

Heartbreak, warfare.

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Introduction:

Heartbreak, warfare¹

Love is the most pure form of emotion that can be expressed by human beings. It comes in many shapes and many forms because all humans are different in the way they interpret love. The environment you are brought up in, the significant others you interact with and the gender you are play vital roles in the way you perceive love and the effect it has on your life.

My parents are my inspiration for this topic. They are best friends, lovers, parents and a true testimony to the trials that love conquers. Earlier this year my dad was diagnosed with a rare cancer that was found in his spine. My parents have already being through a similar incidence 20 years ago when my father was told he was going to die from cancer, they triumphed over the cancer and were strong together for the experience. It had a crippling effect this time, 20 years on, to find out he had a large tumour in his back when they thought they had escaped the worst and had moved on with their lives.

On a day to day basis I watch my parents support, challenge and be there through thick and thin for one another as well as my brothers and I. Experiencing this made me realise love is there through the good, the bad and the morning breath. I can personally extrapolate the experiences from this powerful and ubiquitous emotion from my own life, as short as it has been so far. Past boyfriends and watching my friends go through break ups conveyed the difference in teenage love compared to adult love. In my Personal Interest Project I hope to find out about my generation and the way we view love compared to our parents, also the view that our parents hold about the relationships we have. I'm intrigued by the beliefs and mystery surrounding the concept of love.

Being a teenager myself I am interested in the role it plays in teenager's lives and how gender plays a role in the way love impacts both the female and male genders. The stereotypes are that males are the dominant nature and females the nurturers is something that impacts the roles we play in our relationships and I want to discover if there is a falsehood about this or not.

¹ "Heartbreak Warfare" The first track on John's 2009 album "Battle Studies".

Love cannot be fully understood because of the differences in every person but through my research I hope to achieve emotional growth and have a greater understanding about love and its role on the human psyche.

Through using research methodologies I hope to discover the different perceptions people have to love and love lost. This will give me a better understanding of the concepts of people, gender and time and how continuity and change are existent in society.

The research methodologies that I will be using in my investigation are questionnaires, a focus group, interviews and observation. All of these methodologies will increase my understanding and knowledge about my chosen subject. Questionnaires will allow me to get a large variety of responses from a varied group enabling a broad overview of what a diverse group of people think. Interviews will allow me to delve deeper into my investigation to obtain answers and to get a real emotional response. They are an excellent methodology enabling a large sample of basic knowledge while still allowing the responder to reflect on their individual experiences. The focus group will concentrate on a teenage point of view and how relationships have affected their lives. Participants can relate to each other and help expand on the information given, bouncing of each other's perspectives. The focus group consists of both genders ranging from the ages of 13-18, each person having experienced different relationships at different periods in their teenage lives thus bringing their own unique experience to the discussion.

Observation is a vital key to my research, every day since the beginning year 7 I have experienced teenage relationships and the way couples act towards each other in close situations and also group situations. As I have travelled and grown through year 7-12 I have I have witnessed my fair share of breakups and know the aftermath experienced by both parties. In researching this topic I am eager to determine if there is anyway of navigating through this minefield of love with experiencing less pain and more glory.

I hope to come away from this journey with a greater understanding and appreciation of my generation as well as older generations and hopefully learn to value the experiences that I have had with past partners and look forward to one day having the kind of love that resonates between my parents. In doing my Personal Interest Project I will learn how environment, persons, gender and power affect the relationships within one's life.

Log:

The journey to picking a topic for my personal interest project has been a rough one. My first choice was Blonde Hair; Blue Eyes does that make me a god? In October of last year I was supposed to travel to Vietnam with my mum, on arriving in Singapore we noticed red blotches climbing their way up my legs, we went to visit a doctor who told us to fly home immediately.

On arriving home I got diagnosed with Arynthema nodosum an auto-immune condition which made it extremely painful to walk. Having experienced the worst in Singapore I no longer had a passion to pursue my PIP as my holiday was ruined and that was my source of primary research, I decided to switch.

Watching a few close friends lead different lifestyles to me got me interested in the formation of a family and how a divorce affects the whole family. I found it difficult to sift through peoples tragedies for the purpose of a good mark and soon didn't feel enjoyment over researching my topic anymore because I was watching whole families fall apart not just one person.

Then in December my family got the news that my father had a giant tumour growing in his back. Every aspect of our normal lives was changed and I didn't know how to hang onto the real world when my own micro world was being crushed. This is where I truly saw my parents come together and start pulling the strings of our normal lives back together. It made me question my own relationship and how if something like this were to happen to someone my age how would our boyfriends react, would they hang around?

Ironically my partner at the time didn't hang around, emotions weren't his thing apparently. My father is my greatest inspiration in life, he was battling cancer while at the same time trying to fix my problems which didn't come close to what him and mum were facing. One of dad's favourite sayings is 'in the end, it's not the years in your life that count. It's the life in your years' for him having my two brothers and I and spending his life with my mother was enough.

So why do teenagers experience so much heartbreak and is it different to what my parents experienced?

This is where my PIP got its roots from and has expanded and changed over the past 6 months to form what it is now. On receiving questionnaires back I realised that I needed to expand and have more information, I decided to do interviews. Some interviews were quite tricky as emotional young teenagers weren't the easiest to get simple responses out of. I have never heard that much colourful language at one time before.

Observation was an easy choice for me to choose; at Coles where I work I get to watch hundreds of couples and the way they interact. It was like getting paid to do my research, on breaks I observed the car parks and these were my main observation points, I could be fully bias because having never met any of them before. As observations are subjective it is necessary to consider any bias because of my age and gender.

Although at times it was testing and difficult I can't wait to show my mum and dad the finished product.

Chapter 1: 'Tis better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all.

This quote from Alfred Lord Tennyson said in 1850, it has resonated over time and context because it strikes at the heart of every living person who has experienced the loss of a loved one and what it means to truly love someone, but is it truly better to have loved and lost?

I know from personal experience I would much rather not have met my ex boyfriend. When he dumped me I didn't get empowered or feel rejoiced that I had had that experience, I got chocolate and ate my feelings away and cried every night for about two months. It left me feeling overweight and powerless as I didn't have the experience to deal with my situation. Whoever seems to care the least has the power in a relationship, I was worried about where I went wrong? What I did to cause such a radical response from my partner that he would no longer want to be in a relationship with me.

In retrospect, it became obvious the guy was already looking for his next conquest and didn't have the feelings or emotions I was going through. This made me feel estranged from my peer group as they all appeared to be able to manage and maintain their relationships without any serious problems, but then I got talking to friends and started to realise each one of us has our own stories to tell and that what I experienced was very much the same as what others had experienced. From stories I was listening to males seemed to be the dominate gender when it came to breaking up from the stories but my research was biased as I am female and the majority of my friends are female and we have over the years been open about our relationships and break-ups.

On receiving my questionnaires back I was pleased to see I had a fairly even ratio of males to females, of all age groups with numerous diverse backgrounds.

An overwhelming majority of the respondents in the age cohort 13-18 related only positive connotations to the question "what emotions do you associate with love?" This could suggest that if you have experience with relationship you can therefore relate your personal pain and with no relationship experience you have no personal pain or hurt. In stark contrast the over 25's which had experienced more than two serious relationships in their lifetime or younger people who had suffered the loss of a loved one could highlight their personal hurt. Pain, anger, sadness and jealousy were emotions conveyed by 40% of respondents highlighting that

experience allows you to hold a deeper knowledge of love and the way it effects your emotions.

I further explored this area by concentrating on past and present emotions that had been experienced by my focus group and how the relationship they were in changed the way they felt about their partner. One girl that broke down in tears with the verbatim response of “It destroyed me...I never want that feeling again. I still care what he might think of me, while I was dating him I felt special, he was never worth it.” Shared the same emotions that others had experienced in similar circumstances, universally there are binary opposites to everything for instance night and day and once you have more experience with a real relationship you can embrace that with the good comes the negative and it is part of the experience of growing up and maturing.

Inspired by the shared emotions of the group others told of their emotional battlefields that transpired from the breakdown of their relationship. Emotionally this moved me a lot, as I could relate to these girls. In observing the boys I recognised that they refrained from sharing their emotions, based on a stereotypical tough male, the social barrier caused restraint from them to expressing a sensitive side – “I once felt strongly for a girl. But she wasn’t who I thought she was and she had lied about quite a lot. This made me feel stupid and embarrassed because other people knew what I didn’t. The thought of her is still something that hurts. But I’m happy because I put myself out there.”

Emotions conveyed by the tonal shifts in their voices allowed me to pick up on subtleties that reveal things about the past views of their old partners and the views they have for them now. Remembering a person brings back warmth and genuine love for that person until you reach the stage which lead up to the breakdown of that relationship and regret, sadness and anger are felt.

On *Lifestyle you* I watched a show called Jerseylicious this presented a perfect description of the emotions that heartbreak produces, this is similar to Australia as both are developed western countries with similar values. “Ripped my heart out of my chest...never feel good enough for anyone...no matter what you give to anybody in the future it’s never going to be enough, I would rather be alone for the rest of my life then ever feel that ever again.” Love effects all of us, it doesn’t discriminate by age, race or gender, what this 24 year old said concurred with males and females of all ages through my response group whether they had

experienced one or more relationships. This reinforces how similar our western cultures are where teenagers and adults all appear to feel angst and hurt from failed relationships.

However a large percentage said that they wouldn't change what had happened because it allowed them to achieve personal growth in many different areas of their lives that they couldn't achieve in the relationship. "I got so comfortable that the weight gain didn't matter he loved me for who I am not my dress size... let's just say if I wanted to move onto bigger and better things I would have to become a smaller and healthier me." 60% of women stated that a break up caused them to clean up those sloppy areas of their lives where before they were seemingly comfortable, this tells me that at the loss of a relationship there is always something to gain from the experience or lose as these women have done.

Men agreed that they strived for a healthier lifestyle in order to attract a new partner. "Out with the old, in with new", It's one of the hurtful times in your life when you see an old partner moving on with a new one when you have yet to move on but this is one of the driving factors that lead people to change their lifestyles for the better. When asked about what they do after a break up 80% in the age cohort 18-24 said that they would go to gym get fit and then "hit up the clubs". I agreed with all the respondents who said they wanted to get themselves in shape, my purpose was to try and show my ex what he was missing out on but in the process I learnt that it was important to look after myself because once I felt better in myself I found I was more attractive to the opposite sex.

In conclusion to the question it's better to have loved and lost then not loved at all I believe there is no right answer as each experience is unique and every individual experiences their own spectrum of emotions and react differently at the end of a relationship. It is only when you are put outside your comfort zone or something happens that exposes you to new circumstances that you are able to better yourself and feel desire to improve and grow as a human.

Does who we choose as a partner change the way our parents will feel about us and how do parents normal emotions change when you're in a relationship, for instance does the protective side in males come bubbling to the surface? This concept will be explored in the following chapter.

Chapter Two: Will they still be proud?

I achieved the most personal growth in this chapter as I got to learn more about my parent's generation than I had previously known. Interviews were the main component for this chapter, where obtaining personal views and making firm judgements about the individual's emotions and opinions was instrumental in learning the different aspects of peoples personalities they face when put into different situations. From interviewing my parents and three other parent couples it was conveyed that they have fears and worries about our lives and the partners we choose.

"I get worried that I will no longer be needed in your life. That I will get replaced with your boyfriend and no longer be the main male influence in your life." My dad's response was not unlike any of the other fathers that I questioned; they all expressed emotions of insecurity and jealousy when their daughters where in a relationship. Universally the greatest thing in a parent's life is the birth of their children and they are held precious and close to their hearts, having a child in the hands of a partner who is often racing with hormones who you don't know shakes the foundations that shape a parent's protective nature towards their children. "Watching your daughter being collected by her date feels like handing over a million dollar Stradivarius to a gorilla".²

Teenage girls are seen to be more vulnerable then teenage boys from their parent's point of view, I think this stems from the fact that females are seen in society as the nurturers and soft gender whereas males are more destructive and able to stand up for themselves. Another contributing factor is the bond daughters create with their parents, in my family what I tell mum automatically gets passed onto dad and I'm fine with sharing my life with the two of them but my brothers are more secretive about their love lives and they haven't formed the same connection that I have to my parents, if mum and dad don't know who they are dating or if they are dating at all they won't worry about hurt feelings to the same degree as my up to date comments on every annoying thing my partner does to cause the slightest upset.

My mum always says "A son is a son till he gets a wife; a daughter is a daughter for the rest of her life." Because we form that bond to our parents it matters to us if they approve of our

² Jim Bishop quote

boyfriends and how the family will react to your given partner. Listening to a boyfriend or girlfriend say something which he feels is impressive and you know your parents will disapprove with physically causes you to cringe. You don't want your parents to change their opinion of you because you have chosen someone who goes against what your family values have always been.

Brothers are very similar to fathers in the respect that they want to protect the females and shelter them from harm, I interviewed three typical families with each including at least one boy and girl. The girls didn't worry about whether their brothers could handle themselves in a relationship. "pfft he doesn't care about me so why should I about him?". Without asking or having seen a demonstration of the protective nature of a brother the girls wouldn't realise that it is part of them to protect and come to your aid even if it seems like they really couldn't care less.

In asking the brothers what they would do if they discovered their sister was in an unhealthy relationship 100% said that they would want to "pound the kids head in". A violent response to another's pain is something that all human beings are capable of but from my study I have come to the understanding that males seem to feel it more forceful than females and have a much stronger response when it is a female of his family that is threatened. This shows humans as primal animals as it is the same for most animals over the world for instance the silver back gorilla; it is a global response shared by all males who feel the need to protect through all cultures and animals.

Fathers or brothers I think feel the need to protect because a daughter or sister if they are struggling emotionally turns to their mothers instead of a father or brother. The mother is more tuned to their daughters emotions and can understand the female perspective for instance between a mum and a dad if you had a question about your menstrual cycle you would turn to your mum after all she has personal experience, this builds a common bond between you and you don't need two people worrying and fretting about you, that's where father/brothers step in because they fill the role of being protectors something which isn't a mothers forte. In my research I discovered that fathers often gave one or two sentences of wise words to try and help towards healing their children's pain.

Samantha: It hurts!

Jim Baker: That's why they call them crushes. If they were easy, they'd call them something else.³

In saying this about men I have to acknowledge that females want their fathers or brothers to fill that protector role, if it weren't this way there wouldn't be so many women looking for their knight in shining armour to come to their rescue, lyrics in thousands of songs are a clear representation of this "All I wanted was a white knight, With a good heart, soft touch, fast horse"⁴, "Romeo take me somewhere we can be alone....you'll be the prince I'll be the princess."⁵ With so many songs, books and movies about men being the hero who saves the girl it isn't surprising to find that males find it socially acceptable to fill that position and step into defend and protect when needed.

Without a doubt if I were to break up with my partner I would want my mother by my side and my father in front of me willing to fight the world if I needed him to. All families are based around the parents being the caretakers for their children, it is vital for children to know that their parents will support them in their life choices and be there when things go sour.

How relationship structure has evolved over time and the consequent impacts are discussed in the next chapter. It will look at how values and beliefs have changed in Australia about the stereotypical genders roles we society expects us to follow.

³ Sixteen Candles (1984)

⁴ Faith Hill, This Kiss.

⁵ Taylor Swift, love story

Chapter three: May I get the door for you?

Many changes have occurred in the way relationships are structured in recent times, since the burning of the bras and the sexual revolution with the introduction of contraceptives women have had more choices than ever before and they have embraced this with open arms.

But did previous generations give up some of the things that my generation would kill for? If I ever met a boy who would wait on me hand and foot, to open doors for me or pay the whole bill every time I think I would drop dead from shock. When women became independent it was considered condescending to the women if a man were to open the door or to pay for them it would be seen as a woman was unable to pay their own way in the world. It became common practice for women to show off their independence and pay for themselves, get the door themselves; it was a new era where sticky floors or glass ceilings were a thing of the past for women.

Of all the women from 13-19 who participated in both questionnaires and interviews not one had an experience of chivalry where the man opened a door or paid for their meals or movie tickets, varying very much from the 1940's where women were courted and sex was something that only happened after marriage.

I chose observation as my main research methodology for this chapter. I am a checkout chick for the local supermarket and see on a day to day basis the interplay between males and females. I often witness just mum's coming through the checkouts, these women are still in charge of cooking and preparing the meals in their homes. When I do see a male and female partnership it is generally the female who loads the groceries and carries them although the male is in most cases the stronger of the two. I asked one mum if she was in charge of grocery shopping the whole time "if I didn't I would end up paying for \$200 worth of junk." Her husband simply stating "she's the boss". Is it because women are now more career orientated or because we are more outspoken than previous times that males now consider us so much of an equal that we can do anything as good as they can do. The only times that this differed was in older couples around the ages of 70. The men never letting the women carry bags or drive the trolley or pay. It's really endearing to know that older generations still care about the gender roles we are supposed to play. When observing the car park the same occurrences happened with only older couples having the males get the car door and wait for their partner.

Having observed this in both sex relationships I interviewed three lesbian couples and two gay couples. There is no dominating gender in homosexual relationships because they are the same sex therefore no arguments can relate to the male being sexist or the female being a feminist. But do they each play a stereotypical role? When I asked them how they felt in social situations they both came out with unexpected responses. First the gay men said that if they were in a pub on Australia day they would act like straight men as there would be no need to flaunt their stuff because it wouldn't be well received, however if they were in a club environment they would be in a crowd of common people and would act however they pleased.

The lesbian couples were different to the homosexual men, when out they like establish they are together to stop the men from flirting with them. Although there is no dominate gender one of the pair wears the pants so even in same sex relationship there is no equilibrium. It would seem however that it would still be a normal healthy relationship but there are many things which come with being a gay or lesbian. One of the gay men I interviewed expressed great concern about his parents. His background is Greek orthodox, growing up in a very strict household. When he first told his mother he was gay she kicked him out of the house and told him that she had no son, with this she also stated "never tell your father if you do he will kill you then himself". How is one meant to have a healthy relationship when they can't admit that they even have a partner to their own family?

Australia has been part of a worldwide change of acceptance of homosexuality, if I were to see two men hooking up it wouldn't be a shock nor would I be offended or disgusted. Mardi Gras is attended by thousands and thousands of people every year. In asking my Nan if she would ever attend, she went bright red just because we were talking about that topic. It made me chuckle at how old fashioned they were and just how much Australian values have changed in the way we see what is the social "norm" as to what our grandparents would view it.

Chivalry is lost in our post modern context however we have gained many more valuable things which are far more precious to Australian people and the world. If I were to have a gay child I wouldn't condemn them for the way they are born because of the context I have been raised in, in my grandparents time if two boys were caught doing anything sexual together

they were often sent away from the town to stop embarrassment to the family. Now parents mostly are accepting of their children and the partners they choose to have. Straight, gay or bisexual I know that my parents would be beside me helping to protect and support which is more than what I could of said about previous generations of parents.

Conclusion:

Conclusion:

In order to evaluate my research and its effectiveness to address my hypothesis about if “it’s better to have loved and lost than not loved at all” I need to bring the results of my chapters together. Having your heart broken makes you feel like you will never breathe or live like a normal person ever again. This is just one reason not to get into a relationship with a new partner for the fear of the past repeating itself but how are you meant to find a partnership in which you want to spend the rest of your life with a person if you never take the risk to fall in love?

The perceptions and opinions you gain from your parents are vital in the way you structure your life and the values that you will carry on into the world.

I believe a life without love is a life not worth living. Every relationship has its ups and downs whether or not it’s same sex partners or straight. You can’t categorise the emotions one is meant to feel at the end of a relationship because every person has their own personalities and coping mechanisms, some might be the support of family and friends and others might be to throw themselves into something new and change their lifestyles for the better. Unfortunately for some it is harder but it’s the bad times which make you appreciate the good.

I wouldn’t hesitate to go into a relationship for the fear of having my heart broken because you wouldn’t know whether it was just a fling or the kind of love that my parents feel for each other.

Although I feel that it would be nice to have the kind of partner my Pop is towards my Nan and have car doors opened for me and never having to spend a cent I have to accept that modern day boys just aren’t like that and the once young charming man who would lay his coat in a puddle as to not get his lovers feet dirty is now an old man.

My Pop always says, “age does not protect you from love, but love to some extent protects you from age”.

Resource list:

Unfortunately my first USB got stolen in the library; I lost all of my URL's and the date I found them.

Quotes:

The quote from Jim Bishop came from a quote site. It summed up all of the fathers opinions in a short way and was also humorous. I liked it because it was simple but to the point, my father laughed when reading it so I knew that it was close to the mark. Jim Bishop isn't famous or a person who is well known, I preferred this because it meant that he was just a regular man who wanted to share his opinion on a forum. It was helpful as I turned back to it when I was getting off task and blabbering on about nothing.

Movies:

I used a quote from 16 candles, one of my all time favourite movies. When I first watched the movie I found the quote so true that I was shocked, never before had I seen it summed up in such a simple manner. It's the kind of thing that you would expect a father to say and that's what I love about it. I knew from the start i wanted to use the quote and am happy that I got to use it.

Songs:

I used a combination of Taylor swift, John Mayor and Faith Hill. There was no question about using heartbreak warfare for my title as it is a very good description of what people experience in a relationship. It sums up the battle field that love is and how it can play with your emotions. Taylor Swift and Faith Hills songs were used as examples for how music and lyrics represent the values that females expect in their partners. It was a good example because Taylor Swift's song came out recently and Faith Hill's song was written more then a decade ago.

The other information either came from interviews, questionnaires, observation or from a website which I no longer have the URL for. All were vital in finding out the real human emotions and experiences. Without the honesty of so many participants I wouldn't have a personal interest project to show you. I also need to give some credit for the forest that died in the process of me developing my PIP.