

“You Worry, ‘cause You Want to Give a Reasonable Account of Yourself”: Gender, Identity Management, and the Discursive Positioning of “Risk” in Men’s and Women’s Talk About Heterosexual Casual Sex

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Abstract Heterosexual casual sex is routinely depicted as a physically, socially, and psychologically “risky” practice. This is the case in media accounts, psychological research, and other academic work. In this article, we examine 15 men’s and 15 women’s talk about casual sex from a discursive psychological stance to achieve two objectives. Firstly, we confirm the categories of risk typically associated with casual sex but expand these to include a domain of risks related to (gendered) identities and representation. Men’s talk of risk centered on concerns about sexual performance, whereas women’s talk centered on keeping safe from violence and sexual coercion. The notion of a sexual reputation was also identified as a risk and again manifested differently for men and women. While women were concerned about being deemed promiscuous, men displayed concern about the quality of their sexual performance. Secondly, within this talk about risks of casual sex, the participants’ identities were identified as “at risk” and requiring careful management within the interview context. This was demonstrated by instances of: *keeping masculinity intact in accounts of no erection*, *negotiating a responsible subject position*, and *crafting agency in accounts of sexual coercion*—in the participants’ talk. We argue that casual sex, as situated within dominant discourses of gendered heterosexuality, is a fraught practice for both men and women and subject to the demands of identity representation within co-present interactions.

Keywords Gender · Heterosexuality · Casual sex · Identity · Discourse · Discursive psychology

Introduction

Heterosexual casual sex is often constructed as “risky sex,” where danger is depicted as part of its very nature. This portrayal is common, both in popular media accounts (Farvid & Braun 2013, 2014) and in scholarly research (Armstrong, Hamilton, & England, 2010; Bersamin et al., 2013; Vrangalova, 2015), including psychology (Eshbaugh & Gute, 2008; Hoyle, Fejfar, & Miller, 2000). In such domains, casual sex is positioned as fraught with physical risks (e.g., STI transmission, unplanned pregnancy), social risks (e.g., negative sexual reputation) and psychological risks (e.g., negative affect). Although these realms of risk have been examined in various ways in the past, rarely has the identity of individuals in relation to those risks been considered (except when it comes to women and their sexual reputation, see Conley, Ziegler, & Moors, 2013). As a response to this gap, this article will examine how talk about the risks of casual sex generated stark moments of “identity management” (Edwards, 1998) in interviews conducted with heterosexual men and women. We present talk about the supposed risks of casual sex and focus our analysis on the identity work, engaged in by participants, in relation to such risks. Our aim is to expand the categories currently associated with the risks of heterosexual casual sex and elucidate the importance of localized identity representation when it comes to those risks. Here, localized identity representation refers to specific social or psychological pressures to present oneself in specific ways, for specific audiences, in co-present conversational situations. In this article, we are interested in examining moments of these in

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relation to the “risks” of casual sex, as relayed in the interview context.

Heterosexual Casual Sex

Casual sex is typically defined as some form of sexual contact between two individuals who are not in a committed relationship (with each other) at the time of the “hook up” (e.g., Paul, McManus, & Hayes, 2000; Regan & Dreyer, 1999). However, the term casual sex is elusive (Farvid, 2010) and defined in various ways within the research literature based on the prior relationship of two individuals, the frequency of the casual sex and the relationship status after casual sex (Wentland & Reissing, 2011, 2014). What ostensibly renders a sexual exchange “casual” is a lack of emotional or romantic commitment to a partner, a lack of investment in a future relationship, or the failure of a sexual exchange to lead to a longer-term romantic relationship (Farvid & Braun, 2013, 2014, 2017). Casual sex can be a one-off encounter (Lewis, Atkins, Blayney, Dent, & Kaysen, 2013) such as a one-night stand (Campbell, 2008; Cubbins & Tanfer, 2000), or involve a series of ongoing sexual exchanges, such as friends with benefits or booty calls, that are non-monogamous (Bisson & Levine, 2009; Lehmillier, VanderDrift, & Kelly, 2011). Although usually governed by a coital imperative (McPhillips, Braun, & Gavey, 2001), casual sexual practices can also include kissing, fondling, sexual touching and oral sex (Paul et al., 2000).

The exact rates of casual sex among adults are difficult to pin down (Farvid & Braun, 2017). Reported instances of coital casual sex, among mixed-gender North American university students, range anywhere from 12 to 30% (Maticka-Tyndale, Herold, & Mewhinney, 1998; Paul et al., 2000; Weaver & Herold, 2000), 40% (Fielder, Carey, & Carey, 2013), and 67% (Armstrong et al., 2010), with recent reviews indicating that between 60 and 80% report some form of casual sex interaction (Garcia, Reiber, Massey, & Merriwether, 2012). Rates of casual sex in Australasia are not well known, but sexual health research indicates that 8% of the most recent sexual encounter reported by a representative sample of Australian adults was with a casual partner (Rissel et al., 2014). Cross-sectional data from a random sample of university students across New Zealand indicated that casual sex rates were between 5 and 20% (Psutka, Connor, Cousins, & Kypri, 2012). In contrast to media “moral panics” about a rampant hook-up culture where casual sex is replacing conventional dating and monogamy (Freitas, 2013; McIlhaney & Bush, 2008; Preidt, 2010; Proctor, 2009), research indicates that monogamy and life-long coupledness (especially marriage) remain the idealized norm among heterosexuals (England & Ronen, 2013; Farvid & Braun, 2017; Wilkins & Dalessandro,

2013). Such moral panics about casual sex may arise due to the risks often associated with its practice.

Risks of Heterosexual Casual Sex

The dimensions of risk associated with casual sex span the physical, social and psychological. Physical risks such as STI/HIV transmission and unplanned pregnancies have been a focus of analysis since the 1980s (Baldwin & Baldwin, 1988; Lescano et al., 2006; Levinson, Jaccard, & Beamer, 1995; Paul et al., 2000; Winslow, Franzini, & Hwang, 1992). Here condom-less casual sex (Johnson, Douglas, & Nelson, 1992; Lescano et al., 2006; MacDonald, Zanna, & Fong, 1996; Weinberg, Lottes, & Aveline, 1998; Winslow, Franzini, & Hwang, 1992) and sex on holiday, or on school and university breaks, are regarded as the most risky types of casual sex (e.g., Apostolopoulos, Sonmez, & Yu, 2002; Maticka-Tyndale, Herold, & Oppermann, 2003; Sonmez et al., 2006). Previous research of this nature has inadvertently constituted those who engage in casual sex as particularly reckless and irresponsible (Beres & Farvid, 2010), particularly if not taking the right safety precautions.

The risks of heterosexual casual sex tend to affect men and women differently, and the specter of risk is much more pronounced for women. For example, based on an enduring sexual double standard (Bordini & Sperb, 2013; Crawford & Popp, 2003), the social risks of engaging in casual sex are higher for women than for men (Conley et al., 2013). Women are much more likely to have their social status lowered for engaging in casual sex, whereas men are more likely to have their status elevated (Farvid, Braun, & Roney, 2017; Kalish & Kimmel, 2011; Ronen, 2010). Women are also at greater physical risks of physical or sexual assault (Littleton, Tabernik, Canales, & Backstrom, 2009; Paul & Hayes, 2002), and if a casual encounter results in an unplanned pregnancy, women can be much more severely affected than men (Bradshaw, Kahn, & Saville, 2010).

In terms of psychological risks, women report more guilt (Herold & Mewhinney, 1993), shame (Littleton et al., 2009; Paul et al., 2000), regret (Campbell, 2008; Eshbaugh & Gute, 2008; Littleton, Tabernik, Canales, and Backstrom 2009; Paul et al., 2000), and less enjoyment (Herold & Mewhinney, 1993), but more disappointment with casual sex (Littleton et al., 2009; Paul et al., 2000), compared to men. In contrast, men report more positive emotional outcomes (Conner & Flesch, 2001; Lyons, Manning, Giordano, & Longmore, 2013), or at worst “mixed” emotions (Epstein, Calzo, Smiler, & Ward, 2009; Olmstead, Billen, Conrad, Pasley, & Fincham, 2013), and casual sex can result in more positive individual and social outcomes for them (Conley et al., 2013; Conner & Flesch, 2001; Currier, 2013; Garcia & Reiber, 2008; Regan & Dreyer, 1999).

Although the risks of casual sex have been a prominent focus of previous research, this has primarily come from psychological traditions that approach identity as a fixed, stable and internalized entity (i.e., personality). Such work has focused on individualized “traits” that ostensibly lead to greater risk-taking (King, Nguyen, Kosterman, Bailey, & Hawkins, 2012), contexts that facilitated “disinhibition” and risk-taking (Bersamin, Paschall, Saltz, & Zamboanga, 2012; Sonmez et al., 2006), or social responses to specific casual sex behavior (Conley et al., 2013). What has been missing is a more contextualized examination of risk from a discursive perspective that approaches identity as fluid, contextually bound and subject to the demands of localized identity representation. We address this gap by examining participants’ identity management in relation to the (gendered) risks of casual sex, demonstrating how through this talk they attended to the localized risks posed to their identity within the interview context.

Examining Identity

Our approach to understanding and analyzing identity (namely gender and heterosexuality as discussed below) draws on various forms of discursive psychology (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006; Edley, 2001). Discursive psychology posits that identity is something that people *do* rather than something that they are (Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998). From this perspective, identities are social categories that one can ascribe to, resist, and define the character of self and others in relation to, in order to achieve something in specific interactions. Identities are also social practices; a set of social resources that individuals draw on to portray themselves (or others) in specific ways, at specific moments, based on the contextual demands of an interactional situation (Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998).

The way people talk about themselves or others, and the way they construct particular identities, is dependent on the discursive identity positions circulating within culture (Davies & Harré, 1990, 2001; Seymour-Smith, Wetherell, & Phoenix, 2002), which are then taken on or resisted during talk or conversations, to do interactional business (Bamberg, Fina, & Schiffrin, 2011). From this perspective, identity “is constituted and reconstituted through discourse and is thus flexible, contextual, relational, situated and inflected by power relations” (Seymour-Smith et al., 2002, p. 255).

Heterosexuality, Gender, and Identity

When it comes to the broader construction of heterosexuality, dominant versions of masculinity and femininity currently manifest in gendered ways within the West (Budgeon, 2014; Gavey, 2005). Successful manhood involves being

heterosexual, white, middle-class, sexually successful, sexually practiced, sexually potent, desired by women, able-bodied, physically strong, powerful, dominant (including during sex) and competitive (Connell, 2005; Edley, 2011; Edley & Wetherell, 1996). Often called hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005) achieving this involves a shirking of feminized expressions or practices (such as vulnerability or emotionality), that may bring “hard” heterosexual masculinity into question (Cook & Hasmath, 2014; Wetherell & Edley, 1999).

Dominant femininity, in contrast, involves an overwhelming focus on bodily representations (slim, white, hairless, toned) where sexy “attire” and heterosexual attractiveness are markers of feminine success (Gill, 2009a, b). Heterosexual women have traditionally been positioned as passive and responsive in sex and often required to set the limits on sexual progression or sexual safety (without necessarily having the power to do so) (Gavey, 2005; Gavey, McPhillips, & Doherty, 2001).

Recent cultural shifts, characterized by postfeminism (McRobbie, 2009) and a (re)sexualization of culture (Gill, 2003, 2012), have seen female autonomy, independence, sexual agency, and sexual prowess become celebrated aspects of womanhood, albeit in contradictory ways (Evans, Riley, & Shankar, 2010). The call to being sexual has almost become a *new* imperative for women who may be deemed prudish or old fashioned if they are not (always) “up for it” (Gavey, 2005). Based on an enduring sexual double standard, however, woman must also carefully negotiate a sexual identity that is up for it, but not overly sexed or “slutty” (Bordini & Sperb, 2013; Jackson & Cram, 2003).

Work looking at Western gendered heterosexual subjectivities must acknowledge Hollway’s (1984, 1989) highly influential poststructuralist work around discourses of heterosexuality. Three salient discourses around heterosex produce different subject positions for women and men: a *male sexual drive discourse* constituted men as inherently (biologically) sex-focused and sex-driven, and, once aroused, as requiring gratification via coitus/orgasm; a *have/hold discourse* situates sex within monogamous marriage-type to relationships—the woman is sexually passive, but effectively “gives” sex to her male partner so that her (true) relational and domestic desires can be fulfilled; a *permissive discourse* situates men and women both as desiring sexual agents and “anything goes, as long as no one gets hurt” (Braun, Gavey, & McPhillips, 2003, p. 238). Within this discourse, sex is positioned as inherently good, and the right of men and women to enjoy.

Although ostensibly gender-neutral, the permissive discourse shares the same “biologistic assumptions” as the male sexual drive discourse (Hollway, 1989), and although women are able to occupy the position of subject rather than object, the gender-blindness of this discourse does not mean that women are positioned within it in the same way that men are. Given the broader gendered context, the meanings of men’s

Table 1 Participant demographics and casual sex experiences—women and men

Name*	Age	Ethnicity	Occupation	CS**	Name	Age	Ethnicity	Occupation	CS
Hazel	21	Pākehā***	UG student	25	Jean	31	Pākehā	Service manager	13
Sienna	22	Taiwanese	PG student	0	Jacob	33	Pākehā	Service delivery	20
Dawn	22	Pākehā	Business owner	1	Rick	21	Pākehā	UG student	60
Whina	23	Māori	Sales	47	Will	30	White (USA/NZ)	PG student	6
Theresa	44	Pākehā	Education	1	Shawn	44	Pākehā	Journalist	5
Corrina	46	Black	Education	15	Parker	25	European/ Middle-Eastern	PG student	5
Dora	21	Taiwanese	UG student	1	Deon	22	Pākehā	Bank worker	4
Nina	20	Pākehā	UG student	1	Aiden	25	Pākehā	Trades person	1
Leanne	38	Caucasion (USA)	Service	40	Liam	24	White (USA)	PG student	7
Raina	20	Taiwanese	UG student	0	Tristan	36	Pākehā	Journalist	25
Neema	18	Russian	UG student	0	Nickoli	29	Pākehā	Writer	100
Sadie	38	Middle-Eastern/ European/Asian	PG student	25	Amar	35	White (UK)	Education	20
Arya	24	Chinese	PG student	5	Paulo	30	Pākehā	Professional	100
Zoe	29	Pākehā	Professional	15	Teo	18	Chinese	UG student	0
Janessa	20	Caucasian (USA)	UG student	4	Cole	27	Russian/European	PG student	6
	M = 27.1			M = 12		M = 28.7			M = 25

*Pseudonym

**Number of casual sex experiences

***Pākehā denotes non-Māori New Zealanders of European decent

and women's permissiveness—including casual sex—are located differently, with women's sexuality also governed by other intersecting discourses that can frame women's permissiveness/casual sex in more negative terms (Farvid et al., 2017).

Aims of the Study

Amidst this research and cultural backdrop, in this article we are interested in how specific dominant (gendered and heterosexual) identities were made relevant, mobilized and managed within the interview context, in talk about the “risks” of casual sex. We were concerned with both the macrodiscursive identities that talk about casual sex invites (in the Foucauldian or poststructuralist sense), as well as some microinspired discursive analysis of identity management in the interactional interview context (Bamberg et al., 2011; Burr, 2002; Edwards, 2006). We take a synthetic or synthesized (Wetherell, 1998) focus to identity analysis that fits with our discursive approach (outlined below) and points to the nature of identity construction: speakers' talk of casual sex draws on the dominant heterosexual identities made available within broader culture, but also requires building, crafting, resisting and managing within the interview context to achieve particular representational ends. We will demonstrate how in talking about the general risks of casual sex, participants

worked very hard to portray particular versions of themselves to the interviewer, based on the contextual demands of the interview and what was at stake for them in terms of their identity.

Method

Participants

The data analyzed here come from a larger critical feminist project examining the social construction of heterosexual casual sex in the West. As a topic-driven project, interviews were one mode of data collection used to gather information about the sensitive topic of heterosexual casual sex. Fifteen men and 15 women aged between 18 and 46 were recruited and interviewed about their sexual histories and casual sex experiences. The participants were ethnically diverse and reported varying levels of experience with casual sex (see Table 1). They were interviewed in two urban centers in New Zealand (Auckland: 26; Wellington: 4), at either the host university (Auckland), or a hired interview room (Wellington), or in their residence (two Auckland women). The interviews ranged between 40 min and 2.5 h (most were 2 h) and were digitally recorded, then transcribed using a modified version of the Jeffersonian style (see Appendix 1).

All participants took part in individual semi-structured interviews with the exception of two women (Dora and Nina) who requested a joint interview.¹ Ethics approval for the project was sought and gained from the host institution where the research was conducted. Participation in the research was entirely voluntary, and no monetary incentive was given for taking part. Given the sensitive nature of the topic, measures were taken to create a comfortable interview exchange. For example, the participants were assured they did not have to answer any questions they did not wish to, that they could stop the interview at any time, and the interviewer watched for signs of discomfort as well as providing a list of support services at the end of each interview.

Recruitment was conducted through advertisement posters and word of mouth for a project exploring heterosexual sex in different contexts, such as relationships and casual sex. Interviews were guided by a schedule designed to gather in-depth information about the participants' experiences related to sex in different contexts (Farvid, 2010). The interviewer was the first author (PF) and asked questions about the participant's sexual history, their experiences of sex in relationships, one-off sexual contact and ongoing casual sex relationships. The interviewer was a relatively young (26 year old), slim, able-bodied, heterosexual woman, with features that positioned her as outside of the dominant ethnic group (olive skin, dark hair, dark eyes; markers of her Persian heritage). The impact of her embodiment (Burns, 2003) on the interview process is detailed elsewhere (Farvid, 2010, 2011), but in brief, meant that she was older than some participants and younger than others, was not part of the dominant gender (men) or ethnic group (Pākehā), but embodied aspects of idealized femininity (e.g., slim, young). The interviews with women were conducted with great ease and involved valuable rapport. The interviews with men involved some awkwardness, displayed mainly on the part of a few men via their closed body language or lack of eye-contact during interviews (Rick; Amar). Other men worked hard to "charm" the interviewer (Jean; Aiden; Tristan) or portray themselves as very sexually successful with other women (Jacob; Shawn; Tristan; Amar). The interviewer's gender and embodiment, the interview questions, and the participant's responses worked to co-construct the accounts that are analyzed below.

Analytic Approach and Process

The data were analyzed using a synthetic approach to discourse analysis (Wetherell, 1998; Wetherell & Edley, 1999).

¹ These two women were very close friends and said they had no "secrets" and hence wanted to do the interview together. This joint interview was not hugely different in terms of content and form when compared to individual interviews—although the women were less detailed in their descriptions than others who were interviewed on their own.

This method of analysis was chosen after data collection, due to the striking features of localized identity management in relation to the gendered risks of casual sex. We have analyzed other aspects of the data using various constructionist approaches (Farvid & Braun, 2013, 2014, 2017), but for the specific corpus of data analyzed here, we have chosen a synthetic approach because the talk in relation to risks, invited such an analysis. This synthetic approach allows space to examine both the management of identity within a given context and the broader discourses that shape or underpin such discursive maneuvers.

We approach people's use of language as working like a loop: people are both the producers and the products of discourse (Billig, 1991). In the analysis, we are primarily interested in looking at the role of language and interaction as the site of *identity work* within the interview context (Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998; Benwell & Stokoe, 2006), and how the participants worked to represent themselves in specific ways when being interviewed about casual sex. We pay close attention to the action orientation (Heritage, 1984) of participants' talk—that is, what their talk is attending to (in terms of interactional business) when it came to identity as made relevant in/by talk of the risks of casual sex (see Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998; Edley, 2001).

Highlighted by our synthetic approach, we engage less in a fine-grained analysis of talk as typified by conversation analysis and discursive psychology and tend toward the critical discursive psychology approach, while drawing on some fine-grained analytic techniques to enhance our analysis. As individuals draw on discursive resources that are socially and historically located (Wetherell, 1998), and which have a broader meaning beyond the interview context, our analysis will also go *beyond* the interview context to explore participants talk in relation to broader constructions of masculine and feminine heterosexual subjectivities. We consider the sociocultural discursive conditions which allow for, or necessitate, the accounts that were produced.

In analyzing the data, participants' accounts of casual sex were read and reread, looking for patterns and discursive regularities. Analysis was carried out by the first author, in consultation with the second author. Through this process, talk in relation to varying forms of "risks" related to casual sex was identified. The interviewer did not directly question the participants about what they considered the risks of casual sex, or how they had managed various physical, social or psychological risks typically associated with sex. Rather, the instances of talk about risks analyzed below came from general narratives about casual sex experiences—as offered by the participants without much probing from the interviewer. Once broad categories of risk were identified, a finer-grained analysis was carried out looking at the identity management in relation to that talk about risk. We were interested in how individual participants engaged in identity work within the

interview context, as well as making links across participants' talk about similar issues and the broader sociocultural identities or constructs that enabled this talk. We do not claim our interpretation of the data as the only possible reading, but a contextualized analysis based on the data gathered, our analytic interests and our researcher positioning.

Results and Discussion

The articulated risks of heterosexual casual sex were gendered and related to sexual performance (men), physical safety (women) and sexual reputation (men and women, but evoked differently). When talking about these risks, identity emerged as something that the participants attended to within the interview context; something that required careful negotiation and management by them.

Keeping Masculinity Intact in Accounts of No Erection

For men, talk of the risks associated with casual sex centered on sexual performance and, in particular, loss of erection. Below, immediately preceding this extract, Rick was talking about how a “responsive” casual sex partner who is sexually engaged is better than a passive partner:

- Int: When you're in that scenario where the person is responding to you that way like (.) you know wrapping their legs around (.) what what are the sorts of things that you're thinking or feeling?
- Rick: (.hh) That's exactly it though (.) when I have that I don't think about anything else it's it's actually (.) there are no thoughts my mind is clear (.) it's (0.2) it's almost like a meditation where you're just completely involved in the animalistic ritual of fucking or having sex or whatever you wanna
- Int: [hhmm]
- Rick: [.hhhh] umm it you actually don't think about anything else so that you can actually enjoy sex (.) like if I'm not into it my mind will wander and it wanders to all sorts of things [like (.hh)]
- Int: [hm=]
- Rick: [=what] I watched on TV not just tryna think about someone else or another like a porno that I've seen or (.) it actually wanders to the point where I've sort of like how it'll only take a second (.) but you'll click and go 'oh whoops I'm having sex here (.hh)
- Int: hhmm=
- Rick: =and every now and again I'll go limp (hh) [just 'cause]
- Int: [hhmm hhmm]

- Rick: I'm not into it umm (0.2) and that's always quite embarrassing
- Int: What (.) how come?
- Rick: I've got a little bit of a har (.) I wouldn't be so heartless as to tell someone that my dick went limp because I wasn't enjoying them (.hh) and they were that [bad]
- Int: [right]
- Rick: that I was [just]
- Int: [yup]
- Rick: (h) was that [un-into it]
- Int: [So that would] be the reason that it would go limp?
- Rick: Yeah I've never been like I I can't perform like at all if I'm too drunk (0.2) umm=
- Int: =hhmm
- Rick: and I've never had a problem getting it up (.) like it's it's a matter of my mind wanders and then usually it wanders at the point where you're getting close to orgasm but you can't (0.6) it's almost like the muscles contract and you lose the actual (0.2), I don't know how you'd put it (.) it's it's kind of like you've got two dicks and one of them (.) like metaphorically (.) one of them is ready to orgasm and you can feel it like it feels like (.) you would be able to if you had a masty ((engaged in masturbation)) or did whatever and one of them is just it's up because it's up like when you wake up in the morning it's there like it [(,hh)]
- Int: [hhmm=]
- Rick: = and sometimes you'll start off with it being the first one you know and then it will change
- Int: hhmm
- Rick: and...you get close to orgasming and then something changes

In this extract, Rick works to construct the causes of his inability to “perform” sexually as external in a number of ways. First, his mind wandering (resulting in a loss of focus on the act of sex) is relayed as the source of his “limp” penis. Secondly, the cause of his mind wandering is portrayed as the lack of titillation offered by the woman (her lack of responsiveness) and hence externally caused. Thirdly, Rick talks about having two different penises that react differently to sexual stimulation. His account is a contrasting of the “situational” versus the “inherent”; he is inherently hard/masculine, but certain situations produce something that is not *really* him—resulting in penis limpness (due to the context). By making statements such as “I've never been like...I can't perform...if I'm too drunk” and “I've never had a problem getting it up” he constructs an identity as a “real man” who *can* usually easily “get hard” (Brubaker & Johnson, 2007;

Potts, 2000; Vares & Braun, 2006). The risks of casual sex are simultaneously depicted by Rick as not being able to get “hard” in a casual sex scenario, but also the threat to his manhood this narrative creates when relayed in the interview context, to a heterosexual female interviewer.

The interviewer’s role in producing this account requires some analytic attention. About half-way through the extract, Rick demonstrates a turn construction unit (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008) by uttering “and that’s always quite embarrassing.” At this juncture, the conversation could have moved on to another topic, but this is challenged by the interviewer who asks further questions, hence problematizing Rick’s initial account as inadequate and procedurally making further accounting by him relevant. In the last turn, Rick also undermines further questioning by the interviewer (who has asked for even more accounting on the part of the limp penis) but providing a scripted formulation (Edwards, 1995) to position his “two dicks” account as routine. Here, in a similar fashion to previous work that has discussed the construction of the “unreasonable penis-self” where men’s penises have been constituted as an external entity to themselves (i.e., the man with two brains, see Potts, 2001), Rick crafts a story around the man with “two dicks.” Potts (2001) suggests that “the inside/outside dichotomy...manifests as an exteriorization of... sexual corporeality” (p. 156) where men are able to exonerate or detach themselves from the actions of their bodies. Similarly, Rick presents himself as completely detached from the actions of his penis(es) and portrays those actions as to some extent out of his control. Once a woman has rendered him as not into sex, the non-orgasmic penis takes over and renders him as powerless over the erectness/orgasmic ability of his penis. Based on Cartesian philosophy, the actions or functions of men’s bodies that appear outside the “rational self” may be positioned as part of a “dis/enchanted nature” (Seidler, 2007). In this instance, this Cartesian inside/outside distinction provides a resource that Rick can utilize to maintain an intact masculine (erectile) identity in the face of an account of penis limpness.

Excessive alcohol consumption was often tied to erectile issues by the men. The following extract comes after Deon was talking about how he had a relaxed approach to instigating casual sex and that he wished he could be a bit bolder with women:

- Int: You don’t find that umm you that they ((women)) pressure you? (h)
- Deon: Umm (0.2) yep yep (.) yep. Recently there was a girl who I had a thing for ((me)), this (.hh) ((Scandinavian)) girl (.) she’s [beautiful]
- Int: [(h)]
- Deon: and and I remember there has been a couple of times where we’ve been in town and it’s fully like

this superficial I’m drunk I’ll text her where are you and we’ll go in town (.) and meet up and we might like pash ((kiss))...and I do know that she um (0.2) wants to have sex with me and in fact tried a couple of times but both times I was too (.) way too drunk to even react or even like like I can’t if I am too drunk there is no way that I will get an erection at all. So I remember I was seeing these fucken horrible images of lying in her bed that’s how far [it]

- Int: [hhh]
- Deon: got and she was on top of me, she was trying to give me an erection was just using sort of a frottage kind of approach (.hh) [and]
- Int: [a what]
- Deon: A frottage
- Int: oh right
- Deon: like dry humping you know?
- Int: Right right okay (hh)
- Deon: And and I was just too drunk to react aye (.) so I have just got this image of her doing it and obviously I woke up the next morning (.) I obviously didn’t do anything because I still had my underwear on

The interviewer’s question is quite leading in this account and signals a preferred answer (Pomerantz, 1984) from Deon that is affirmative. He is invited to acknowledge that women pressure him into casual sex and goes on to offer an account of a scenario where he contacted a woman who desired him sexually. Deon’s account about the risk of “no erection” during casual sex with this woman is organized to locate the “blame” for Deon’s lack of erection on excessive alcohol consumption, rather than Deon’s general masculine sexuality when sober. Deon repairs his claim (Wilkinson & Weatherall, 2011) from “too” to “way too drunk” to legitimize his claim that it was only external factors hindering his sexual performance. In the last turn, his use of “memory” is evident in doing “being drunk”—he gives an account of not remembering (Edwards & Potter, 1995) whether or not sexual intercourse took place, but finding evidence in the morning that this had not been the case. This account invokes a level of intoxication so high that his memory is impaired, rendering the expectation that he might have been capable of getting an erection completely unreasonable.

The construction of alcohol as hindering sexual performance has a long-standing history within the West. Alcohol as both facilitating sexual desire and hindering male sexual performance is a well-established cultural “truth” which Deon and other men drew on and (re)produced. Deon, like

others, worked to portray himself as a man who can usually “get it up,” if not hindered by intoxication.² In doing so, Deon is also “trading” his masculine competence (De Visser, Smith, & McDonnell, 2009) by bolters his success in another domain of dominant manhood (heavy drinking), while describing his failure in others (sexual performance). In using a widely accepted reason as responsible for any erectile failures (i.e., alcohol), men’s (erectile) masculinities remained intact in the interview context. Against a cultural backdrop where men are required to be “sexperts” (Potts, 2002) and display exceptional sexual performance to remain properly masculine (Farvid & Braun, 2014), these accounts normalized not “getting it up” in a casual sex encounter where alcohol had been involved.

For men, “[v]irility and masculinity are confirmed through proper erection, and functional [penile] performance” (Grace, Potts, Gavey, & Vares, 2006, p. 310). In these data, talk of erectile failures required careful management so that men’s masculine identity was not jeopardized. Accounts like Deon’s and Rick’s, where lack of erection was externalized to other factors, can be understood as identity work designed to maintain a properly masculine image within the interview context. They also reflect Western popular and medical discourse where ‘the “healthy” and “functioning” male body must be capable of producing “normal” erections’—and where loss of erection or “erectile function” (Potts, Grace, Gavey, & Vares, 2004, p. 490; Tiefer, 2004) become synonymous with loss of masculinity or manhood (Potts, 2000). The absence of an erection, or erection-loss, was a risk of casual sex for men which also required careful and localized management within the interview context, particularly in response to probing interview questions from a woman interviewer. We now turn to discuss women’s talk and management of risk.

Negotiating a Responsible Subject Position

For women, talk of risk centered on potential sexual or physical victimization. In what follows, Teresa talked about safety in relation to a one-night stand she had engaged in with a man who she met at function:

Int: Yep so what um happened (.) on the night um I’m quite interested also in how (.) when you guys (.) when you were talking or chatting or meeting before the actual (.hh 0.2), um having sex,

what that was like and what you were thinking or feeling?

Theresa: Um oh it was just pleasurable (.) I mean I couldn’t remember what we, (.hh) probably talking about this and that and you know a bit of flirting and that usually involves a bit of sort’ve (.) eye wobbling and eye action and lots of smiling and stuff like that and kind’ve you know hanging around afterwards and you know (0.2) um you know (.) at some point you know somebody says well what about (.) you know would you like t (.) you know

Int: hmmm

Theresa: Um and it seemed that (.) all seemed fairly kind’ve um (.hh 0.3) pleasurable and exciting and not in any kind’ve um illicit or scary or um

Int: hmmm

Theresa: um:: um (0.2) that felt kind’ve fairly sort’ve (0.3) natural and pleasurable (.hh) and kind’ve exciting enough kind’ve thing

Int: hmmm [yeah]

Theresa: [yeah um]

Int: [So he] obviously asked you to come back at some point and that was fine

Theresa: yeah

Int: and you did you have any hesitations when he asked or reservations or

Theresa: Um (.) no not really no (.) I guess I guess I had felt (.) and I mean this is you know we know that the world is full of you know terrible date rape stories and things that can go [wrong (.hh)]

Int: [right]

Theresa: but I guess I um ah actually (.) no knowing me I probably did check that he um (.) I thought the hotel that he was staying at was kind’ve reputable (0.3) I mean if you went there and you needed help that you would get it

Int: [yeah]

Theresa: [if anything] sort’ve went wrong Um (.hh) and that that he knew enough people that I knew and enough people had seen us kind’ve together that also if anything went wrong it wouldn’t be kind’ve umm (0.2) well I mean you know but that’s all compl-[sure]

Int: [so then]

Theresa: [those] things can go wrong but

Int: absolute yeah=

Theresa: =um I suppose I and I must have found out enough about him to um think (.) you know [he’s] not a pervert or something you know (.) not a serial killer or

Int: yep (.) but that was so the notion of safety and all those sorts of things was something that was quite salient at the time?

² As evidenced within scientific literature (Briddell & Wilson, 1976; Cooper, 1994; Farkas & Rosen, 1976), popular media constructions (Callaway, 2009), internet-based health and sexual information (e.g., Santoso, 2006; Silverberg, 2006), and government-funded organizations providing education about alcohol (e.g., The Alcohol Advisory Council of New Zealand, ALAC, www.alcohol.org.co.nz).

Theresa: Yeah oh yeah
 Int: On the evening?
 Theresa: Yes definitely

Theresa, like many of the participants (e.g., Rick, above), displayed trouble with questions that asked about thinking and feeling. She reformulates the interviewer's first question by moving it from the personal ("what were you feeling") to the non-specific and as related to specific actions ("talking about this and that...flirting...eye wobbling"). By doing so, Theresa indicates that thoughts and feelings were unimportant and that the interviewer should already know what was involved, as it is well-established or routine when it comes to one-night stands. This extract also demonstrates the macro- and microlevels of interaction playing out together in the interview context. Within a wider social context where discourses of "risk" in relation to casual sex feature strongly (Beres & Farvid, 2010), and in an interpersonal context where the interviewer introduces and summarizes this exact issue, Theresa's account is rhetorically set up to counter any notions that she was acting in an irresponsible or careless way in relation to her physical safety during a one-night stand.

The interviewer displays a specific agenda oriented toward the potential dangers of (casual) sex, and Theresa seeks to alleviate the possibility that there was any danger by describing the early evening interaction as "pleasurable" and "exciting" but not "illicit" or "scary." These utterances denote the supposed spectrum of possibilities in relation to a casual sexual encounter for women—part of a wider list of possibilities—a potential for both pleasure and danger (Vance, 1984). In the minimization of the interaction as "a bit of flirting," "a bit of sort've eye wobbling," "fairly sort've natural and pleasurable," Theresa manages her identity as engaging in casual sex from a position of mundane moderation rather than a more overtly "sexed-up" attraction that could be heard as uncontrollable, risky or dangerous (Farvid & Braun, 2013).

At the start of the extract, the interviewer's questioning about hesitations that evening, may have also signaled to Theresa that hesitations *should* have been part of her considerations in relation to casual sex, given the broader context of casual sex and risk for women. Theresa responds to this, somewhat leading question, by drawing on the cultural discourses of "terrible date rape stories," to produce an account where she not only positions herself as aware of and knowledgeable about potential "risks" of casual sex, but also as someone who is responsible and careful by engaging in "safety-checking" (reputable hotel, having friends in common) before having casual sex. Theresa does a lot of identity work to defend against the interviewer's question, which is seemingly taken as an accusation that she might not have been careful enough. The use of the term "stories" also removes date rape and risk away from her even further—in

that stories (a term which implies fiction) somehow become "unreal" and less likely.

In this account of just-met-sex, Theresa articulates being safe and responsible, constructing an identity of careful rather than carefree in relation to her safety and not putting herself in any "danger." This account is situated within a broader social context that often blames individual women for putting themselves "at risk" of (sexual) assault (Berns, 2001; Meyers, 1997), for example, by having sex with someone they do not know well or having casual sex while intoxicated. Having sex without safety considerations has negative identity implications for women, which Theresa works to resist in this instance, in her broader identity as a woman. The broader social context requires this account from Theresa in this moment within the interview context, where she was accounting for her one-off casual sex encounter.

Crafting Agency in an Account of Sexual Coercion

Accounts of sexual coercion appeared in a few of the women's interviews. In these instances, women were managing a victimized personhood, while seeking to deflect the notion that they were a victim. In the following extract, Zoe described a casual sex experience with an acquaintance that made her feel uncomfortable. The interviewer had just previously asked Zoe to choose a positive or negative one-off experience to talk about:

Int: So, I don't know which one you want to do, or if you had one that you really want to talk about? (hhh)
 Zoe: Yep. I guess there's there's only one (.) sort of negative one that (0.3) it wasn't hugely negative, but it was probably the most negative=
 Int: =hmm
 Zoe: and that was someone who was a friend of a friend who I'd sort of become friends with and hung out with a bit (.hh) an:::d we::: only slept together once (.) Um an:::d he was quite a fu:::n kinda person I mean fun but he was quite kind of bolshie ((bold or pushy))
 Int: hmm=
 Zoe: =and probably in that situation I felt a little bit more pressured than I have in any others (.)
 Int: hmm=
 Zoe: =and it's not that I couldn't have said no um::: and you know to him (.) I have said no before, but I did fe:::el (.)
 Int: hmm=
 Zoe: =that there was a little bit more pressure
 Int: hmm where did that (0.1) come, like how was how could you describe that pressure? Where does it

- come from?
- Zoe: Um I guess (0.4) I guess he had an expectation that I would sleep with him (.) at a certain stage in the night I think it became apparent that he sort of had a bit of an expectation. And (0.2) [he] would have been very disappointed had we not=
- Int: =hmm=
- Zoe: =An::d he would (0.3) I you know I never felt that I couldn't say no but I would have felt a bit stink ((bad)) kind of saying=
- Int: =hmm=
- Zoe: =no really (.) Like I guess maybe that I would have felt like he would have judged me a little bit (.hh)
- Int: In?
- Zoe: Whereas some of the others like I've had two other times when I've not wanted to have (.) penetrative sex and they've both been totally fine with that and I've never felt judged like they would want me to have said that if I didn't (.) whereas with him I think he just wanted me to go along with it (.hh)

Despite articulating, repeatedly, how she could have said no to sex, Zoe reports going along with intercourse, in a pressured situation. In talk about the risks of (casual) sex—sexual coercion—an identity risk is also apparent; that of being someone who was sexually coerced. In this account, Zoe engages in identity work to position herself as *not coerced* in this instance of (unwanted) casual sex. Subtle forms of sexual coercion are largely glossed over and minimized by Zoe to achieve this identity positioning. Namely, Zoe crafts a position of “agency” (“I never felt that I couldn't say no”; “I have said no before”) even in an account of coercion (“I felt a little bit more pressured”; “he had an expectation that I would sleep with him”).

The practice of depicting such experiences as “not that bad” suggests that a victim status is the identity “risk” at hand, and to avoid this required work by Zoe to bolster her agency and choice within the encounter. Admissions of being pressured/coerced into sex are difficult to display and are subject to the demands of identity representation within conversational contexts (Gavey, 2005). Zoe's dialog is an account to herself and others, where she resists taking up—or being given—a sexually coerced identity position; the visible “threat” to Zoe's identity within the interview context. The final category of risk we turn to is participants talk about garnering a sexual reputation from engaging in casual sex.

The (Gendered) Management of Sexual Reputation

The phrase “sexual reputation” is often associated with the well-established and enduring sexual double standard where women's active seeking of, and engaging in, (casual) sex, is

pejoratively labeled as “slutty” or “skanky,” while the same behavior by men is positively labeled as “studly” (e.g., Crawford & Popp, 2003; Farvid et al., 2017; Jackson & Cram, 2003; Kitzinger, 1995). In these interviews, acquiring a certain type of sexual reputation in relation to casual sex was often subtly invoked by the participants as a social risk of casual sex. In this talk, participants engaged in identity work to construct particular images of themselves; and men and women orientated toward different types of identity risks in relation to the sexual reputation. For example, women displayed concerns around being deemed promiscuous. One woman's talk about sexual reputation produced an account of “silence” about her casual sex encounters. In the following extract, the interviewer really pushed Whina to account for her secretiveness:

- Whina: I'm quite a secretive person
- Int: hmm=
- Whina: =in the sense I won't tell my friends what I get up to and ah sexually but
- Int: Why's that?
- Whina: Why? 'Cause I don't think it's any of their business why? But I don't know, I I think about that sometimes too I'm like, 'cause I'm really I'm really (0.5) interested in my friends' lives and I I will ask and I will get to know what what goes on in their lives a lot of the times (.) though people just don't ask me so I'm like if they don't ask I'm not going to tell
- Int: hmm
- Whina: So (.hh) it's it's not so much like I'm I'm keeping a secret (.), it's like I'm just not telling them (.) If people ask me I will be completely honest
- Int: hmm=
- Whina: =but um they don't ask so I don't tell y'know (.) and that's that's that's how I justify me (0.3) not telling people (.) and I know I know sometimes it's sort of bordering on Whina you are actually just being secretive though (.) like y'know?=
=But why would you then be secretive about that?
- Int: um=
- Whina: = I mean just out of interest
- Whina: Why? Why? Oh maybe maybe secretly I'm ashamed of what I my actions? (.) I don't I don't I can't I can't answer that 'cause [I don't know]
- Int: [But I mean] why might you be, what what is it about those actions that might make you feel that way?
- Whina: Um (outbreath)
- Int: Where would that idea sort of stem from?
- Whina: Probably because I've had sex with almost 50 people
- Int: Hmm
- Whina: so I don't (.hh 0.2) don't really like to publicise that (.) because I don't want people to get the wrong impression of me

Int: Which would be?=
 Whina: =Which would be that I'm whoreish and slutty (0.2) and and things like that. Which I mean could be a fair enough assumption for people didn't know me

This account started quite abruptly during the interview, without any invitation or questioning from the interviewer. Whina was talking about a casual sex encounter when she launched into an account of herself as “secretive” about her sexual experiences. The interviewer's questioning about *why* she might be secretive is resisted by Whina who paints secretiveness as self-explanatory in this context, akin to the way in which people have been documented as responding to “silly questions” in police interrogations (Stokoe & Edwards, 2008). One reason Whina might resist this line of questioning is that she does not want to make available the identity position of someone who might be deemed a “slut.” However, the interviewer repeatedly pushes Whina on this issue, eventually resulting in her providing such an account of her secretiveness. Whina's account is set up in relation to the risks of acquiring a sexual reputation and hence a negative image to herself and others if she disclosed the frequency and nature of her casual sex encounters.

Lying about one's sexuality could be read as positioning Whina as abnormal in some way, although she works hard to portray herself as an “ordinary girl” who is not intrinsically different to other women because of her sexual activity. Whina is negotiating her sexual conduct against conventional perceptions of what is appropriate feminine (sexual) conduct: 50 casual sex partners may (legitimately, in her account) get her the label of whore/slut if people did not know her. Her “true identity” is portrayed as not whoreish or slutty, but the possibility that she could be judged as such by society's standards, positions not telling as her best option so that she is not judged unfairly or inaccurately by others. Unlike some research where the sexual double standard has been critiqued and disrupted by participants (Allen, 2003; Jackson & Cram, 2003), in this interview, the sexual double standard shaped the account, particularly with regards to the social risks for women posed by engaging in what might be considered *too much* casual sex (Farvid & Braun, 2017).

Men's identity concerns around reputation were (again) hinged on performance and being deemed “bad in bed” (Tristan, 34). For example, the following extract follows a discussion around condom use in casual sex. Tristan goes on to depict a concern for sexual reputation in terms of sexual performance, making relevant his identity within the interview:

Int: So then in terms of a one-night stands?
 Tristan: Well the one-night stand, you know as I said, you've got all those things going against you, um tiredness, drunkenness
 Int: hmm

Tristan: (0.2) you know (.) fumbling around with the condom (.) um you know it's it's very (.) and then then you worry 'cause you sort of think well (.hh) um yeah, you want to give a reasonable account of yourself=

Int: =and why why is that important?
 Tristan: Why? (.) um I don't know
 Int: Is it because mm=
 Tristan: =I suppose (.) it's it's some maybe maybe it's an ego thing but but you also its (sighs)=
 Int: =Is it I guess what I'm trying to get at is it a (.) in terms of the concern for the w- woman enjoying herself but more like what she will think of you afterwards (hh) or what she may tell other people or or whatever (.) what's the [concern there]
 Tristan: [well it's] it's a bit more
 I suppose it is it's not a selfless concern in that sense (.) it's not that you want to give her great pleasure=
 Int: =hmm=
 Tristan: =It's more that you know worry (hh) about your reputation (.) not that not that um I mean most of the women I don't think that they [are] *Sex and the City* types who go round comparing notes and um
 Int: (hhh)
 Tristan: humiliating men to their friends=
 Int: =right hmm=
 Tristan: =um but yeah it is about it's about male I suppose ego pride all that those sort of silly things

Poor sexual performance within casual sex is depicted here as one of the ubiquitous risks of casual sex for men. Tristan manages his account around “difficulties” associated with casual sex performance, as to avoid being positioned as a man who really is bad in bed. Using a three-part-list (tiredness, drunkenness, condom fumbling), Tristan builds a rhetorically robust argument (Atkinson, 1984) for why he may encounter difficulties during casual sex. He invokes a generalized, and generally “known,” set of common factors which could apply to any man in any circumstance. He situates these elements as undermining his sexual performance and in doing so situates them as something that could happen to anyone at any time. The identity constructed is a fragile masculine sexual subjectivity, dependent on sexual performance, that is under assault on all sides. But Tristan's masculinity is kept intact, as the culprits producing poor performance are not specific to him. Displaying an image of someone who cannot perform sexually was a threat to Tristan's masculinity, and he works to resist the cause of such instances as internal.

Tristan's utterance “you want to give a reasonable account of yourself” refers to the desire to give a reasonable sexual account of himself, during a/ny casual sexual encounter/s. Although not articulated specifically by him, the interviewer does not question him to explicate what he meant by

“reasonable account”; indicating the orientation of the interviewer was also focused on performance as the issue at hand.

The notion of the “male ego,” often positioned as responsible for much of “male” behavior, be it sexual or otherwise (Farvid & Braun, 2006), is directly invoked by Tristan to explain his desire or need to “give a reasonable account” of himself within casual sex. Tristan portrays his *real* concern as not necessarily about providing women with great pleasure (out of worry for their pleasure), rather in terms of giving women pleasure in a way that a man *should*. This account also ties into a well-established “pseudo-reciprocal gift discourse”—where:

Men require heterosexual sex to satisfy their sexual urges (corresponding to the male sex-drive discourse). However, in order to do so, this discourse relies on men viewing women as passive receptacles who must relinquish all control over their bodies, in “giving” themselves, or in “giving” sex to their male partners. In return, the man must try to please the woman, which entails, in most cases, trying to “give” the woman an orgasm. (Gilfoyle, Wilson, & Own, 1992, p. 217–18).

The worry in Tristan’s account is thus about the implications his sexual partner’s pleasure has on his manhood as a sexually virile man (Grace et al., 2006). However, rather than positioning this scenario as all about him and his image, Tristan’s use of the word “silly” when referring to male “ego and pride” positions him as having to behave in a certain way, due to the requirements of “silly” masculinity, rather than it being his “true” identity. Hence, Tristan did not simply invoke traditional (or hegemonic) forms of masculinity, but positioned himself in relation to cultural ideals to account for his actions (Wetherell & Edley, 1999).

What Tristan is doing here is quite complex in terms of identity representation. He does not simply display himself as concerned with ego/pride, things that men are supposedly typically worried about; rather, his account constructs these concerns as asinine yet simultaneously considered by him. Tristan takes the position of both complicit, yet resisting, traditional codes of masculinity; he is “above all that,” yet he is not. His true self is not unknowingly worried about “silly” things that men are ostensibly concerned about, yet it is something that he needs to consider as a man almost in an obligatory way. He is thus not to be held responsible for having to behave in such a way, it is the requirement of manhood, but not his “true” (underlying) identity.

Conclusions

In this article, we have demonstrated how dominant discourses of gendered heterosexuality permeated talk about the risks

of heterosexual casual sex to produce different identity threats to men and women in the interview context. These gendered concerns speak to the pervasive constructions around heterosexuality—constructions which the interviewer and the participants both oriented to within the interviews. These findings echo representations found in casual sex advice. Women are effectively advised to prioritize safety in casual sex, reinstating women’s position as sexually vulnerable to heterosexual men (Farvid & Braun, 2013, 2014). Men are effectively advised to prioritize performance, reinstating men’s position as sexually dominant and performative (Farvid & Braun, 2013, 2014). Within our data presented here, what was at risk for men was not being recognized as a “performing” hetero-masculine man, who could have and enjoy (any) casual sex at any time. For women, what appeared to be at risk was being positioned as irresponsible and naïve, putting themselves at risk, and therefore doing casual sex badly. The added level of risk we drew out was an interactional one. The identity threats outlined above invited careful localized management by the participants, highlighting the importance of identity and representation in the interactional context, when it comes to talk about the risk of heterosexual casual sex.

The implications of our research are many-fold. When it comes to casual sex research, we have expanded the categories of risk typically associated with this practice. In addition to the well-established physical, social and psychological risks typically discussed, we have identified risk in the domain of localized identity representation. This is an important finding as it highlights aspects of casual sex practice that have not been addressed by previous research. Casual sex researchers need to take into consideration that a salient level of risk for those who engage in the practice included dimensions related to identity and representation, as linked to broader discourses of gender and sexuality. Hence, future research in this arena, whether it is survey, interview or other forms of data collection, needs to consider the importance of identity and representation when designing a project and in interpreting any outcomes.

Furthermore, although casual sex is often portrayed as a practice that men enjoy and benefit from, our discursive focus supports other emerging work that suggests casual sex is a fraught domain for both men and women, albeit in different ways (Epstein et al., 2009; Olmstead, Billen, Conrad, Pasley, & Fincham, 2013). In demonstrating how gendered discourses of heterosexuality shape both men’s and women’s accounts in precarious ways, we have been able to highlight that men, along with women, do not always benefit from the current gendered constructions of heterosexual casual sex (Farvid & Braun, 2017). However, the stakes appear to be much higher for women.

In relation to sexual health education efforts, considerations need to be made about the possibility that physical aspects of sexual risk (e.g., STI transmission/unplanned

pregnancies) might not be the most salient to those who engage in casual sex (before, during, or after casual sex). In our data, although women seemed acutely oriented to physical risk in terms of sexual victimization, both men and women rarely discussed sexual risks as it related to STI transmission or unplanned pregnancies (Farvid & Braun, 2017). This lack of engagement requires further investigation. Elements of risks associated with the social and in terms of (gendered) identity are also categories that might be important to focus on when it comes to sexual health education. For example, emphasis could be placed on debunking performance-oriented masculinities in heterosexuality, which (ironically) produced stark moments of vulnerability and discomfort for men. Ongoing efforts are also needed to disassemble the enduring sexual double standard that permeates heterosexuality and produces gender asymmetry when it comes to the social and identity risks of engaging in casual sex (particularly for women) (Bordini & Sperb, 2013; Farvid & Braun, 2017; Reid, Elliott, & Webber, 2011).

When it comes to psychology as a discipline, our work supports research traditions that position identity as fluid, contextual and constituted via discourse in specific moments of interaction (Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998; Bamberg et al., 2011; Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). Identity was something our participants actively constructed, achieved and managed, in a contextually bound manner. An alternative interviewer (e.g., a man) and a different set of questions or research interests would have no doubt produced varying accounts to those examined here. This article adds to the sizeable body of scholarship that has moved away from understanding identity as a stable, inborn and unitary construct that is self-contained and directly defines individual character or behavior. Our analysis demonstrated how identities are socially constituted and negotiated by individuals, based on the contextual demands of a given scenario, while drawing on available sociocultural discourses.

Lastly, in relation to discursive psychology, our work highlights the usefulness of interview research when it comes to examining sensitive topics or data that are ethically or pragmatically hard to collect via naturally occurring talk. Although it is clear that the accounts analyzed here were co-constructed between the interviewer and interviewee, and that both parties shaped the accounting, the analysis offered new insights into the constructions of risk in relation to casual sex. Furthermore, we have showcased the flexibility that can be applied in discursive analysis, by modifying a synthetic approach to suit the collected data and the analytic interests of the research. We argue that discursive psychologists should remain creative and strategically draw on the methodological tools at our disposal that help to produce novel research insights. Through such an approach, we identified and discussed identity as a “risk category” when it comes to casual sex. We have argued that this layer of risk is first and foremost interactional and focused on self-representation in

the interview context, but one that draws on broader discourses of gendered sexuality that create those risks. Further research focused on examining identity, gender, interaction and “risk” is sorely needed and we invite scholars to integrate these dimensions of risk in future casual sex research.

Overall, our research concludes that despite recent cultural shifts in the (re)sexualization of Western culture, the proliferation of postfeminist and discourses, and decades of gender equality activism, heterosexual men and women are still having to position themselves in relation to an enduring and unchanging gendered model of heterosexuality. This model creates a fraught sexual rationality for both women and men and continues to require urgent dismantling and reformulation to promote gender diversity and egalitarianism.

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Appendix 1

The transcript notation used here was a modified version of Jeffersonian style, as used by Wetherell (1998).

- One or more colons indicated the extension of the previous sound: **Tha:::t**
- **hh** indicates an audible intake of breath
- A? is used to mark upward intonation characteristic of a question
- Underlining text indicates emphasis placed on a word or part of a word
- Extended brackets indicate overlapping speech. The left bracket indicates the beginning of the overlap while the right bracket indicates the end: e.g.,
- **hh[hhh]**
- **[hhhh]**
- Double parenthesis indicates transcribers descriptions
- Numbers in parentheses, e.g., **(0.2)**, indicate pauses in tenths of a second, while **(.)** indicates a micropause.
- **=** indicates the absence of a discernible gap between the end of one speaker’s utterance and the beginning of another speaker’s utterance.

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