can be seen most readily in the title guiding this research: 'home is where the heart is'. Home is located somewhere, but a house only becomes a home when its occupants instil in it a range of meanings, feeling and experiences. This research aims to fill a gap in the current geography literature by using the subject of 'love' to understand further the relationship between identities and place.

Participants

I require 15-20 heterosexual couples to participate in my research. Respondents need to be:

- ♥ aged between 20-40 years
- ♥ living with their partner (this can be in a variety of living arrangements i.e flatmates, but not living with their parents and not with children)
- ♥ residing in Hamilton

Methods and Your Involvement

I will use a variety of qualitative methods, including interviews and diaries and photos. I will also pay attention to 'home and love' media such as DIY television programmes. There are three stages of research. You may choose how many phases you would like to participate in. Initial face-to-face interviews will be carried out with couples, lasting between 60-90 minutes. The second and third stages of the research will involve the participation of only women in which they will be asked to write a diary about, and take photos of, their everyday experiences of 'love' for seven days following the first interview. After seven days I will return to collect the diaries and cameras and then arrange a time for a follow-up meeting to discuss the diaries and photographs. All interviews will take place at times and in places that suit everybody and privacy is guaranteed.

Participants' Rights

If you decide to participate you have the right to:

- ♥♥ decline to participate in any particular stages of the research;
- ♥♥ decline to answer any particular question;
- ♥♥ withdraw from any or all parts of the research;
- ♥♥ withdraw from the study up until three weeks following their involvement in any stage of the research;
- ♥♥ decline to be audio-recorded;
- ♥♥ ask for the audio recorder to be turned off at any time;
- ♥♥ ask for the erasure of any materials you do not wish to be used in reports of this study; and
- ♥♥ ask any questions about the study at any time during participation.

Confidentiality

Your answers will be treated completely confidentially. Unless your permission is obtained, your name and any other identifying characteristics will not be disclosed in any resulting publications or any other reports produced in the course of this research. A pseudonym (fake name) will be used in any reports. All of the information (including tapes, information on paper and photographs) I gather will remain secure at all times in a locked cupboard in my university office. Data contained on computer database will be accessible by password only. Data will be destroyed five years after the completion of the research; however, you may request that I return the diaries and photos to you following the completion of the research.

My research is academic and independent of any governmental organisation. It has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences of The University of Waikato. Any questions about the ethical conduct of this research can be sent to the Secretary of the Committee, email xxxxxxxxxxx, postal address, xxxxxxx

The Results

A report derived from my PhD thesis delivering the main findings from the research will be prepared for you and other people who might be interested. Upon its completion, my thesis will be available at the University of Waikato's Central Library and on the Australasian Digital Theses Programme.

Anticipated Benefits of the Research

This research aims to fill a gap in the existing data on young heterosexual couples' experiences of home, and young women's experiences and perceptions of 'love'. There is relatively little known about the 'everyday' experiences of young heterosexual couples in the home. These geographies, specifically 'love', emotions and the practices of homemaking, are so common-place that they are often thought to be unworthy of academic attention.

Contacts Details

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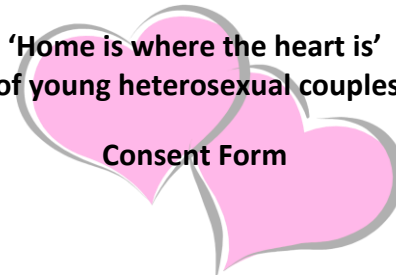
Private Bag 3105, Hamilton

P: xx xxx xxxx ext xxxx

E:

APPENDIX 5: Consent form

'Home is where the heart is' Everyday geographies of young heterosexual couples' love in and of homes



Consent Form

I have read and I understand the Information Sheet and am willing to take part in the research project 'Home is where the Heart is': everyday geographies of young heterosexual couples' love in and of homes. The purpose of the research is to investigate the everyday geographies of young heterosexual couples experiences of home and to use the subject of love to understand further the relationship between identity and place for young heterosexual women in heterosexual relationships. Findings from the research will form part of Carey-Ann Morrison's PhD thesis at The University of Waikato and will be published in academic journals and books.

I have had the opportunity to discuss this study and I am satisfied with the answers I have been given. I understand that: (please tick where appropriate)

- Taking part in this study is voluntary and that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time up until three weeks following my involvement in any or all stages of research and to decline to answer any individual questions in the study.
- My participation in this study is confidential. Without prior consent, no material which could identify me, including photographs, will be used in any reports generated from this study.
- If I have any questions regarding the ethical conduct of the research I can contact the Secretary of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences Ethics Committee by email: xxxxxxxxxx, or by postal address: xxxxxxxxxxxx

I consent to participate in all or some of the research phases, but am aware that I can change my decision at any time by contacting the researcher: (please tick where appropriate)

- Phase 1: Face-to-face couple interview
- Phase 2 (woman participant only): Solicited diary and self-directed photography
- Phase 3: follow-up interview

I consent to our conversation being audio-recorded

YES/NO

“I agree to participate in this research and acknowledge receipt of a copy of this Consent Form and the research project Information Sheet.”

Participant’s name and signature:

Date:

Participant’s name and signature:

Date:

Researcher’s name and signature:

Date:

Please fill in the following information if you are interested in being provided with a copy of the interview transcripts for editing and/or a summary of the main findings and/or photo-diaries.

Name:

Address:

APPENDIX 6: Interview schedule

Participant Identity

1. What are your ages?
2. What are your occupations?
3. With which class do you both identify? What are your class backgrounds? (Prompt: parent's occupations? Socio-economic conditions when you were growing up?)
4. What are your ethnic backgrounds?
5. Are there any other traits or activities that significantly inform your identities? (Prompt: spirituality, politics, occupational identity and theories)

Introductory Questions

6. **What does 'home' mean to you?**
 - a. Does this place feel like 'home'? (Prompt: what do you or have you done to make this place feel like home) Why or why not?
 - b. What is/has been important in making you 'at home'? (Prompt: emotional attachment to material objects, feelings, relationship, meanings)
 - c. Is your home important for your relationship? If so, in what ways?
 - d. How is your home used to consolidate (strengthen, maintain) your relationship?
7. **What does 'love' and being 'in love' mean to you?**
 - a. What does being 'in love' feel like?
 - b. What does 'falling in love' feel like?
 - c. How would you define love? If there was no word for love, how would you describe it? For instance, how would you tell each other you loved them?
 - d. How, where and in what ways do you express your love for each other?

- e. Do you think love is different for men and women? (Do you think you feel the same about love?)

House and Love Questions

8. What are your present housing arrangements? How long have you lived in this house?
9. What dwelling type and what household type (living arrangements) is it? (Prompt: inner-city/suburbs, owning, renting, boarders couple living by themselves, couple with flatmates...)
10. How long had you been in the relationship before you decided to move in together?
11. Is this the first time you have lived together as a couple? (Prompt: have you lived together in other houses?)
12. Has your relationship changed/stayed the same since moving in together?
13. Have your ideas on love changed/stayed the same since moving in together?
14. Is marriage important to you?
15. How does your current living arrangements compare to your childhood homes? (Prompt: in terms of people, appearance, possessions, routines and rules; are they similar/different, better/worse? Is it a heterosexual home?)
16. Does your home reflect any values or ideals instilled by your family homes?
17. Do you think your background (family history, education, class) has influenced your relationship, for instance, in terms of compatibility?
18. When you were younger did you have any ideas or expectations about being in love? Where did these ideas come from?
19. Do you think your current relationship reflects these ideals?
20. How do you negotiate how you use your current home? (Prompt: Are there spaces you use for activities you do together? Which spaces, what activities and how are these spaces and activities important for your relationship. Which parts of the house do you share? with partner – bedroom, other areas of importance; flatmate – communal living spaces.)

21. Do you have your own spaces as well? Why? (Prompt: which spaces and how do you use them? Are these personal spaces important for your relationship, and why?)
22. Are there any objects or spaces that symbolise your home as a shared space? Or that represent your love? (eg bed, family photos, pets)
23. How do you and your partner negotiate the material objects in your home? Is this important for your relationship? Can you give me an example?
24. How do you make decisions over the purchase of new household objects (e.g. furniture, appliances, ornaments, etc)? (Prompt: joint/singularly) Is this important for your partnership? How?
25. How did you resolve the arrangement of the individual 'personal' objects you each brought with you when you moved in together?
26. Do you have any pets? Why/why not? Who looks after them and why? Are these important in creating home and sustaining your relationship? Can you explain why?
27. How do you negotiate who does the domestic chores around the home? Why do you think this is? (Prompt: parents' influence, time availability, traditional gender roles).
28. What happens during meal time (dinner) in your home? (Prompt: who prepares, cooks and cleans up dinner? Do you eat together and where do you eat? Is this important for maintaining your relationship?)
29. Do you use your home as a social space? If so, how do you use it and who comes over? Who organises and prepares for entertaining in your home? Why? (Prompt: having guests over – parents, friends, having a dinner party, BBQ, drinking, watching DVD.)
30. What would a 'romantic night in' involve?
31. How important is romance in your relationship?
32. How do you negotiate the material design of your home? Is this important for your relationship? (Prompt: do you do DIY-ing together?)
33. Does the design of you home ie architectural layout, *reflect* your heterosexual partnership? If so, can you give examples? (Prompt: DIY to make it more suitable for entertaining, changing layout of home for various reasons)

34. Does your house look the same/different as heterosexual people you know living in a similar situation?
35. Do you think a homosexual home would look the same/different to your home? (Prompt: in terms of material possessions, arrangement, rules and routines, spaces)
36. Do you think your domestic activities and homemaking activities are overtly 'heterosexual'? Why/why not?
37. Do you think your house looks like a 'heterosexual' house? Why? (Prompt: is your sexuality evident or hidden to outsiders? Do you have sexually-identifying objects and arrangements? Can you provide an example of a time when it was assumed that you were in a heterosexual relationship?)
38. Do you have a vegetable/flower garden? Why/why not? Who looks after this and why?

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**Diary
of**

Name:

APPENDIX 8: Solicited diary and self-directed photography instructions

Dear Diary-writer,

I am really excited that you have agreed to participate in this stage of my research! This method may seem unusual but it provides wonderful insights into your experiences of, and reflections on, being in a relationship that cannot be gained from one-off research methods such as interviews. A combination of journal entries and photography gives you the opportunity to reflect upon your 'love life' in both word and picture, because sometimes words are simply not enough!

At the beginning of your diary please write some details about you and your partner and your relationship. Include:

- 💕 How long you have been together
- 💕 Where and how you met
- 💕 How long have you lived in your current home
- 💕 How you felt when you first met, for example, was it love at first sight?

Each day, for seven days, write about your **activities, emotions and experiences** of love and your relationship. Reflect on things (whether they be good or bad) that happened during your day that you think will help me understand how love operates in your home.

Please try to write in your diary everyday, but if you cannot that is fine. Just fill it in the next day. It is up to you how much you decide to write and you do not need to be too concerned with spelling and grammar, but please try to write tidily. If you prefer you can type your thoughts on the computer. It is **your** diary so feel free to include anything and everything! This may be things like drawings, pictures from magazines, poetry, 'love-letters'. And, just to let you know – any names you include will be changed to ensure your privacy.

When taking your photos please focus on **things, places, people, activities**; anything that is important to or reflects the love within your relationship. Please try to focus on things in your home. For example, you and your partner may have bought a piece of furniture together, or there may be certain areas in your home that you spend a lot of time together. You may have a special gift that he bought for you or you might take a photo of him doing something for you. Love can come in many forms, expressions, activities and I want you to be able to adequately show me how love operates in your home.

I hope my guidelines are clear and I hope you enjoy participating in my research. If you have *any* questions regarding your journal or photos please call me at any time on my mobile xxx xxx xxx or at university on xx xxx xxxx extn. xxxx. If you call my mobile, I will call you back so you do not have to pay for the call.

I will pick this diary up on at am/pm.

Carey-Ann

APPENDIX 9: Analysis example

of thing and I guess before, I don't know, around the time you started getting interested in Briscoes phamplets, its kind of like 'oh that's good. Ill need that one day' there is always that kind of mentality of always, like I was quite young in my 20s, like my sister got married when i was quite young, so it was that mentality of all be married and I will have my own house and I will need this kind of stuff, so its kind of that collecting thing, like even things for your home, like Christmas things, like you have to have your own Christmas stuff now and that kind of thing, and so it wasn't like a real major issue because" n "most of it was hers and I just didn't care" C "he just moved in with his clothes and" N "pretty much a suitcase, aye?"

40.39 what about now – is it the same? Who does the shopping for the house stuff?

They both agree but N points out "then other stuff, we, will buy together, like you know, the stereo and we both" C clarifies whether he means that they went shopping together, and N agrees. C "yeah, so that was kind of like you know like a Saturday, should we got to town have a look around type thing but you would never just go to The Warehouse or Briscoes and like think 'oh we need a new pyrex dish or something" N agrees "yeah, like practical things, practical housey stuff she will just buy" cause I wouldn't have a clue, well I might have a bit of a clue but probably not that good" C "but you don't really have an interest or know the need either, if we need a new roasting dish or not" n agrees "yeah, just not that interested" C "yeah so I would do that, and I would just go and buy stuff but if we were making a big purchase or if we were wanting to buy a new tv or a couch or a bed there is no way that I would do that by myself, we would definitely do that together"

41.50 How do you negotiate how you use you home?

C "I don't think we really have personal or private spaces I think I have heard of a lot of people have like bigger houses and they have like their room or the wife might have their sewing room or the husband might have his workout room but at the moment the way we have our house set up its just, its everything is the same, I think the only exception would be where the computer is that becomes a private space purely because it's a one person activity, for the most part, aye, I think that would be the only exception, but apart from that its both the same I think." I ask about activities together. They can't think of anything and suggest that there is "only two areas then isn't there" C doesn't understand the question and after I repeat it she replies "ok I will think of things that you might want to know, things like sometimes I am cooking and S comes and hovers around and I am just like 'can you leave the kitchen?' because at that point in time, in that point in time I guess that is

household making
Feminine subjectivity
traditional
N2

♀ influence on the home

'Big purchases' - electronics etc are bought together.
Material home-making

Gendered descriptions as justification for lack of involvement in buying house stuff.
\$

Joint/individual spaces, breakdown of personal boundaries.
Physicality of house.

Fluidity of space

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