Gender, romance and the school ball
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Abstract
This article reports on how a group of year 13 students, from three New Zealand secondary schools, negotiated popular cultural and media constructions of the school ball as a romantic space for girls, and an event similar in importance to their wedding day. None of the female participants viewed the ball as a site of romance for them personally. Instead, it was some of the male participants who constructed the ball as a romantic space through linking the ball to a wedding and discussing their motivation for taking their girlfriends to the event. Initially, the young men’s discussions of romance appear to challenge the emotionally inexpressive version of masculinity prized in New Zealand culture. However, these discussions also acted as a resource for the young men to constitute their “adult” hegemonic masculine subjectivities. It appears young men and women are challenging traditional discourses of gender in the twenty-first century.