Anger Is A Feeling Too: An exploration of emotional work and the effects of gender based Emotional Language Competency development in heterosexual relationships.

by

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Abstract

In order to maintain or regain harmony in a romantic relationship, couples must carry out emotional work. It is possible that this work is not equitably distributed across both partners. A number of emotions have been gendered and stigmatized within society over the evolution of humanity with significant impact on romantic couples. Sadness for example, is typically considered a feminine emotion, as it is "softer", whereas anger is often considered a masculine emotion because it's "tougher". This delineation follows in romantic relationships with females expressing softer emotions and males expressing tougher ones. Emotions are a normal part of human experience. Emotional Language Competency (ELC) and Emotional Work (EW) are constructs that are important to explore within the context of a heterosexual romantic coupleship. This study examines the importance of ELC and EW within heterosexual romantic coupleships and the effects of gendering emotions on coupleships and the individuals within those couples. 30 heterosexual couples were interviewed, exploring their use of emotional language and how comfortable they felt using language to communicate about emotions. Another factor that was studied was the perception of stigmas in relation to emotions. A content analysis performed on the transcribed interview data revealed four themes: **(Theme 1)** Rates of expression of emotion are higher in females than in males, **(Theme 2)** Emotion is highly gendered; anger and frustration are acceptable for males even to the point of violence, **(Theme 3)** The only model of healthy/safe emotional expression is currently a female one; males feel more comfortable expressing emotion around females (especially in coupleships) and **(Theme 4)** Emotional equality and equity is desired by all and the steps necessary to achieve it.

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Alexandra Besoi. The research project, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, Project Name "Anger Is A Feeling Too: Emotional Language Competency in Males and Its Effects On Violence", No. Pro00097102, 10/23/2020. No part of this thesis has been previously published. The title of this thesis has evolved after the interviews were executed and analyzed to "Anger Is A Feeling Too: How emotion has been socialized by gender and its effects on heterosexual romantic couple ships".

Acknowledgements

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To Dr. Elena Nicoladis, thank you for mentoring me through my undergraduate studies into my masters, and teaching me the value of "failure" while rising and learning in the process. This experience has been invaluable and has shaped my professional mindset, research capacity, and perspective in Psychology.

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To the University of Alberta. Thank you for being an incredible institution that truly values uniqueness of thought, and inspires one to go beyond the scope of what they originally imagined. Thank you for giving me this opportunity in my professional and academic career.

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To my friends and family who have kept me going through Covid and through all of my degrees. I genuinely could not have done it without you. You have provided me with the foundation to draw strength to complete my degrees and to forge my future.

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Participants

To all of my incredible participants in this study, thank you for being so vulnerably brave and going on this exploratory journey. I hope that what we all collectively desire, in a more equal and equitable world, is made a little bit more possible from our work together.

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Theme 1: Rates of expression of emotion are higher in females than in males; Females express emotions (through physical affection and verbal expression) more than men in the context of a couple. Both females and males in 30/30 couples described this phenomenon as occurring within and outside of their coupleships.

Theme 2: Emotion is highly gendered, with anger and frustration being more acceptable for males to express than other emotions, even to the point of violent outbursts. Both males and females in 21 out of 30 couples expressed that they believed that anger and frustration were more acceptable for males, whereas sadness and joy was more acceptable for females in all societal contexts.

Theme 3: The only model of healthy/safe emotional expression is currently a female one; males feel more comfortable expressing emotion around females (especially in coupleships). Males have not been taught how to express emotions with ease and regulation. In a group of males they will rarely express, with females they have an easier time expressing themselves (especially within coupleships), because the only example of emotional expression (with typically gendered female emotions) is a female/feminine model.

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Figure 1: Game 1 Story Map created using the website https://storyboard.viget.com. As you can see, each ending has a different type of result, with all results being winnable. This storyboard game was created by Mackenzie Dechaine and Michael Kobewka, two volunteer video game professionals.

Figure 2: Game 2 Story Map created using the website https://storyboard.viget.com. As you can see, each ending has the same result stating "You failed the Exam, Try Again". Participants were told they had 5 tries to try to win the game, however, no part of the decision tree would result in a win. This storyboard game was created by Mackenzie Dechaine and Michael Kobewka, two volunteer video game professionals.

List of Symbols

ELC - Emotional Language Competency

EI - Emotional Intelligence

ER - Emotion Regulation

EW - Emotional Work

Glossary of Terms

Emotions: a state that is felt (Reisenzein, 2007), an affective episode triggered and guided by at least one appraisal (Mulligan & Scherer, 2012), as well as an experience that is processed by the brain and body (Izard, 2013; Reisenzen, 2007)

Emotional Language Competency: The ability to identify and express one's own emotions using both verbal and non-verbal (physical, gestural) language to communicate said emotions. It is also the ability to identify others' emotions while demonstrating a verbal understanding of another's emotions using emotional language to paraphrase or summarize an individual's emotional expression. Emotional Language Competency involves a multitude of skills including emotion regulation, language ability, self awareness and an awareness of others.

Emotional Regulation: Thompson (1994, pg 27-28) definition of Emotional Regulation stating: "[Emotional Regulation] as "the extrinsic and intrinsic processes responsible for monitoring, evaluating, and modifying emotional reactions, especially their intensive and temporal features, to accomplish one's goals" A broad definition of ER refers to the psychological processes involved in the control of emotion." (Garcia-Andres et. al., 2010).

Emotional Intelligence: the capacity to utilize verbal and nonberbal expression, understanding, regulation (of self and others) and problem solving of emotional interactions.

Emotional Work: The active promotion of activities or "tools" that are promoted by one or both parties within a relationship in order to establish the enhancement of others emotional wellbeing, with the provision of emotional support to produce a positive emotional environment.

(Umberson, Thomeer & Lodge, 2015; Erickson, 2005; Hochschild, 19

Chapter 1: Introduction

There once was a fable titled The Scorpion and The Frog. Originally a Russian fable that was written in 1933, and translated into English in 1955, this fable tells a tale of a scorpion who asks a frog to take them both across a river. The frog is hesitant, insisting that the scorpion will most likely sting the frog in the process. But the scorpion pleads for the frog's help, trying to ease the frog's worries by explaining to the frog that it is not in their collective interest if the scorpion stings the frog, as they would then ultimately both drown. The frog agrees, and they start off on their journey. Halfway through the river, the scorpion stings the frog, and the frog cries out: "Why would you do that! Now we'll both drown!" While drowning, the scorpion replies: "I'm sorry, it's just in my nature." Much can be drawn both allegorically from children's fables. Fables are the stories that we retain from an early age into adulthood, similar to many other narratives, stereotypes and concepts that we understand as societal "truths". The tale of the Scorpion and the Frog is no different. At a base level it is a story that provides a warning of trusting one's instincts and the inability to overcome one's nature. It can also serve as an analogy for how the Emotional Work (EW) in any relationship might not be equally distributed. In this thesis, I will be focusing on romantic heterosexual couples to begin to explore how EW affects relationships.

Within the Scorpion and the Frog, the fable allegorically demonstrates how EW is carried out in a romantic relationship through the characters experiencing very distinct outcomes as a result of processing a similar emotion. This emotion could be labelled fear. The scorpion feared the water and needed a safe route across it, while the frog feared the scorpion and its tendency to sting when threatened. In order to ensure a harmonious relationship, the frog works through her fear and communicates the necessary requirements for both the two to get across the river safely.

The frog is bearing the brunt of Emotional Work in the relationship by regulating her own fear, communicating needs and managing both her and the scorpion's emotions. Unfortunately, the scorpion had weak Emotional Regulation abilities, and when faced with being so close to the water was not able to regulate his fear and his following actions resulted in a violent consequence. The reason the frog has been denoted as female here (using "she/her" pronouns), and the scorpion male (using "he/him" pronouns), is that, as will be demonstrated in greater detail below, previous research suggests that females tend to have a greater ability to identify, regulate and communicate about emotions than males.

Much of the previous literature on gender effects in emotions and emotional processing has looked at females and males as individuals. In this thesis, the aim is to look at how couples do Emotional Work (EW) together, based on their Emotional Language Competency (ELC), Emotional Regulation (ER), and Emotional Intelligence (EI). EW is essential in order to maintain a strong, harmonious relationship (Erickson, 2005). A common understanding of strong relationships might be outlined as being those that last despite any tribulations that may arise due to normal life experiences. Harmonious relationships are those that maintain a high level of contentment on average and are able to return to or maintain harmony should negative issues arise (Galliher et al., 2004). Erickson (2005, p. 338) defined EW as "activities that are concerned with the enhancement of others' emotional well-being and with the provision of emotional support". Umberson, Thomeer, and Lodge (2015) expanded upon this definition by outlining that EW is actively promoted within relationships by one or both parties for the sake of harmony. As well, Umberson et al. (2015), along with Erickson (2005), and Hochschild (1979) demonstrated that EW is disproportionately carried out by females (Umberson et al., 2015; Erickson, 2005; Hochschild, 1979).

To better understand EW in heterosexual romantic relationships, we must first define what emotions are. According to Izard (2013), emotions cannot be contained in a single psychological, physiological, neurological, or cognitive measure. To date, there is no universally agreed-upon definition of emotion (Izard, 2013). Previous definitions have included: a state that is felt (Reisenzein, 2007), an "affective episode" "triggered and guided by at least one appraisal" (Mulligan & Scherer, 2012, p. 346), as well as an experience or state that is able to be processed by the brain and body (Izard, 2013; Reisenzen, 2007, p. 426). All of these definitions refer to emotions as states or episodes in such a way that in the context of a couple, emotions could disrupt harmony and require EW to regain harmony. Imagine a person brings dinner to her partner's house and the majority of it just needs to be baked but is otherwise complete. She feels like she is providing for the relationship but is met with anger from her partner when he goes to put the food on the baking sheets and it doesn't fit. Distressed by his anger, she tries to find a solution to it but is met with silence and the evening is significantly disrupted. Had EW been equal in this example, the evening would have maintained harmony instead of experiencing a breach in the relationship.

Emotional states do not only require EW on the part of the couple as a unit. Based on a review of the literature, it seems that emotional states are not the singular trigger for EW (Jones, 2001). Emotional states might additionally require some internal processes to moderate them (in this case meaning increased or decreased) into being repressed, regulated, or expressed (Izard, 2013). An example of this might be anger. In an environment where anger is not moderated either by the individual or by an external source, this could lead to violent outcomes such as screaming, hitting, or breaking things. According to Mayer and Salovey (1993), the factor that would result in the expression (regulated or unregulated) or repression of an emotion that is felt

by an individual, is Emotional Intelligence. Emotional Intelligence (EI) is a broad construct that includes constructs such as Emotional Regulation (ER) and Emotional Language Competency (ELC) (Mayer & Salovey, 1993). In the following paragraphs we will be going into the definitions of each of these constructs, with particular emphasis on ELC as I did not ask any particular interview questions on ER and ER will need to be studied in depth in future works.

Through this study, there will be an examination of how ELC, ER, and EI influence EW in heterosexual romantic relationships. EI is an important factor to consider (inclusive of both ER & ELC) for an individual's capacity to engage in interpersonal EW successfully. EI enables the individual to identify when and where they need to moderate an emotion. Mayer and Salovey (1993) defined EI as the capacity to use verbal and nonverbal expression, understanding, regulation (of self and others) and problem-solving of emotional interactions. ER acts as a redirection for the emotions being felt and the actions that might result from them. Additionally, we will be using the Thompson (1994, pp. 27-28) definition of Emotional Regulation stating: "[Emotional Regulation] as the extrinsic and intrinsic processes responsible for monitoring, evaluating, and modifying emotional reactions, especially their intensive and temporal features, to accomplish one's goals. A broad definition of ER refers to the psychological processes involved in the control of emotion." (Garcia-Andres et. al., 2010). The caveat to whether or not emotional states will be physically or verbally expressed in a safe, harmony-seeking, non-violent way is whether or not Emotional Intelligence and Emotionally Regulation are present.

While ER and EI are highly important to EW, based on a review of the literature ELC is often overlooked. I am proposing that ELC is significant in the support and execution of EI and the ability to express oneself in interpersonal settings or engage in EW. The ability then, to use clear language to describe and talk through one's emotional state in a non-hostile way is what we

will be calling ELC. In this study we will be formally defining ELC as: the ability to identify and express one's own emotions using both verbal and non-verbal (physical, gestural) language. It is also the ability to identify others' emotions while demonstrating a verbal understanding of another's emotions using emotional language to paraphrase or summarize an individual's emotional expression. As such, each individual within a coupleship brings their own individual EI and ELC to their relationship causing a need for EW to be present to maintain harmony in the relationship.

As noted earlier, EW is disproportionately executed by females in heterosexual couples and the inequality is largely due to how children are socialized from infancy (Kelly & Hutson-Comeaux, 2002). Societal norms and stereotypes have dictated which types of emotion are characteristic for women (happiness, sadness, fear) versus those that are "typical" for men (anger, frustration) (Parkins, 2012). The gendering of what emotions children are allowed to express, and the development of EI and ELC appears as early as preschool age through parents, teachers and social environments (Kelly & Hutson-Comeaux, 2002; Kiel & Kalomiris, 2015). As children age and develop into adulthood, these socialized levels of EI inform their adult behaviours and understanding of emotions (Parkins, 2012). In our society, emotions outside of anger and frustration are labelled as weak, which thereby is assigned the territory of those assigned female at birth (Parkins, 2012). This gender-based imbalance can create a lifelong struggle for both sexes in their interpersonal relationships, triggering the need for different types and amounts of EW in romantic relationships (Pollitt & Curran, 2022).

At this point, EW spearheaded by females in heterosexual romantic relationships becomes vital to ensuring harmony and safety for both parties in the relationship (Hochschild, 1979). In much of this gender x emotion x EW literature, men have less development of EI and

ELC (Zhu, Zheng, Lu, 2015). We also know that the emotions that males are allowed to express are anger and frustration, which as far as emotions go, are the most likely to lead to aggression and acts of violence if not regulated (Berkowitz, 1989).

The Present Study

This study is an exploratory study and a qualitative investigation with the objective to investigate the effect of gender-based ELC, EI and EW in heterosexual couples. This study does not include hypothesis testing with inferential statistics. There were four main objectives of this study:

- Objective 1: gathering a deeper understanding of lived experience created by the gendering of emotions and gender differences in ELC, EI, and EW.

- Objective 2: confirming gendering of emotions and identifying any restrictions to anger and frustration expressed by males.

- Objective 3: exploring the consequences of gendering of emotions inside and outside the relationship unit.

- Objective 4: identifying the consequences of gender inequality and inequity for couples, both in real time and according to their reports.

The aim of exploring ELC, EI, and EW in heterosexual relationships was to gather a deeper understanding of the lived experience created by the gendering of emotions and gender-based development of ELC, EI, and EW. The underlying goal of this thesis is to gain further insight on how the gendering of emotion affects heterosexual romantic relationships and the consequences of this both inside and outside the relationship. I expected to confirm the gender effects in ELC, EI, and EW and furthermore demonstrate through the direct statements of the

individuals in the coupleships what consequences of the gender inequality manifest for couples in real time.

Additionally, I aimed to identify if there are any restrictions to how anger and frustration are deemed acceptable for males to express, and if it is acceptable even to the point of violence. Finally, I asked the participants to speak on whether we as a society are any closer to emotional equality and emotional equity in all areas of human interaction. In the context of this study, emotional equality refers to the belief that specific emotions are independent from gender, and emotional equity to the belief that emotions themselves are de-stigmatized and able to be expressed in all appropriate contexts.

Chapter 2: Methods

To accomplish the study objectives, we conducted interviews with 30 heterosexual couples (male + female pairings) over Zoom to ensure safety during COVID. Each interview acted as a small-scale, individual case study. Heterosexual couples were chosen to be able to gather data and responses that could then be generalized to other heterosexual couples. These sessions ranged from 25 minutes to 2 hours and the length of time was entirely dependent on the participants' willingness to respond to the interview questions at length.

Each session consisted of a consent declaration at the beginning of the recorded Zoom session where participants verbally consented to the session structure (See Appendix B). The interview structure consisted of 4 parts: Interview 1, Game 1, Game 2, Interview 2. Within each of the interview sections, both sexes in the coupleship were prompted to think critically about their experiences with emotion, emotion regulation, and emotional language competency. They were also asked to consider what the opposite sex might experience when it came to emotional

language use and physical expression of emotion. The games were a safe avenue to explore how the sexes responded to winning a game (Game 1, the game you could almost never lose) or losing a game multiple times over (Game 2, the game you can never win). Winning might establish a sense of joy and accomplishment, potentially revealing a harmonious state where no EW is required. Losing, then, might reveal unregulated negative emotions and the need for EW in order to regain harmony.

   Part 1. Initial Interview. The first interview acted as a warming up to the session as a whole. This interview included thought-provoking exercises to explore how often the participants perceived themselves to verbally or physically express emotion in a regulated manner. This was examined both in general contexts, as well as directly within the participants' coupleships. It was important that the interview begin with warm up conversation topics such as "how did they meet" and "what did they like to do together" (See Appendix A) in order to establish comfort between the participants and the interviewer. This comfort, or rapport, created a space for all 30 participants to freely express their experiences with emotion in society as well as within their coupleship. These warm-up questions directly moved into the main Interview 1 questions which consisted of questions regarding frequency and ease of expressing emotion both physically and verbally.

   This section consisted of interview questions regarding the perception of how often emotional language competency was used on a weekly basis from the perspectives of females towards males, females towards females, males towards females, and males towards males. These questions addressed Objectives 2 and 3. Additionally, participants were encouraged to speak freely of their individual experiences with emotional language competency and prompted

to discuss between themselves as partners. These questions addressed Objective 1. This section

consisted of 11 questions written out fully in Appendix A and highlighted below.

Interview 1

1. How often do you guys think couples have disagreements?

2. How often do you guys think couples have emotional conversations?

3. How often do you think females in heterosexual couples use emotional language?

4. How often do you think males in heterosexual couples use emotional language?

5. How often do you think females display their emotions in heterosexual couples?

6. How often do you think males display their emotions in heterosexual couples?

Part 2. Game 1. Prior to the first game, participants were asked whether they thought

females or males played more video games, and then inquired about whether or not either of the

participants in the coupleship had ever played video games and/or 'choose your own adventure'

games before (See Appendix A). These questions acted as a transition into the playing of the 2

choose your own adventure games created by two volunteer game creators specifically for this

thesis (See Acknowledgments; See List of Figures).

Participants were asked to play a total of two games during their sessions. The purpose of

these games was to elicit emotions that might lead to the couples expressing emotions in

language (Objective 4). The participants accessed the games through the experimenter's Zoom-

screen-sharing and the participants telling the experimenter which option in the game to move

forward with. Both games were set up as 'choose your own adventure' games using a third-party

video game creation tool on the website https://storyboard.viget.com and two volunteer video

game professionals who assisted in the creation of the games. Only the experimenter was at the

controls and the participants had to relay which direction they would like to go in to the

experimenter.

The first game was created to prime the participants with a false sense of confidence. All

the outcomes in the first game were winnable, and the game itself was considerably shorter and

much easier than the second.

The premise of the first game was that of getting lost on a road trip, and navigating the

trip to arrive at the lakeside campground without GPS.
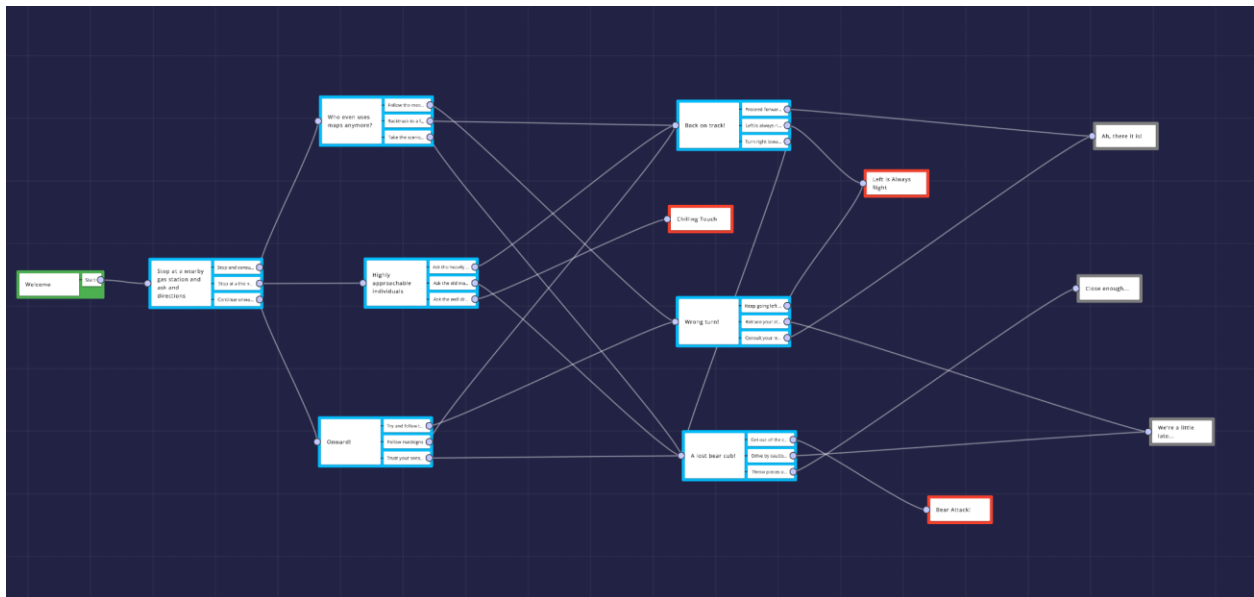
Figure 1: Game 1 Story Map created using the website https://storyboard.viget.com. As you can
see, each ending has a different type of result, with all results being winnable. This storyboard
game was created by Mackenzie Dechaine and Michael Kobewka, two volunteer video game
professionals.

Part 3. Game 2. Game 2 on the other hand was the exact opposite of game 1 in that it was unwinnable, much longer, and much more difficult. The premise of the second game was getting across the University of Alberta Campus for a midterm from the two farthest ends. In the game, the students were ending one class in ECHA, one of the buildings on the farthest south side of the campus, and needed to get to the Biological Sciences Building which is one of the buildings on the farthest north side of the campus, in under 10 minutes.

During their travels, the participants experienced roadblocks fraught with peril at every stop they made. Whether it was one of the participants bumping into an ex-partner, a fire occurring and the building they were running through being evacuated, or a pack of coyotes masquerading as therapy dogs, the participants struggled.

Participants had 5 tries to complete this game, as it restarted in a seemingly infinite loop. Every time they failed the midterm by being late or not having enough time to complete the exam.
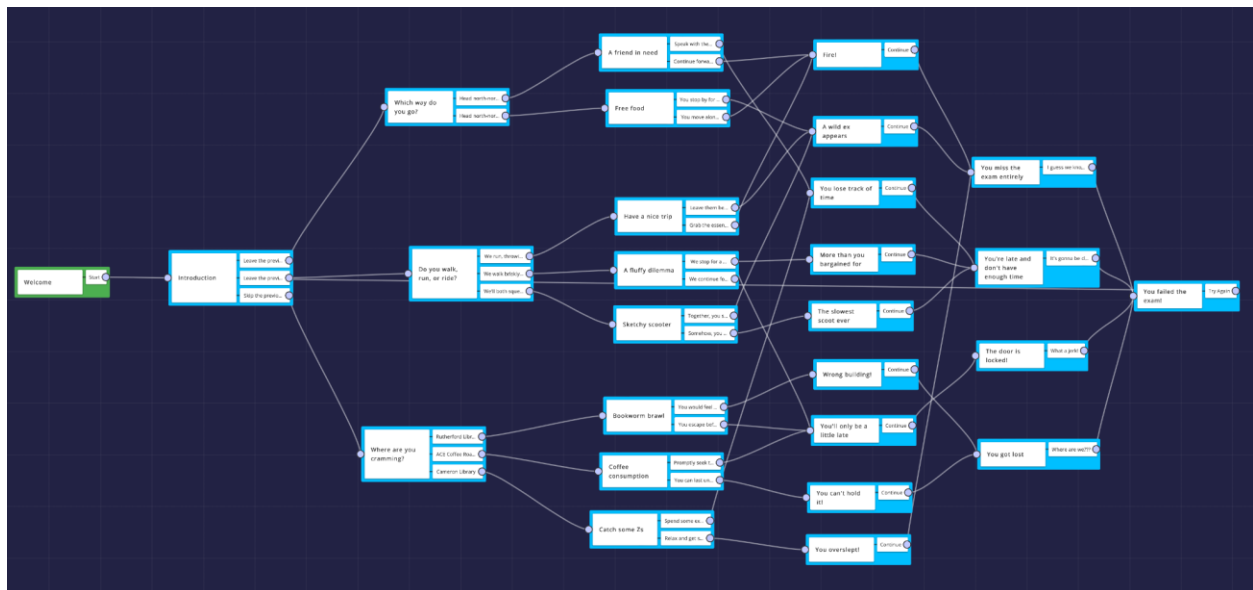
Figure 2: Game 2 Story Map created using the website https://storyboard.viget.com. As you can see, each ending has the same result stating "You failed the Exam, Try Again". Participants were told they had 5 tries to try to win the game, however, no part of the decision tree would result in a win. This storyboard game was created by Mackenzie Dechaine and Michael Kobewka, two volunteer video game professionals.

Part 4. Interview 2. In the second interview, the concluding interview, participants were encouraged to consider their experiences of going through both games individually and together as a couple. The games were intended to act as a vehicle for observation of a purposefully frustrating situation that would elicit some kind of emotional response, emotional communication, and language exchange between the participants (Objectives 2, 3, and 4). The second interview was then created to encourage participants to think critically about their reactions to the games.

After considering the games themselves and how participants perceived the completion of the games, a wider lens was brought to the interview questions. Here participants were asked to reflect on whether they thought emotional language and emotional language competency were societally perceived as equally allowed for males vs. females (Objective 4).

Additionally, participants were asked to think about a world in which emotional language competency was frequently used with no differences between males and females and was encouraged to be used. Here individuals often reflected upon a better world, one where relationships, physical and mental health, and work environments were far healthier. This interview consisted of 8 questions, listed below (Objective 4).

Interview 2

1. How did it feel to go through the two games together?

2. Did you feel differently between the first game and the second game?

3. Did you feel like you learned anything about your partner playing this game together?

4. Did you feel like you learned anything about yourself during this game?

5. What do you think about emotional language competency? Do you think its important?

6. Do either of you feel like you could use more emotional language in communication?

7. Do you feel like it's equally acceptable between females and males to use emotional language?

8. If you don't feel like it's equally acceptable between females and males to use emotional language, do you think that if it was, it could help communication between partners or just individuals in general?

Following the 4 stages of the session, participants were debriefed on a high-level version of the purpose of this study, and let in on the information that the second game was unwinnable. (See Appendix C)

Since it was a debrief, this part of the session was not recorded. However, upon reflection, it would have been highly beneficial for some of the conversations that occurred in the debrief to be recorded as participants had further insights regarding emotional language competency at this stage. Within the remainder of this thesis, results from the two interviews were utilized in order to identify and examine the themes that emerged from this study. The games, while useful, were not as yielding of thematic results as the interviews and could be improved for future use.

Participants

The participants' demographics were not gathered for this study and the couples ranged in age from 20 years old to 47 years old. The couples also ranged in their amount of time together

from the span of 9 months to 15 years. 24 of the couples appeared to be white or Caucasian

Canadians, and 6 of the couples identified as being East Asian Canadian. All couples cohabited

due to a combination of COVID-19 isolation requirements, as well as their own decisions to live

together.

Coding for themes

Transcription was done using volunteers in the University of Alberta GLADLab and the

volunteers transcribed the data from audio/visual recordings to conversation transcription and

gesture transcription. Only the conversation transcription was used to analyze data; further

research should be done on the gesture transcription that the volunteers created as it may reveal

how emotion manifests in gestured speech. Themes were identified by the experimenter and a

volunteer interrater and then cross-referenced and refined over the course of the thesis writing

process. To demonstrate the impact of participant agreement within the results, the number of

participants or couples as a whole were counted and reported to stress the common consensus

within each theme and was not intended to add a quantitative component to the study. The

methodological approach in this study was influenced in part by my advisor Dr. Elena Nicoladis,

as well as the paper by Teherani et al. (2015) discussing the most applicable way to execute a

qualitative study.

Chapter 3: Results

Interview 1 Overview

The results of Interview 1 (expanded upon below in the section of themes) identified that

both sexes, within all 30 couples interviewed, perceived that females expressed emotion both

physically and verbally at a markedly higher frequency and ease than their male counterparts. All

30 males reported little to no verbal or physical expression of emotion outside of anger when being asked the same question. Within their coupleships, all 30 males reported considerably more emotional expression than outside of their coupleships. However, despite the fact that all of the males in the study described their partner as one of, if not the only person they expressed emotions with. However, the frequency and intensity of the expression was reported as still being considerably less than females, as well as being less regulated overall.

Game 1 Overview

The first game acted as a successful prime to encourage participants to fully express themselves during the game portion of the session, as it was always winnable. Additionally, Game 1 supplied a high level of confidence for both participants in the coupleship for the potential win of the second game. During and after completion of the first game, both participants were excited and eager to start the second game. Emotions that were described by both the male and female in each of the 30 coupleships following the first game were joy and excitement, exclaiming (with some variation) statements such as "that was fun, I enjoyed that".

Game 2 Overview

The second game was purposely created to instigate some level of frustration or annoyance. 25 out of 30 couples claimed the second game was frustrating. As such, it successfully acted as an aggravating stimulus as it was programmed to be unwinnable. In addition to being unwinnable, the couples had to try to win Game 2, 5 times with the false hope that they could use logic, and past failed attempts to win the next round. Each time that the game was lost, the frustration in the 25 out of 30 males considerably increased visibly and verbally. Actions that were taken by the male were fisting of hands, rocking back and forth, and general

physical agitation. Verbally, the male typically used the sound "argh" or "grr" very often. Or exclaimed things such as "Really??" or "Come on!". While the males were the most obvious in their display of aggravation, all 30 females expressed significant interest in finding out how to win the game and seemed that they were trying to validate their partners' feelings through commiseration and repetition of frustrating phrases used, this only occurred after the male had already expressed their emotions.

Interview 2 Overview

Following the questions regarding learnings within the games, the participants then participated in Interview 2 in which questions more tailored to ELC (Emotional Language Competency) were introduced (See Appendix A). In this final interview participants were prompted to think in more depth about their experiences with the first interview, their experience with both the games, and their experiences of ELC in society. The prompts allowed participants to speak from a third person perspective, or perhaps a friend or relative if they so desired. The intent of this was to uncover their feelings about the topic, even if they used a third-party perspective to highlight that perception. Despite all participants having the opportunity to speak through a third-party lens, all participants spoke from their own experiences in each of the questions.

The questions revolved around the potential negative consequences of unequal ELC development in childhood when comparing boys and girls. Participants were asked to reflect on their experiences being developed in a gendered manner when it came to ELC. Participants were then encouraged to reflect on how that affected their partnership together, and whether the unequal levels of ELC inspired more friction in the relationship than other potential reasons for friction. A final set of questions prompted participants to think about how this unequal

development of ELC affected their family relationships as well as their friendships and work

relationships. The participants were left off by imagining a world where development of ELC

was not gendered and was truly equal, providing both boys and girls to develop high ELC from a

young age with no marked differences in stigma through adulthood in experiencing, learning and

expressing emotion.

Analysis of Themes

There were four main objectives of this study which directly correlate to the four themes

that emerged as results from the content analysis of the data. The four themes and their related

objectives were as follows. Theme 1, Rates of expression of emotion are higher in females than

in males, relates directly to Objective 1, gathering a deeper understanding of lived experience

created by the gendering of emotions and gender differences in ELC, EI, and EW. Theme 2,

particular emotions are highly gendered; anger and frustration being acceptable for males even to

the point of violence, relates directly to Objective 2, confirm gendering of emotions and identify

any restrictions to anger and frustration being expressed by males. Theme 3, the only model of

healthy/safe emotional expression is currently a female one; males feel more comfortable

expressing emotion around females (especially in coupleships), relates directly to Objective 3,

exploring the consequences of gendering of emotions inside and outside the relationship unit.

And Theme 4, emotional equality and equity in EW is desired by all and the steps necessary to

achieve it, relates directly to Objective 4, identifying the consequences of gender inequality and

inequity for couples in real time.

Theme 1: Rates of expression of emotion are higher in females than in males; Females express emotions (through physical affection and verbal expression) more than men in the context of a couple. Both females and males in 30/30 couples described this phenomenon as occurring within and outside of their coupleships.

Example (1) from Transcript (Theme 1):

- EXP = Interviewer, SUB 1 = Female, SUB 2 = Male

- 30/30 couples described a similar if not exact proportion between males and females and their emotional language use.

—--Start Example—---

EXP: Um so I'd love for these next few if you guys could answer individually um how often do you think females in heterosexual couples use emotional language in a week?

SUB1: I'd say like ninety percent of the time haha.

EXP: Hahaha.

SUB1: Yeah cause it's just like.

SUB2: Yeah.

SUB1: Hehehe that's your answer too?

EXP: Hahaha.

SUB1: Individually [name removed].

SUB2: No, same answer.

SUB1: Okay.

EXP: Um how often do you think males in heterosexual couples use emotional language in a week?

SUB1: Like five percent of the time.

SUB2: Hahaha.

EXP: Hahaha yeah.

SUB2: Yeah, yeah probably.

SUB1: Hahaha.

EXP: Hahaha.

SUB2: ten percent or less.

EXP: Um how often do you think females display their emotions in heterosexual couples more

less or equal to their male counterpart?

SUB1: More.

SUB2: More.

EXP: So then on the opposite do you think males uh display their emotions in heterosexual

couples less?

SUB1: Yeah I guess I don't know it's just hard cause like you know most, most times it's just

like are you thinking of anything it's like no there's like no emotions or whatever that's

happening at that moment.

—--End Example—---

      Analysis of Theme 1: In Theme 1, the results demonstrated that females and males in all

30 couples strongly believed that females expressed emotions (physically and verbally) more

than men. In the example above, the female participant (SUB 1) continues on to say that when

the female partner asked her male partner what they were thinking about or if they needed to talk

about anything, they were met with nothing, no communication and no emotions. Males viewed

females to be highly emotionally intuitive and expressed that they felt females used emotional

language competency multiple times in a day whereas for themselves they might have only used

it a couple times a week.

Theme 2: Emotion is highly gendered, with anger and frustration being more acceptable

for males to express than other emotions, even to the point of violent outbursts. Both males and

females in 21 out of 30 couples expressed that they believed that anger and frustration were more

acceptable for males, whereas sadness and joy was more acceptable for females in all societal

contexts.

Example (2) from Transcript (Theme 2):

- EXP = Interviewer, SUB 1 = Male, SUB 2 = Female

- 21/30 couples described a similar experience

—---Start Example—---

EXP: not what you personally believe but what like kind of overarching societal like beam is do

you think it's equally acceptable between females and males to use emotional language?

SUB2: hmm I, I would say that uhm like different kinds of emotional language are acceptable

for males versus females.

EXP: okay.

SUB2: uhm yeah, yeah because I think uhm like more uhm like mm I don't know what the word

is like apparent, apparent mmm I don't know what the word is I'm blanking on the word more

obvious showings of like anger or frustration I think is more acceptable for males uhm and like

yeah I feel like if a female does that you know they are looked at a little bit more harshly versus

like someone like a guy is like yelling at the sports game for example uhm.

EXP: [name removed] is moving off screen.

SUB2: yeah he's like I'm not associated with her.

SUB1: yeah - sports -.

SUB2: I've never seen a sports game uhm so I would say like that's more acceptable for males whereas uhm like sadness is maybe more acceptable for females like there's still you know something of a taboo I feel like when guys cry you know in some, in some situations and that kind of thing and so yeah but I don't think like, like in general being emotional versus not emotional is necessarily like allowed for one and not the other.

EXP: cool alright what do you think [name removed]?

SUB1: yeah I wish I had gone first cause you stole but I felt very clever with my like well it depends on this and then you just said it and I was like well fine uh I can actually go a little over this so very similar to what [name removed] said but uh you see almost exactly what you said that yeah for, for especially uh yeah like angry or I'd even say maybe just like negative yeah in particular like negative charged emotions like anger and frustration and all that stuff that like men I mean like work places for example I've worked at places where like, like the guy is like a boss or I could easily like blow up and yeah no one really would pay much mind whereas like a female coworker could that would be like just super not acceptable behaviour.

EXP: mhm.

SUB1: but I'm, I'm gonna word your of the story I actually think the stigma against so yeah I think well I'll finish with that thought first I think yeah women have a big stigma against being like impactfully emotional and especially in public settings uh and are expected to be much more sort of like stable and stoic in presentation but yeah I'm gonna build on yours a little bit and be a little more extreme about it I think men are super like lots, lots of things to this I guess but that same stoicness applies just in a different way that like you're allowed to be mad but that's sort of it that there's sort of like a righteous anger concept and outside of that you should be pretty, so

like even expressing like, like you can't be too excited or happy about things cause, cause that's not cool and like and then similarly yeah then like negative emotions in general like sadness or loneliness and all that stuff is super not like even, even like unconscious were like oh you can like, like, yeah I'll finish it there because I'm gonna end up rambling about nothing uh yeah similar to what you said but I think that it's, it maybe a little stronger than you said I think that the stigma against expressing certain negative emotions for men is really strong in basically all contexts of like you can't come into a workplace with any kind of like hey I'm uncomfortable with x or I'm unhappy with y like these sort of things and that's not gonna fly.

—--End Example—---

Analysis of Theme 2: Theme 2 echoed previous research that demonstrates emotion is highly gendered with anger and frustration being the only acceptable emotions for males to express (Roper, 2005; Izard, 2013; Bendelow, 1993; Chaplin & Aldao, 2013). 21/30 couples in theme 2, stated that anger and frustration are considered "male" emotions, and sadness, joy, and excitement are considered "female" emotions. However, it was noted that the anger and frustration that was accepted for men was even accepted to the heightened point of violent outbursts (Example 2). Additionally, emotions such as sadness, discomfort or hurt feelings (or negative emotions as is connotated by SUB1 in Example 2) are stigmatized for males with males not feeling they have the space or ability to express these emotions in contexts outside of their coupleship. All 30 males and all 30 females expressed this opinion.

Theme 3: The only model of healthy/safe emotional expression is currently a female one; males feel more comfortable expressing emotion around females (especially in coupleships). Males have not been taught how to express emotions with ease and regulation. In a group of males they will rarely express, with females they have an easier time expressing themselves (especially within coupleships), because the only example of emotional expression (with typically gendered female emotions) is a female/feminine model.

Examples from Transcripts (Theme 3):

Example (3a) from Transcript

- EXP = Interviewer, SUB 1 = Male, SUB 2 = Female
- 18/30 couples described a similar if not exact experience

—---Start Example—---

EXP: uhm okay so next question uhm how often do you guys think that uh females display their emotions in heterosexual couples. This is more physical expressions and facial expressions uhm # more or less equal to their male counterpart?

SUB2: hmm.

EXP: like body language.

SUB1: I would think probably more uhm I'm just trying to have a third person perspective to kinda how our body language interacts.

SUB1: yeah I think in general women are more expressive both verbally and non-verbally so it's probably actually about the same ratio every 4-5 times a woman expresses non-verbally a man expresses.

EXP: hmm interesting so what I'm kinda hearing you say is that uhm those same feelings and maybe those same urges and expressions are synonymous across the board but they tend to be muted in males.

SUB1: yeah.

EXP: so they don't come out as often.

SUB1: yeah I think as, as I mention the talking about it that men at least the men that I know uhm we need time to ourselves.

EXP: hmm.

SUB1: and I mean we joke around about it a lot because we'll say it and a proper whatever because you watch a table of men and watch a table of mixed sex the table of men they can just sit there quietly and they're just content that's. You know where as women tend to be talking over each other very often uhm yeah I think men just deal with their emotions maybe a bit differently and aren't as expressive so.

EXP: hmm

SUB2: yeah I do feel I, I feel similar to the other question. I do feel that like you said they are a bit more muted but I also do feel at times that it's just like you said it's just measuring two different things in a lot of ways. I do feel like men are very like emotional beings it's just like whether it's like they've been taught how to deal with it differently or it is biology or whatever it is I do feel like they do have the emotions but it isn't as like it isn't as expressive. So I feel like it's like if we were to like study it or something like that. You learn that's it's just by law.

EXP: mhm yeah

SUB2: I know that's not like a popular opinion these days but I do really feel like it's, it's that like I again I feel very biased because I work with some very unhealthy couples everyday at work and I grew up with women so.

EXP: yeah no for sure.

SUB2: I guess I've been living with xxx my partner and he's a man xxx. I don't know.

SUB1: it's, it's interesting because I am in a weekly men's support group in which it's kinda like a general support group in that we discuss everything from relationships to professional things to health and fitness uhm but one of the things we do discuss is a lot of us have been conditioned to try and express our emotions and maybe more of uh feminine way.

SUB1: which, which is fine because we are all figuring out how to communicate but in a group of men and it is so much easier to communicate kind of. It's different like, like as [name removed] was saying we, we just. We interact with each other differently and I mean there's a lot of you know talk about you know men are from Mars and women are from Venus. And things like that and I think this is maybe where that stems from is that we just have different communication styles. So yeah but actually expressing going back to your question I do think women are generally more expressive

SUB2: yeah like I would say

SUB1: I would think much much more expressive I do think when I pay attention to it. It's probably a 1:4 1:5 ratio

———--End Example———---

Example (3b) from Transcript:

- EXP = Interviewer, SUB 1 = Female, SUB 2 = Male

- 30/30 couples had the female navigating the interview for both partners in the

  sense that they managed the turn taking and offered encouragement to their male

  partners when the male partner was providing reflections

—---Start Example—---

EXP: Yeah. Okay so let's get right into it, how did the two of you meet?

SUB1: Do you want to answer this?

SUB2: No you go.

EXP: Awesome. Okay we're gonna take a little bit of a detour here and you guys can answer the next few questions um either in general or from your own experience um or both and I may ask you to clarify depending on how it goes. Um so how often do you guys think that couples have disagreements?

SUB1: Do you want me to answer first or do you want to?

SUB2: You answer first.

SUB1: Are you gonna change your answer?

SUB2: Probably not.

SUB1: Okay. Um I think often, like by often I probably am thinking like major disagreements less often but like smaller disagreements let's say like 3 times a month.

EXP: Yeah for sure.

SUB1: I think.

SUB2: Yeah I'd say probably majorly minor disagreements about weekly.

EXP: Yeah? Alright well how often do you think that males in heterosexual couples use emotional language in a week?

SUB2: I don't. Far less frequently um. I guess they probably wouldn't uh always initiate although they might match uh women on occasion for bringing I guess emotional language.

EXP: mhmm.

SUB1: Yeah I think for me like with I don't know I seem to pick these kinds of people as my friends for guys but like I kinda with my guy friends its definitely every time we hang out. So, for me they seem very emotional I would say they probably match women, but I don't know if its like very dependent on the space you're in. Cause that's I don't know all, all my guy friends all our conversations are very emotional but that's cause its like the back and forth, but I don't know if they're like hanging out with guys if that's the same thing or not.

—---End Example—---

Analysis of Theme 3: In terms of Theme 3, 30 out of 30 couples expressed the opinion that males have not been taught how to express emotions with ease. It was stated by both raters in Example 3b that males physically expressed emotions outside of anger/frustration less than females and expressed only comfort with the verbal and physical expression of emotions with their female partner. Males expressed that within their social environments, they were least comfortable expressing emotion both physically and verbally with their male friends and family members. Conversely, they expressed emotions more verbally with their female friends and family members, most particularly with their female partner. These rates of expression were stated to still be significantly less overall than females expression of emotion in general.

Interestingly, it was stated (and exemplified in the above transcript in Example 3b) that a possible reason for this inability to express despite a desire to, is that the only current example of emotional expression in a healthy, safe manner, is a female/feminine model that only includes tools to enable expression of gendered female emotions (established in Theme 2).

Theme 4: Emotional equality and equity in Emotional Work across genders and within couples has the capacity to be established, but individuals and couples do not currently have the tools or working models to do so.

Examples from Transcripts (Theme 4):

Example (4a)

- EXP = Interviewer, SUB 1 = Male, SUB 2 = Female

- 27/30 couples described a similar if not exact experience in that females would initiate the emotional language competency growth in their males and invest in this growth over the years for the sake of the coupleship.

—--Start Example—---

EXP: so uh what do the two of you think about emotional language competency and I can provide a definition if you'd like and do you think it's important.

SUB2: oh yeah.

SUB1: yeah I think.

SUB2: yeah a 100 percent.

SUB1: there's yeah the idea of learning to communicate about communication.

SUB2: yeah.

SUB1: and I think that's a big thing and when we're talking about different communication forms I think that a lot of couples are trying to communicate with different languages.

EXP: mhm mhm.

SUB1: so you know two people trying to talk in different languages and it leads to a lot of frustration on both ends and you just kind of assume that the other person sees the world and communicates the same as you.

SUB1: because that's, that's all you've ever experienced right?

SUB2: mhm.

SUB1: is your own communication style and until you're able to understand that people have different ways to communicate what's going on inside of them then you're just gonna be having a lot of friction and butting heads a lot.

SUB2: mhm.

SUB1: so yeah I think that that's very important and.

SUB2: mhm.

SUB1: understanding that people communicate about emotions differently.

SUB1: mhm yeah.

EXP: absolutely.

SUB1: and communicate with somebody who communicates their emotions differently for sure absolutely.

EXP: what do you think [name removed]?

SUB2: uhm I think uh like a big thing over the years in relationships like my whole job is building relationships with really, really unhealthy people and also to like relationships. And we've definitely had hard times and we've definitely had unhealthy coping mechanisms and communication over the years. I think the big thing is meeting people where they're at uhm and also meeting yourself where you're at and your emotional competency. Because you also have to understand like sometimes you're just not there and sometimes that person is not there either and they don't really have to meet you there either like it's just about recognizing that in people.

EXP: for sure.

SUB2: that's really I feel I do it is a struggle to do I do feel.

EXP: yeah absolutely.

SUB2: *pause*

EXP: it's so important and it's very difficult.

SUB2: yeah.

EXP: and its importance kinda matches its difficulty I think in a lot of ways.

SUB2: yeah.

SUB1: yeah what you put in is what you get out.

SUB2: yeah.

SUB1: and it can be hard you know?

—--End Example—--

> **Example (4b) from Transcript:**
>
> - EXP = Interviewer, SUB 1 = Female, SUB 2 = Male
>
> - 29/30 couples described a similar experience and a desire to equalize emotional
>
>   language competency in society

—---Start Example—--

EXP: Um okay so on a global scale in a society aspect do you feel like it is generally equally

acceptable between females and males to use emotional language based on societal rules.

SUB1: I don't think it's equal.

SUB2: Mm yeah definitely not.

EXP: So how.

SUB1: At the.

EXP: is it skewed?

SUB1: right like I guess like there's an expectation that you know like females or women will use more emotional language and also like you know uh you there are stereotypes to that like the angry black woman or like you know the you know things like that, that's, that just feeds into that societal belief right and like and also that males just either kinda like you know they aren't thinking. Or they don't think that way you know they don't have emotions kind of thing so.

EXP: Mhm.

SUB2: Yeah you see it all the time in you know media and.

SUB1: Mhm.

SUB2: tv culture, pop culture and stuff like that it's just very.

EXP: Yeah.

SUB2: defined gender norms.

EXP: Yeah it's something that like can be potentially internalized over time.

SUB2: Yeah.

SUB1: Definitely.

EXP: Yeah um so since you don't think it's equally acceptable do you think that if it was it would help communication between partners and individuals in general?

SUB2: Yeah.

SUB1: Yeah.

SUB2: definitely.

SUB1: There'd be more understandings you know like there wouldn't have to be like as much uh I guess well you'll be able to clarify it better if you're able to you know utilize those skills the emotional speaking and whatnot.

EXP: Do you think that it would help the individual on like a personal level like even if they

weren't in a relationship just to be able to express like how they were doing and maybe access

care?

SUB1: I think so cause like they would be more mindful right of themselves and the

words they'd use.

EXP: Makes sense.

SUB2: Mm yeah I think uh lots of cultures and you know especially males of the cultures they

don't they don't seek help and aren't offered enough help in that you know field and so they

were to have you know exp if they were allowed to express more emotional um language I think

it would kind of break down the walls, break down that wall.

EXP: Yeah I definitely agree with that.

SUB2: Yeah.

—---------------------------------------End Example—--

     Analysis of Theme 4: Both males and females in 29 couples agreed that increasing

emotional language competency would support healthy communication and equitable Emotional

Work in: relationships, familial units, workplaces, friendships. Additionally, 29/30 of the couples

agreed that males were stereotyped to have fewer emotions than females. These participants

agreed that females were stereotyped to be too emotional whereas if males expressed emotions,

in any way, they were considered weak. Almost all couples hoped to see a change in how society

positions emotional language competency as it pertains to gender and the inequitable tools

socialized in childhood. Within this context, the majority of interviewed males spoke about their

experience with anger and physicality being far more prevalent than other emotional expressions

as it was more encouraged and freely allowed. Males expressed regret over not being able to

express emotions to their male friends and family members. However, they felt unable to engage

in emotional language and emotional physical expression around people outside of their female
partner or in some cases their female friends/family members.

Couples reported emotional language competency equality and equity would likely
require socializing children differently, creating new models of Emotional Language
Competency tools. This would require setting different standards of acceptance of emotions in
society and finally making gender independent from emotion. This disentangling and
independence could mean that the masculine emotions of anger and frustration are no longer
bound to males. Additionally, neither would the emotions of sadness, happiness, excitement and
joy, be bound to females. As well, emotional expression would be socially acceptable no matter
one's gender, or type of emotion, and emotion-based tools would be taught equally across
genders and across the globe. Participants expressed that as a whole we must begin by "meeting
people where they are at" (Example 4a) and acknowledging that we do not have concrete models
and equitable societal norms in place within our current societal structure.

Additional Remarks

Additionally, although there was a range in age of the couples, ranging between 18 years
old to 54-year-old individuals within the couples, there was no difference in our resulting themes
based on age. Finally, the sample of couples consisted of 6 Canadian Asian couples and 24
Canadian Caucasian couples, and there was no difference in the resulting themes from the
difference in culture either.

Chapter 4: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to deepen our understanding of gender differences in
Emotional Work and Emotional Language Competency in heterosexual relationships lived

experience. Soliciting the views of heterosexual couples provided nuanced context on how gendering Emotional Intelligence (EI), Emotional Language Competency (ELC) and Emotional Work (EW) can create consequences for intimate partnerships. By executing a qualitative, exploratory study I managed to confirm the gender differences in ELC, EW and EI. This study format allowed for a deeper understanding of the couples lived experiences and the effects of gendering emotions in real time. The goal was less to prove a hypothesis and instead to ask more questions, remain curious and explore the why and how of effects for gendering of ELC, EW & EI. The study design was created in order to examine the male versus female model of emotion and to highlight the negative effects of gender-based socialization on heterosexual couples.

After interviewing 30 heterosexual couples about the distribution of Emotional Work in their relationships, this study revealed the following 4 themes: **(Theme 1)** Rates of expression of emotion are higher in females than in males, **(Theme 2)** Emotion is highly gendered; anger and frustration are acceptable for males even to the point of violence, **(Theme 3)** The only model of healthy/safe emotional expression is currently a female one; males feel more comfortable expressing emotion around females (especially in coupleships) and **(Theme 4)** Emotional equality and equity are desired by all, equipped with knowledge of the steps necessary to achieve it. There was strong agreement across couples for these four themes as over 18/30 couples expressed that all four themes rang true for their relationship.

The Current State of Affairs: Themes 1 to 3

The first three themes were related to the current situation of EW in the 30 interviewed couples. When considering Theme 1 (Rates of expression of emotion are higher in females than in males), the results of this study supported the existing body of literature that positions females as having an advantage in ELC to males (Parkins, 2012). The participants vocalized some

awareness of the gender differences in their ELC and their use of ER, as well as in their

participation in EW. Participants spoke about how it was quite obvious growing up, and in

adulthood, that females were encouraged to express their emotions while males were stigmatized

for emotional expression. Later in life, all 30 females that were interviewed reported having their

ability to express emotions labelled as 'weak'. Based on this observation, it seems that regardless

of gender (or type of emotion), emotions themselves are stigmatized. This may have

consequences on romantic relationships in which an expected level of intimacy requires

facilitation through emotion (Gaia, 2002). All 30 couples (both males and females) also noted

that because ELC, ER, and EI were feminine traits, and therefore "weak", males were socialized

from an early age to not work on developing ELC, ER, and EI, as weakness was not masculine.

Strength, according to both sexes, was largely characterized by unemotionality, with two

notable exceptions: anger and frustration. Since anger and frustration were considered to be

"strong", females were shamed for expressing anger/frustration and males were encouraged to do

so. Theme 2 states that Emotion is highly gendered with anger and frustration considered

acceptable for males even to the point of violence. 21 of the 30 couples expressed the opinion

that anger and frustration were highly socially acceptable for males, even to the point of violence

towards oneself or another. The Example (2) from Transcript in the results section is a great

example of Theme 2. Here the male and female participants expressed agreement that males

were accepted and even encouraged to express anger, even if it resulted in violent outbursts in

social settings that could harm someone, as "no one really would pay much mind" (Appendix D,

Session 16).

During the data analysis, all 30 couples revealed that the emotions that seem socially

acceptable for males to express are some of the most volatile and most demanding of

intervention or regulation. With males being encouraged to express anger and frustration even to

the point of violence, what effect does this encouragement have on romantic relationships?

Would it require additional EW? If the females are so high in ELC and act as the emotional

regulators in the romantic coupleship, (i.e., taking on the EW) then the males' emotions of anger

and frustration will be more likely to require regulation as those emotions can turn harmful.

Inversely, the emotions that females are "allowed to/accepted to" express are the ones that are

least required of ER (Brody, 1997; Chaplin, 2015). So, if females have higher ELC and EI and

greater ER abilities, and the emotions that males are allowed to express are more likely to be

requiring of ER, and females are known to be the more active sex when it comes to EW, then it

stands to reason that females have a disproportionate burden of EW in their romantic

relationships to males in order to create and maintain harmony. As I did not specifically

interview the participants regarding the role of the regulator, further research will need to be

done in this area as we currently do not know who is assigned the role of the regulator in

heterosexual relationships.

      With females bearing a disproportionate burden of EW in heterosexual relationships, it is

perhaps not surprising that participants noted that the only model of healthy/safe emotional

expression is currently a female one (Theme 3). For the purposes of this study, the feminine

model of emotion illustrates that the way these concepts (ELC, ER, EI, EW) have been

socialized and taught has been purposely geared towards females, and as such the passing down

of these learnings continues this legacy. Similarly, all 30 males interviewed stated that they felt

more comfortable expressing emotion around females, especially within their coupleships. We

know that female and male participants in this study agreed that males expressed emotions less

than their female partners both within and outside of their romantic coupleship. So is it possible

that the heterosexual relationship is the societal pressure haven for heterosexual males to explore, even rarely, their emotions? Could then, through the modeling of their female partners, and a harmonious environment that their female partners are working to establish through ELC, ER, and EI, males learn to use these tools more fluently?

This "haven"-based learning is certainly possible; however, it is difficult to claim with any level of certainty that heterosexual coupleships might act as a rehabilitator to heterosexual males in terms of ELC, ER, EI, and EW. One of our participants spoke about trying to learn how to express emotion through a female model of emotional expression and how this did not fully allow for complete learning of emotional expression and subsequently ELC, ER, EI, and EW. This participant stated that the female emotional expression model was something that individuals could use as a baseline. However, in order to grow their ability in this realm, the participant had to study and learn through a local men's group what it meant to express emotions as a male, and communicate their needs to their female partner in a harmonious way.

Based on previous research by (Duncombe & Marsden, 1993), females in heterosexual couples typically lead the majority of EW with their respective partnerships (Theme 1). From the analysis of the data, it appeared that this might be because the only working model for these tools is a feminine model (Theme 3). As such, EW equity and equality, according to Frith & Kitzinger, (1998) and Perray-Redslob & Younes (2021) have not yet been achieved. It is possible that EW equity and equality might be achieved should each individual in a heterosexual relationship be equipped with comparable abilities in ELC, ER, and EI (Theme 4). With this increased equality, it might become simpler to create and return to harmony within a heterosexual relationship.

Consequences to Themes 1-3

While these three themes shed light on heterosexual romantic relationships and the discrepancies between males and females in ELC, ER, EI, and EW, the themes identified are not without their consequences. What we have understood with this research and the literature reviewed, is that it is not a conscious choice that males make to place this EW burden on their female partners (Chaplin, 2015). Instead, this phenomenon is a result of generations worth of socialization, stigmatization and gendered development of ELC (Duncombe & Marsden, 1993). Some possible consequences of these societal structures are so widespread and influential that there are a number of concerning issues that can be tied to them in varying fields of study (Perray-Redslob & Younes, 2021). For males specifically, rates of accessing mental health care is significantly lower than that of females (Rice et. al., 2018). In fact, men are less likely to access health care in general until it reaches a certain threshold where it is so bad they have little choice, or the choice is made for them by a loved one (Bertakis et. al., 2000).

Theme 4: Equity & Equality in the Future

Finally, we explore Theme 4: all the participants desired EW equality and equity, as well as the knowledge of the steps necessary to achieve equality and equity. When considering a world of true ELC, ER, and EI equity and equality (equity in this case meaning that there is no stigma revolving around these constructs that might affect one's relationships or opportunities; equality meaning that the development was treated as equal without a gendered lens and children were reared the same when it came to these constructs), both participants reflected that it would be a safer, better world. Often participants explored this and spoke about how interpersonal relationships would improve, romantic couples would experience more health and wellbeing, friendships and family relationships would thrive, and even workspaces would be conducive to

clearer communication and empowerment across the board. As discussed, in order for partners to communicate through everyday stressful situations and maintain or return to harmony, females would often have to act as the primary regulators, regulating their own emotions and their partners' emotions. If this were to occur occasionally, it would be less noticeable, but for some of the couples that were in discussions or arguments more regularly than others (See Appendix D), this would become taxing over time for the female partner. It is essentially twice the emotional load to regulate one's own emotions as well as their partners' while utilizing all parts of ELC to facilitate the process. We saw this facilitation throughout the interviews and games in this study. While the female was very adept at it, and it was subtle in its nature, it was still present without fail.

Future Research & Limitations

This study included only heterosexual couples within the dataset. I acknowledge and know that gender is a spectrum and that there are all types of equally legitimate relationships and coupleships. This study was conducted to examine the male vs female model of emotion to highlight the negative effects of gender-based socialization. However, to get a generalizable picture across relationships on how socialization has affected emotion in ELC, ER and EI future research must also study same-sex relationships, asexual relationships, aromantic relationships, trans relationships and all other types of relationships that exist in the world. Additionally, the majority of the participants in the present study were Caucasian. The dataset did include 6 sets of Chinese Canadian couples, who expressed the same four themes as the other couples. Future studies are needed to make arguments about cultural differences or similarities.

This study was limited by time as it needed to be completed during a Masters degree timeline and could have benefited from additional analyses and the dataset is prepared for

conversation and discourse analysis and gesture analysis. There are limitations to this study

being qualitative as there are no quantitative results to provide additional information to

strengthen the data. In the future, it will be important for researchers to understand age effects by

controlling for the age of participants. Additionally, years of togetherness should also be

controlled and cross referenced to see if there are any notable effects there. All of the participants

in this study were drawn from the students digest at the University of Alberta. A more diverse,

and potentially larger participant pool might strengthen the results that have been explored in this

thesis. Finally, this thesis and degree was entirely conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, in

person data collection was prohibited, and it would be important for this study to be replicated in

person to see if there are any notable effects caused by the virtual data collection method.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

While we are beginning to understand why ELC, ER, EI, and EW have developed in a

gendered fashion through socialization in childhood, we have yet to fully understand why the

gendering of emotion and the constructs that stem from them persist in today's cultural

landscape. The most recent generations in their young adult years are a group of, to date, the

most socially evolved, intellectually stimulated, social activists that seek to foster equity and

equality among all groups of people (Singh & Dangmei, 2016). Equity in this case is defined as

the ability to experience emotions in a way that would inspire positive reinforcement over time,

without negative consequence or removal of opportunities. Equality in this case, is defined by the

non-gendering of emotion, in that all emotions are equal, and none have a connotation that

results in a perception of one's worthiness.

Currently, there is an unequal distribution of EW in couples. However, there is a deep

desire for more equitable distribution. This distribution would have to include females being able

to express anger and frustration, males being able to develop ELC, ER, and EI in an equal amount as females, and a better model for "masculine" EW in relationships to relieve the burden on female heterosexual partners. It is up to society as a whole to change our patterns of socialization and development, to extend the dismantling of gender to emotion as well as pay, and to rear children with an equal adeptness to handle all that their brains and bodies naturally experience, one of the biggest being emotion. The most important thing to realize is that the current systems do not make life easier for males in the domains of emotional health, mental health and physical health. Instead, it decreases their lifespan and decreases their quality of life and quality of relationships (Rice et. al., 2018; Bertakis et.al., 2000). If we all want equity and equality, we must all work towards it, and demand societal change, not just individual change. It is a direction that we are slowly moving towards, but not one that is moving fast enough considering the destructiveness, and life altering consequences that some of the forms of expressing emotion can have.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Session Questions

Interview 1:

1. How did the two of you meet?

2. What do you like to do together?

3. How often do you guys think couples have disagreements?

4. How often do you guys think couples have emotional conversations?

5. How often do you think females in heterosexual couples use emotional language?

6. How often do you think males in heterosexual couples use emotional language?

7. How often do you think females display their emotions in heterosexual couples?

8. How often do you think males display their emotions in heterosexual couples?

9. Who do you think plays video games more? Males or females? Or do you think it's an even distribution?

10. Have either of you ever played video games?

11. Have either of you tried a choose your own adventure game?

Interview 2:

1. How did it feel to go through the two games together?

2. Did you feel differently between the first game and the second game?

3. Did you feel like you learned anything about your partner playing this game together?

4. Did you feel like you learned anything about yourself during this game?

5. What do you think about emotional language competency? Do you think its important?

6. Do either of you feel like you could use more emotional language in communication?

7. Do you feel like it's equally acceptable between females and males to use emotional language?

8. If you don't feel like it's equally acceptable between females and males to use emotional language, do you think that if it was, it could help communication between partners or just individuals in general?

Appendix B: Consent and Declaration

Project Title: Anger is a Feeling Too

Research Investigator:

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Background: We are conducting a study to identify the underlying mechanisms that result in dichotomized emotional language learning and competency. In this study you will respond to a set of interview questions followed by playing two choose your own adventure games and an ending interview

Study Procedures:

- Interview 1

- Choose your own adventure game 1

- Choose your own adventure game 2

- Interview 2

Estimated time for completion: The study will take approximately 1.5 hours.

Voluntary Participation. Your decision to participate in this study is entirely voluntary and you may decide to stop participating at any time. Your decision not to participate will not affect access to services from the University of Alberta. The results of this study may be presented at scholarly conferences, published in professional journals, or presented in class lectures. Only grouped (aggregate) data will be presented. The data will be securely stored by Elena Nicoladis for a minimum of five years. After the data are no longer in use, the data will be deleted from our files.

Risks. There are no foreseeable risks to this study. If you should experience any adverse effects, please notify the researcher immediately.

Further Information and Withdrawal of Consent: If at any point you would like to remove your responses from this data set you may do so up to 2 weeks after data collection has been complete. If a participant wishes to withdraw from the study they may do so at any point without penalty. If they wish to not complete the study prior to the study beginning they will receive an alternative task to complete that will consist of a short research paper to read and a few multiple choice questions to answer. If you have any questions about this research, please contact Dr. Elena Nicoladis at 780-492-0124 or elenan@ualberta.ca. The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines by a Research Ethics Board at the University of

Alberta. If you have any questions about, or wish to clarify, your rights as a research participant, you can contact the Research Ethics Office at 780-492-2615.

If you agree to participate, please say "yes".

Appendix C: Debrief

Anger is a Feeling Too

<u>The Purpose of the Study</u>: As children we learn about our gender as a solid construct that we have to follow. With this construct comes a set of rules and regulations that dictates our behaviour, actions, and learnings about the world. One of these learnings includes emotional language competency. Emotional language competency can be broken down into report vs rapport talk which we know that males favor the former and females the latter. My hypothesis is that this favouring is a direct result from gender stereotypes being imposed on children at a young age telling them whether they can feel free to express their emotions and learn how to describe them (girls) or not (boys).

We also know that as a majority, males are more likely to perpetrate violence whether that include sexual assault, domestic violence, completing suicide, or other acts of violence. My hypothesis is that this demonstrable increase in violence perpetrated by men can be moderated through the learning of emotional language competency.

By understanding the effects of gender stereotyping on rates of violence through emotional

language competencies, we have the potential to learn more about treatment opportunities for

those who perpetuate sexual assault, domestic violence and completion of suicide and prevention

techniques to bring down these rates of violence in our society.

Background of Research: Please refer to the following readings for further information.

- Beck, L., Kumschick, I. R., Eid, M., & Klann-Delius, G. (2011, December 12).

  Relationship Between Language Competence and Emotional Competence in Middle

  Childhood. *Emotion*. Advance online publication. doi: 10.1037/a0026320

The Design of the Study: In the present study, we will be using online interviews of

heteronormative couples via Zoom or Google Meets as well as having participants complete 2

"choose your own adventure" games. The organization of the session will go as follows: pre-

interview, game 1, game 2, post interview.

Further Contact information: Thank you for participating in this study! Without the help of

people like you, we could not answer most of the important scientific questions in psychology.

If, after this appointment, you have any questions about this research, please contact Dr. Elena

Nicoladis at 780-492-0124 or elenan@ualberta.ca. If you have any questions about research

participation, contact the Research Participation Coordinator at 780-492-5689, or

rescred@ualberta.ca. The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical

guidelines by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. If you have any questions

about, or wish to clarify, your rights as a research participant, you can contact the Research

Ethics Office at 780-492-2615.

Please do not tell other people about what we had you do here because we may be asking others

in your class to be research participants, and we do not want them to come in with any biases.

Also, be assured that we will aggregate all the responses and analyze them as a group, and will not

analyze any response individually.

If you decide to withdraw the consent for using the data you have provided, please let us know.

Simply contact us and ask for your data to be withdrawn. If you wish to withdraw from the study

you may do so at any point without penalty. If you wish to not complete the study prior to the

study beginning they will receive an alternative task to complete that will consist of a short research

paper to read and a few multiple choice questions to answer. There will be no punishment/ penalty

if you decide to withdraw your data.

Appendix D: Transcripts

Glossary of Transcripts

CHAT uses the following forms for marking disfluencies.

Stuttering-like disfluencies (SLDs)	Code	Example	Notes
prolongation	:	s:paghetti	Place after prolonged segment
broken word	^	spa^ghetti	Pause within word
blocking	≠	≠butter	A block before word onset
repeated segment	↩	↩r-r-r↩rabbit like↩ike-ike↩	The ↩ brackets the repetition; hyphens mark iterations
lengthened repeated segment	↩ and doubling	↩rr-rr-r↩rabbit	The doubling of "r" indicates lengthening of the "r" segment
word repetition	[/]	dog [/] dog	Further distinctions are done inside FluCalc
Typical Disfluencies (TDs)	**Code**	**Example**	**Notes**
phrase repetition	<> [/]	<that is a> [/] that is a dog.	< > is used to mark repeated material
word revision	[//]	a dog [//] beast	Revision counts once
phrase revision	<> [//]	<what did you> [//] how can you see it ?	Revision counts once
phonological fragment	&+	&+sn dog	Changes from "snake" to "dog"
pause	(.) or (..) or (…)	(.)	Counts the number of short, medium, long pauses
pause duration	(2.4)	(2.4)	Adds up the time values, if marked
filled pause	&-	&-um &-you_know	Fillers with underscore count as one word

Table 1: CHAT glossary for symbols utilized in transcription. Provided via CHILDES Transcription Manual p. 93 https://talkbank.org/manuals/CHAT.pdf .

OSF Transcript Link

Link: https://osf.io/7g2nf/

Appendix E: Games

Game 1: https://storyboard.viget.com/psychologically-game

Password: ThirtyFour

Game 2: https://storyboard.viget.com/you-can-win-this-game

Password: ThirtyFour

Appendix F: Figures

Figure 1: Game 1 Story Map
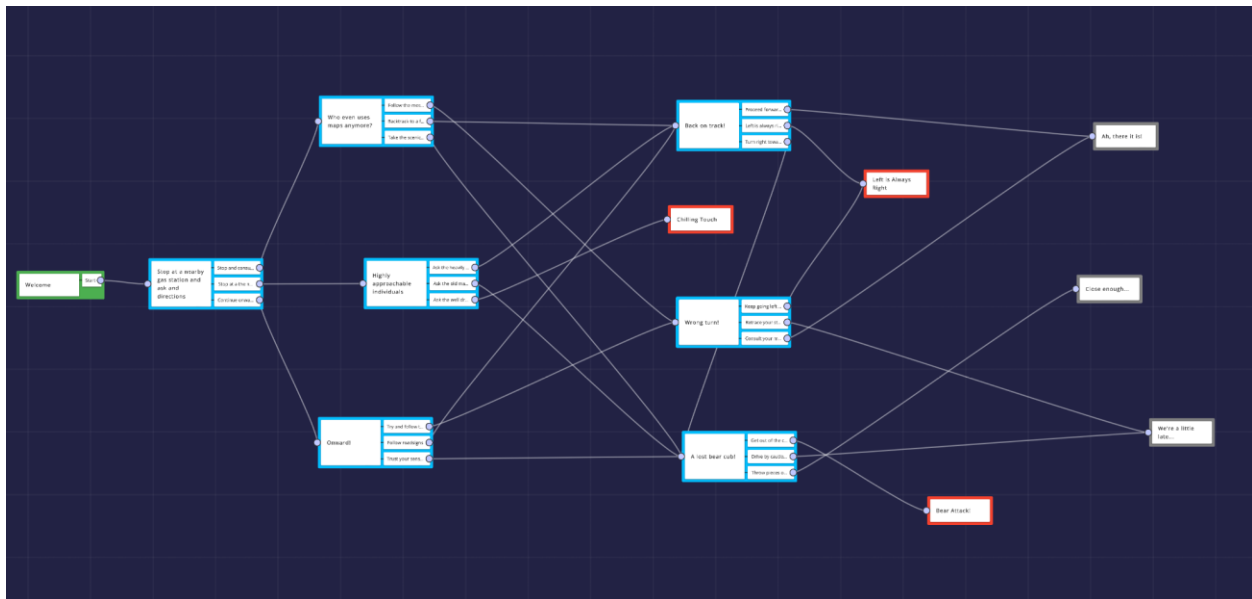
Figure 1: Game 1 Story Map created using the website https://storyboard.viget.com. As you can see, each ending has a different type of result, with all results being winnable. This storyboard game was created by Mackenzie Dechaine and Michael Kobewka, two volunteer video game professionals.
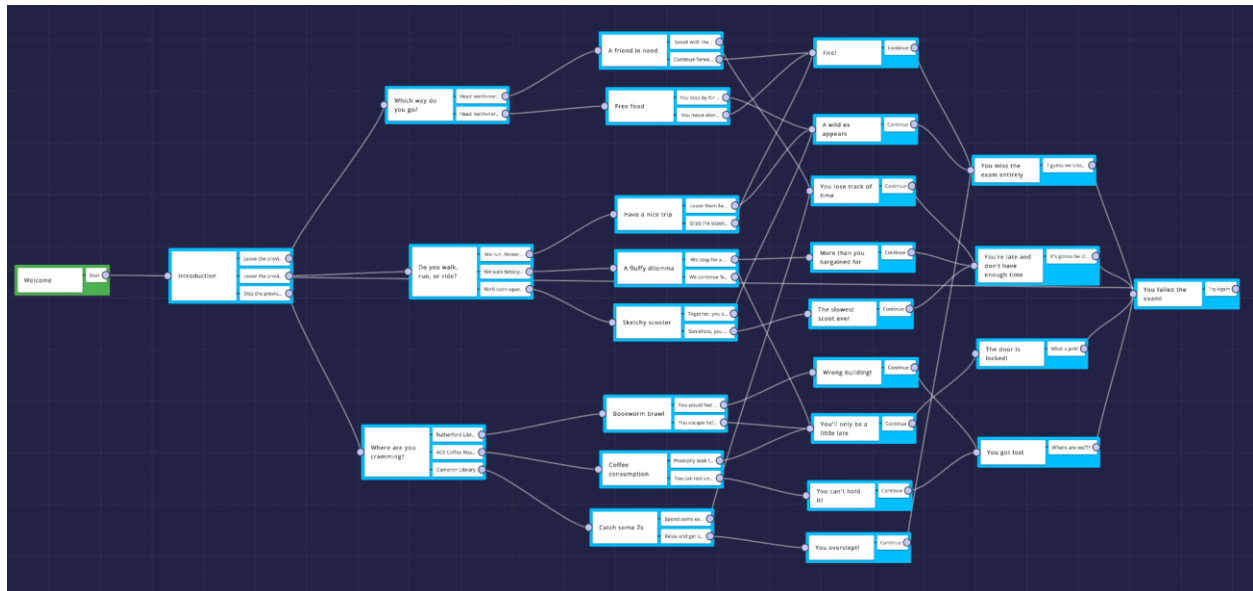
Figure 2: Game 2 Story Map

Figure 2: Game 2 Story Map created using the website https://storyboard.viget.com. As you can see, each ending has the same result stating "You failed the Exam, Try Again". Participants were told they had 5 tries to try to win the game, however, no part of the decision tree would result in a win. This storyboard game was created by Mackenzie Dechaine and Michael Kobewka, two volunteer video game professionals.