METHODOLOGY

At its core, feminist research is designed to seek social justice, to enhance women's voice and influence in society, and to explore alternative ways of understanding the world through women's experiences (M. Gergen, 2008, p. 280).

Ideologies and social reality are constructed, reproduced and bequeathed through language, supported by facilitating social practices (Billig, 2001; Edwards, 1997; Fairclough, 1993). Language is at the core of social behaviours and interactions (Krause & Chiu, 1998), managing our mental representations (Moscovici & Duveen, 2000; van Dijk, 1995a) so that common understandings are unquestioned, seeming to be natural truths - common sense - underpinning our thinking and behaving (Billig, 2001; Hall, 2001; Parker, 1992), and regulating modes of talking, thinking and acting (Jäger & Maier, 2009).

This chapter details the theory and analytic methods used to provide shape to public positioning of independent women through language in media and academic texts, and private positioning through women's talk about, and resistance to, their ascribed social position. Section 3.1 describes the theoretical base of the project, that our social worlds are constructed through language and discursive practices that enable sense to be made of our environments. Section 3.2 introduces the methodological bases and discusses the elements of interpretative repertoires (Section 3.2.1), ideological dilemmas (Section 3.2.2), and subject positions (Section 3.2.3) that are common to discourse analytic approaches. Section 3.2.4 discusses Foucauldian discourse analysis that is characterised by its interest in power relationships, their history and enabling mechanisms, and their potential for change through resistance that is the focus of Section 3.2.5.

Section 3.2.6 looks at issues of quality management in terms of mechanisms to ensure project credibility (Section 3.2.6.1) and plausibility (Section 3.2.6.2). In Section 3.2.7, the methodological components of this project are described in the dimensions of Willig's (1999) formulation. These are: text construction (Section 3.2.7.1); analysis (Section 3.2.7.2) that describes the technological approaches of framing (Section 3.2.7.2.1) and discourse analysis

(Section 3.2.7.2.2); identification of alternatives (Section 3.2.7.3), relationships between discourses and institutions (Section 3.2.7.4), historical emergence of discourses (Section 3.2.7.5), the material basis of discourse (Section 3.2.7.6), and recommendations for change (Section 3.2.7.7).

Section 3.2.8 reports the steps taken to ensure the participants of the study of resistance were undertaken ethically including the information made available (Section 3.2.8.1), formalised consent (Section 3.2.8.2), steps to ensure confidentiality (Section 3.2.8.3) and aggregated acknowledgement of participants' contribution (Section 3.2.8.4). The final section (3.3) briefly summarises this chapter.

3.1   Theoretical Base

The role of ideology is crucial in the re/production of our social worlds (van Dijk, 1995a) with institutionally-grounded representations dominant in our "common sense" understandings (Mehan, 2001; Moscovici & Duveen, 2000). Critical theory is ideologically-orientated inquiry (Willis, 2007), an examination of society and culture that specifically addresses issues of ideology and power within historical and cultural contexts. Feminist theory is, by its nature, critical in its examination of gendered ideological power relations (Hepburn, 2003b), pointing to the social construction of "femininity" and "masculinity" (M. Gergen, 2008; Lather, 1988; Oakley, 1981; Riger, 1992), and its insistence on giving voice to women's experience (Kelly, Burton, & Regan, 1994; Maynard, 1994; Morrow, 2000; Phoenix, 1990; Smith, 1990). It bears close similarity to critical psychology in that both are ideological perspectives with no single theory informing either field, they select from a multiplicity of multidisciplinary methods, they are overtly political and they seek to identify and change social inequalities (Burman, 1998; Reinharz, 1992; Wodak & Meyer, 2009). They also share a belief that our social reality, including power relations, is re/constructed symbolically through language (Bucholtz, 2003; R Gill, 1995; Hughes, 2002; Weatherall & Gallois, 2003). Equally challenging, definitions of terms in critical psychology such as "discourse" and "ideology" are diverse (van Dijk, 2008; G. Weiss & Wodak, 2003), requiring project specification.

It is probably appropriate at this point to clarify that discourses are series of statements that construct an object (Parker, 1992). While elements of a discourse might be identified, it is important to understand that discourses, of themselves, are not objects. They form

relationships between things, they are the rules and procedures that manage our thinking about things, they provide a map to the historical forces underpinning political and social struggle, and they are not set in stone, instead offering potential for resistance and change (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008). People do things with language rather than use it as just a descriptive resource (Wetherell, 2007).

While there may be no specific theory, critical psychology subscribes to three theoretical principles: that discourse is

•   constructed from available language and constructive of reality;

•   performative, the primary medium for social action; and

•   situated temporally, institutionally, and contextually (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008; Fairclough, 2001; Hepburn, 2003a; Parker, 2002).

The theories from which psychology discourse studies are drawn - for example, social identity theory (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 2007), social representations (e.g., Moscovici & Duveen, 2000), positioning (e.g., B. Davies & Harré, 2001) - are grouped here under the umbrella label *constructionism*. That is, that language and discursive practices interactively construct our social world and it is analysis of these that will offer opportunity for change where ideology and power imbalances bring disadvantage. Social constructionist approaches share four characteristics: they

•   take a critical approach to taken-for-granted knowledge;

•   understand our social worlds to be historically and culturally specific;

•   are cognizant that knowledge is a cultural, discursive construct; and

•   believe our knowledge, contingent on time, place and context, shapes the range of social actions available to us (L. Phillips & Jørgenen, 2002).

This project is undertaken in the tradition of critical psychology that grew from the 1960s counter-culture movements (Walkerdine, 2001). These movements challenged conventional knowledge that perpetuated social inequality, with critical psychology seeking to relocate the source of distress in mechanisms of social organisation that create disadvantage rather than in purported individual pathology (Fox & Prilleltensky, 1997). Critical psychologists understand that our reality is socially constructed through discursive practice, both produced by and producing institutional power relations, analysis of which is aimed at effecting positive social change.

3.2   Method

Just as there is no single theory of discourse, its analysis has many linked, overlapping, and occasionally contested, approaches.   N. Phillips and Hardy (2002) identify four major perspectives, noting these are not discrete but should be regarded as points on a continuum. According to this formulation, *social linguistic analysis* is constructivist and focuses on individual texts, *interpretive structuralism* looks at the use of discourse to support context, *critical discourse analysis* is interested in how discourse creates and perpetuates social power inequalities, and *critical linguistic analysis* examines individual texts to understand their role in surrounding power dynamics. Within these perspectives variously lie approaches with differing methodological emphases. For example, conversation analysis studies talk-in-interaction (Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 2008), discursive psychology is interested in discourse as a lens on the psychology of individuals (Billig, 1999a; Wiggins & Potter, 2008), Foucauldian discourse analysis examines discourse for power structures, and narrative psychology attends to our use of story to situate experience (Hiles & Čermák, 2008).

While there may be no fixed method of analysing discourse, intrinsic to all the above perspectives are components of an issue's genealogy, its historical antecedents showing how contemporary knowledge and truth has evolved from earlier struggles, that they are not constant; descriptions of related power and its functioning; and the discursive practices that construct subjects in a given context (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008). In general, there is a focus on a social wrong (for example, inequitable treatment of unmarried women), constructing objects of research (for example, mechanisms that perpetuate the disadvantage), consideration of the function of the social wrong for the social order, and identification of ways of overcoming obstacles to change (Fairclough, 2009).

Of fundamental importance is to ask what institutions are reinforced or subverted by prevailing discourses; what categories of people gain or lose; who would promote and who would oppose the discourses; how do the discourses interlock with others; and how do they justify the present (Parker, 2002). Integral to the research process is researchers' reflexive practice, and explication of their own subjective position, which, for van Dijk (2001), is the point of discourse studies. For some researchers, it is their personal experience that generates a critical approach when these conflict with "truth" (Parker, 2002).

Three concepts common across approaches to discourse analysis are interpretative repertoires, ideological dilemmas, and subject positions (Edley, 2001; Reynolds, 2008).

3.2.1 Interpretative repertoires. Sometimes thought synonymous with discourse (Burman & Parker, 1993), interpretative repertoires are closely linked and might be thought constitutive of discourses. By this I mean that discourses re/construct social institutions, be they structures such as education, justice or personal interdependence, whereas interpretative repertoires are "recurrently used system of terms used for characterizing and evaluating actions, events and other phenomena" (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p. 149) that, together as a set, build a discourse. Shifts in power relations in discourses are more likely to be evident in interpretative repertoires because of the greater range they offer speakers to construct an object within a discourse (Edley, 2001) where they may be inconsistent and contradictory (Billig et al, 1988), incorporating both public and personal representations of any position (Byrne, 2003).

3.2.2 Ideological dilemmas. Very similar to interpretative repertoires, ideological dilemmas arise when speakers draw on opposing repertoires as they negotiate daily living (Billig et al, 1988). Because we use language that is culturally, historically and ideologically available to us (Billig, 2001), we draw on the knowledge that constructs our reality to make sense of our experience yet this may contain conflicting models that vary in their salience over time and situations, and within a discourse.

Billig and colleagues (1988) discuss opposing unification and individuating myths associated with neoliberalism that resonate with this project. In the context of Chapter 2, we might understand these as the tension between family values and individuality that poses an ideological dilemma for reconciliation by individuals, depending on context. Either may be drawn upon in seeming contradiction and conflict which makes ideological dilemmas "wonderfully rich and flexible resources for social interaction and everyday sense-making" (Edley, 2001, p. 203). For example, a woman may draw on ideology privileging independent action and achievement in her field of endeavour while citing family interdependence as integral to her wellbeing as she negotiates these inconsistencies within the same discussion. The availability of these contradictory positions allows discursive re/constructions that might preserve or transform conventional common sense, depending on their context.

3.2.3   Subject positions. "The constitutive force of each discursive practice lies in its provision of subject positions (that) incorporate both a conceptual repertoire and a location for persons within the structure of rights for those that use that repertoire" (B. Davies & Harré, 2001, p. 262). That is to say, a *subject position* offers both a view of "reality" and embodiment in an individual's discursive environments. An individual occupies many subject positions, depending on occupational, social, relational, and other contexts that define discursive situations (van Dijk, 2008). The independent woman has many positions unrelated to her dependence status. She may be described, or describe herself, as "friend", "daughter", "teacher", "consumer", "tourist", "homebody", and so on. Within her domestic independence, she may be positioned as "desperate and dateless", "the seating problem at a dinner party", "the sad, lonely spinster", "a single mother", "the bachelor girl", "a free spirit", "all together", "self-contained" and so forth. In her own discourse, she may position herself as a "career woman", "scholar", "wage slave", "mother", "carer", or "wife", the spotlight shifting to illuminate each position as that aspect of her identity comes into focus. As can be seen, a subject position is constructed from culturally understood "types" available for use in discursive practice and applied from a particular moral perspective that is always open to challenge and change.

3.2.4   Foucauldian analysis. Foucauldian discourse analysis (FDA) is embedded in, if not generative of, critical discourse analysis with its interest in power relations and their discursive creation and regulation of our social worlds (Jäger & Maier, 2009). For Foucault, ideology was secondary to analysis of enabling power relations that characterise and shape our culture (Foucault, 1980). Of primary interest to him were the discourses constituting cultural knowledge and truth, the social representations that construct historically-contingent subjects and their positions in our realities (Hall, 2001).   That is, we and our worlds are the outcome of historically contingent power practices that produce our subjective knowledge, the analysis of which will enable identification of inherent inequality and the possibility of change (Hepburn, 2003a). This is not to say that we as subjects are irrevocably bound to ideologically and discursively constructed positions. "… (All) discourse is not… irredeemably ideological. Ideologies arise in societies characterized by relations of domination on the basis of class, gender, cultural group, and so forth, and in so far as human beings are capable of transcending such societies, they are capable of transcending ideology" (Fairclough, 1992, p. 91).

FDA is characterised by its interest in the genealogy of a discourse, the evolution of power/knowledge relations through discursive construction, hence the next two chapters that discuss the discursive construction from time immemorial of the independent woman (indeed, women's in/ter/dependence generally) by the power relations around the maintenance of patriarchal interests. FDA is also interested in the mechanisms of power that privilege some while disadvantaging others (N. Phillips & Hardy, 2002) through available possible courses of action; and in the process of subjectification. Analysis of this last dimension is of the technologies of power that demand certain behaviours to achieve certain ends and of the self that make possible personal ways of being through self-regulation of thoughts and behaviours within a moral order that achieves "a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality" (Foucault, 1994, p. 225). For Jäger and Maier (2009), these interests coalesce into questions of the validity of contextualised knowledge, how it has developed and is bequeathed, what function it has for constituting subjects, and any consequences it has for cultural construction. Knowledge encapsulates all possible meanings available from a discourse and these meanings change over time and place.

3.2.5 Resistance. Resistance to positioning that fosters inequality and disadvantage is found through the continuing re/construction of our worlds by discourse, with individuals drawing on a range of possible meanings to counter the unacceptable (Castro & Batel, 2008). Critical psychologists perceive resistance as fundamental to explicating social power structures and their associated costs (Osterkamp, 1999). Power is always exercised in relation to resistance whether this be overt opposition to, or withdrawal from, areas of domination (Henriques, Hollway, Urwin, Venn, & Walkerdine, 1984). For some, the most effective resistance is the creation of a counter-culture (M. Gergen & Gergen, 2003), where individual "deviance" (Parker & Burman, 1993) transforms into legitimate alternative through weight of numbers (Krause & Chiu, 1998). Others subvert conventional positioning through social mobility, shifting comparison criteria to favour one's own group, or undertaking social action to force change (Weatherall & Gallois, 2003). As explained by Foucault, without resistance there would be no power relations, simply obedience; further, power relations are obliged to change through the recreative force of resistance. An example he offers is that of the possibility of a lesbian culture being created outside a male-dominated society where women have no social, legal or political power. The notion of resistance is a major organising mechanism of Study 2.

3.2.6   Quality management. Methodological strengths of critical discourse analysis in general, including FDA, include an openness to interdisciplinary flexibility, the principle of triangulation, the historical analysis of re/constructed discourse, and the intended application of outcomes to induce change (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009). "…creativity, exploration, conceptual flexibility, and a freedom of spirit" (Seale, 1999a, p. 467) characterise the approach however its heterogeneity demands close attention be paid to ensuring research credibility and plausibility, through the conventional criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability that permeate the two following sections. For Rapley (2007), demonstrating credibility and plausibility addresses the double crises of legitimacy and representation to which all qualitative researchers must attend.

3.2.6.1 Credibility. Auditing is a fundamental methodological component, the detailed describing of data collection, management, analysis and conclusions that provides transparency by enabling readers to follow a trail of decision-making through a project's execution (Flick, 2007; Rapley, 2007; Seale, 1999a). Auditing may be done by a study's participants through strategies such as their checking their interview transcript to ensure its accurate representation of their talk, and reviewing results of analysis of transcriptions to see if these make sense to them. It may also be done by other researchers who critique goals, methods, procedures for relevance and applicability to achieve credible conclusions, a mechanism integral to doctoral studies.

Actively searching for *contradictory evidence* to a developing narrative, so demonstrating a commitment to falsifiability, is another strategy to minimise bias (Seale, 1999b). Where there is a trend across transcripts that contradicts an expectation, it provides an opportunity for the researcher to strengthen her analysis through incorporation of the new finding into her results or otherwise accounting for such negative instances. Where there is minimal contradiction, any examples may be analysed as deviant cases to provide additional support for conclusions, modify emerging ideas, or to be demonstrably exceptional (Seale, 1999b). In this way, understandings guiding the research may be rechecked for continued value, modification, or abandonment. Seale (1999b) confirms that the researcher should expect to change her mind, the point being to remedy error rather than explain it (Flick, 2007).

Detailed *access to data* is provided through explanatory quotes from texts that have provided insight leading to analytic outcomes. Readers may decide for themselves whether the data

support the conclusions reached by the researcher. *Comparing findings* to those of other researchers enables significant differences to be examined and explained, reconciled with other work, or suggest a return to a project's data for further analysis.

3.2.6.2 Plausibility. Reflexivity is integral to the methodological process, critical reflection on the reality being structured by a project's evolution and the processes involved at all stages. Among many issues for discourse analysts are those to do with recognising that they are producing discourses in their quest to find them (Parker & Burman, 1993). As discussions are turned into texts, the meanings and positions constructed in the discussion are frozen in time, to be acted upon by the researcher for a different reason to their generation (Burr, 1999).

Transcription in itself transforms the raw data to representative text through a process of selecting what should be recorded and how (Fairclough, 1992; Flick, 2007; Jaffe, 2007; Rapley, 2007). It is a practice of representing discourse in a certain way to meet research goals and may focus on its content or structure, transcriber preference, phonetic representation of speech sounds (Bucholtz, 2007), conversational interactions (Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 2008) and so on with predictable variability although, as they become more generally used, some models become dominant (Jaffe, 2007). Transcription is the epitome of reflective practice as the researcher makes decisions about selection and relevance (Mondada, 2007).

It is in very large part reflexivity that is responsible for the lack of methodological formulae in approaches to discourse analysis as researchers seek the best tools to achieve their goals, consider the advantages and disadvantages of research design, find better ways of asking questions, undertake alternative readings of outcomes that may contradict prevailing understandings, and more meaningful ways of presenting findings (M. Gergen, 2008).

An important mechanism to strengthen plausibility is *triangulation*, analogous to ascertaining a topographical position through multiple bearings, through differently constructed realities (Seale, 1999a). That is, an issue may be examined through the lens of two or more theories, methods, or data sources, adding to the richness of outcomes (Flick, 2007). In this project, the three separate studies were informed by critical theory that drew on Foucauldian thinking, and that of social identity theorists such as Henri Tajfel. Within these theoretical perspectives, both framing and discourse analytic methods were applied, supported by a

quantitative framework where this was useful. Data was constructed from three different sources, described below. The whole came together in the final section where similarities and differences were subject to reflection about power relations and resistance in the construction of the independent woman and her subjectification by psychological theory.

Another criterion for plausibility is the *transferability* of the process to other contexts where replicability of results would confirm its quality. Transferability replaces notions of external validity and is made possible through thorough description of the research context, assumptions and project evolution.

3.2.7   Research dimensions. A framework for describing the methods used in this project will be adapted from the seven dimensions of social constructionist research, formulated by Carla Willig (1999) that form its basis. It should be noted the dimensions are not sequential, rather components of an integrated whole.

3.2.7.1 Text construction. Willig's (1999) first dimension is *documentation of subjective experience* but for the purposes of this project will be renamed *text construction*. This is because its breadth, while encompassing subjective experience, also seeks to capture the cultural positioning of independent women through analysis of print media comment and the manner of their inclusion in selected psychological theory. Details of data selection and text construction will be elaborated in their respective chapters. Here, the detail will be anticipated by noting that the media and theory texts were drawn from public sources, on-line newspaper archives and academic publications, respectively. Extracts from the latter were photocopied and scanned into Word 12.2.6 (for Mac) using Omnipage.

The media text providing the data for Study 1 was compiled from keyword-identified content from the years 1999 and 2009. These years were determined by the availability of on-line archives that dated from the latter part of the 1990s and my desire to sample the most recent full year at the time of analysis. The decade difference was to assess whether there was any change in subject positioning over that time.

I decided that academic developmental psychology textbooks that provided the data for Study 3 would be the most efficient way of finding discourse about independent women because of their systematic focus on human development across the lifespan. Further, that I should

match publication years to those of the media study to compare both public and academic discourse about independent women to their respective audiences.

The text of subjective experience comprised transcribed recorded discussions with the women who generously contributed their experiences and perspectives to the study (Chapter 7 details their recruitment and profile). As noted above, transcription is a situated practice, reflexively linked to the analytic approach of the research and to presentation relevance, amongst other things (Bucholtz, 2007; Mondada, 2007). In this instance, guided by an FDA approach to the power relations by which independent women's status is constructed and resisted, I was interested in identifying related subject positions and their construction rather than the structure of the discourse itself although not to the degree of ignoring representational cues such as pauses and emphases. While transcripts are understood to be a verbatim recording of speech, a problem with retaining all the conversational hesitations, repetitions that fill in while the speaker is thinking, interruptions, unfinished sentences and so on is that their replication makes the written version of a conversation quite difficult to read and may reflect on a speaker's eloquence (Poland, 1995). I decided to follow the "really useful" (Rapley, 2007, p. 57) conventions developed by Poland (1995) that minimise conversational imperfection when it is converted to text (Appendix A). Repeated listening to the discussion interviews enabled accuracy of the texts to be checked, indistinct passages to be clarified, and preliminary identification of distinct repertoires.

3.2.7.2 Analysis. The three textual compilations were entered as Word documents to the qualitative data management program NVivo8 as separate sub-projects. In essence, NVivo works as an electronic filing cabinet where information is kept in node folders that may be cross-referenced, annotated, sorted, linked, classified and otherwise dealt with as one would with paper-based data. Data may be coded into predetermined nodes or, more commonly, nodes are generated by themes emerging from the data. In this project, a coding frame developed that both inductively developed from each study's data and deductively allowed subsequent alignment of themes and positions from all texts (Flick & Foster, 2008).

While my overarching method in this project is Foucauldian analysis of discourse to examine the power relations around women's relational independence, the individual studies themselves required different analytic tools to achieve this goal. Because the texts had

different perspectives – newspaper discourse to demonstrate cultural, or public, construction of the independent woman, conversation between participant and researcher detailing lived experience and resistance to their social location, and academic publications for peers and students that would position the independent woman in psychological theorising – they each demanded an analytic method fit for purpose (Parker & Burman, 1993). These were the use of framing analysis to plot the cultural construction of categories of single women, and discourse analysis to tease out subject positioning in academic discourse and repertoires of negotiation and resistance from independent women.

The three foci, texts, and the tools chosen for their analytic purpose and strength, offered valuable triangulation of source and method to support the validity of respective findings (Flick & Foster, 2008) and an appreciation of the shape of the issue (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009). As well, the expected patterns of discursive and cultural practices, with their ideological and contested relationships (Fairclough, 1993; Parker, 1992), would explicate societal values and beliefs about independent women, from which their social effects might be deduced (S Taylor, 2001). They would also show both consistent difference and commonality (Potter & Wetherell, 1987) so identifying ideology and/or transition.

3.2.7.2.1 *Framing*. A frame is a discursive technology for priming understanding of a subject in a certain way. As an analytic tool, framing analysis draws on interdisciplinary traditions including empirical and interpretive analysis and is guided by cognitive, constructivist and critical perspectives (Reese, 2007). Rather than just identifying them, analyses describe how content frames organise and structure our social reality.

As it relates to mass media, framing theory assumes that characteristics of a communication shape audience comprehension through the media frame (the organising idea of an item or a series of related items), and an individual's frame that draws on existing mental representations that are retrieved from memory by the presenting frame to make sense of the message (Scheufele, 1999). The persuasive power of the media is particularly effective if content is congruent with audience interests and if access to alternative framing is limited (van Dijk, 1995b). This facilitates ready acceptance of social reality as defined by mainstream media (Siu, 2009) which loops back to validate content. That the framing is drawn from the culture shared by the message generator and the audience (Gamson &

Modigliani, 1989; Kitis & Milapides, 1997), renders the process of social construction invisible (Van Gorp, 2007).

Van Gorp (2007) emphasises that frames are independent of individuals or agencies, instead embedded in culture. This means there are more frames available than those drawn upon for communication, allowing flexibility in meaning for both the authors and individuals in the audience. It also means that text and frame are independent of each other although the frame suggests a preferred reading of the text. Because they are based in culture, frames are stable across time although their applications may change, reflecting shifting prominence in power relations, so that their power is predicated on compliance with their preferential use.

Psychology's interest in the impact of mass media has largely focused on their influence on pathological behaviours, for example, violence, racism or malnutrition, rather than their function as social mediators (Giles & Shaw, 2009). Three problems have been identified with the conventional approach (K. Chamberlain & Hodgetts, 2008). The first is that research has (i) predominantly sought causative media effects, (ii) excluded the complex issues surrounding media practices, and (iii) ignored the active participation of audiences in making meaning from content. The second problem is the use of existing methods and measurement, which are inadequate for capturing complexity, and the third is to do with decontextualising media practice and use from the social to the individual.

In response to these problems, Giles and Shaw (2009) proposed a model for stipulates inclusion of both qualitative and quantitative methods to address macroanalysis (of broad data sets) and microanalysis (of selected materials from a dataset to exemplify a frame). The model will be detailed in Chapter 6.

3.2.7.2.2   *Discourse analysis*. Both discussion and textbook texts were subject to the more conventional discourse analysis that identifies interpretative repertoires or themes, contradictions, emphases, disagreement and other discursive practices in complex texts, unlike the more simplified representations of newspaper content. The results of both types of analysis will be discussed in the final section, where FDA - the power relations and possibilities around women's relational independence - will be applied to the project in aggregate.

3.2.7.3 Identification of alternatives. In Willig's (1999) formulation, participants are invited to consider alternative ways of reading their stories or people with different experiences are included to identify a range of "positionings, opportunities for action and implications for practice" (Willig, 1999, p. 47). In the current study, it was the range of experiences that afforded the discerning of alternatives, from the always-single to several times-married, either through divorce or widowhood, and participants' perceptions of social reaction as they transited between living single and living coupled. The inclusion of married participants and those in a committed romantic relationship, while numerically fewer, provided a counter-balance by increasing the range of available repertoires. Alternatives to newspaper frames and academic subjectification of independent women are also suggested, drawing from a broader knowledge base than that of the texts.

3.2.7.4 Relationships between discourses and institutions. "Institutions… are structured around and reproduce power relations" (Parker, 1992, p. 18), making it important to seek transparency of the relationship between institution and discourse, and the impact of associated discursive practice on the social world. A corollary of this would be discerning direction for change. Primarily, this requires identification of (i) the institutions that are reinforced or challenged by particular discourse, (ii) who would gain and want to promote such discourse and (iii) who would want it expunged because of its personal cost.

In this instance, patriarchy, defined as male privilege (Rowbotham, 1999), made manifest through the institutions of marriage and family with its gendered roles and expectations that are analogous with those permeating our social world, could understandably feel challenged by growing numbers of women choosing to remain independent of romantic attachment, even for the purposes of maternity. As described in Chapter 2, response to the challenge has drawn on discourses supporting the benefits of marriage, or at least cohabitation, for heterosexual couples. More recently, ideological adaptation to include dominant neoliberal beliefs about economic freedom, consumerism and, cynically, individual autonomy, has shifted to promote marriage through extending its catchment to homosexual couples.

3.2.7.5 Historical emergence of discourses. Archaeological analysis, the genealogy, of discourses looks at the power relations that accompanied their evolution, and the means by which these constructed a subject across time. Foucault said that discourse is a path from one contradiction to another, both juxtaposed in a common location (Foucault, 1969). The

role of the analyst is to examine the gap between the contradictions to map their constitution, their form, their relationship, and their domain through discursive practice. In this way, historical changes in knowledge and truth, and their construction, expose contextualised power relations of relevance to contemporary researchers (Foucault, 1980; Parker, 1992; Reisigl & Wodak, 2009).

Normally, historical examination of discourses about independent women would be of their evolution through, in this project, the scientific discourse of psychological theory. However, preliminary reading found that independent women had been problematised in public discourse, including scientific knowledge, with no indication that it had not ever been thus. It seemed that there would be little contradiction to analyse if my historical probe extended only to psychology's advent in the nineteenth century. Curious to find the source of this negativity, I turned to historical accounts of independent women's experience that took me, as I report in the next chapter, back to the Palaeolithic as I plotted the discursive shifts in that experience from which contemporary public and scientific discourse were identified.

3.2.7.6 The material basis of discourse. This dimension explores what can be said and thought, and the environment in which the ideas and practices are possible. That is, the ways in which discourses are shaped by the manner of their transmission and their organisational framework such as those of communities of practice whose participants, joined by some common factor(s) such as professional affiliation, share discursive practices (van Dijk, 2008; Weatherall & Gallois, 2003).

In this project, material bases of discourse include the generally uni-directional medium of mass print media that draws on tropes, stereotypes, metaphors and other culturally shared rhetorical devices to deliver communication. They also included scientific texts that follow discipline-based linguistic styles to present expert discourse in authoritative journals, on-line fora, and other knowledge compilations that, demanded by methodological rigor, builds on previous, and expands contemporary, knowledge within the conformative boundaries of peer review. Discussants drew on discourses available from these and other institutions in their identity construction, referring to, correcting, contesting and presenting alternative meaning to those endorsed by authority.

3.2.7.7 Recommendations for change. If the point of critical discourse analysis is to take a position (van Dijk, 2001), it is also to seek alleviation of inequality and oppression and to promote personal, collective and relational wellness (Prilleltensky, 2001). To do this, "it must have something to say about how psychological, social, and/or political practice can be improved" (Willig, 1999, p. 49). Given that a focus of this project is the role of psychology in representing the independent woman as problematic, indications for change, such as insights into theory and practice, future research directions, or possible social development, the project's findings were, and will continue to be, submitted for academic presentation and publication[1].

The findings also support the advocacy role I have assumed where no opportunity to publicly counter dominant discourse about independent women is lost. These include use of letters pages in print publications contesting editorial content, and responses to public commentators who have drawn on and recreated discourse about the independent lifestyle. Examples of this include a restaurant review that used the public cliché of "desperate and dateless" to describe lone diners, and a radio program that spoke about urban design necessary to relieve the loneliness of the unmarried. In both these, and other, instances my comment has been received positively, in one case providing follow-up material for subsequent broadcast on the value of the independent for the enhancement of urban environments.

I hope I have also instigated some change through my repositioning of the project's participants by reference to their independent rather than marital status. I acknowledge that objection may be raised to my unnuanced allocation of independence to all categories of unattached adults, and interdependence to those in committed sexual relationships, but the values accorded the various marital statuses are to a significant degree reflective and constitutive of past and present negative positioning of independent women, signifying deficit and loss to varying degrees, depending on their distance from the ideological ideal of marriage. It seems to me imperative that terminology is sought to replace that currently used to perpetuate institutional disadvantage. Given the implied complementarity and dyadic intimacy of a monogamous relationship (Billig et al., 1988; Snyder & Cantor, 1998), it seems appropriate to define the statuses by their most fundamental characteristic.

---

[1] A paper *Single women: A force for change* was presented at The British Psychological Society's Psychology of Women Section Conference 2011 and submitted for publication in the Psychology of Women Section Review.

3.2.8   Ethical issues. Curtin University's *Human Research Ethics Committee* approved the component of the project (Study 2) that invited women's participation in the experiential component. This protected discussants' vulnerabilities through ensuring their informed consent, confidentiality, and risk minimisation. Ethics approval was not needed for Studies 1 and 3 whose texts were drawn from written sources rather than participatory discussion.

3.2.8.1 Information. Participants were given background information about the study prior to their agreeing to participate, followed by a copy of the discussion schedule when the arrangements for the discussion were made. They reviewed the subsequent transcript for accuracy, in several cases making additions or amendments, and were offered copies of papers published from the study. With one exception, all participants asked to be informed of the study's results, which were sent to them, and to receive related publications.

3.2.8.2 Permission. While agreeing to participate after reading the background information might be assumed to be imply consent, as might return of the approved discussion transcription, a form (Appendix B) was also signed, on the understanding that a participant might withdraw at any time from the study.

3.2.8.3 Confidentiality. Participants were assured of confidentiality before being asked to complete a brief demographic questionnaire, primarily for descriptive purposes.   Each questionnaire, voice file and transcript was alpha/numerically coded to allow cross-referencing but archived separately to ensure participants cannot be identified. All identifying details (for example, the names of family members mentioned in discussion) were abbreviated to initials.

3.2.8.4 Acknowledgement. Participation are acknowledged at the beginning of this dissertation in a general, non-identifying expression of appreciation.

3.3   Summary

In this chapter, I have described my approach to analysing public discourse about independent women through general audience newspapers, expert discourse through developmental psychology textbooks, and their positioning by the private discourse of women seeking to negotiate positions that reflect their realities. My approach is Foucauldian and constructionist, analysing discursive practices of three different communities (print media,

private individuals, and academic) to examine the subjectification of independent women. The following chapters will detail that analysis and their findings will be brought together in a concluding chapter that reflects on their meaning and whether they satisfy the project's objectives.

I begin, in the next chapter, by reviewing the ideological environment for independent women across time, tracking the genealogy of their positions against social, political, economic and religious change. This discussion will continue in the following chapter where I describe the experiences of independent women in post-European settlement Australia before I turn my attention to contemporary public, private and academic discourse and the possibilities for independent women's identities.