

Gendered Emotional Manipulation: An Investigation of Male and Female Perceptions of the
Player Identity in Romantic Relationships

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Abstract

Although interpersonal communication studies have focused on various aspects of interpersonal relationships, research on the player identity and gendered emotional manipulation in romantic relationships has received little attention. This narrative research inquiry was undertaken to explore perceptions of men and women related to the player identity and gendered emotional manipulation. This investigation used social construction as a theoretical perspective to understand three areas of investigation that include: the existence and relevance of the player identity, the player's relation to emotionally manipulative behaviour, and the connection between socially constructed gender conventions and the player identity. Hesse-Biber's (2006) feminist interviewing approach guided semi-structured interviews with six male and six female participants. Respondents reported the existence and relevance of the player identity in romantic relationships today, connecting this identity to emotionally manipulative behaviour, as well as relating this identity to traditional gender conventions. Finally, implications for men and women in romantic relationships today and future areas of research are discussed in light of these findings.

Chapter One: Introduction

His name, or at least the name he used online, was Mystery. He was the most worshipped pickup artist in the community, a powerhouse who spit out long, detailed posts that read like algorithms of how to manipulate social situations to meet and attract women. His nights out seducing models and strippers in his hometown of Toronto were chronicled in intimate detail online, the writing filled with jargon of his own invention: sniper negs, shotgun negs, group theory, indicators of interest, pawning— all of which had become an integral part of the pickup artist lexicon.

- Neil Strauss (2005). *The Game* p. 15

This excerpt from Strauss' (2005) famous work, "The Game," takes his readers on a step-by-step unveiling of the secret seduction lifestyle. Ultimately, through his work, Strauss (2005) reveals and instructs others on how to manipulate and seduce women. Strauss and his followers belong to what is known as the "seduction community," an underground society committed to learning the art of seduction in order to attract women, often for sexual purposes (p. 68). This community is equipped with their own set of linguistic terms that describe their standardized seduction techniques used on women. Their vernacular include terms like: sniper neg (a comment used to embarrass a woman in a one-on-one conversation), shotgun neg (a comment used to embarrass a woman in a group situation), group theory (the idea that in order to attract a woman, one needs to impress her friends while actively showing a lack of interest in her), indicators of interest (a sign that a woman gives to a man indirectly showing that she is interested in him), and pawning (approaching a group of people in order to meet a woman nearby or adjacent to the group) (Strauss, 2005). This underground community refer to themselves as pickup artists, or individuals skilled at making new acquaintances, often for the sake of romantic

purposes (Pickup, n.d.). Strauss and his followers guarantee that their standardized techniques used to seduce women are effective, and even teach workshops around the world on how to play this game of seduction.

Ultimately, this seduction community is committed to using emotional manipulation to strategically seduce potential romantic partners into sexual relations. Within this community successful pickup artists, like Strauss and his followers, pride themselves on their promiscuous activities with many women. Picking up, or seducing women is seen as the ultimate *game* for this secret community, where success is determined by how many women these men can seduce and have sex with (Strauss, 2005). Strauss' work and his approach to seducing women provide a useful example in introducing this discussion on gendered emotional manipulation and the player identity.

Purpose of Study

As Trenholm and Jensen (2004) articulate, in every culture and society people meet and fall in love. While courtship and expressions of love vary amongst cultures and throughout time, romantic relationships remain an important aspect of human interactions today. At the same time, there are trends and interactions amongst romantic couples that have yet to be explored and understood. This study will take an in depth look at the player identity and what it means for young men and women in their romantic relationships today.

Literature focusing on the player identity is considerably limited. Most research focuses on the player as an identity related to African American urban youth culture; within this cultural context, the player is an identity assumed by some black males as a means of displaying their masculinity amongst their peers (Majors & Billson, 1992; Miller, 2008). Majors and Billson (1992) coined the term 'cool pose' to describe black young males who attempt to present

themselves with a masculine demeanour; they argue that the player identity is part of establishing a cool pose. In addition, while Strauss (2005) and his following do not refer to themselves as players, their goals and objectives are certainly in line with what the player identity entails. In this study, pickup artists will be mentioned as an identity synonymous with the player identity.

Against such a backdrop, this thesis will seek to understand male and female perceptions of the player identity in a more general context in romantic relationships today. Miller (2008) discusses what the player identity means amongst young African American males living in disadvantaged areas of St. Louis, Missouri, USA. Her respondents defined the player identity as an identity in which boys use “girls” for sex, having multiple sexual conquests without any emotional attachment (p. 154). While Miller is describing an identity specific to American youth, due to the lack of research on the player identity, Miller’s (2008) work will be important in giving context to this identity. However the aim is to understand the player identity within a Canadian context. The “Urban Dictionary,” an online resource explaining common communicative slang terms in the English language defines the term player, “as a male who is skilled at manipulating (playing) others, and especially at seducing women by pretending to care about them when in reality they [the manipulators] are only interested in sex” (Player, n.d.). While these two definitions work to specify the meaning of the term player as an identity related to African American youth culture, and/or an identity specific to males, this study will apply the player identity in more broad terms to understanding romantic relationships, affecting both men and women. Whether the player identity has any pertinence or prevalence to romantic relationships in general will be understood through this investigation of male and female perspectives.

An important part of the player identity is related to emotional manipulation, since according the “Urban Dictionary” definition of the player, individuals are “seduced” by their player partners who “pretend to care about them” (Player, n.d.). As such, the concept of emotional manipulation will be a central theme in discussing the player identity. The specific use of emotional manipulation by a player will be referred to as *gendered emotional manipulation*.

In defining gendered emotional manipulation, gender refers to the social and cultural experiences, meanings and institutional structures that are appropriated to males and females respectively (Kimmel, 2011). Thus, gender can be understood as a social category appropriated to males and females, dictating behaviours, attitudes, and identities (Wood, 2011). In describing the emotional manipulation enacted by a player as a “gendered” phenomenon, the term *gendered* works to describe the specific kind of emotional manipulation enacted by a player, which is characterized by issues related to gender. Meanwhile, emotions are defined as a distinct state of consciousness, making a vivid condition which is experienced in a unique way very different from “non-emotive” states (Shields, 2000). Emotion is essentially a state of feeling based on one’s assessment of a social situation. Manipulation within the context of romantic relationships is defined as “enticing” or controlling one’s partner to do something through forms of persuasion, influence, or charm (Layder, 2009, p. 52). Grieve and Mahar (2010) explain that emotional manipulation is the act of manipulating the emotions of others for a self-serving purpose.

Based on the above information found in existing literature, gendered emotional manipulation will be used in this study to describe the emotionally manipulative tendencies of a player, and will be defined as the attempt to emotionally control another person by the means of some form of persuasion or influence. Gendered emotional manipulation, a behaviour assumed

by players, involves lying or manipulating the emotions of romantic partners in order to gain some sort of self-serving gratification, which is often sexual in nature. It is assumed that the context in which gendered emotional manipulation occurs is specific to romantic relationships. It is enacted through manipulating the emotions of one's romantic partner(s). Gendered emotional manipulation occurs by the means of using words or actions to deceive, convince, persuade, or impose guilt on one's romantic partner(s) in order to emotionally manipulate them into a desired response, and it can be perpetrated by both male and female individuals.

Overall, this study will aim to investigate three areas related to the player identity in romantic relationships: (1) the existence and relevance of the player identity in romantic relationships in today's social context, (2) the player's relation to emotionally manipulative behaviour towards romantic partners, and (3) the connection between socially constructed male and female gender conventions and the player identity.

This study employed a narrative inquiry research approach to address the two research questions posed. In this way, the study relied on the stories and perceptions of interview participants that focused on meaning-making based on the interview responses as texts for analysis (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Six men and six women between the ages of 18-35 were selected and each participated in a 20 minute to an hour long interview over the course of April 2011. This investigation is unique since it brings both genders into the conversation about gendered emotional manipulation and the player identity. This study examined the experiences of those who were in committed relationships, as well as those who were single and dating. As a result, this study did not specifically interview couples, but rather interviewed individuals having a various range of relationship statuses. This study also had a more narrowed focus since only heterosexual individuals were interviewed. Although the player identity and gendered emotional

manipulation could affect those beyond a heterosexual orientation and the selected age bracket, in order to narrow the scope of this research investigation, the focus was on this select group of people.

Rationale for Study

Romantic relationships occupy a central place in many of our lives; a more extensive understanding of how cultural forces operate within these relationships may help them to be more successful, satisfying, and long lasting (Zubriggen, 2000). The player identity in romantic relationships has only been studied in relation to a few cultural contexts, and has yet to be applied to understanding romantic relationships in general (Majors & Billson, 1992; Miller, 2008). More broadly, there is a significant lack of research investigating emotional manipulation in romantic relationships (Austin, Farrelly, Black & More, 2007; De Raad, 2005). Thus, this study will establish the importance of studying the player identity, as well as emotional manipulation in romantic relationships today.

This study is also unique because it works to include the perspectives of both men and women in order to understand the player identity and gendered emotional manipulation. By taking the beliefs of both men and women into account, this study will provide a thorough look into an area of study given little academic attention in the past.

Overview of Thesis

The four remaining chapters will expand on the information provided in this introduction to offer a complete narrative inquiry research investigation of what the player identity and gendered emotional manipulation means to some men and women in the context of romantic relationships. Appendix D provides a glossary of terms that are discussed throughout this study; however key concepts pertinent to this investigation will be defined and explained when

necessary throughout this thesis. In Chapter Two, Literature Review, I will draw on relevant literature related to interpersonal communication and gender studies to demonstrate that a broad range of knowledge has been considered for this thesis. In Chapter Three, Research Design and Methodology, I describe this study's narrative inquiry design and procedures, as well as provide a justification for why narrative inquiry was used to investigate the player identity and gendered emotional manipulation. In Chapter Four, Results and Analysis, an explanation of the data gathered from participants' interviews, in which they discuss their own perceptions of the player identity and gendered emotional manipulation will be discussed. Chapter Five, Conclusion, looks across all the participants' responses and asks, taken together, what they say about the existence of the player identity, its relation to emotional manipulation, and its connection to male and female gender conventions.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I began by discussing Strauss' concept of the pickup artist as a means of introducing the player identity in today's cultural context. I then went on to discuss the player identity in relation to African American youth culture; Miller (2008) argues that the player identity is a means of demonstrating a cool pose, a concept introduced by Majors and Billson (1992) describing the manner in which some African American young males display their masculinity. In mentioning these examples of the player identity, this introduction also provides a detailed explanation of gendered emotional manipulation and how it could be related to the player identity. Through introducing these concepts and themes, this introductory chapter sets the tone for this investigation of the player identity and gendered emotional manipulation.

This chapter also mentions that this study takes on a narrative research approach to investigate how men and women perceive the player identity within today's romantic

relationships. This thesis focuses on three areas of investigation including: the existence and relevance of the player identity in romantic relationships, the player's relation to emotionally manipulative behaviour, and the relationship between socially constructed gender conventions and the player identity. Appendix D features the key terms (communication, equality, gender, gendered emotional manipulation, hegemonic masculinity, perception, player, romantic love, and socialization) have been conceptualized as a means of providing a framework of reference for this thesis.

In the next chapter, Literature Review, I present a broad range of the knowledge base on which this study was built. It should be noted that studies specifically related to the player identity and gendered emotional manipulation are very limited; as such, considering other literature related to interpersonal communication and gender studies are helpful in providing a knowledge base for this investigation.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The following literature review is a coalescence of various themes related to romantic relationships, the player identity in various cultural contexts, interpersonal power, and gender construction. While this literature review encompasses an array of literature and topics, it is important to note that these topics will be mentioned as a means of showing the breadth of research completed for this study. This literature review is divided into six sections. First, since perception is a central part of this study, an explanation of what perception is and why people's perceptions are an important means of gaining knowledge is offered. Second, a brief explanation of interpersonal communication and how this study is relevant within a communication studies context is provided. Third, an important discussion of love and relationships introduces the various elements of romantic relationships as a means of providing a background. Fourth, there is a discussion of the literature on the player identity in various contexts. Works derived from Majors and Billson's (1992) conception of cool pose, Miller's (2008) account of the player identity amongst some African American male youth, and Neil Strauss' account of "The Game" are discussed. Fifth, there will be a discussion of interpersonal power in relationships, since elements of power are implicitly at work in the relationship between players and their romantic partners. Sixth, a discussion of gender differences in communication and emotion is offered since gender is considered an important construct in understanding the player identity and gendered emotional manipulation. The theoretical framework of social construction will then be discussed and applied to understanding the player identity and gendered emotional manipulation.

Perception

Since this study aims to explore the perceptions of both men and women related to the player identity and gendered emotional manipulation, an explanation of perception will help

contextualize what it entails and why it is an important means of understanding the world. The expression that perception is more important than reality is certainly reflective of the importance perception holds in determining truth in the minds of people. DeVito et al. (2008) define perception as a process where one becomes aware of objects, events, and especially people through one's sense of sight, smell, taste, touch, and hearing. Also, they note that perceptions are a result of what exists in the outside world, and from one's own experiences, desires, needs, and wants. According to Beebe et al. (2007) interpersonal perception is the process where we decide what others are like, giving meaning to their behaviour and actions. This process also includes making assumptions and judgements from what is observed in the external world (Beebe et al., 2007).

Perception is central in affecting what people believe is true, shaping people's conceptions of reality as they see it (Corbin & White, 2008). DeVito et al. (2008) posit that there are five steps to interpersonal perception, including: (1) sensing some form of stimulation, (2) the organization of the stimuli in some way, (3) interpreting and evaluating perception, (4) storing perception in memory, and (5) retrieving the perception when needed.

In another understanding of perception, Corbin and White (2008) relate that it involves selection, organization, and interpretation. Selection involves mentally prioritizing what is important, organizing is the means by which we organize and make sense of information, and the interpretation stage involves determining what the messages mean to us (Corbin & White, 2008). Since perception functions as a form of truth in the minds of individuals it is a significant means of understanding the world. While perception is certainly a subjective construct, it is still a valid form of gaining information from people since perception is obviously formulated through

interactions with the external world. Through this narrative inquiry research project the perceptions of respondents will work to present a format for reality.

Interpersonal Communication and Identity Formation

How does a study of communication have any relation to understanding people's perceptions of the player identity and gendered emotional manipulation? At a first glance this study would seem better suited as a study related to psychology or sociology; however, communication is a fundamental aspect of all human relationships, and is a necessary element in understanding identities and dynamics present in human relationships. Communication is an essential part of our socialization and interaction with the world. Both explicit and implicit forms of communication function as a means of obtaining, learning, processing, and understanding the world. According to Corbin and White (2008) communication is at the core of who we are. They relate that from the time we are born, we are "talking ourselves into identity" (p. 13). As such, communication functions as a means of creating and maintaining relationships (DeVito et al., 2008). This study is related to the interpersonal communication topic area, which is defined as the process of two people interacting with each other, and influencing each other for the purpose of managing relationships (Beebe et al., 2007). The study of interpersonal communication functions as a means of understanding how people shape and create their identities amongst one another.

Identity is an important part of understanding interpersonal relationships, particularly in the instance of romantic relationships. Guerrero, Andersen, and Afifi (2007) define identity as a "theory of self that is formed and maintained through actual or imagined interpersonal agreements about what the self is like" (p. 22). Thus, identity can be understood as how we see ourselves based on our interactions with the world around us. Identity is formed through our

interactions with other people, our anticipated interactions, and the way others respond and judge us (Guerrero et al., 2007). According to Wood (2010), as we interact with people, we adopt, or internalize their perspectives and perceptions of who we are. Identity is an important aspect of interpersonal relationships since it often works to establish and reaffirm how we choose to interact and behave with others. The following section will explain the various elements of romantic relationships.

An Introduction to Love

Since this study is concerned with romantic relationships, an explanation of what love is and what romantic relationships involve will be a necessary place to begin. According to Fletcher and Kerr (2010), romantic love is defined as a commitment device used to lead people to substantially invest long periods of time with one another, and support any resulting offspring. They insist that a “leap of faith” is necessary in sustaining long term relationships which is powered by strong emotional attachment (p. 627). Love is also widely sought, and often idealized by many (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2007). Love can be defined as an intense feeling of affection or fondness towards a person or thing (DeVito et al., 2008).

Sternberg (1988) conceptualized that love has three basic components: intimacy, passion and decision/commitment. According to Regan (2003), the intimacy component involves an emotional attachment and feelings of warmth, closeness, connection, and bondedness in the love relationship. Passion can be seen as the intense emotional feelings towards another person, and the decision/commitment component is largely cognitive and relates to the short-term decision to love another individual, and the longer term commitment to maintain that love (Reagan, 2003).

Romantic relationships are one of the most complex relationships to understand within the realm of interpersonal relationships. Reagan (2003) mentions that there are various kinds of

romantic love relationships. Within this thesis, the relationship between a player and her/his partner will be constituted as a kind of romantic relationship. DeVito et al. (2008) relate that there are six stages of interpersonal relationships, including: contact, involvement, intimacy and risk, deterioration, repair and dissolution. Contact takes place when the first perceptual contact with another individual is made. The involvement stage is where a sense of connection is created, and the intimacy and risk stage is where individuals commit themselves to one another. Deterioration occurs when there is a breakdown in relationship progress and communication is often necessary to amend relations. Repair occurs if individuals work to fix problems, and if problems are not resolved, dissolution or the breaking of relations will take place (DeVito et al., 2008). Intimacy is almost always mentioned as a necessary component of romantic relationships, and is often mentioned as one of the most important aspects of a romantic relationship.

Corbin and White (2008) define intimacy as the “communicative core” of relationships (p.57). Intimacy could involve an element of passion, whether it be sexual, intellectual, spiritual, or emotional (Corbin & White, 2008). Intimacy can also be seen as an instance where an individual is honest and open with another person, where there is the exchange of very personal thoughts and feelings (DeVito et al., 2008). Also related to intimacy are the three main styles of love. The following section describes these styles of love, with a specific focus on ludus love.

According to Reagan (2003) the three main styles of love include: eros, storge, and ludus. While the only love style that is of importance in this investigation of the player identity and gendered emotional manipulation is the ludus style of love, in order to give context, all three of these love styles will be explained. Eros love is related to physical passion and desire for a quickly developing romantic relationship (Campbell, Finkel & Foster, 2002). Reagan (2003) relates that eros is often characterized by an immediate and powerful attraction to the beloved

person. The erotic lover (those characterised by the eros love style) is prone to fall in love quickly, feeling an intense need for daily contact with the beloved individual, and desires the relationship to be exclusive (Reagan, 2003). Storge love is characterized by a value of trust and companionship (Campbell et al., 2002). With this kind of love, the “storgic” lover treats and views her/his romantic partner as an “old friend” (Reagan, 2003, p. 9). This kind of love does not experience the same sort of intense emotional and physical attraction associated with eros love, and prefers communication about shared interests rather than expressing direct feelings (Reagan, 2003). The third primary love style is called ludus, and will be described in more detail since it characterizes the player as a romantic partner.

Ludus love is characterized by game-playing and a lack of sincere emotional attachment (Reagan, 2003). Ludic lovers (those who are associated with the ludus style of love) have an aversion to partner dependence; they enjoy the attention of others, and are deceptive lovers (Campbell et al., 2002). According to Reagan (2003) the ludic lover views love as a game to be played with skill, and often plays it with several lovers at the same time. In addition, the ludic lover has no intention of making future plans with their current lover(s), and does not want to have any growing involvement, or attachment to romantic partners (Reagan, 2003).

Ludus love is exemplified by a lover who is a “commitment-phobe” or avoids commitment in relationships (Reagan, 2003, p. 9). Ludic lovers try not to see their partners too often, and believe that lies and deception are justified (Reagan, 2003). The ludic lover enjoys all different physical types and views sexual activity as an opportunity for pleasure rather than emotional bonding (Campbell et al., 2002). All in all, the ludic lover aims to remain in control over her/his emotions at all times (Reagan, 2003). These characteristics seem to describe the player as a romantic partner. Since the player is an individual who is skilled at manipulating

others, and especially at seducing/tricking romantic partners into thinking that they are cared for, (Player, n.d.); also, maintaining emotional control is of the outmost concern for the player (Miller, 2008). This description of the ludic lover helps to characterize what the player identity entails.

Similar to ludic lovers are what Piorkowski (1994) refers to as Don Juans and Jezebels. Don Juans and Jezebels are characterised as untrustworthy and promiscuous seducers, and while they appear carefree moving from one relationship to another, they hide their vulnerabilities from people (Piorkowski, 1994). Don Juans refer to males, while Jezebels refer to females. These kinds of lovers, similar to the player, seek sexual relationships as the primary factor of their relationships with others (Piordowski, 1994). Also, interestingly, Piorkowski (1994) insists that Don Juans and Jezebels learn to distrust people early in life, often due to being physically deserted by a parent, or experiencing some form of emotional abandonment. This emotional abandonment could be a result of parental loss, a result of marital conflict, parental overwork or job loss, the death of a significant relative in the family, the birth of a sibling, the injury or illness of a relative, or any other source of severe ‘familial’ stress taking a toll (Piorkowski, 1994).

Just like the ludic lover or the player, Don Juans and Jezebels pursue multiple lovers simultaneously or consecutively, which provides them with narcissistic gratification and also functions as a means of control over getting too intimate with an individual (Piorkowski, 1994). In all instances, whether referring to ludic lovers, the player or Don Juans and Jezebels, these individuals work to gain control over their emotions as a means of minimizing being exposed and hurt (Campbell et al., 2002; Piorkowski, 1994; Reagan, 2003). Also, they (Don Juans and Jezebels) reject others before they are rejected so that the risk of being abandoned is minimal (Piorkowski, 1994). Piorkowski (1994) also reveals that often Don Juans and Jezebels possess a

narcissistic outlook on life. As such, those who have narcissistic personality disorders should be mentioned since they exude similar approaches to love as both ludic lovers and players.

According to Campbell et al. (2002), narcissists (individuals who suffer from narcissistic personality disorder) report a game-playing approach to love that coincides with ludus love. In defining narcissistic personality disorder, the American Psychiatric Association (1994) relates that narcissists are individuals who believe that they are unique and superior to others, think very highly of themselves, and seek admiration and attention from people. They have a “grandiose” self-concept, defending themselves against criticism, and associating with high-status others (Campbell et al., 2002, p. 341). Narcissists are said to be exploitative and lack empathy for their romantic partners, as well as other people (Campbell et al., 2002). Narcissists use interpersonal relationships for self-enhancement and maintaining esteem, and report less commitment in their romantic relationships, often having multiple alternatives in dating relationships (Campbell et al., 2002). Interestingly, similar to the player identity that Miller (2008) describes, narcissists seek esteem, power/status, and sex in their interpersonal relationships with others (Campbell et al., 2002). Whether achieving these goals means being charming, exciting, deceptive, controlling, or “nasty,” they will do it in order to get what they want (Campbell et al., 2002, p. 432).

Similar to players, narcissists have a game-playing strategy to love, are selfish, and have less interest in the needs of their romantic partners (Campbell et al., 2002). Campbell et al. (2002) find that narcissists strive to engage in sexual contact while avoiding excessive forms of emotional connection. The player identity seems to have many of these same attributes including: multiple romantic partners, a lack of concern for romantic partners, desiring emotional detachment, and seeking sexual relations over intimacy (Miller, 2008). Narcissists work to assert their power and control in relationships, as well as attempt to present a certain image to others

(Campbell et al., 2002); both of these characteristics will also be shown to be important to players.

Central to the player identity is the concept of deception and infidelity. As in accordance with the player definition, players pride themselves on their deceptive tactics convincing their lovers of their commitment and faithfulness while their intentions are often to use their romantic partners. As a result, unfaithfulness is an essential part of describing a player's behaviour. The following discussion of deception and infidelity in romantic relationships will elaborate on these elements of romantic relationships.

Deception and Infidelity

Secrecy, deception and infidelity are important concepts to consider in understanding the player identity and gendered emotional manipulation. Boon and McLeod (2001) did a study on deception in relationships and found that when participants were asked whether honesty was believed to be the most important aspect of a relationship, only 27% of respondents answered affirmatively, while 65% said that it depended on the situation. Spitzberg and Cupach (2007) relate that 56% of people report troublesome relationships involving selfishness, manipulation, untrustworthiness, or unpredictability. They relate that infidelity in romantic relationships is estimated to occur 30% of the time. Similarly, Barta, and Kiene (2005) relate that 32% of men and 31% of women have reported being unfaithful to a dating partner.

Tafoya and Spitzberg (2007) insist that there is a significant lack of research on infidelity since what constitutes as unfaithfulness in a romantic relationship is a subjective construct. They define infidelity as acts involving romantic affairs, adultery, cheating, extradyadic sexual activity (ESA), extramarital coitus, extramarital involvement, non-monogamous relations, sexual betrayal, and unfaithfulness (Tafoya & Spitzberg, 2007). ESA is understood as engaging in

sexual relations with someone other than one's committed romantic partner. ESA is underrepresented in literature since what constitutes as extradyadic sexual activity varies depending on the individual (Tafoya & Spitzberg, 2007). Tafoya and Spitzberg (2007) relate that men express more of a desire to engage in ESA than women. They also go on to relate that more men commit acts of infidelity and experience less guilt. They relate that infidelity is ironic since "everyone disapproves of it, and yet everyone is doing it" (p. 201).

Tafoya and Spitzberg (2007) highlight that infidelity could function as a form of communication, revealing that it could be strategic, manipulative, or tactical. They refer to the act of using infidelity as a means of communication as communicative infidelity (CI). While CI has been related as a method of communication directed to a former, current, or prospective partner, CI could also be a means of communicating a message amongst peers related to power and image management. In this way infidelity is not just a behaviour but a communicative act which elicits cues that are intentional, strategic, tactical, and communicative. CI could thus be related more broadly to the player identity since this identity could certainly function as a mode of communication. It will be shown through Miller's (2008) discussion of the player identity amongst African American males that being a player is an explicit form of communication conveying terms of coolness necessary for black young males. In the instance of Strauss' explanation of the pickup artist, which will be discussed later on, playing the *game* is a means of communicating attributes of alpha-male dominance.

Emotional manipulation

This study specifically focuses on the player identity and gendered emotional manipulation. Layder (2009) associates the terms of power and control to explaining emotional manipulation in romantic relationships since manipulation is a means of exerting power and

control over another person (Layder, 2009). Layder (2009) uses the term control interchangeably with manipulation relating that control (or manipulation) involves two people, the person who is controlling and the person who agrees to be the subject of control. Bently, Galliher, and Ferguson (2007) relate that emotional manipulation is used to influence one's romantic partner to achieve self-serving goals. They refer to this exercise of control and power as "intimate terrorism" (p. 484). In understanding emotional manipulation as a gendered behaviour, Grieve and Mahar (2010) found that males had a significantly higher tendency to be emotionally manipulative than women.

Struckman-Johnson, Struckman-Johnson, and Anderson (2003) conducted a study of 6000 college students and found that emotional manipulation is a common tactic used amongst college students in coercing romantic partners into sexual activity. Their study indicates that 30% of men and 14% of women admitted to using emotional manipulation as a means of convincing their partners into sexual relations. The emotionally manipulative tactics they mention in their study include: telling lies, using authority, threatening to breakup, and repeatedly asking for sex.

The scarcity of literature discussing gender differences of emotionally manipulative behaviour in romantic relationships demonstrates the importance of investigating gendered emotional manipulation further. Austin, Farrelly, Black, and Moore (2007) argue that more research should be done investigating the use of emotional manipulation by people. The following section will explain the ways that the player identity is understood in different cultural contexts.

The Player and Cool Pose

In beginning this discussion of the player identity amongst African American urban youth, the term cool pose will be introduced and defined since it is an important part of

explaining the player and by extension gendered emotional manipulation. Majors and Billson (1992) coined the term cool pose to describe how some African American males publicly present themselves, and establish their masculine identity. They relate that, “cool pose is a ritualized form of masculinity that entails behaviours, scripts, physical positioning, impression management, and carefully crafted performances that deliver a single critical message: pride, strength, and control” (p. 4). Cool pose functions as a form of conduct and behaviour displayed by some African American males as a means of reaffirming attributes of masculinity in a very public manner.

Since black males are often considered a marginalized group of individuals, the cool pose disposition works as a means of resistance against the social and economic barriers stigmatizing black men (Majors & Billson, 1992). In this way, cool pose works as a means of asserting *power* over one’s environment, and is a means of proving self-worth amongst black young males (Majors & Billson, 1992). Jansz (2000) relates that emotional toughness is a primary attribute of cool pose. In this way vulnerable feelings are suppressed since they conflict with the desired images of masculinity (Jansz, 2000). Moreover, the cool pose identity prizes typical masculine values like sexual promiscuity, toughness, and manipulation (Majors & Billson, 1992). This powerful sense of masculinity closely resembles Connell’s (1987) notion of hegemonic masculinity describing a heterosexual dominant masculine identity that some males ascribe to. Hegemonic masculinity will be described in more detail later in this chapter.

Miller (2008) builds on the work of Majors and Billson (1992) describing the player identity as a part of the cool pose disposition amongst African American men. She relates that men in the African American subculture are commonly rewarded for their sexual conquests with women. In Miller’s (2008) work she interviewed a sample of black youth residing in

disadvantaged neighbourhoods in St. Louis, Missouri, U.S. Some of her respondents claimed to subscribe to the player identity; these players openly admit to using females for sex, often through means of trickery or deceit. She relates that being a player offers these young men the potential for power, status and prestige amongst their peers. Miller (2008) interviewed a number of men associating themselves with the player identity, and revealed that many admitted to having a “feigning” interest in convincing females to have sex with them through expressing a superficial interest in having a romantic relationship (Miller, 2008, p. 154). These types of men describe themselves as “smooth talkers,” and admit to subscribing to this kind of identity as a means of gaining a respected image amongst others (Miller, 2008, p. 154).

Miller (2008) offers accounts of the so-called players she interviewed, revealing their tactics of manipulation. One of the respondents she engaged with, Tyrell, admits that:

You can easily talk to girls and have ‘em thinking [that you care about them]...You know how they heads [are. It’s] that easy...You just talk to ‘em. You tell ‘em what they wanna hear, they gonna give you what you want, thinking that you really care about them for real, but you really don’t. You’ll have ‘em loving you, but you ain’t even care about ‘em. (Miller, 2008, p. 120)

In another account, a participant related that, “I wouldn’t say [we] make ‘em have sex. [But we] run a game on ‘em or something...convince her...just be talking” (Miller, 2008, p. 120). These self-proclaimed players admit to using emotionally manipulative tactics as a means of engaging in sex with girls. Miller (2008) relates that the cultural ethos of the player insists that love equates to softness, and as such, committed romantic relationships are avoided at all costs.

Interestingly, there is no mention of African American females assuming the player identity; instead Miller (2008) relates that women are often said to be the recipients of this kind of emotional manipulation. This is not to say that female players do not exist, but apparent sexual double standards prohibit females from coming forward and discussing this as a possible identity

for themselves. Miller (2008) relates that, females who succumbed to the sexual advances of males, even through forms of deceit, faced derogatory labels, were targeted by other males, and were ultimately disempowered in their dating relationships. Amongst African American youths, if a female admits to being a player, she would be placing her sexual reputation in jeopardy (Miller, 2008). As a result, within this context, combined with sexual double standards and facets of masculinity that promote emotional manipulation and relationship games, Miller (2008) notes these women do not necessarily openly subscribe to the player identity.

It is important to note that Miller specifically focuses on respondents living in disadvantaged areas in St. Louis, Missouri. As such, it should be emphasized that not all black African American youths subscribe to the cool pose demeanour, or by extension the player identity. Instead Miller (2008) focuses on a select grouping of individuals in which she bases her research on.

Ultimately, there are some significant commonalities brought out in Miller's (2008) investigation specifically focusing on African American youths that can be applied more generally when discussing romantic relationships between men and women. Cool pose, for example, is positioned by Majors and Billson (1992) as a psychological defence used by black men as a means of dealing with racial oppression and social inequality; they go on to say that cool functions as a means of aiding one to stay in control over one's psychological and social space. However, cool pose can be seen as something that has been adopted today by a much wider audience.

Lease, Hampton, Fleming, Baggett, Montes, and Sawyer (2010) relate that white men's masculinity is often influenced by depictions of masculinity in other racial groups like the hip-hop culture associated with the African American urban subculture. Campbell (2007) believes

that white people who are influenced by and act in accordance to the norms within African American urban culture desire the cool tough image associated with black youthful masculinity.

Kitwana (2005) relates that African American youths are trendsetters for the rest of the world. A Philadelphia based market research company, Motivational Educational Entertainment (MEE) Productions have been arguing for over a decade that black urban youth are “trendsetters for youth nationally [within the United States] and internationally” (Kitwana, 2005, p. 94). MEE Productions insists that what black urban youth are doing today, other ethnic and racial groups will be doing tomorrow (Kitwana, 2005). In fact African American youth are said to be “the most influential and trendsetting youth market in the world” (Kitawana, 2005, p. 95).

As a result, Brody (2000) relates that young boys generally comply to masculine display rules as a means of being seen as “cool,” including attributes like: showing emotional control, being tough, aggressive, challenging authority, boasting and bragging about rule-violating exploits (p. 26). All of these attributes coincide with attributes of the cool pose demeanour and aspects of traditional masculinity. Thus, while cool pose has been adopted by people in a more general sense, it has been said to have originated in urban African American subcultures.

Cool pose and by extension the player identity is certainly a phenomenon that needs to be examined from a wider perspective. Majors and Billson (1992) insist that coolness has yet to be examined as a universal phenomenon cutting across race, gender, and class being used by people around the world. Cool pose can certainly be seen as a disposition that goes beyond African American urban subculture and thus possibly contributing to the creation of the player identity in romantic relationships in a more general context.

Similar to the cool pose masculine demeanour, the seduction game associated with the pickup artists can be seen as an identity synonymous with players. The following section will

provide an explanation of pickup artists as a means of introducing this as another instance of the player identity.

Pickup Artists and the Seduction Game

Neil Strauss, a self-proclaimed professional pickup artist, discusses his popular work, “The Game,” as a means of teaching men how to *pickup* women. The “Merriam-Webster” dictionary defines “pickup” as the act of making a new acquaintance, often for the sake of romantic purposes (Pickup, n.d.). There is a whole underground following of pickup artists like Neil Strauss, Ross Jeffries, and others who travel around the world teaching workshops to men on how to pickup women. This group of pickup artists refer to themselves as belonging to the “seduction community,” a secret society dedicated to seducing women for romantic purposes using formulaic communicative codes and behaviours to attract women (Strauss, 2005, p. 68). Pickup lines and codes of conduct are all standardized for those wanting to learn the art of seducing women (Strauss, 2005). In his book, “The Game,” Strauss gives an autobiographical account of how he became a part of the seduction community, and his various encounters where he and fellow pickup artists pickup women, for the sake of sexual relations (Strauss, 2005). These pickup artists claim to know exactly what to say and do to make women become attracted to them.

Popular terminology used within the ‘seduction community’ involves words like *neg*, which is the act of using a backhanded compliment, or accidental insult towards women as a means of lowering her self-esteem and ultimately successfully picking her up (Strauss, 2005). Pickup artists aspire to be the ultimate alpha-male in social situations with women. The acronym AMOG stands for alpha-male of the group, and it is the AMOG identity that is believed to attract

women. The following rules are taught in workshops by Strauss (2005) and other so-called successful pickup artists:

- 1) A pickup artist must be the exception to the rule, do not do what everyone else does.
- 2) Emotions should be ignored.
- 3) The key to picking up is ignoring the woman desired, and winning over her friends first.
- 4) If the woman desired is attractive, it is important to seem unaffected by her charm.
- 5) Do not approach a woman expressing blatant sexual intentions, let her earn the right to be hit on.
- 6) Never approach a woman from behind, always be in front of her or at a slight angle.
- 7) Make an attempt to touch her in some way.

These rules function as a means of manipulating women emotionally, physically, and mentally into believing they are sincerely attracted to these skilful pickup artists. Interestingly, Strauss (2005) claims that adhering to the rules of the ‘game’ will ensure that any man can be capable of picking up attractive women. Some of these so-called pickup artists have prided themselves on having hundreds of sexual partners, and have gained the affection of many women.

An underlying important theme seen in both Miller’s (2008) account of players and Strauss’ pickup artists is the underlying concept of playing a *game*. According to the “Urban Dictionary,” the term game refers to one’s “ability to seduce anybody of the opposite sex...or same sex for that matter” (Game, n.d.). Thus, game can be seen as another term referring to gendered emotional manipulation, where seduction is used for self-serving goals. In the seduction community, one’s high-score refers to how many women a pickup artist has slept with. Ultimately a player’s goal is to play a strategic game of manipulation and seduction as a means of achieving the ultimate success, sexual relations with many women.

Eyre, Hoffman, and Millstein (1998) did an investigation applying Goffman’s (1969) *sociological game theory* to understanding gaming dynamics in sexual relationships amongst African American adolescents. According to Eyre et al. (1998) African American youth play a

specific game when initiating sexual relations with one another. Goffman (1969) relates that a game is an encounter where two or more people are assembled, aware of each other and can communicate with one another. Within this game format participants have to comprehend or guess what each is seeking to achieve (Goffman, 1969). A game has rules that identify certain facts as important and others as unimportant (Goffman, 1969).

Eyre et al. (1998) take Goffman's game theory and apply it to sexual games that some African American adolescents play in romantic relationships, revealing that often sexual relations function as a game amongst these teens. Eyre et al. (1998) divide sexual gamesmanship into four categories: (1) courtship, where a sexual or romantic relationship is communicated and formed, (2) duplicity, tricking the romantic partner into having sex, (3) disclosure, spreading gossip, and stories about sexual conquests, and lastly, (4) prestige, building a social reputation in the eyes of peers. This game theory applied to the romantic relationships of some African American adolescents is certainly a part of the player identity that Miller (2008) discusses extensively. In Miller's (2008) study, the young men she interviewed aim to be sexually promiscuous and deceptive as a means of promoting an image of prestige, status, and power (Jansz, 2000). Spreading rumours and stories about sexual exploits is a natural part of the deceptive process that these young men openly admit to. Meanwhile, pickup artists emphatically work within a gamesmanship framework where seducing women is a game with rules, success, failure and competition (Strauss, 2005).

Additionally, Miller (2008) underscores that ultimately, in line with the cool pose code of conduct, the player identity functions as a means of establishing status and power. Also as mentioned before, Layder (2009) relates that control and manipulation are synonymous since manipulation functions as a means of asserting control or power over another individual. In this

way the manipulator becomes the individual in power, while the manipulated becomes the subject of that power. Ultimately, seeking power is an important aspect of understanding the player and gendered emotional manipulation.

Power and Relationships

Interpersonal power is certainly an important aspect in providing context to this study of perceptions of the player identity and gendered emotional manipulation. Beebe et al. (2007) define interpersonal power as the ability of influencing another individual in a desired direction. In this way, power is about getting another person to do something desired by one's self (Beebe et al., 2007). Essentially power is a fundamental aspect of relationships with others (Corbin & White, 2008). In the context of understanding the player identity, power is certainly a dynamic that contributes to the interplay between players and their romantic partners. Through controlling the emotions of one's romantic partner by acts of deception and manipulation, the player assumes a powerful position over her/his partner. Guided by feelings of affection and love, the player's partner lacks the knowledge of knowing that she/he is being emotionally deceived as a means of being used for self-serving purposes of the player partner. This deceptive relationship places the player in a position of power. Moreover, ascribing to the attributes of emotional control, deception, manipulation, and sexual promiscuity could be a means of expressing the ultimate form of masculinity or cool pose associated with having power and dominance in one's environment.

Principles of power related to interpersonal relationships consist of the following: (1) power exists in all interactions, and (2) relational development relies on a negotiation of each partner's power (Beebe et al., 2007). Ultimately, in an interpersonal context one decides who will have the power over others, and what kind of power they will have (Beebe et al., 2007).

Power is always relational, and thus can only exist through one's relation to others. Additionally, power must be communicated for it to exist (Corbin & White, 2008).

It should be noted that when discussing players within the context of African American youth, and pickup artists, both are described as masculine identities. Power and control are known to be attributes associated with masculinity. Additionally, cool pose as a code of conduct and the player identity are identified as an extension of hegemonic masculinity. As such understandings of gender, both masculine and feminine, are important aspects of understanding the player identity. Often the player is associated with masculine traits including: withholding vulnerable emotions, seeking power, control, and being concerned with maintaining a positive reputation amongst others (Jansz, 2000). In order to understand the means by which gender constructs are powerful means of forming an identity, an examination of gender will help to potentially understand the player identity further. In Western society "to be masculine [a term usually associated with men] is to be strong, ambitious, successful, rational, and emotionally controlled" (Wood, 2011, p. 23), and femininity, which is associated with women, is described as being physically attractive, passive, emotional, expressive, and nurturing (Wood, 2011). While gender is certainly an important aspect of this investigation, it will be important to reiterate that while research alludes to the player being a primarily male identity, the possibility of it being a part of the female identity will also be explored and understood through a narrative inquiry interview process. However, in the interim, literature alludes to the player being a primarily masculine identity.

Gender: Communication and Emotion

Both Miller's (2008) account of the player and Strauss' revelation of the pickup artist relate that it is an embodiment of the traditional masculine identity associated with males. It

should be mentioned that this thesis does not aim to ignore other various and evolving representations of masculinity. For example, Weber (2006) discusses the television makeover transformations of men demonstrating how masculinity has been reconstructed. She argues, “The television makeover thus serves as a primer for a new kind of masculinity that enables a man to claim conventional models of manhood, while also requiring that he develop a critical consciousness of his own body and well being” (p. 304). Moreover, Benwell (2006) discusses ‘new’ forms of masculinity represented in popular male magazines, her discussion of the “new man” and “new lad” identities demonstrate that there are various and evolving representations of masculinity (p. 540).

However, this investigation is specifically focused on one aspect of masculinity (discussed in the following literature) since it is this concept of masculinity that is most associated with the player identity. Further research on gender constructs may help to give context to why literature suggests that the player identity is more of a male identity than a female identity. An explanation of the ways in which men and women are traditionally said to communicate, as well as the different ways they are said to conventionally express emotion will be discussed in the following section. It is important to note that while gender does not necessarily coincide with one’s sex, traditionally men are socially encouraged to be masculine while women are encouraged to be feminine.

In discussing gender it is also important to acknowledge that there are various understandings of the concept of gender. For example Butler (1990) discusses the ways in which both gender and sex are social constructs that should be subverted through not acting in accordance to gender norms. Butler’s concept of gender and sex is an example of the various ways in which gender is understood within a socially constructed framework. While Butler’s

work is invaluable in understanding gender as a social construct, the thesis will investigate a more broad approach in understanding gender and social construction.

Literature discussing gender consistently insists that there are distinct differences between the way men and women often communicate (Daly, 2010). For example, women are often noted as more likely to interact with others to build closeness and intimacy with others, while men interact with others as a means of achieving something, or getting something done (Beebe et al., 2007). Men also tend to be more direct when communicating with others while women tend to be more indirect (DeVito et al., 2008). Beebe et al. (2007) note that men and women respond to conflict differently in the following ways: women are more concerned with equality, caring and connecting with others, they encourage mutual involvement, females tend to attribute crises to problems in relationships, and are more concerned with the impact of a relationship on their personal identity. Meanwhile, men tend to adhere to abstract principles and rules, protect their self-interests, attribute crises to external problems outside of relationships, and often respond to conflict by focusing on rules, and being evasive (Beebe et al., 2007). Common themes highlighted indicate that men tend to be more interested in communicating to promote their own self interests while women communicate as a means of creating and maintaining bonds with others.

The experience of emotion and difference in expressions among men and women are an important area of investigation when attempting to understand the player identity. As mentioned before, the concept of gendered emotional manipulation is closely related to understanding the player identity, since being a player involves emotionally manipulating others. Literature shows that masculine and feminine expressions of emotion are distinctly different, and gender is often

defined based on these differences. While men are encouraged to be aggressive and withhold tender emotions, women are encouraged to be empathetic and openly express tenderness.

In beginning this discussion on gender and emotion it should be noted that gender is understood as a social category appropriated to males and females, dictating accepted behaviours, attitudes, and identities (Wood, 2011). Meanwhile, emotions are defined as a distinct state of consciousness, making a vivid condition which is experienced in a unique way very different from “non-emotive” states (Shields, 2000, p. 7). DeVito et al. (2008) reveal that emotion involves three parts: bodily reactions, mental evaluations, and cultural rules and beliefs. Bodily reactions can involve blushing or an increase in heart rate, the mental evaluation involves the interpretations one makes based on the bodily reaction, while cultural rules are related to what the general rules are in terms of expressing the emotion experienced (DeVito et al., 2008).

Shields (2000) relates that gendered emotion functions as a means of maintaining the distinctive differences in masculinity and femininity since emotions work to dictate what is appropriate behaviour for both men and women. Since gender will be understood in this investigation as a socially constructed state of identity, it is important to note that the literature provided outlining the differences in emotional expression and experiences among men and women are not aimed to relate that men and women are innately different in their emotions, but that they have been prescribed specific roles in what emotions they are socially encouraged to express.

Daly (2010) relates that there are two main accounts for the difference in emotional expression of men and women: *different cultures* and *skills specialization*. According to Daly (2010), the different cultures account relates that men and women come from two different emotional cultures, and the skills specialization theory suggests that men and women live in the

same emotional culture, but men have not learned the social skills that women often possess. Regardless, of which account is valid, a number of empirical evidence has concluded that men and women express and interpret emotions differently (Daly, 2010; DeVito et al., 2008; Shields, 2000). Women, for example, are said to be more sensitive to emotions, better at distinguishing facial expressions, and better able to describe emotional experiences (Daly, 2010). Moreover, a number of research reveals that men are socialized to inhibit emotions that display vulnerability (Tager, Good & Brammer, 2010). Vulnerable emotions include: shame, guilt, sadness and fear (Eagly, 2009; Fischer & Manstead, 2000; Jansz, 2000; Tager et al., 2010). For men, sharing personal feelings is often withheld as a means of protecting their identity since exposing tender feelings shows vulnerability, which is considered to be a sign of weakness (Jansz, 2000). Masculine men are supposed to exhibit qualities of strength, agency, and control. According to Fischer and Manstead (2000) masculinity is defined as the ability to suppress and control one's emotions. Men even report experiencing less shame, guilt, sadness, and fear than women do, and are viewed as less socially sensitive than women (Moss-Racusin, Good & Sanchez, 2010).

According to Jansz (2000) vulnerable emotions like fear, sadness, shame, and guilt expose a side of men that conflicts with conceptions of masculinity in Western society. Moreover, suppressing vulnerable emotions and expressing anger as a form of aggression helps men to fulfill their roles as competitive providers, emphasizing their personal achievement, higher power and status (Brody, 2000). Also, disadvantaging others is more socially accepted for males, which rationalizes their fewer displays or even feelings of guilt (Ferguson & Eyre, 2000).

Meanwhile, empirical evidence reveals that women have considerably contrasting social expectations related to the expression and experiences of emotions. Fischer and Manstead (2000) reveal that women are often seen as the “keepers to the heart,” since they tend to be socialized to

be more in tuned with their emotions and the emotions of others (p. 71). Women tend to be socialized to feel and express more empathy, joy, enthusiasm, fear, sadness, and shame than men (Fischer & Manstead, 2000). Moreover, emotions which facilitate healthy social relationships like warmth, support, and cheerfulness are socially prescribed as appropriate for women (Brody, 2000). Eagly (2009) reveals that women provide more sensitive emotional support than men do, and as a result people prefer the emotional support of women. “Communication and emotion are not the only means of constituting difference in gender; however, within the context of this study on understanding perceptions of the player identity and gendered emotional manipulation, these are two important areas of investigation.”

BEM Sex Role Inventory

The BEM Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) is the most commonly used measure of gender. It is a 60-item inventory measuring a person’s gender along a spectrum ranging from highly masculine to highly feminine, based on “sex-typed social desirability” (Bem, 1974, p. 155). Sex-typed social desirability can be explained as characteristics that have been deemed culturally desirable for men and women respectively (Bem, 1974). Bem (1974) writes, “BSRI was founded on the conception of a sex-typed person as someone who has internalized society’s sex-typed standards of desirable behaviour for men and women” (p. 155). A person’s gender, according to this inventory, is based on self-assessed attribute dimensions (Reagan, 2003).

Bem (1974) has developed four categories in classifying gender according to the BSRI femininity/masculinity, high-low continuum. These four categories include: masculinity, femininity, androgynous, and undifferentiated (Bem, 1974). One third of the attribute dimensions in the inventory consist of stereotypically male characteristics such as: self-reliance, independence, assertiveness, forcefulness, analytical ability, willingness to take risks, self-

sufficiency, and ambition (Reagan, 2003). Another one third of the dimensions on the spectrum are considered stereotypically female and include attributes like: yielding, shy, affectionate, sympathetic, sensitive to the needs of others, childlike, warm, tender, eager to soothe hurt feelings, and gentle (Reagan, 2003).

Those who score high masculine and low feminine characteristics are classified as masculine, those who score low masculine and high feminine characteristics are considered feminine, while those who score high on both masculine and feminine characteristics are classified as androgynous, and individuals with a low identification to either male or female characteristics are placed in the undifferentiated gender category (Bem, 1974). In classifying people based on these four categories Bem (1974) indicates that gender is not based on sex, since a man could possess more feminine characteristics or a woman could possess more masculine characteristics.

The previous research discussing the player identity in different contexts has alluded to the fact that the player identity is specifically a masculine identity. Bem's inventory demonstrates how men and women can both be masculine in personality, and thus could possibly equally subscribe to the player identity in romantic relationships. Whether gender identity has any relation to the player identity will be revealed in Chapter 4. However, Bem (1974) allows us to realize that gender is certainly not necessarily in accordance to one's sex.

Hegemonic Masculinity

Miller's (2008) discussion relates the player identity to what Connell (1987) has termed hegemonic masculinity. Majors and Billson (1992) refer to this as "compulsive masculinity" and define it as taking place when typical masculinity becomes a rigid prescription of toughness, sexual promiscuity, manipulation, and risk-taking (p. 34). Meanwhile, Strauss (2005) relates that

the ultimate pickup artist, capable of “out-gaming” all others, is known as the alpha-male of the group (p. 321). Strauss (2005) relates that pickup artists are required to think of themselves as alpha or dominant males, possessing all of the characteristics of traditional masculinity.

According to Connell (1987) hegemonic masculinity is the enforcing of masculine global subordination over everyone else, and providing the essential basis for hierarchical gendered differentiation. Thus, this term describes the alpha-male, epitomizing traditionally masculine characteristics. At its center is the enforcement that men and women are distinctly different, and along this difference comes themes of superiority and inferiority. Traditional masculine characteristics of agency and strength trump all other alternate gender identities. Hegemonic masculinity enforces the attitude and behaviour that encourages heterosexual male dominance over other men and women (Weitzer & Kubrin, 2011).

Weitzer and Kubrin (2011) relate that this form of masculinity is reinforced and remains socially normative due to its reproduction in the media, the patriarchal family structure, and other institutions. In defining the term hegemony, Connell (1987) explains that it can be defined as a social ascendancy manifesting itself in the organization of private life and cultural processes. In this context ascendancy simply refers to a position of power over others embedded in various cultural institutions (Connell, 1987). It is important to also note that hegemonic masculinity is not just related to dominance over women, but also a subordination of other types of masculinity as well (Connell, 1987).

Meanwhile, hegemonic masculinity is not what powerful men are but what they aspire to be (Connell, 1987). Winning hegemony requires individuals to aspire to creations of models of masculinity involving fantasy figures like the alpha-male protagonists found in various cultural representations (Connell, 1987). Qualities of this kind of masculinity relate to attributes of

commanding power, aggression, competitiveness, and the control of vulnerable emotions like love and fear, and maintaining a certain image amongst others (Miller, 2008). Hegemonic masculinity is a very public, heterosexual presentation of self involving traditional conceptions of men as strong, assertive, and powerful agents. It should be noted that forms of hegemonic masculinity does not necessarily equate to total cultural dominance and the obliteration of alternative identities, but is a position of power competing with other forces in a state of play (Connell, 1987).

In discussing the player identity amongst black youth, Miller (2008) contends that the player status is a facet of hegemonic masculinity. The player identity and cool pose functions as an extension of hegemonic masculinity that is structured to advantage players. Since this study will investigate the player identity amongst males and females, it is important to understand that masculinity could certainly be an identity that both men and women identify with. Aspiring for power, dominance, and control over others is certainly not an attribute specific to men, although men are often socialized to assume this role (Eagly, 2009). Bem (1974) reveals that masculinity and femininity are attributes that do not coincide with one's sex. Instead, both men as well as women can ascribe to one of four categories of gender articulated by Bem's Sex Role Inventory.

Ultimately, Miller (2008) relates that the player identity amongst African American urban youth works to affect committed relationships as well as relationships with players. She goes on to argue that hegemonic masculinity embodied through the player identity creates a cultural ethos leading to jealousy, suspicion, distrust, and conflict in relationships. Strauss (2005) compares the pickup artist to an animal predator seeking prey. He insists, "The best predators don't lie on the jungle floor with their teeth bared and claws out. The prey is going to avoid them. They approach the prey slowly and harmlessly, win its trust, and then attack" (p. 56).

Thus, the player identity is fundamentally rooted in aspects of manipulation, seduction and deception that are paramount to understanding dynamics potentially affecting some romantic relationships today.

Social Construction

Berger and Luckmann (1966) define social construction as the notion that one's identity, behaviour, attitudes, and overall concept of reality is a learned process through living in one's environment. They argue that, individuals form their ideas about themselves and the world based on the processes of social interaction that take place in their lives. More simply stated, social constructionists believe that people construct the world around them through social forces (Allen, 2005). Thus, socially constructing reality involves naming the world we live in, and living within the naming of the world (Corbin & White, 2008). Socialization, a term often related to social construction, is the act of learning appropriate behaviours and meanings in accordance to one's social identity and to what society deems as acceptable (Berger & Luckman, 1966).

Social construction is a fundamental theoretical framework in understanding gender identification since gender construction occurs as one interacts with her/his environment. As mentioned in the introduction, gender identity refers to a culturally defined identification of male or female learned through the process of socialization (Dunivin, 1991). Thus, in understanding the creation of gender, "practices such as encouraging girls to be docile or admonishing boys not to cry helps to disseminate and perpetuate constructed 'knowledge' about gender" (Allen, 2005, p. 36). According to Wood (2011) gender is, "defined by society and expressed by individuals as they interact with others and media in their society" (p. 23). Since gender is socially constructed, both men and women are socialized to behave and think in specific ways according to gender norms (Wood, 2010).

Built from the work of Berger and Luckman (1966), it is widely believed that men and women are socialized to construct and comprehend relationships differently (Reagan, 2003). While women are socialized to value interdependence, creating intimacy with others through self disclosure and communication, men are taught through the process of socialization to value independence, establishing intimacy through engaging in shared activities (Eagly, 2009). A significant part of the socialization process involves behaving according to people's expectations (Berger & Luckman, 1966). Thus, behaviours that coincide with accepted gender identities garner approval while those that are inconsistent are often negatively sanctioned (Eagly, 2009).

Gendered Social Learning

Gendered social learning is rooted in social construction theory and takes place when people learn through their social environment how to behave as boys and girls, as well as men and women (Addis, Mansfield & Syzdek, 2010). Jansz (2000) relates that as soon as parents know the gender of their child the socialization process begins. He goes on to relate that parents and others begin to attribute specific kinds of characteristics to infants. Addis et al. (2010) relate that many researchers concede that people interpret meanings of gender based on experience; in a broader sense theories related to gendered social learning are grounded in the principles of reinforcement (encouraging behaviour), punishment (admonishing behaviour), and modeling (learning how to behave through the examples of others). For example, boys learn from early experiences that there are negative repercussions in displaying vulnerable emotions, making them less likely to do so in future interactions (Addis et al., 2010). In this manner, boys are penalized for asserting non-masculine behaviour. Meanwhile, boys who are assertive, outgoing, and competitive, have more positive responses from others, reinforcing this behaviour amongst boys and men (Addis et al., 2010).

A study investigating five different American and European cultures amongst children aged from three to 20 found that parents emphasized control of emotional expression with their sons, and control of aggression amongst their daughters (Block, 1984). Similarly, Dunn, Bretherton, and Munn (1987) found that mothers use less emotion when acting with their male babies than with their female babies. In another study fathers were found to use less emotion when reading a story to their sons than used when reading to their daughters (Jansz, 2000). Interestingly, while parents may not consciously raise their children to have these gendered differences, it is often done as a means of ensuring that their children are socially accepted. According to Brody (2000) parents are obviously motivated to raise their children to be well liked, and will consciously or unconsciously conform to norms of socialization ensuring that their children adhere to accepted gender display norms of emotion.

Thus, gendered emotion is often a result of socialized codes of behaviour that occur early in development. School-aged girls are found to be more skilful than boys at changing facial expressions and fostering social relationships (Brody, 2000). Brody (2000) relates that boys who are less liked or popular amongst their peers are often seen as weak, vulnerable, are frequently hurt or defeated at athletic games and are often referred to as “sissies” (p. 27). Also, popular boys exhibit an emphasis on competition and self-promotion; as a result, they identify with superheroes, engaging in competitive play, fostering aggression and dominance (Jansz, 2000). Meanwhile, well liked girls express themselves well, understand group dynamics, are less aggressive, and are interested in social relationships (Brody, 2000).

It is important to understand that gendered social learning through the process of socialization teaches men and women to behave, react and perceive things in specific ways based on reinforcement, punishment, and modeling. The previous examples display the manner in

which boys and girls are raised to adhere to specific gender roles from the time they are infants, and continuing into adulthood as people live by the codes of behaviour specific to their gender. Moss-Racusin et al. (2010) relate that individuals who go against gender norms risk social and economic penalties. As a result, it is easy to be critical of gender conformities that restrict both men and women, but for many of us it is a reality of our social space that we cannot escape.

Consequently, the player identity and gendered emotional manipulation could certainly be identities affected by the social construction of gender. This study will now seek to understand people's perspectives of the relevance of the player identity to today's social context, the player's relation to emotionally manipulative behaviour, and the connection between socially constructed male and female gender conventions and the player identity. A comprehensive examination of people's perceptions of the player identity will help to enhance the vague amount of literature on the player identity and gendered emotional manipulation. The question remains as to whether this is a real life identity, and whether gender constructs have any relation to its existence. Gaining the perspectives of both men and women will provide a relevant platform to explore this issue.

Research Questions

The literature review has helped to identify some of the implications gender constructs have in interpersonal relationships, specifically focusing on attributes of the player identity. Considering the social construction of gender, as has been defined and identified in the literature, the following questions have been posed:

RQ 1: How do men and women perceive the player identity in romantic relationships?

RQ 2: How do men and women perceive emotional manipulation in romantic relationships?

A diagram (Appendix E) was created to demonstrate how all of the topics discussed in the literature review work to provide a foundation on which this investigation was built. The diagram begins with the most broad topic at the top, “Love and Relationships,” and narrows in focus as the diagram descends. The arrows demonstrate the connection between topics. The last box describes the most specific topics related to the two player identities identified.

The diagram provided features “Love and Relationships” at the top of the diagram since it is the simplest starting point in beginning a discussion on the player identity. Connected to love and relationships are the various love styles and approaches to love including “Ludus Love, Don Juans, Jezebels, and Narcissism.” These various love styles and approaches mentioned all engage in acts of what is constituted as infidelity or deception. As such, “Infidelity/Deception” is placed as a necessary theme in understanding Ludic lovers, Don Juans, Jezebels and Narcissists. Infidelity and deception are both forms of what is constituted in this thesis as gendered emotional manipulation. Consequently, “Gendered Emotional Manipulation” is connected to understanding infidelity and deception. Literature reviewed in this thesis outline emotional manipulation, as an effort of seeking power in relationships; the concept of “Power” is thus related to gendered emotional manipulation. From there, concepts of gender are introduced to understand the player identity further, and specific examples of the player identities are discussed, including: Miller’s (2008) concept of the player identity and Strauss’ (2005) explanation of the pickup artist.

The concept of “Perception” encircles the entire diagram to demonstrate that this study relies on the perceptions of participants to understand this study. Social construction is also featured outside of perception, since social construction is the theoretical perspective that encompasses the entire investigation.

Chapter Summary

This literature review began by defining perception, an important term to understand in conceptualizing participant responses in this investigation. This chapter has also examined the various aspects of romantic relationships, the player identity in two separate cultural contexts, interpersonal power, and aspects of gender construction. All of these elements mentioned in this chapter, work to provide a better understanding of what the player identity entails, its cultural significance, and how it may possibly be related to socially constructed gender conventions. Social construction is presented in this chapter as a theoretical framework, and relates social constructionist theory to understanding gender.

It is important to keep in mind that this review of literature does not stop at the end of the Literature Review chapter. Instead, both Chapter Three, Research Design and Methodology and Chapter Four, Results and Analysis, draw on various literature to further enhance this investigation. The review of literature is best viewed as occurring throughout this thesis, but is mostly focused in this chapter. In providing this information, it will now be important to explore the perceptions of people in relation to the player identity and gendered emotional manipulation.

The following chapter will discuss the relevant methodological approaches that were used to carry out this study, leading to the selection and application of Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) approach to narrative inquiry and Hesse-Biber's (2006) approach to feminist interviewing.

Chapter Three: Research Design and Methodology

McKee (1997) relates that, “A compelling story isn’t a flight from reality but a vehicle that carries us on our search for reality, a best effort to make sense out of the anarchy of existence” (p. 12). Narratives are stories people use to talk about themselves, creating meaning for themselves and others (Johnstone, 2003). This investigation employed a narrative inquiry methodological approach in understanding people’s perceptions of the player identity and gendered emotional manipulation. This chapter will discuss what narrative inquiry is and why this methodological approach is ideal for this study. The reasons for using narrative research inquiry will be emphasized by comparing the suitability of a qualitative research approach as opposed to a quantitative research approach. Also, this chapter will demonstrate that a narrative inquiry is an ideal research approach for understanding perceptions of the player identity by comparing it to other qualitative methodological approaches. The research design for this investigation will be outlined and described, including the coding procedure used to analyze the data obtained. Thereafter, an explanation of Hesse-Biber’s (2006) in-depth feminist interviewing approach will be discussed in detail. Careful measures were taken to ensure that this study was both rigorous and credible in its investigation of people’s perceptions of the player identity and gendered emotional manipulation. This chapter demonstrates that in-depth feminist interviewing through a narrative inquiry research design was ideal in achieving this study’s goals.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) relate that how we know ourselves, others, and the world are all a result of the narratives we use to construct meaning. Narrative inquiry research uses the personal accounts of one or more individuals in order to understand a specific phenomenon. This methodology works to acknowledge the importance of stories in relaying significant experience and meaning in our lives. Creswell (2009) defines narrative research as involving the

investigation of people's lives as they provide accounts of their life stories with respect to specific topic areas of investigation. Stories do not just work as a means of telling others about ourselves, they work to construct our identities, finding purpose and meaning in our lives (Berger & Quinney, 2005). As people recall and define identity and meaning through their narratives, they also interpret and understand these narratives based on culturally available models of understanding (Gubrium & Holstein, 2000). As such cultural norms help us to understand our narratives, since our stories are embedded with cultural influences.

Chase (2005) relates that the aim of narrative inquiry is to uncover naturalized discourses that shape daily life. The player identity and gendered emotional manipulation could be part of an important cultural and communicative discourse within romantic relationships today. Understanding the stories and lives of participants provides an opportunity to understand this potential inside identity through the intimate revelations of male and female participants. Worthington (1996) reveals that narrative inquiry yields information that is not available in other forms of exposition and analysis, since it works to understand the personal lives and perspectives of participants through an account of their lives. Issues of gender and by extension power are all intimately intertwined in understanding the player. As a result, people's stories are useful in conceptualizing the dynamics at work in the construction of the gendered individual (Wodack, 2005). This process of engaging with the stories of participants allows me as a researcher to gain important access to subjective truths necessary in creating a substantive study of the player identity and gendered emotional manipulation. This study aims to figure out the player identity, an identity that is often hidden and unarticulated. Consequently, narrative inquiry allows individuals to relay their stories in a way of revealing *truths* by using a personal methodological approach.

Also, narrative inquiry research allows participants to take account of and reflect on their own experiences allowing them to become more self-aware and self-reflexive of meaning and cultural experiences in their lives (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Self-reflexivity is understood as a term describing a sense of self-awareness of one's biases that may influence one's perspectives on the world. This concept will be further examined later in this chapter when discussing Hesse-Biber's in-depth feminist interviewing.

Bloom (2002) outlines that there are three main aims of narrative research: (1) Narrative inquiry uses individual lives as a source of investigation, (2) this research approach is invested in using individual narratives of the self as a place to generate social critique and advocacy, (3) and narrative inquiry also attempts to deconstruct the self as a humanist conception allowing for unconventional understandings of self. As a result, narrative inquiry research is a methodological approach used to encourage and facilitate social change as well as promote an understanding of people through investigating their perspectives of the world. The aim of this study is ultimately to bring awareness to an issue in romantic relationships that have seemingly gone unnoticed in literature.

This study is qualitative in its research design and approach. Qualitative research often uses words to describe research rather than numbers, and takes an exploratory approach to research. Thus the researcher attempts to understand meanings people relate to specific social or human occurrences (Henstrad, 1993). The research process used for qualitative studies involves: "inductively building from particulars to general themes," where the researcher makes interpretations of the meanings from the data collected (Creswell, 2009, p. 4). On the other hand, quantitative research works to test theories through examining the relationship between different variables (Creswell, 2009). These variables are then analyzed using statistical procedures. The

merit of using a qualitative research methodology in understanding perceptions of the player identity and gendered emotional manipulation is apparent since this study is exploratory in nature. While quantitative research is concerned with numbers, qualitative research aims to understand meanings specific to human phenomena. In the instance of this study, statistical analysis would not offer the meaningful depth necessary to understand people's perceptions related to this area of investigation.

At the same time, there were a number of different qualitative methodological approaches that were considered for this research study, including an ethnographic research approach, which requires the researcher to immerse in a culture over a period of time, collecting observational and interview data (Creswell, 2009). This method of inquiry would not work for this study, since understanding whether the player identity and gendered emotional manipulation is a cultural phenomenon has yet to be investigated. Also, the time constraints of this research investigation would not allow an in-depth cultural investigation of the player identity.

Case studies were also considered as a research methodology in understanding the player identity. Case studies concern themselves with exploring a phenomenon or individual in-depth (Hemel, 1993). Since case studies investigate a specific phenomenon or individual(s), it is difficult to generalize findings. Thus, conducting an in-depth study involving one or a few individuals who assume the player identity would not work to give context to the pertinence or prevalence of the player identity amongst men and women in romantic relationships today. As such, narrative inquiry proved to be the most fitting in researching this study on the player identity. The narrative inquiry research approach works to explore a specific issue through an in-depth engagement with a number of individuals.

Methods and Procedures Adopted

The data for this research was obtained through one-on-one interviews conducted throughout a one month period with a total 12 people (six men and six women) ranging from 18-35 years of age. Participants were recruited using personal network and through a snowball sampling. Snowball sampling takes place when the researcher obtains information from a few members of the “target” population, and then requests these members to refer other people within the desired population to obtain data from (Babbie, 2008, p. 205). The term ‘snowball’ describes the process of accumulation since located participants suggest other participants (Babbie, 2008; Keyton, 2006). Babbie (2008) relates that this method of sampling is often used when the researcher aims to take an exploratory approach to research. Using this sampling approach involved consulting personal acquaintances and asking them to refer to interested individuals.

Recruitment criteria used to gather participants was fairly broad. Respondents had a range of romantic relationship statuses since a variety of perspectives were necessary in understanding the player identity and gendered emotional manipulation. The only important criterion used in selecting participants was determining whether they fell within the desired age bracket. As a result, participants who volunteered for this study, within the 18-35 year age range were accepted.

Due to the vast diversity of the Canadian people, the participants came from a range of ethnic, socio-economic, and religious backgrounds, which offered a range of perspectives important to this exploration. According to a Statistics Canada report, 13.4 million people have arrived from other countries to Canada in the 1990s (2003). The report also reveals that 18.4 per cent of the Canadian population in 2001 were immigrants (2003). The information obtained

through interviews with participants has been stratified based on the gender, cultural, and religious affiliations revealed during the interview process.

Clandinin (2007) identifies some key points in obtaining qualitative data, including: “locating a site or individual to study, obtaining access to participants and establishing a rapport, purposefully sampling, collecting data, recording information, the resolution of field issues, and storing data” (p. 118). Since the detailed information about the lives of respondents is being used, a consent form outlining the use of the data gathered and the terms of confidentiality has been communicated to all participants (see Appendix C). Respondents were required to sign the permission form as a means of agreeing to the terms.

The 12 participants met with me on an individual basis and were asked to answer a total of 21 interview questions (see Appendix B). The interview questions crafted attempt to elicit descriptions of respondents’ personal experiences as well as their perceptions of the player identity and gendered emotional manipulation. The interview questions have been created to explore three different areas: (1) the existence and relevance of the player identity in romantic relationships in today’s social context, (2) the player’s relation to emotionally manipulative behaviour towards romantic partners, and (3) the connection between socially constructed male and female gender conventions and the player identity.

Each interview lasted around 20 minutes to an hour in time. Throughout the interviews, observations were noted, and the entire interview was audio recorded. The location of interviews varied widely, depending on what was convenient for the individual participant. Since the interviews asked some personal questions about participants’ lives, all participants were provided with two counselling resources to consult if needed after their interviews. Initial research

assumptions, ideas, and observations were recorded in a research diary that was reviewed during the research analysis stage.

Thereafter, all audio recordings were transcribed into document form. Each interview was transcribed after the interview took place. Also, research diary entries were completed after every interview as a means of remembering important aspects of the interview and notable observations. Transcribing the recorded interviews functioned as a means of being more thorough in the data analysis stage.

Since this narrative inquiry research study asked personal questions about the lives of participants, the identity of all participants is confidential. The names of participants and other identifying details that could be linked to a particular individual will not be disclosed. Pseudonyms have been given to participants in the final results section, and were also used in the transcribed documents obtained through participant interviews.

Thereafter, the data was analyzed in order to find corresponding patterns and commonalities amongst participants. Thematic research analysis was used to interpret the data obtained through the interview process. Boyatzis (1998) explains that thematic analysis is a process of interpreting data gathered through a qualitative research approach. This process involves encoding the data gathered, through a list of themes, indicators, or other qualifications. Thematic analysis breaks down data into themes, which are defined as the patterns found in the information gathered that describe or organize the observations (Boyatzis, 1998).

According to Owen (1984) themes function as an understanding of an interaction, a relationship, or an event. In order for a theme to be coded using thematic analysis, it requires three criteria: recurrence, repetition, and forcefulness (Owen, 1984). After the first few

interviews, coding and identifying themes were completed, making the identification and analysis of the data later on easier.

Keyton (2006) relates that a category is defined as a number of excerpts, examples or themes that have similarities. In this research study, categories were developed and identified as they appeared in the data. Open coding was used, which is a process in which data is considered in detail as a means of developing initial categories (Strauss, 1987). Open coding was used by highlighting important parts of participant transcripts, and making appropriate notes. The notes were then assessed to determine key words, which led to the development of initial categories of representation. Strauss (1987) relates that as categories become apparent in the data, it is important to start labelling them with a code, which often consists of one short word or a phrase. Categories and sub-categories were then created based on the repetition found in the transcripts obtained through the interviews with participants.

This investigation used Hesse-Biber's (2006) approach to feminist interviewing when conducting interviews with the 12 participants. Hesse-Biber (2006) relates that the feminist interviewer is concerned with understanding the diversity of knowledge that often lies hidden and unarticulated. Different from traditional interview techniques, feminist interviewing works to neutralize the power dynamics between the researcher and the researched individual as a means of creating a collaborative process of investigation and engagement. Feminist interviewing is particularly concerned with addressing issues of social justice and social change. Hesse-Biber (2006) reveals that the feminist interviewer views social reality as multidimensional and it is this complexity that shapes the interview process. Thus, the feminist researcher realizes that the researcher and the researched come together with a range of diverse backgrounds and affiliations that contribute to the differences in how they perceive the world (Hesse-Biber, 2006).

In addition, feminist in-depth interviewers are cognizant of issues of power and authority that may affect the interview process. Fontana and Frey (2008) argue that interviewing is inherently political, historical, and culturally bound. They relate that these dynamics of power, control, and influence can go against the neutral aim and purpose of interviewing. Thus, in an effort to try to reduce this power dynamic inherent in interviews, feminist researchers attempt to discern how their own values and biases affect their research (Hesse-Biber, 2006).

Ultimately, feminist interviewing is committed to reducing the hierarchical relationship between the researcher and the researched. Various interviewing methods and strategies are used by feminist interviewers as a means of equalizing the power relationship during interviews (Hesse-Biber, 2006). Hesse-Biber relates that one method in equalizing the relationship between the researcher and research participant is by using a participatory model approach to interviewing, which involves the researcher sharing her/his biography with research participants. In an effort to use a participatory approach, I made an effort to disclose my personal story, and why I have become interested in this research topic of the player identity and gendered emotional manipulation. Another strategy of reducing hierarchical dynamics in the research process involves member checking, which functions as a way of empowering researched individuals in the interview process.

Member checks were also used as a part of this research design; this methodological approach is based on the understanding that participants being interviewed are highly knowledgeable about their social world and should be part of the process of creating knowledge (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Member checking is defined as, “taking findings back to the field and determining whether participants recognized them as true or accurate” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 243). Thus, the researcher’s role is to engage with participants to determine what they think of

a description, interpretation, or an explanation (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). This approach enables the participants involved in the study to have some sort of agency in interpreting meanings related to the investigation at hand. Lindlof and Taylor (2002) insist that, “rather than being acted upon, the cultural members act toward a claim that catalyzes their political consciousness” (p. 243). This self-reflexive process, which attempts to eliminate traditional hierarchical approaches to research allows research participants to have a role in validating the data used for analysis.

Member checking was employed for this research investigation in two ways. Firstly, during the analysis stage, when I was not sure of a participant’s response, I contacted the participant via email and asked for clarification. Secondly, if a participant’s direct quote was used in the final write-up, the participant was consulted beforehand and had the opportunity to review the transcripts and alter content.

In addition to member checking, interviews were conducted using a semi-structured format. These kinds of interviews take place when a researcher has an overall idea of the kinds of questions that need to be asked, but is also open to listening to the research participant and understanding avenues not necessarily organized by the researcher. Usually semi-structured interviews begin with the creation of an interview guide, which is a list of written questions that should be asked over the course of the interviews (Hesse-Biber, 2006). Hesse-Biber (2006) writes that in semi-structured interviews, “I have an agenda, but it is not tightly controlled and there is room left for spontaneity on the part of the researcher and interviewee” (p. 116).

Listening intently to what participants have to say is paramount to the feminist interview process. It is important to acknowledge hesitant pauses in speech that could signal “not-quite-articulated experience where standard vocabulary is inadequate” (Hesse-Biber, 2006). Memoing

was also used during the interviewing process to track initial thoughts and ideas. Combining data analysis with data collection was a way of making the data analysis easier.

One of the most important features of feminist interviewing is being self-reflexive at every part of the research process. Hesse-Biber (2006) relates:

As a feminist interviewer, I am aware of the nature of my relationship to those whom I have interviewed, careful to understand my particular personal and research standpoints and what role I play in the interview process in terms of power and authority over the interview situation. (p. 114)

This process of self-awareness is called self-reflexivity and is the practice of being mindful of biases of the researcher as well as the researched. This is extremely important since narrative research requires the researcher to interpret the stories of participants and relay them in a research study. A researcher's perspective and personal views inevitably come through in providing an analysis of results. Hesse-Biber (2006) relates that reflexivity is the process by which the researcher is sensitive to situational dynamics existing between the researcher and researched affecting the creation of knowledge. Guba and Lincoln (2005) relate that, "Reflexivity...demands that we interrogate each of ourselves regarding the ways in which research efforts are shaped and staged around binaries, contradictions and paradoxes that form our own lives" (p. 210). Thus, my role as a researcher will be made apparent in the Conclusion of this thesis. Exposing my role as a researcher allows readers to better assess this study's conclusions related to the player identity and gendered emotional manipulation (Guba & Lincoln, 2005).

Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined the narrative inquiry research design used for this study of the player identity and gendered emotional manipulation. By first defining narrative inquiry research, and describing what it entails, this chapter demonstrates the merits of using this

methodological approach. This chapter also shows why narrative inquiry is an ideal means of studying this investigation by comparing it to other methodological approaches. Also, the specific research design procedures that have been undertaken in this research investigation including: participant selection procedures, issues of confidentiality, data collection and approaches to data analysis are discussed. Most importantly, Hesse-Biber's (2006) approach to feminist in-depth interviews has also been discussed at length since it was used as a methodological framework for interviewing participants.

The next chapter will discuss this study's results and analysis.

Chapter Four: Results and Analysis

Results

The final sample of participants comprised of six men and six women with an average age of 22.5 years. Out of the 12 participants, one was black Canadian, one was Irish Canadian (Caucasian), two were Palestinian, one was Bosnian, one was white South African and Ukrainian, one participant was white Canadian, two identified themselves as East-Asian, one participant was Vietnamese, one participant was Persian, and finally one was identified as Jordanian. All of the participants identify as Canadian. While this study does mention participants' ethnic affiliations, ethnicity is hardly the most influential factor in understanding their perspectives. Hoerder, Hebert, and Schmitt (2005) insist that instead of ethnic youth having clear national identities, immigrants pull together different aspects of different cultures to form their own sense of identity. As a result, Canadian youth cultures are a mixture of class, ethnic, gender, and regional factors that come together and create a distinct identity (Hollands, 2001). All participants confirmed the existence of the player identity in today's social context. Participants identified and defined the player identity with consistent similarities related to the player's non-committal behaviour towards romantic partners. Respondents believed that players are emotionally manipulative towards their romantic partners, and acts of manipulation often involve lying and playing emotional games. They were also found to believe that socially constructed masculine gender conventions were connected to the player identity. The following sections detail participants' perspectives related to the player identity and gendered emotional manipulation under specific themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data.

Existence and relevance of the player identity

The player identity in today's social context. In recalling the previously stated definition of the player, the “Urban Dictionary,” defines the player “as a male who is skilled at manipulating (playing) others, and especially at seducing women by pretending to care about them when in reality they [the manipulators] are only interested in sex.” (Player, n.d.). All respondents interviewed defined the player along these same terms. For example, when Jasmine was asked to define the term player she shared: “A player is...someone who thinks they can get any guy or girl they want. And that they can cheat with them, and play with their emotions and think that they can get away with it.” In most instances respondents defined the player as an individual who is a male, uncommitted, has no emotional connection to his/her romantic partners, is often only interested in sex, and has multiple partners at the same time.

Results indicate that nine out of the 12 respondents believed that the player identity is primarily a male identity, and while females can be players, men are mostly associated with this identity. For example, when John was asked how he would define the term player he believed that it was a term referring to, “A guy who associates with many girls, dates many girls that they’ve done [had sexual relations with].” Several other participants had similar perspectives associating men more with the player identity than women. For example, when asked whether he believed the term player referred to one gender more than the other, Calvin said, “Absolutely, yeah. I think it definitely like refers to more of the male side than the female side.” Anita conceded by relating that, “As much as I want to say it’s not, I think that when people hear the word player I think they associate it with the male gender.” Jessica shared this view insisting that, “first of all when I think of a player I automatically think of like a man.” She went on to explain that:

Yeah I think it goes more towards men. And maybe it's just because you know like how it is portrayed on television um, and when I look at relationships with my friends, it always seems to be you know, it's always the guy cheating on the girl. You rarely hear about the girl cheating on the guy.

Out of the nine participants who believed that the player identity was primarily a male identity, six were female respondents. The remaining three male respondents believed that the player identity could equally likely be male or female. For example, when George was asked whether the player identity referred to one gender more than the other he responded by saying:

Not necessarily. Not necessarily one gender, like I said it could be female, it could be male. It depends on the person itself, and depends on the perception of the person, right? How they feel, how they feel about others, their feelings about romance, and everything.

Thus, while the majority of respondents alluded to the player identity as being primarily associated with men, there were those who did believe that both men and women are equally likely to take on this identity. Some also noted that while females may not always be associated with the player identity, female players do exist as well. Sally explained, "Yes, yes I think it refers to a male more, just because that's the traditional player, is a male. That's kind of how it starts. There are female players, but it definitely more refers to men." Sally concedes with many of the other participants who similarly believed that the player identity is primarily a male identity, and while women could be players, they are less likely to take on this identity.

Players are unfaithful and do not love their romantic partners. In further understanding what the player identity entails, it was commonly mentioned that players lack a sense of commitment to their romantic partners, and do not get involved in romantic relationships to build an emotional connection with their partners. For example, when Jessica was asked to define the term player, she explained, "I would define it as someone who cheats around, someone who likes a lot of attention, someone who is not necessarily stable minded, not serious in a relationship."

Similarly, Oliver defined the term player by relating that:

I define a player as a partner in the relationship who is uncommitted and who is basically enjoying their life, and maybe using the other partner just uh to spend time, just to have fun. Someone not serious, I guess.

Both Oliver and Jessica mentioned that players are often not serious about their romantic relationships. According to them, players often have no sense of faithfulness or emotional bond towards their romantic partners.

Anita believed that a player is, “Somebody that doesn’t seek romantic relationships with girls,” she went on explaining, “and somebody that will seek physical relationships with girls instead, or has no emotional connection when they do get with girls.” Similarly, Sally believed that a player is, “Somebody who has a relationship, a male or female who has a relationship with the opposite sex and they don’t do it for love, it’s strictly to gain something out of it.” According to participants, players are often involved in relationships for sexual gratification. Travis reinforces this sentiment by saying, “There is no romance involved for the player. There is just sex.”

Players are promiscuous and have multiple partners at the same time. Players are known to be promiscuous, only interested in engaging in sex with their partners, and have multiple partners at the same time. Ranata believed that a player is, “Someone who has a lot of partners, sleeps around, or they date a lot, and like the other partners don’t know.” Anita explained that a player is, “Someone who chooses to be in non-committal relationships, generally multiple at the same time, and makes a choice whether to be honest or dishonest about it.” Similarly, George defined a player by relating the following:

Well, I guess someone who loves girls, and for me is like not stick to one girl rather than sticking to one you know going with like several other girls, and none of them knows about the person who’s going out with them and what you see him doing.

George highlights that players often have multiple partners who often do not know that the person they are going out with is a player. Most participants believed that players often have multiple romantic partners at the same time. Travis explained, “I think a player is just, like if I close my eyes and think, player, I think male, and someone that has a promiscuous nature, and has multiple sexual partners.” Most respondents had similar answers highlighting the promiscuous nature of a player’s behaviour.

The player identity has a negative connotation. Participants revealed that the player is an identity with a negative connotation associated to it. As such, a number of respondents revealed that players do not refer to themselves as players since it is seen as a derogatory identity. For example, when Matt was asked whether he knew individuals who classified themselves as players, he responded by saying, “I wouldn’t say so no, they don’t call themselves that but they do brag about the amount of attention and sex they get.” When asked whether he would classify these individuals as players he responded by saying, “I’d say so.” John offered a similar response when asked if he knew people who identified themselves as players; he explained that, “Sure, or I don’t know if they would classify themselves as players, but I know they would be seen as players.” Travis offered an explanation as to why players may not want to refer to themselves as a player. He said:

It’s not an attractive brand to brand yourself by. Especially if you’re the type of male that is very sexually promiscuous, that sleeps with many women, it’s not good, you know. The wolf doesn’t want to label himself a wolf, you know. The wolf wants to be, you know, I don’t want to be cliché now, but you know doesn’t want to look predatory, doesn’t want to look suspect. He wants to look like, you know, average ‘Joe Blow.’

According to Travis, to refer to one’s self as a player would be compromising one’s chance of continuing to be a player.

The player as a socially acceptable identity for men and deviant identity for women. Most respondents believed that it is socially acceptable for men to be players, while it is socially unacceptable for women. When asked whether a player was socially accepted, Ranata explained, “Socially accepted for men, oh yeah, more for men than women for sure. Because a girl gets called a whore, if she’s sleeping around.” Many of the respondents indicated that while it is often acceptable for men to be players, female players are called demeaning names. Jasmine had a similar response relating that:

I think for females, it’s not accepted, because if she is labelled a player then she’s going to be labelled other mean words, can I say them? Like whore, like slut. For a male to be a player, it’s like a cool thing, they’re gonna be like, ‘Oh he’s so hot, he can get any girl he wants.’ It’s okay for him to be a player.

Matt believed that, “For men it seems quite accepted that they try to seduce as many women as possible,” and he said that, “a woman who sleeps around would likely be labelled a slut.” Most participants had similar responses, noting that men are often encouraged to be promiscuous while women are not.

The player identity was considered a common identity amongst the 12 participants interviewed. One of the most important aspects highlighted through this investigation is related to the perceived prevalence of the player identity amongst the participants interviewed. All participants with the exception of one believed that the player was a common identity, and all of the participants admitted that they knew someone, or of someone who was a player. Ranata explained, “There’s always a player that everyone knows. You know like Jordan, oh my God he would be perfect for this interview.” Similarly, Travis said:

I think that the idea of being sexual promiscuous is increasing overall. I think that overall our standards of like sexual norms are like transforming, so I think yes the idea of a player is prevalent in our society.

Similarly, when John was asked whether he believed that the player was a prevalent identity he stated, “I think it has to be,” he went on to further add:

What we live in nowadays, everything is about choice, everything is accessible to you right? If you want to go somewhere it's at your fingertips, it's not like before, you know where we're exposed to certain things and that forms your identity. You have choices now, so why wouldn't you want to exercise all your choices in finding a mate or partner, right? The only way to do that is to date more, to meet more girls to figure out what you want and what you don't want.

To Travis and John, the player identity is a natural progression of today's romantic relationships where people are now more sexually open and free.

Also a number of respondents believed that the player identity is more common amongst younger individuals. According to these respondents, the player is an identity that takes shape in the senior years of high school and continues into college. For example, Jasmine explained, “I think it's more of a teenage um time. Where like in high school, that's where the term comes into play. I haven't seen guys who are like 30 years old and they're players, I mostly see it in high school.” Oliver had a similar account when asked whether he believed the player identity is common. He said, “I would say like at a different age group it is. Like maybe for teenagers it is, more [than] like older people. So obviously between the ages of 16-25 years it is a common thing.” Calvin also believed that the player identity is more popular and socially accepted among a younger age group. He explained:

Like when you're going through high school for example, the other guys around you love that they promote it [the player identity], like it's kinda like the lifestyle they want to live when you're young.

Some mentioned that behaving like a player is more of a phase that one goes through in high school, but that it can also continue into older years depending on the individual.

As mentioned before, all participants knew or knew of someone who could be classified as a player. Oliver recalled knowing about 15 players who were male, and five who were female. Similarly, Travis said:

I do know many males that have had very very high levels of success with females, if success could be considered having sex with them, you know, like yeah I have a friend in Japan that has slept with oh probably hundreds, just doesn't know the number anymore.

All participants recalled knowing individuals who slept around often, or had multiple partners at the same time.

The player identity as a learned identity. Many participants did believe that a person learns to be a player through one's social context. Oliver said:

Well I think that thing [the player identity] is built when you grow up at a specific age, and the society you live in, and like who you hang out with and [pause] basically if you do it once, if you like, for example, if you see one of your friends do it and you think it's cool, you're gonna do it and you're gonna like it, for example, and you'll just keep on doing it. So maybe it is something in the culture or in the society that you just blend in maybe.

John also believed that the player identity is socially constructed saying that, "I think from a guy's standpoint it's cool to be a player. So it's a double-edged sword, like society creates something that a guy wants to be that girls endorse, and at the same time girls will hate guys for being it right?" Participants noted that the player behaviour is certainly learned through interacting with others, and is often deemed the "cool" thing to do.

However it should be noted that some participants believed that being a player also involves some natural abilities. Travis does believe that the player identity can be socially constructed as he shares:

So it is socially constructed in a sense, you know, because they just look around themselves and say, 'Oh, this is how the player walks, this is how the player talks.' And, they try to fake it until they make it. These are the men who are trying to become players in the framework that it is socially constructed.

He goes on to say, “But I think at the same time, a true player, right, is someone that is just a natural at it, and this is what people within the community [seduction community] discuss as well; so it’s almost a compliment to be like a player that is not socially constructed.” According to Travis, while being a player is learned, for many, it can also involve natural skills that some are more inclined to have than others. To him some players have an innate ability to seduce potential romantic partners. Calvin also related that the player is culturally constructed, but it also involves a natural ability to be extroverted. He explained, “It can be something learned for sure, it can also be natural ability. Like you won’t find someone that’s shy just all of a sudden learn how to do it [be a player].”

A number of respondents mentioned media such as music videos, YouTube clips, and books as being an influencing factor in popularizing this identity. Jessica related:

When you watch TV, a lot of the rap videos they have like guys saying, ‘I’m a player, I’m a player, it’s cool,’ so I think that kind of gets embedded in a lot of young people’s, young and older men’s head, and so I probably think it’s more of a social construction rather than innate.

Similarly, Travis contended that:

I think the idea of the player has entered the realm of social consciousness by the books of Neil Strauss, ‘The Game,’ and David D’Angelo, the ‘Mystery Method.’ Mystery is a character from ‘The Game.’ He’s got his own TV show on MTV, you know what I mean? There’s seminars, like, in every major city on how to be a player and how to pick up women.

Travis mentioned Neil Strauss’ book, “The Game,” which teaches men how to attract and seduce women. David D’Angelo is a character in Strauss’ book who has his own television show on MTV premised on the art of picking up women. Travis believed that through these forms of popular media that the concept of the player has become popularized.

Similarly, Calvin noted:

I know like even if you go on YouTube there's something called, and I've watched this myself, it's called 'The Men's Room,' and it's literally a one-on-one interview where they have players in and they actually interview them on their specific styles of how they pickup women, so it could be considered like a culture and a game in some sorts because they evaluate their game.

This show mentioned by Calvin presents methods of picking up women, and portray it as a kind of game. While some noted that being a player involves some natural abilities, most believed that assuming the player identity is learned and is often demonstrated and popularized through media.

This section of the interview questions was set to understand whether the player identity exists and whether or not it has relevance in romantic contexts today. All participants confirmed the existence and relevance of the player identity by being able to define it and situate it within real social contexts. The second part of the interview questions attempt to understand the relation between the player identity and emotionally manipulative behaviour.

The player's relation to emotional manipulation.

Gendered emotional manipulation is an important aspect of the player identity.

Participants believed that emotional manipulation is part of the player identity, many also connected emotional manipulation to lying and deception, which was deemed a major part of the player identity. Some had stories exemplifying acts of deception by players. The following offers a full and detailed description of the way participants defined and related emotional manipulation to the player identity.

Most participants (four women and five men) believed that emotional manipulation, defined as deception and lying is part of the player's behaviour with their romantic partners. Ranata defined emotional manipulation in the following way: "Lying, I mean, [a player would say] 'Oh yeah, like I'm not seeing anyone else,' and you have three other girls you're screwing

around with. That's emotional manipulation." She believed that emotional manipulation is part of the player identity.

Oliver had a similar response when asked if he has seen emotionally manipulative tactics used by players. He said, "In terms of behaviour, I guess just lying and committing to someone, or like pretending to commit to someone when they're not." Oliver believed that players often deceive their romantic partners into believing that they are committed to their partners when in reality they are not. When asked to describe tactics and behaviours illustrating emotional manipulation by players, Jessica said, "Acting like you know you're really into someone at first, and then maybe when they got what they wanted out of the situation you act like they don't necessarily care about them." This idea of players pretending to care about their partners was reminiscent in a number of respondents' answers. Travis believed that players will do or say anything to be able to seduce a person they are sexually interested in. He said, "and so yeah, I might give a few compliments, maybe their hair won't look nice, and I'll compliment them on it." Similarly, Calvin said:

For sure, I think the male player...when they're picking up a girl or talking to them, there's a lot of compliments, there's maybe things that are just made up, like something to perk her interest. Like a lot of guys will make up something that's totally not true about them [women of interest] to just add a little mystery to them.

In all these instances, respondents highlight that a significant part of the player identity is related to deceptive behaviour, whether pretending to be committed to their partners or lying to attract a potential partner.

Ranata believed that players will often lie to their romantic partners regarding their whereabouts when they are cheating on their partners. When she was asked if she had seen emotionally manipulative tactics used by those who are players, she said:

Oh yeah, all the time, just I mean, sneaking around, saying you know you're at work [when] you're with another girl. Like my friend, her boyfriend cheats on her all the time, and he's my best friend. So it's like, I get to see it, and I can't say anything about it. I know what he's doing, and she'll be like, 'Oh yeah, like you know, he's just at work right now.' Like no, he's with another girl kind of thing, like lying, lots of lying.

In this example, Ranata recalls that her best friend cheats on his girlfriend and lies about it saying that he's at work. She highlighted that players are known for their lying and sneaking around since they often have multiple partners that they are dating/having sex with.

Anita discussed a player she knew of who deceived his romantic partners through projecting a certain persona to his peers. She elaborated:

It was a guy we all knew, and he was dating three girls at the same time: one for a year and a half, one for eight months, and one for four months. And, he basically I guess would play the strong silent type so like he just seemed mysterious and like not the like [pause] I guess a player a lot of people associate, like they're very extroverted, they're confident, and he was the opposite. He was like quiet, and mysterious, and kind of nervous, and a lot of people know about the story, and when people debate about it, everyone kind of wonders if that was all planned and that was all strategic as well. And because no one knows his true personality when it's to that degree of deception.

In this instance, the male player was deceiving three girls into believing that he was committed to each one of them, when he was not. As Anita pointed out people suspected that he portrayed certain personality traits potentially to hide his real identity as a player. She goes on and explained that, "all of the girls, like when they found out, were like really shocked. It wasn't like they were suspecting it in anyway, you know they were all extremely shocked, and are still hurting and stuff." Through these examples, it appears that many believe that players use deceptive tactics in their romantic relationships.

A number of respondents associated emotional manipulation with emotional game playing. For example, Jessica described emotionally manipulative behaviour as, "someone who kind of plays around with other people's feelings, and maybe does it in a purposeful manner." Jasmine seemed to share Jessica's perspective as she defined emotional manipulation: "I think

it's a way of like, a particular individual manipulating the other person's emotions, and scheming."

John highlighted emotional game playing as an emotionally manipulative tactic as well. He said, "You always want what you can't have. You make yourself unavailable, it increases the intrigue behind you and indifference is really attractive, especially to females." All participants with the exception of one female participant indicated that deception and mind games were a part of the player identity. Through the telling revelations of the participants interviewed, it is evident that deception is a defining characteristic of the player.

Consequently, 10 out of the 12 respondents believed that emotional manipulation was a part of the player identity. Anita related that:

Okay, emotional manipulation is related to the male player identity, I do think it is. I think that in order to be a player, and have multiple women at the same time, especially if you're doing it dishonestly, requires manipulating them because you at some point are going to have to lie to them, in order to cover yourself so-to-speak, and also you're not being emotionally honest if you're in multiple relationships at once.

She goes on to say that, "I think it's the same for women. I think that's the exact same for women. If a woman is being a player and seeing multiple people, then they're being manipulative."

Similarly, when Sally was asked whether emotional manipulation is part of the male player identity she said, "the whole notion of a player which is a traditionally male role, is to use women, play with their emotions to get something out of them." She added: "I do [believe that emotional manipulation is part of the female player identity], not as much as men. But I do, because some females do definitely manipulate men to get what they want." Also, Matt responded to the same question by relating:

I think it's both [part of the male and female player identity], this sort of identity requires an amount of emotional manipulation, so yeah, I'd say both. Because it takes a sort of

skill to pull this off, I guess. Because people do get suspicious and jealous with ease sometimes, so it's to stave that off you would have to change the way they [a player's romantic partners] see things.

In clarifying Matt's response, he believed that emotional manipulation is part of the player identity since it takes a kind of skilled ability to deceive partners who may be suspicious of a player's level of commitment. Oliver believed that emotional manipulation is part of the player identity as well. He said, "Well that's something [emotional manipulation] that I think that person would do just for example not to feel the guilt." According to Oliver a player uses emotional manipulation in the form of deceit in order to make herself/himself feel better.

Interestingly, John went on to add an interesting perspective related to gender and the use of emotional manipulation:

Like I can't use a phone, unless I have a phone to use. I think females give males emotions that we can manipulate on. You know they act needy, they act a certain way, um, they have the need to be wanted, they have the need to be noticed, which is fine, but after a while, some guys understand that, and they can manipulate it you know, they can push and come and go as they please, and it creates a little dependence on the girl, and some guys understand that they're doing that, and some guys don't, but it works the same. Likewise women do that as well, they can play the guilt card with guys, you know, the damsel in distress, you know tears, or loneliness and some guys buy into that, sometimes it's genuine, like I mean I don't think a lot of the times it's contrived, I think girls have very real emotions and it comes across as a certain way, and without them understanding it can be used to manipulate by guys.

John exemplifies the notion of emotional manipulation as a gendered phenomenon. To him, both men and women use emotional manipulation, just in different ways. Men play on women's so-called emotional vulnerabilities, while women display these vulnerabilities to manipulate men as well. John's statement is imperative in understanding the concept of gendered emotional manipulation.

Emotional manipulation is not important when investigating the player identity. It should be noted that while most of the participants believed that emotional manipulation was part of the

player identity, two (John and Travis) perceived emotional manipulation as not having a significant connection to the player identity. When John was asked if he believed emotional manipulation is part of the player identity, he responded:

No, I think it's a misperception. I think people want to understand why someone is a player, right? And they'll put a reason to it, and then there's commonalities in everything, this is just a commonality...It's almost like a pie graph, a very small section is highlighted in neon colour so it sticks out more, but it's still a very small portion of the graph. I think that's what's going on here.

According to John's perspective, emotional manipulation is overemphasized in this study since it realistically does not apply to everyone who is a player.

Instead, John insisted that all players are different, and have an individual set of practices and behaviours that they adhere to. He went on to relate:

I don't think, not to discredit what you're doing, I think there can be some general perceptions that you can discover through this study, but I think for the most part it's individual, it's all circumstantial. So I don't think there's a set code, where guys are like this is the player code. You know what I mean? I don't think it works like that.

According to John, to standardize the player behaviour by establishing a connection between emotional manipulation and the player identity is incorrect.

He also noted that being honest is more effective than being deceptive when wanting a strictly sexual relationship with another person. He explained:

Everybody talks about emotional manipulation, I really don't think it's that useful. Like if I hook up and end up with a girl, and I'm just straight up with them, it works a lot better than if I was to BS [bullshit] with them. I find that girls want the same thing guys want right, they just don't want the title with it. I mean, the game is fun too, that's the whole point of it, people like the game. After a while it just gets boring.

To him, it is easier to "hook up" or have sex with a girl by being honest with her than it is to lie and play emotional games. He even believed that many girls desire sexual relationships with multiple partners but do not want the negative title that comes along with being promiscuous.

Meanwhile, Travis was more fixated on emotional manipulation as being too strong or “sinister” of a term to describe how players operate with their romantic partners. He explained:

Okay, I consider myself as someone who is very promiscuous with females, okay? I’ve slept with uh, like I’ve stopped counting after a hundred, so I estimate it’s probably like 150-250, but because it’s an estimate, I don’t know um, and so if I’m a player then I don’t think emotional manipulation is part of a player.”

He elaborated:

Yes, the player will do and say anything to be able to reach their tar[get], their goal [having sex], and I’m certainly guilty of that, you know, on numerous circumstances. But I mean, I personally just consider that amoral, I don’t consider that manipulation.”

In both these instances, these two participants were adamant in articulating that emotional manipulation is not a notable part of the player identity.

In John’s opinion, emotional manipulation is over exaggerated in this study. He believed that players are all individual and all have an individual approach to playing men or women. He even goes as far as to note that being honest of one’s intentions is more of an effective method than scheming and playing emotional games. Meanwhile, Travis was more concerned with using the word manipulation, which he believed was too harsh in describing the player’s behaviour. He considered a player’s behaviour as more persuasive than manipulative in nature.

Social acceptability of emotionally manipulating one’s romantic partner. Many participants believed that it was socially unacceptable to emotionally manipulate one’s romantic partner. To a number of respondents, a real romantic relationship involves honesty and commitment. When Ranata was asked if she believed it was socially encouraged to emotionally manipulate one’s romantic partner she responded, “Nope. Not from what I see, I mean, no one encourages lying.” Similarly, Calvin said, “I think, in general, it’s not okay to emotionally like manipulate someone, especially like being with my last girlfriend, and now that we’re over, like that genuine organic kind of feeling has to be real.” When Andrea was asked the same question,

she responded saying, “No definitely, nobody should be emotionally manipulating anybody. Especially in romantic relationships, when you should be loving each other and accepting each other instead of manipulating each other.”

In contrast, John had a different perspective believing that to an extent it is socially encouraged to emotionally manipulate one’s romantic partner. He explained:

I feel like when guys do it [emotionally manipulate their partners], it’s weird, you have this term, it’s called ‘game,’ and that’s essentially what game is, it’s emotional manipulation, so when someone says, you have good game, I’m guessing that’s what they mean right? That’s tough because in that regard it’s definitely encouraged for guys to have game right?

John mentioned the term game, and emphasized that it is socially encouraged for men to have it. Interestingly, he defines game as emotional manipulation. He goes on to say, “It’s different because it’s encouraged for guys to emotionally manipulate to attract girls. It’s encouraged for girls to emotionally manipulate to keep guys, right.” While others did not have similar responses, John’s response is important since he brings attention to the concept of ‘game,’ a term that will be discussed later on in this chapter.

This second section of the interviews was set up to determine whether participants saw a connection between the player identity and emotional manipulation. Almost all participants indicated a relationship between emotional manipulation and being a player. Apparently, participants also believed that deception is a significant part of the player identity. The next part of the interview questions seek to investigate whether socially constructed gender conventions have any relation to the player identity.

Connections between gender conventions and the player identity

The meanings of masculinity and femininity according to respondents. Before assessing whether participants believed there is a connection between gender conventions and the player

identity it was important to first understand how they perceive concepts of gender. As discussed in Chapter Two, Bem (1974) divides gender into four categories (masculinity, femininity, androgynous, and undifferentiated); masculinity and femininity are the two categories of interest in this study. Respondents did have their own individual conceptions of what masculinity and femininity meant to them, but they were specifically asked to define gender in terms of society's standards.

Most participants aligned society's conceptions of masculinity with attributes of strength, agency, and dominance. Meanwhile, femininity was mostly described as being in touch with emotions, being nurturing, and carrying one's self in a certain way. Participants did believe that masculinity was strongly related to the player identity, while femininity was not (for the most part). A detailed account of participant perspectives are discussed below.

Traditional understandings of masculinity based on what participants deemed as society's standards were often described with adjectives such as strength, power, and agency. For example, Jessica related: "masculinity [as] socially constructed would be like male, strong, powerful, dominant." Adding to this idea Anita said:

I think masculinity has been defined as...strong, the breadwinner, provides for the family and I think that we're breaking that down slowly but I think you know that's there, you know they're not expected to show too many emotions, they're supposed to be reliable in terms of like having a job and being there for us [women].

Anita described masculinity in terms of agency and power. In her conception, socially constructed ideals of masculinity are related to being strong, providers, and withholding emotion.

Along with many of the other participants, Matt automatically associated men with masculinity. Most participants conceived of gender as aligning with sex. When Matt was asked how he would define society's conception of masculinity, he articulated that, "Men are generally perceived as more dominant, aggressive, more concerned about displays of wealth and being

shown as powerful, and unconcerned with relationships.” John believed that masculinity is the alpha-male. He defined alpha-male as, “someone who likes to be in-charge, who wants the final say, who I don’t know, I don’t think center of attention but wants authority, that’s society’s definition of what masculinity is for sure.” Calvin defined masculinity in these same terms. He said, “I think masculinity especially in this society is like defined as very you know dominant, very strong and very like you know, in-charge.” In all of these conceptions of masculinity, respondents highlighted attributes of strength, agency, a detachment of emotions, and desiring dominance.

In contrast, opposing attributes were used to describe socially constructed conceptions of femininity. Jasmine defined femininity as being, “Nurturing, sweet, compassionate, intelligent, caring and loyal.” Similarly, Anita defined femininity:

Socially it’s been defined as we’re nurturing, we’re sensitive, we’re good listeners, we do better in school, we’re organized, we wash dishes and do the laundry. Some would say subservient. And, you dress up and look good, and you care about that too, like it’s important to show that you care about that.

Similarly Matt said, “society’s conception [of femininity] would be emotional and compassionate, probably complete opposite of what I said for male. So submissive in some respects.” Travis said, “Femininity, is more like your purity, and your lack of maleness, your lack of testosterone , your subtleness, your softness. You know sensitivity, emotional intelligence, stuff like that.”

When Oliver was asked to define femininity he said: “A female has to behave like one to me. Behaviour consists of many things such as the way she dresses and respects her body and the way she walks and speaks, including language.” John said, “When I think of femininity I think gracefulness. Like femininity is more of an energy, more of a way somebody carries themselves, conducts themselves, more graceful that’s the only way I can put it.” Most

noticeable is that many aligned femininity with being nurturing, in touch with emotions, and behaving in a certain manner.

The relationship between gender conventions and the player identity. Results show that 10 of the 12 respondents believed that socially constructed conceptions of masculinity were related to the male player identity, while two participants believed that femininity was related to the female player identity. For example, Oliver indicated that men adhere to the player identity because it is, “the masculine thing to do.” He explained:

To them [male players] it means just having more power over the other side and like being able to do more [than] what the female could do in the relationship. And, basically the more you get the more masculine you are.

Oliver believed that players behave the way they do in relationships as a means of gaining dominance and power. Also he insisted that in the player’s mind the more sex and women a man acquires, the more masculine he is.

When Calvin was asked whether he believed masculinity related to the male player identity he responded by saying, “Yeah, absolutely like for sure, when you’re at a bar or you’re somewhere and you’re talking to a girl, and you want to be like, confident, and I think that’s part of masculinity, being confident, and like I said being in-charge.” Meanwhile when Jasmine was asked to define masculinity she responded saying, “Player. Strong, confident, kind of like, I think player is the best description because that’s what I usually think of masculinity, like a player: strong, confident.” When Anita was asked if she believed masculinity relates to the male player identity, she said the following:

The socially constructed definition of being strong and not showing too much emotion. I think that’s exactly what you’re doing when you’re seeing multiple women, is that you’re kind of detaching yourself and not showing too much emotion or like giving too much of yourself, because then you can only get hurt so much.

Most participants revealed similar accounts connecting masculinity to the male player identity. They believed that aspects of emotionally detaching one's self from romantic partners, and sleeping with multiple women were often attributes that exemplify society's conceptions of masculinity. When Travis was asked whether he saw a connection between socially constructed notions of masculinity and the male player identity he responded by saying, "I think the top tier player is more masculine than a low tier player. And it's whoever has more, you know, references on their CV, if you will." When mentioning "references" on one's CV, Travis was referring to the number of women a person has slept with.

Participants did believe that masculinity was directly related to the male player identity. To a number of participants, assuming the player identity is a means of asserting power, control, and dominance in a relationship, attributes that are commonly in line with socially constructed notions of masculinity. While others simply defined masculinity in terms of how many women one has had sex with. Travis defined masculinity by simply saying, "The number of women you've slept with."

On the other hand, two participants connected femininity to the female player identity. When asked if femininity was related to the female player identity, Matt said, "Well it does, females are expected to be very attractive, and able to charm men, and use their looks to seduce men. So yeah, I'd say so." In Matt's opinion, female players use their feminine qualities in order to seduce men. Calvin had a similar response indicating that women use their physical attractiveness to seduce men. Meanwhile the rest of the ten participants saw no connection between femininity and the female player identity. Anita exemplifies the sentiment of many participants who saw no connection between femininity and the female player identity:

If you're going to be a player and you're female you're not really going to be nurturing and sensitive. If you're being dishonest about it, you're not really being sensitive to

other's feelings. You're kind of like detaching yourself and desensitizing, and so I guess that's kind of interesting because it's a contradiction almost. That's interesting I never thought about it that way, but it is kind of contradictory, um and you're more of a rebel, almost seen like a rebel.

To Anita assuming the female player identity is going against conventional gender norms of femininity and rebelling against expectations of being nurturing and sensitive.

Some participants expressed that those who are female players often seek more traditionally conceived masculine aspirations such as power and control. Sally said,

I think maybe a female who is being a player has a little bit more of like a controlling nature, um, maybe some more masculine tendencies of like control and you know being very confident and self-aware of yourself. I think a woman who is being a player has to kind of have some masculine tendencies.

Similarly, Travis believed, "A female is not a player. A female is someone who is non-player, is anti-player. If a female is a player, then she's not feminine, it's kind of a masculine characteristic." These responses suggest that women who assume the player identity place themselves in a position of control rather than as a subject, situating themselves outside of the pale of femininity and into the realm of having more masculine tendencies.

This section has aimed to understand whether respondents believed there is a connection between gender conventions and the player identity. Most believed that society's common conceptions of masculinity had a notable relationship to the player identity. The next and final section asked participants to determine whether this study is important in today's social context.

Importance of this study in today's social context

This study was deemed unimportant to some while important to others. There were three common responses that participants expressed when asked whether they classified this study as important in today's social context. Some regarded this study as not important since it is an everyday occurrence that deserves little academic attention. Others believed that the player

identity is not an identity that can be studied since it is more of an individualized identity with no standard practice or set code of behaviour. The third group believed that this study is important since it brings awareness to a topic relevant to romantic relationships today. A detailed look at participants' responses follow.

Calvin was one of the respondents who believed that this study investigating the player identity and gendered emotional manipulation was not very important. He said,

I think if I saw it in a paper, for sure I would read it, but I can't see myself in any situation where I felt like I was being emotionally manipulated and I have to go to a library and read about it. It's more something that you ask your friends about like something in a very social context.

Similarly, Sally believed that, "I think it's common sense in the sense that people already know this is this. People already know it happens to people." According to Calvin and Sally a study of this nature is not necessarily relevant.

Meanwhile both Oliver and John believed that the player identity cannot be understood through this investigation. John said,

I think you can interview a thousand guys and a thousand girls, and you could meet a guy one day that you would have no idea is a player. Cause it's relative, like you would have gone through certain things in your life, right, everybody has, whatever demons, whatever the f*** you want to call it. One day you'll meet someone that can play on them, whether they want to or not, I don't think there's a definitive thing to look out for. Thus, John believed that the player identity is too broad and individualized as an identity to

understand or look out for. Oliver said:

I just think that it's a thing [the player identity] where you can't really study it because um, I might be wrong, but um, I just think we may think it's a huge thing that happens everyday to everyone or something and it might be nothing or vice versa. And uh, especially when we think of players, we think of somebody who just kind of lies maybe or something, so it's hard to carry such a study on it. And, maybe as a participant as well I could be a player or not, and I think that would actually affect the study a lot.

Oliver brought up the idea that through this study the player identity could be made into a phenomenon of relevance when it is not. Moreover he contends that since players often lie, it

would be difficult to truly understand this identity since interviewing players could compromise an honest account of information.

Other respondents deemed the relevance of this study as high since it works to bring new awareness to an important aspect of interpersonal relationships today. For example, Anita related that:

I think that relationships are so fundamental. I think that no matter how much you succeed in other things, whether it be, like I can speak from personal experience, like athletics, I'm on a university team, school whatever it may be that you're succeeding in. We're social beings, and there's this fundamental draw towards finding someone else you connect with and sharing those successes with them and like only then are they like reaching their potential of like you know maximum happiness, I guess. And, I think these kinds of studies are like super important and super fascinating. And, I think they're fundamental.

According to Anita, a study of this nature touches at the very nature of understanding relationships, which is a fundamental aspect of human existence. To her, regardless of other aspects of life, the basic and fundamental need to connect with others is an essential part of the human experience, and a necessary aspect to be studied and understood.

Travis also believed that this study is important to understand since it brings an important awareness to interpersonal dynamics between men and women. He explained:

I think the player identity is becoming popular, a lot of males are understanding it in a disparaging context. I mean like the words that are used in the word, "The Game," include things such as, 'target' you know, you approach the target, you open on a set, you gotta hit your numbers, you gotta get 25 leads, and all these ideas really itemize women, you know? Make them seem not only stupid, but also things, with a capital 'T,' you know things to be 'f*****' and used. And I think the whole idea of 'The game' and the player identity is new and refreshing and exciting and fun for males, but at the same time, there are these dark and sinister overtones that need to be acknowledged, and I think it's a ripe time in our society for research to be conducted in this area.

Travis believes that Strauss' book, "The Game," uses language that itemizes women, such as referring to women as 'targets, opening on a set, hitting numbers, and getting leads.' He highlights that, to some, being a player is fun, but there are some significant concerns related to

how people are treated and regarded by players. According to him and others, studying the player identity is important in understanding relationship dynamics between men and women in interpersonal relationships today.

In conclusion, participants believed that the player identity is an existing and prevalent identity, mostly (but not exclusively) associated with men. Through participant interviews it is apparent that players are known as individuals who are unfaithful to their romantic partners, and often have more than one partner at the same time. Respondents believed that they commonly have relationships as a means of engaging in sex and do not seek emotional connections to their romantic partners. Some also seemed to agree that the player is often a younger identity that is learned through one's social context.

Participants also believed that deceptive behaviour like lying and emotional games are a significant part of a player's behaviour towards their romantic partners; they often noted that these acts of deception are a form of emotional manipulation. Almost all of the respondents with the exception of two saw a connection between socially constructed conceptions of masculinity and the player identity.

Discussion

This section will discuss the findings obtained addressing the two main research questions originally proposed for this research investigation. Results will be understood in relation to a social construction theoretical perspective. The findings drawn from participant interviews will also be compared and analyzed in relation to the literature reviewed for this investigation.

The purpose of this thesis is to understand people's perceptions of the player identity and gendered emotional manipulation. The two initial research questions used as a guiding point for this investigation are:

RQ 1: How do men and women perceive the player identity in romantic relationships?

RQ 2: How do men and women perceive emotional manipulation in romantic relationships?

In order to answer these questions, interviews with participants focused on three areas of investigation: (1) the existence and relevance of the player identity in romantic relationships in today's social context, (2) the player's relation to emotionally manipulative behaviour towards romantic partners, and (3) the connection between socially constructed male and female gender conventions and the player identity. Designed as a narrative inquiry using interviews as a method of investigation, this study engaged 12 participants (six men and six women) in conversations about the player identity and gendered emotional manipulation. These individual conversations with participants that lasted about 20 minutes to an hour were audio recorded and analyzed using thematic analysis.

Social Construction as a Theoretical Framework

In taking the concept of social construction and applying it to the results of this study, a number of arguments can be made. Berger and Luckmann (1966) theorized that one's identity, including one's concept of reality is a learned process developed through living and interacting with one's social surroundings. They introduced the concept of socialization as the process by which one learns appropriate behaviours and meanings in accordance to what society deems as acceptable.

From participant perspectives, it was found that the player identity is a learned identity developed as a result of one's social environment. For example, Oliver believed that the player

identity develops as one grows up, and is fostered through one's social environment. He insisted that the society one lives in and the people that one associates with have an impact on the development of this identity. Similarly, Jessica also believed that being a player comes from being surrounded with images on TV that promote this identity as valid and "cool."

Gender Constructs and the Player Identity

In answering the first research question related to how men and women perceive the player identity in romantic relationships, the following connections have been made. Participants found that the player identity is primarily a male identity, and while women were believed to be capable of being players too, participants indicated that men are usually more associated with this identity.

A possibility in explaining why the player identity is more associated with males than females could be related to the process of gendered social learning. As mentioned in Chapter Two, gendered social learning is rooted in social construction theory and takes place when people learn through their social environment how to behave as males and females. According to Jansz (2000), as soon as parents determine the gender of their child, gendered social learning begins, as parents ascribe specific characteristics (based on gender) to infants. Gendered social learning is premised on the notion that people learn how to behave in their environment according to principles of reinforcement, punishment, and modeling (Addis et al., 2010). According to Addis et al. (2010) through the process of gendered social learning, boys are taught that there are negative social consequences in displaying vulnerability, while being assertive, outgoing, and competitive renders more positive responses. Meanwhile, young girls are encouraged to be open to share vulnerable emotions, and be more in tuned with their feelings (Jansz, 2000). Dunn et al., (1987) have found that mothers use less emotion when acting with

their male babies than with their female babies. Similarly, Block (1984) found that parents tend to emphasize control of emotional expression with their sons, and control of aggression with their daughters.

Brody (2000) relates that boys who are less liked by peers are often seen as weak and vulnerable. Meanwhile popular boys often exhibit qualities of competitiveness and self-promotion, aggression, and dominance (Jansz, 2000). Well liked girls are expressive, understand group dynamics, and are interested in fostering social relationships (Brody, 2000). As such, from the time of infancy masculine and feminine qualities are instilled in boys and girls through the process of gendered social learning. Participants in this study were found to believe that masculinity is related to the player identity and that it is socially accepted for men to be players. Consequently, through the process of gendered social learning it may be possible that men are encouraged to behave like a player, or assume the player identity since it exudes traditional conceptions of masculinity (control, dominance, and agency). Women may not necessarily be associated with this identity because they are socialized from a young age to be more in touch with their emotions, nurturing, sensitive and considerate.

The idea of the player identity as primarily a male identity does not necessarily mean that females are less likely to be players; instead the lack of a representation of female players could also be the result of sexual double standards between men and women. Many participants mentioned that it is more socially acceptable for men to take on the player identity than it is for women. Ranata, Jasmine, Jessica, Andrea, Matt, John, Calvin, and Travis, all mentioned that women who are players are often regarded in a derogatory way, being called names such as “sluts” or “whores.” Similar to the perspectives of participants, literature in this area suggests that sexual double standards continue to exist.

Crawford and Popp (2003) conducted a study investigating sexual double standards and found that women continue to be stigmatized for engaging in sexual activity outside of heterosexual marriage. Women are thus taught to believe it is socially shameful to be as sexually inclined as men are. Durham (1998) argues that women are often faced with conflicting ideas related to sexuality. He goes on to say that society teaches young women to look sexy but to say no, to act in a feminine manner but not be sexual, and to attract the sexual desire of young men, but to not satisfy their own sexual desires. Crawford and Popp (2003) reflect that women often experience a kind of dissonance since they are depicted as sexual objects but are seen as sluts and whores if they express their sexual selves. She also relates that women are expected to refuse sexual advances, acting as “limit setters” while men are expected to initiate sex and be sexual experts (p. 24). This evidence was in line with what participants in this study believed; they related that women are seen negatively when they have multiple sexual partners while it is more accepted for men. Miller (2008) discusses this double standard between men and women as well in her investigation of the player identity amongst African American urban youth. She notes that while young men are often rewarded for their sexual conquests, by being considered to be ‘cool,’ girls face a sexual double standard, being called derogatory names and being targeted by other boys. Thus, it may not be that women are less likely to be players, but are less likely to admit to this identity in fear of the social stigma of being promiscuous and having multiple sexual partners.

Hegemonic Masculinity

Reflecting back to the process of social construction and gendered social learning, men are often socially encouraged to take on rigid attributes of masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity is an identity important to understanding the player identity, since they are closely aligned. As

mentioned in Chapter Two, hegemonic masculinity is defined as a rigid prescription of masculinity epitomized by alpha-male characteristics such as agency and strength. In a way, hegemonic masculinity is an extreme form of what men are encouraged to be. Majors and Billson (1992) relate that hegemonic masculinity, which they refer to as ‘compulsive masculinity,’ is when masculinity becomes a rigid identity of toughness, sexual promiscuity, manipulation and risk taking. Taken together these are all attributes that participants associated with the player identity. Also, Miller (2008) relates that the player status among young African American youth is a facet of hegemonic masculinity. In considering participants’ responses describing the player identity, it is apparent that hegemonic masculinity could certainly relate to the player identity as well. As such, the concept of social construction could be attributed to the creation of hegemonic masculinity, and its reinforcement through the player identity.

Masculinity, Femininity, and the Player Identity

Throughout the interviews with participants, it was important for me to articulate that I was interested in understanding how people defined *society’s* conceptions of masculinity and femininity. Many associated society’s conceptions of masculinity with attributes of strength, agency and being emotionally detached, while femininity was commonly defined as nurturing, sensitive, and emotional. Similarly, research discussing masculinity and femininity mention qualities similar to participant responses; for example, Fischer and Manstead (2000) define masculinity as the ability to suppress and control one’s emotions. For masculine men sharing personal feelings is often withheld since exposing these feelings is often considered a sign of weakness (Jansz, 2000). Moreover, attributes like power, agency, and strength are commonly associated with masculinity (Brody, 2000). Meanwhile, femininity is often associated with communal qualities such as modesty and sensitivity (Moss-Racusin et al., 2010). In considering

the participants' responses and the literature reviewed there appears to be a connection between masculinity and the player identity.

At the same time, two participants found a connection between femininity and the female player. Matt believed that females use their feminine charm to seduce men, while Calvin believed that women use their physicality to seduce men. The 10 remaining respondents saw no connection between attributes of femininity and the player identity. Anita pointed out that to be a female player is to go against traditional feminine gender norms of being nurturing and sensitive.

Cool Pose and the Player Identity

In a number of different participant responses the concept of "cool" is mentioned. Travis related that the player is seen as a cool identity. He believed the player is socially labelled: "It's being labelled as, oh he's one *cool* cat, he's smooth with everyone, he's so likeable." Oliver mentioned the term cool when discussing how people learn to be a player; he said, "basically if you do it once, if you like it, for example if you see one of your friends do it and you think it's *cool*, you're gonna do it and you're gonna like it for example, and you'll just keep on doing it." John mentioned the term cool, saying that it is regarded as cool to be a player. Similarly, Jasmine related that for a male it is cool to be a player. Jessica believed that being a male player is portrayed on television as the cool thing to do. Ranata said that: "In movies and music videos, the player is usually shown as a male and that influences people, young men to act that way; it gives them the idea that it's a *cool* thing to be."

The term cool is a cultural expression used often in mainstream popular culture. The "Urban Dictionary" defines the term cool as "An adjective referring to something that is very good, stylish, or otherwise positive. It is among the most common slang terms used in today's world" (Cool, n.d.). As Majors and Billson (1992) have noted, the term cool originates in urban

African American culture referring to the cool, calm and masculine demeanour that some black men behave in accordance to. They describe it as a way African American men present themselves publicly to establish their male identity. Majors and Billson (1992) relate that cool pose is exemplified through masculine values such as emotional detachment, sexual promiscuity, toughness, and manipulation. Miller (2008) relates that the player identity assumed by some African American urban youths is part of the cool pose disposition.

Meanwhile, Kitawana (2005) argues that African American youths are often trendsetters for the rest of the world. As such, being cool is something that has been adopted by various other cultures including mainstream Western popular culture. Since participants did believe that the player identity is part of having a cool social disposition, one could conclude that the player identity has been adopted through the influence of African American youth, and their concept of the cool pose.

Gendered Emotional Manipulation

In answering the second research question related to how men and women perceive gendered emotional manipulation in romantic relationships, participants did find a connection between emotional manipulation and the player identity. Participants believed lying and deception were tactics of gendered emotional manipulation. It was expressed that players tend to use lying and deception to hide their unfaithfulness. This is similar to Miller's (2008) findings that lying and deception are significant parts of the player identity amongst African American urban youth as well.

Layder (2009) argues that manipulation is a means of exerting control over another person. A number of participants also expressed that assuming the player identity is a way of asserting power and control over one's romantic partner. For example, Jessica said: "When you

manipulate someone you have to have some sort of...dominance and some sort of power in order to do that to someone.” Similarly, when Sally was asked if she relates masculinity to the player identity she said, “What better way to have control over her than to manipulate her emotions?”

Concept of Having “Game”

Game is a concept often mentioned and associated with the player identity. Successful players are regarded as having “good game.” Interestingly, John connected the term game to gendered emotional manipulation, saying:

It’s weird, you have this term it’s called ‘game,’ and that’s essentially what game is; it’s emotional manipulation, so when someone says, ‘You have good game,’ I’m guessing that’s what they mean, right? That’s tough because in that regard it’s definitely encouraged for guys to have game, right?

This concept of game can be seen as an important aspect of understanding the player today.

Strauss’ work, “The Game,” is premised on teaching men a strategic game of manipulation and seduction as a means of having sex with women. John believed that it is socially encouraged for men to have game. As mentioned in Chapter Two, the “Urban Dictionary” defines the term game as: “The ability to seduce anybody of the opposite sex...or same sex for that matter.” (Game, n.d.). Thus, through participants’ responses and literature reviewed, it is apparent that the concept of game as a slang term describing gendered emotional manipulation can be connected to the player identity.

It is also important to note that two of the 12 participants did believe that gendered emotional manipulation is not a significant part of the player identity. John had an interesting perspective articulating that there is not a standard code or set practice for players. According to him, to emphasize gendered emotional manipulation as a set practice for all players would be inaccurate. At the same time, John does admit that emotional games are a part of the player identity highlighting that players do play games.

Similarly, Travis dismissed the notion of emotional manipulation as being a significant part of the player identity. He was more concerned that manipulation was too strong of a term to describe the player's behaviour. At the same time he did believe that a player would do and say anything to be able to engage in sex with a person; but he did not see that as a form of manipulation. While John and Travis are in the minority, their perspectives are, nevertheless, important in considering various perspectives related to the player identity and gendered emotional manipulation.

Through the voices of participants in this study, this narrative research inquiry establishes that the 12 respondents believed that the player identity is seen as a true, relevant, and common identity within today's social context. Participants also believed that there is a connection between emotional manipulation and the player identity. Many defined emotional manipulation as acts involving deception towards romantic partners. Those interviewed in this study did find a connection between society's conception of masculinity and the player identity.

Altogether the results of this study may not seem very revealing, as they may be intuitive to many living within our current cultural context. However, this study works as an introduction to an area of investigation that has been neglected within interpersonal communication studies. Social construction is an important theoretical framework for this study because it contextualizes gender, placing it into a category of being arbitrary and learned. Social construction theory teaches us that gender is a learned identity, and this process of learning takes place over the course of one's life; it is culturally as well as temporally specific. What has been understood through the literature reviewed is the idea that masculinity and femininity are constructs created in the society we live in. The player identity could possibly work to reinforce both masculine and feminine identities.

Through engaging in important conversations with participants, it was found that the player identity is seen more as a male identity than a female identity. This gender difference associated with the player identity could be a result of the process of gendered social learning, or due to the rigid social standards of how men and women should sexually behave.

In compiling the information obtained from participants, one could conclude that both men and women are equally victimized by the player identity since both genders often have to work within a socially constructed framework dictating appropriate behaviour and identities. Functioning within a social context that demands one to behave, look, and feel a certain way is oppressive, as it places people in a rigid and restrictive category of identity. Thus, recognizing that gender is socially constructed through the process of socialization beginning in infancy works to help us to recognize the apparent rigidity that gender categories place on us. Social construction as a theoretical framework works to breakdown the concept of the player identity and investigate it by understanding it as a learned identity, as believed by participants in this study.

Chapter Summary

This chapter explored the findings of the 12 semi-structured interviews conducted with participants. Results reveal a number of commonalities in responses related to understanding the player identity and gendered emotional manipulation. Commonalities found amongst participant responses include: the definition of a player, the player as a socially learned identity, the player's connection to emotional manipulation, and the player's connection to socially constructed understandings of masculinity.

This chapter also examined participants' responses positioning them within the context of the research questions initially posed and literature reviewed for this investigation. The context

for these responses was studied by understanding Berger and Luckmann's (1966) concept of social construction. Gender construction and the player identity, hegemonic masculinity, femininity and masculinity and the player identity, cool pose and the player identity, and gendered emotional manipulation are all topics discussed in this chapter. These topics are derived from the reviewed literature and are used to interpret participant responses.

The concluding chapter will provide a summary of the results of this study, mention my role as a researcher, discuss the limitations of this study, and suggest recommendations for future research. Additionally the next chapter will provide a personal reflection and offer final thoughts.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

The above study has examined people's perceptions of the player identity in today's romantic relationships. Semi-structured in-depth qualitative interviews were employed with 12 participants - six men and six women. The aim of this research has been to determine how participants understood the player identity and gendered emotional manipulation in romantic relationships.

The findings of this study show that the player identity is perceived among the 12 participants as a prevalent identity today. Participants were found to believe that the player is primarily male, and while female players do exist, usually men are more associated with this identity. It was believed that it is a common identity, associated more with younger individuals. Most participants indicated that the player identity is learned through interacting within one's social environment. Participants did believe that emotional manipulation in the form of deception and playing emotional games was part of the behaviour of players. They also suggested that this identity is related to traditional aspects of masculinity. Some participants even went as far as indicating that female players exude more traditionally considered masculine qualities than feminine qualities.

Role as a Researcher

Growing up as a first generation Canadian, Muslim female will certainly have an impact on how I present my thoughts and conclusions in this study. I am a feminist, which connotes many different meanings to different people, but to me being a feminist means promoting and encouraging equality and fairness for all people (Wood, 2011). I do believe that one of the many institutional systems that continue to disadvantage people is gender, which functions as "a system of constituting people as two significantly different categories, men and women, and

organizing social relations of inequality on the basis of that difference” (Ridgeway and Correll, 2004, p. 510). Whether this categorization restricts men from expressing their emotions, or women from initiating sexual activity, it works to greatly disadvantage individuals in their relationships with one another (Crawford & Popp, 2003; Moss-Racusin et al., 2010).

Understanding the player identity and gendered emotional manipulation has become an interest of mine, not because I have personally been affected by gendered emotional manipulation, but because I have seen many of my peers go through what seems to be a kind of pattern of emotional manipulation at the hands of their romantic partners. I do believe that there is a distinct pattern that can be seen in some relationships today that I hope to uncover through this scholarly investigation.

While I provide my own assumptions in clear view, this study is not an account of my own subjective views of the player, but has instead reflected the views of both genders and how they perceive the player and gendered emotional manipulation. As such, this narrative inquiry approach has grounded this study by taking an exploratory look into the beliefs and perceptions of both men and women.

Limitations

As in the case with any research investigation, there are limitations to this study. While this study focuses on the player identity within a Canadian context, Miller’s (2008) work defines the player identity within an American cultural framework. Due to the lack of research on this topic, it was important to draw from Miller’s (2008) work. Also, given the complexity of the topic, and limited scope of research available it was important to include many concepts. However, in an effort to stay concise, these concepts could not be discussed in more detail.

A small sample of 12 participants were consulted, and while they did represent various ethnic groups, and both genders they do not represent the larger population. If time permitted, I would have interviewed a significantly larger sample of individuals, from a wider range of backgrounds.

Another limitation of this study is my role as a researcher. I certainly have my own ideas and biases about the player identity and gendered emotional manipulation, and it is difficult to approach this study from an outsider's perspective since I live within a social context where the player identity has become apparent to me. Moreover, my interest and academic pursuits have always focused on privileging socially marginalized individuals, including women. As such, my perspectives and feminist slant may have had an impact on how I have interpreted the results of this study. Nevertheless, through using the voices of participants, I have tried to be as fair as possible in giving a balanced perspective of the player identity and gendered emotional manipulation.

Moreover, taking on a narrative methodological approach requires the researcher to be highly interpretive in compiling results and conclusions. Thus, while I did employ member checking as a means of achieving a level of neutrality, this aspect of my methodological approach should be mentioned as a possible limitation. While my methodological approach could compromise the validity of this study, it is not an aspect of any study that can be avoided, since all researchers are required to use their knowledge and critical thinking to interpret the results of any investigation carried out.

Reflections

As mentioned in the beginning of this thesis, romantic relationships are an essential part of human interactions today; however, I believe that many participants did not see the

importance of studying the player identity and gendered emotional manipulation. In passing, a respondent did say that it is important to bring awareness to this area of research, but I believe there is a lack of understanding of how traditional gender conventions affects many of us in our most personal relationships with one another.

When Ranata was asked if she deemed this study important in today's social context she related that, "[It is important to] understand behaviours, like why people act this way, what makes them act this way." When Matt was asked the same question he responded saying, "I don't know if it's important or not, but certainly interesting to learn it." Most participants had similar answers, giving little justification for why they deemed this study relevant or not relevant. Anita, Travis, and John were the only participants who expanded on their answers, and explained in detail how important they classified this study.

In my opinion, I do believe that the player identity has significant implications in understanding the dynamics within interpersonal relationships today. Strauss (2005) as well as one of the respondents in this study, Travis, compared the relationship between a player and his/her romantic partners to the relationship between a predator and its prey. This comparison demonstrates the disparaging manner in which some players may view their partners, conceiving them as prey or targets, rather than equals. While it is important to keep in mind John's belief that all players are different, it is interesting to make note of this commonality where players are compared to predators.

Also, the player identity could work to compromise the integrity of honest relationships among people. In her study of urban American youth, Miller (2008) concludes that the player identity creates a "cultural ethos" leading to jealousy, distrust, and conflict in relationships. For example, this identity fosters a strong sense of insecurity among those who may have been

romantically involved with players (Miller, 2008, p. 156). Young individuals who are not players, and have a desire for an honest relationship must also contend with the consequences of this identity by having to constantly reaffirm their commitment to their romantic partners, who are often sceptical due to the prevalence of the player identity (Miller, 2008).

Moreover, this study highlights that gender can be a restrictive imposition placed on many of us. Through this research investigation, participants found that the player identity is connected to expressions of masculinity. Consequently, I believe that both men and women should become aware of the social construction of gender as a means of empowering themselves to step outside of restrictive, socially created identities that undermine their ability to self-actualize and have fulfilling relationships. Miller (2008) concludes that:

A particular challenge lies in providing young men with alternative forms of status and prestige...but it also means educating men, as well, about the harms of normative masculinity to themselves and the young women in their lives, and working to foster greater empathy and egalitarian connections with young women. (p. 218)

However, it is not only men that need to be educated about the harms of normative gender conventions; women must also become aware of how they can potentially be disadvantaged by socially created conceptions of femininity. By conceiving of gender as something that is socially created, both men and women are able to understand that they do not have to be limited in the way they behave and think about the world. In a way, the findings of this study underscores the importance of understanding the agency we have in our lives and in our relationships with others.

In going back to the concept of gendered emotional manipulation in romantic relationships, John does highlight that it is a gendered phenomenon by revealing that both men and women have specific emotionally manipulative practices that they use. The original definition of gendered emotional manipulation as acts involving lying or manipulating the emotions of one's romantic partner(s) in order to gain some sort of self-serving gratification,

which is often sexual in nature, does seem fitting in describing the player's behaviour.

Additionally, the naming of this specific kind emotional manipulation as a gendered phenomenon seems appropriate since gender does affect how this emotional manipulation takes place.

Final Thoughts

As communication students, we are taught to constantly deconstruct and make ourselves aware of our surroundings since they reveal important aspects about ourselves and our lives. I believe understanding the player identity is part of this important evaluation of the current social context we live in. Understanding whether it is a prevalent and a pervasive identity leads us to inquire more about what this identity entails and how it affects people. A study of this nature introduces an important area of inquiry that has been neglected in interpersonal communication studies, and yet its prevalence is quite significant among youths today. All of the 12 participants interviewed knew at least one person that they classified as a player.

Academic focus has seemed to lag behind in terms of understanding the implications of the player identity. There are a number of different areas that have yet to be understood in relation to this topic area. For example, what does the player identity say about our values and ideas as a society? What are the social consequences of this identity for men and women? How does the player identity affect the status of men and women? Is the player identity a liberating or destructive identity? How does the term *game* fit into the player identity? Does the player identity exist among homosexual couples? This study begins the conversation through understanding whether the player identity does exist and how it could be connected to gendered emotional manipulation, but there are many avenues of research that are yet to be explored.

It should also be noted that the value of qualitative research is not to quantify results or even make sweeping generalizations. Instead the aim of this approach is to gain knowledge and perspective on specific social occurrences or phenomena around us. In essence, my goal was to gain others' perspectives on this identity, without undermining its complexity. The intention of this study was not necessarily to think of the player as having a set strategy in seducing partners, or to *make up* a connection between gendered emotional manipulation and the player. Instead, I wanted to highlight and bring awareness to an identity that has significance in today's cultural context.

By highlighting this identity, we allow ourselves to give it a name and therefore bring it into the realm of social consciousness. Studies of this nature are relevant, in my opinion, because they work to give significance and highlight an identity that potentially affects us. By being aware of the player identity, we can better understand the current world around us, an endeavour at the heart of every academic pursuit.

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Appendix A**Ethics Approval**

Ethics Approval Notice

Social Science and Humanities REB

Principal Investigator / Supervisor / Co-investigator(s) / Student(s)

<u>First Name</u>	<u>Last Name</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>	<u>Role</u>
Rukhsana	Ahmed	Arts / Communication	Supervisor
Faadia	Ghani	Arts / Communication	Student Researcher

File Number: 02-11-16

Type of Project: Master's Thesis

Title: Gendered Emotional Manipulation: An Investigation of Male and Female Perceptions of the "Player Identity" in Romantic Relationships

Approval Date (mm/dd/yyyy)	Expiry Date (mm/dd/yyyy)	Approval Type
04/11/2011	04/10/2012	Ia
(Ia: Approval, Ib: Approval for initial stage only)		

Special Conditions / Comments:
N/A

This is to confirm that the University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board identified above, which operates in accordance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement and other applicable laws and regulations in Ontario, has examined and approved the application for ethical approval for the above named research project as of the Ethics Approval Date indicated for the period above and subject to the conditions listed the section above entitled “Special Conditions / Comments”.

During the course of the study the protocol may not be modified without prior written approval from the REB except when necessary to remove subjects from immediate endangerment or when the modification(s) pertain to only administrative or logistical components of the study (e.g. change of telephone number). Investigators must also promptly alert the REB of any changes which increase the risk to participant(s), any changes which considerably affect the conduct of the project, all unanticipated and harmful events that occur, and new information that may negatively affect the conduct of the project and safety of the participant(s). Modifications to the project, information/consent documentation, and/or recruitment documentation, should be submitted to this office for approval using the “Modification to research project” form available at:

http://www.rges.uottawa.ca/ethics/application_dwn.asp

Please submit an annual status report to the Protocol Officer 4 weeks before the above-referenced expiry date to either close the file or request a renewal of ethics approval. This document can be found at:

http://www.rges.uottawa.ca/ethics/application_dwn.asp

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Ethics Office at extension 5841 or by e-mail at: ethics@uOttawa.ca.

Appendix B**Interview Guide**

Interview Questions

The interview questions crafted attempt to elicit descriptions of respondents' personal experiences as well as their perceptions of the player identity. The following questions are primarily conceived as a way to cover the range of issues that I have deduced pertinent to this research investigation of the male player.

The interview questions have been created to explore three different areas: (1) the existence and relevance of the player identity in romantic relationships in today's social context, (2) the player's relation to emotionally manipulative behaviour towards romantic partners, (3) the connection between socially constructed male and female gender conventions and the player identity.

Questions related to (1) include: How would you define the term player? Would you describe the player as a socially constructed identity? Do you believe that the term player refers to one gender more than the other? Would you classify players as a socially accepted or deviant identity, for men and for women? In your perception, how prevalent is the player in today's social context? Do you know individuals who classify themselves as players?

Questions pertinent to (2) include: How would you define emotional manipulation? Is emotional manipulation related to the player identity? Have you seen emotionally manipulative tactics used by those assuming the player identity in romantic relationships? If so, what sorts of tactics have you seen? In your perception, would you say it is socially encouraged to emotionally manipulate one's romantic partner, for women and for men?

Questions germane to (3) include: How would you define masculinity? Does masculinity relate to the male player identity? How would you define femininity? Does femininity relate to

the female player identity? How would you classify the importance of studying the player identity in romantic relationships in today's social context?

Thus, the interview questions that will be used to guide the interviews are formulated as follows:

Introductory Questions – *used to stratify data*

- 1) What is your full name, age, and sex?
- 2) Do you affiliate with any culture other than Canadian? If so, what culture do you affiliate with?
- 3) What gender association do you affiliate with, if any?
- 4) Do you have a religious affiliation? If yes, what is it?
- 5) Do you believe that your religious affiliation will affect your perceptions of the player identity in romantic relationships?

Investigative Questions

- 1) How would you define the term player?
- 2) Would you describe the player as a socially constructed identity? Why (and why not)?
- 3) Do you think that the term player refers to one gender more than the other? Why (and why not)?
- 4) Would you classify players as a socially accepted or deviant identity?
 - a. For men?
 - b. For women?
- 5) Do you think that the player is prevalent in today's social context?
- 6) Do you know individuals who classify themselves as players?
- 7) How would you define emotional manipulation?

- 8) Do you think emotional manipulation is related to the male player identity? Why (and why not)?
- 9) Do you think emotional manipulation is related to the female player identity? Why (and why not)?
- 10) Have you seen emotionally manipulative tactics used by those assuming the player identity in romantic relationships? If so, what sorts of tactics have you seen?
- 11) Would you say it is socially encouraged to emotionally manipulate one's romantic partner?
 - a. For men?
 - b. For women?
- 12) How would you define masculinity?
- 13) Does masculinity relate to the male player identity?
- 14) How would you define femininity?
- 15) Does femininity relate to the female player identity?
- 16) How would you classify the importance of studying the player identity in romantic relationships in today's social context? Please explain.

The last question attempts to further establish the validity of this study, and demonstrates that I do not aim to arbitrarily focus on men or women as emotional manipulators and men or women as victims of manipulation. This question provides participants the opportunity to express whether they concede that the rationale for studying the player identity is legitimate or not.

Appendix C**Participant Consent Form**

Title of the study: Gendered Emotional Manipulation: An Investigation of Male and Female Perceptions of the 'Player Identity' in Romantic Relationships

Faadia Ghani, Researcher, Master of Arts, Department of Communication, Faculty of Arts

Supervisor Dr. Rukhsana Ahmed, Department of Communication, Faculty of Arts

Invitation to Participate: I am invited to participate in the abovementioned research study conducted by Faadia Ghani, and Rukhsana Ahmed.

Purpose of the Study: The main purpose of this thesis is to understand the perceptions of both men and women related to the following: whether the player is an identity assumed by some people, whether players are socially encouraged to emotionally manipulate their romantic partners, and how socially constructed gender conventions are related to the player identity, if this identity does exist.

Participation: My participation will consist essentially of a one hour semi-structured interview during which questions will be asked and recorded. The interview has been scheduled for some time in April 2011, in a study room in Morisset Library, at the University of Ottawa. I will be asked to answer questions about my perceptions and personal experiences in past/present romantic relationships. All information will be audio recorded, and transcribed into document form. Transcripts will be submitted with the researcher's final thesis submission. If my quotes obtained through my interview are used in the final thesis submission I will have the opportunity to review and approve the quote before it is used. The researcher will send an email with my transcript, and I will have two weeks to request that my quote not be used. If the researcher does not hear from me within the two week deadline, the researcher will assume that the quote is acceptable to use.

Risks: My participation in this study will entail that I volunteer very personal information, and this may cause me to feel inconvenienced, and partially uncomfortable since my personal experiences will be revealed. I have received assurance from the researcher that every effort will be made to minimize these risks. Moreover, the researcher has assured me that all information will be obtained in the least most invasive and offensive way possible, and that the information will be used strictly for research purposes. If I feel uncomfortable or distressed in any way after the interview, I acknowledge that I will have the opportunity to contact counselling services from the following resources: Sandy Hill Community Health Centre or Ottawa University's Student Academic Success Service counselling support to set up a free appointment with a trained counsellor to discuss my concerns.

Benefits: My participation in this study will help to understand common male and female experiences in today's romantic relationships. There is a significant lack of research in this area of investigation, and this study aims to advance knowledge in this important area of study. Moreover, this study will attempt to understand the perceptions of both men and women in relation to the romantic relationships. Understanding these experiences could potentially work to empower both men and women in their interpersonal relationships with their romantic partners.

Confidentiality and anonymity: I have received assurance from the researcher that the information I will share will remain strictly confidential. I understand that the contents will be used only for research and that my confidentiality will be protected. As a participant, my real name will not be used as a means of protecting my privacy. I understand that there will be no password required to access the transcript document in the Microsoft Office Word file that will be emailed to me. **Anonymity** will be protected in the following manner: my real name will not be used, and the experiences I recall during the interview will not be mentioned other than for this thesis project. There will be no discussion of the interview, or discussion of my answers after the interview has been completed.

Conservation of data: The transcripts, interview questions, and all interview recordings will be kept in a secure manner in confidential files saved on a USB drive held by the researcher's supervisor in her Ottawa University office, and will be conserved for a five year period. The researcher and the researcher's supervisor will be the only individuals to access this data. After the five year period, all the documents will be erased and destroyed.

Voluntary Participation: I am under no obligation to participate and if I choose to participate, I can withdraw from the study at any time and/or refuse to answer any questions, without suffering any negative consequences. If I choose to withdraw, all data gathered until the time of withdrawal will be destroyed.

Transcript Data: I understand that if any of my quotes are used in the researcher's final thesis submission, I will be informed by the researcher via email. I will then have two weeks to review the transcript and approve my quotes. If I do not approve of the quote, I will have the opportunity to change what I have said, or request that the researcher omit the quote entirely. I understand that if the researcher does not hear from me within the two week period, she will assume that I approve of the quote being used, and she can go ahead and use it. I also understand that my transcript will be sent, in its entirety, to me via email as a Microsoft Office document attachment that is not password encrypted.

Acceptance: I, First Name Last Name, agree to participate in the above research study conducted by Faadia Ghani of the Department of Communication, Faculty of Arts, University of Ottawa, which research is under the supervision of Dr. Rukhsana Ahmed.

If I have any questions about the study, I may contact the researcher or her supervisor.

There are two copies of the consent form, one of which is mine to keep.

Participant's signature:

Date:

Researcher's signature:

Date:

Appendix D

Definition of Key Terms and Concepts

Definition of Key Terms and Concepts

For the purpose of this study, the key terms and concepts are defined as follows:

Communication – The process of acting on information (Beebe, Beebe, Redmond & Geerinck, 2007).

Equality – A principle and a practice meaning the insurance of the same opportunities, expectations, and support for all people (Kramarae & Treichler, 1991).

Gender – Defined as the social and cultural experiences, meanings, and institutional structures that are appropriated to males and females respectively (Kimmel, 2011).

Gendered Emotional Manipulation – Used to describe the emotionally manipulative tendencies of a player, and will be defined as the attempt to emotionally control another person by the means of some form of persuasion or influence. Gendered emotional manipulation, a behaviour assumed by players, involves lying and manipulating the emotions of romantic partners in order to gain some sort of self-serving gratification, which is often sexual in nature. The context in which gendered emotional manipulation occurs is specific to romantic relationships. It is enacted through manipulating the emotions of one's romantic partner(s). Gendered emotional manipulation occurs by the means of using words or actions to deceive, convince, persuade, or impose guilt on one's romantic partner(s), and it can be perpetrated by both male and female individuals.

Hegemonic Masculinity – Cultural, social, and political expressions of heterosexual subordination over women (Connell, 1987).

Perception – Perception is a process where one becomes aware of objects, events, and especially people through one's sense of sight, smell, taste, touch, and hearing (DeVito, Shimoni & Clark, 2008).

Player – An individual who is skilled at manipulating (playing) others, and especially at seducing one's romantic partner by pretending to care about him/her when in reality the manipulator is only interested in sex (Player, n.d.).

Romantic Love – A commitment device used to lead people to substantially invest long periods of time with one another, and support any resulting offspring (Fletcher & Kerr, 2010).

Socialization – The act of learning appropriate behaviours and meanings in accordance to one's social identity based on what society dictates as acceptable (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

Appendix E

Visual Representation of Key Concepts

