

REINVENTING THE SQUEAL:  
YOUNG NEW ZEALAND WOMEN NEGOTIATING  
SPACE IN THE CURRENT SEXUAL CULTURE

By  
Lesley Wright

A thesis submitted to the Victoria University of Wellington  
in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

Victoria University of Wellington

(2012)

---

For Hannah, and my Mum

---

## Table of Contents

<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES AND IMAGES .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>ABSTRACT.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>CHAPTER ONE: IN THE BEGINNING.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<i>The Mainstream Moral Panic.....</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>One Small Note.....</i>	<i>19</i>
<b>THE POINT OF IT ALL—THESIS AIMS.....</b>	<b>19</b>
<i>Introducing New Zealand: Facts about the Nation.....</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>The Objectives .....</i>	<i>22</i>
<b>CHAPTER TWO: SETTING THE SCENE .....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>CHAPTER THREE: HOW AND WHY THINGS WERE DONE .....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>FEMINIST METHODOLOGY.....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES .....</b>	<b>52</b>
<i>Why a Third Wave Feminist Stance?.....</i>	<i>52</i>
<i>Additional Theoretical Influences .....</i>	<i>58</i>
<i>Sexual Script Theory (SST).....</i>	<i>63</i>
<i>Sexual Subjectivity.....</i>	<i>66</i>
<i>Doing Space.....</i>	<i>67</i>
<i>Epistemology .....</i>	<i>71</i>
<b>CHAPTER FOUR: HOW I DID IT .....</b>	<b>74</b>
<i>Methods, Feminist Methods, and Mixed Methods.....</i>	<i>74</i>
<i>Transformative Goals Need a Mixing of Methods.....</i>	<i>75</i>
<i>Softly Softly—Mixed Methods and Sensitive Topics.....</i>	<i>76</i>
<i>Don't Blow My Cover.....</i>	<i>77</i>
<i>Putting the Pieces Together—The Design.....</i>	<i>78</i>
<i>Doing It Online.....</i>	<i>78</i>
<i>Volunteers, Take One Step Forward .....</i>	<i>82</i>
<i>Research Instruments .....</i>	<i>85</i>
<i>One Last Thing .....</i>	<i>95</i>
<b>CHAPTER FIVE: WOMEN'S WORDS—THE SURVEY.....</b>	<b>96</b>
<b>THE ANALYSIS .....</b>	<b>96</b>
<b>THE RESULTS .....</b>	<b>97</b>
<i>What is Real Sex? .....</i>	<i>97</i>
<i>Spot the Difference: Hooking Up, Casual Sex and Fuck Buddies.....</i>	<i>99</i>

---

<i>What is Hooking Up?</i> .....	99
<i>What is Casual Sex?</i> .....	106
<i>What are Fuck Buddies?</i> .....	111
<i>What is Public Sexual Behaviour (PSB)?</i> .....	114
<i>The Oh So Persistent Sexual Double Standard (SDS)</i> .....	119
<i>What We Get up to behind Closed Doors</i> .....	120
<i>Conquering the World One Orgasm at a Time</i> .....	130
<i>Discussion</i> .....	132
<b>CHAPTER SIX: LISTENING TO VOICES</b> .....	<b>136</b>
THE SEXUAL RISK SCRIPT—THE RULES IN NEW ZEALAND.....	136
<i>Safety</i> .....	137
<i>Sexual Partners</i> .....	142
<i>Stigma in Its Many Forms</i> .....	151
<i>It's All about Control</i> .....	155
<i>Just to Be Clear</i> ... ..	159
CHOICES, CHOICES, CHOICES—PRESCRIPTIVE IMPACTS OF THE SRS .....	160
<i>Looking for Mr Relationship</i> .....	160
<i>Doing the Together Woman</i> .....	162
<b>CHAPTER SEVEN: SPACES AND PLACES</b> .....	<b>165</b>
MAKING SPACES OUT IN THE WORLD .....	165
<i>Seeing the World through Beer-goggles</i> .....	166
<i>Doing It in Public</i> .....	177
<i>Flashing at the Bar</i> .....	177
<i>Ambiguity as a Pass Card</i> .....	180
<i>No Space for Casual Sex</i> .....	188
<i>No Strings Attached ... or Sitting on the 'I'</i> .....	191
<i>Choosing from a Lack of Options</i> .....	196
RELATIONSHIPS—COVETED (PRIVATE) SPACE .....	199
<b>CHAPTER EIGHT: COMMON THREADS AND UBIQUITOUS THEMES</b> .....	<b>212</b>
TALKING ABOUT DESIRE .....	212
ORGASMS AND EMBODIED TENSIONS.....	216
STIGMA—IT'S A TOUGH WORLD OUT THERE .....	221
LOSING YOUR 'V' PLATES FOR LOVE VS THROWING THEM AWAY.....	233
WOMEN, SEX AND EMPOWERMENT .....	237
<b>CHAPTER NINE: WHEN ALL IS SAID AND DONE</b> .....	<b>255</b>
<i>What Women Had to Say, and What Went Unsaid</i> .....	255
<i>Coming to Conclusions</i> .....	259
REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	262
<i>Recommendations</i> .....	263
<b>APPENDICES</b> .....	<b>266</b>

---

<i>Appendix 1 - Emerging Adulthood</i> .....	266
<i>Appendix 2 - Recruitment Flyer</i> .....	268
<i>Appendix 3 - Study Website</i> .....	269
<i>Appendix 4 – Survey</i> .....	272
<i>Appendix 5 - Information and Consent Form</i> .....	280
<i>Appendix 6 - Reinventing the Squeal Web Discussion Group</i> .....	284
<i>Appendix 7 - Facebook Page for Project</i> .....	286
<i>Appendix 8 - Interview Guide</i> .....	287
<i>Appendix 9 – Survey Results Graphs</i> .....	288
<b>REFERENCES</b> .....	<b>297</b>

---

## List of Figures and Images

Figure 1: Range of response to closed-ended questions .....	88
Figure 2: Range of response to open-ended questions.....	88
Figure 3: Definitions of 'real' sex by group.....	98
Figure 4: Overlap in definitions.....	99
Figure 5: Definitions of hooking up by group .....	100
Figure 6: Have you ever hooked up? .....	101
Figure 7: Frequency of hook ups .....	101
Figure 8: Definitions of casual sex .....	106
Figure 9: Have you ever had casual sex?.....	107
Figure 10: Frequency of casual sex .....	107
Figure 11: Have you ever had a fuck buddy? .....	112
Figure 12: Public sexual behaviours (PSB) witnessed by participants.....	115
Figure 13: Public sexual behaviours (PSB) engaged in by participants .....	116
Figure 14: Does the sexual double standard exist?.....	119
Figure 15: Does the SDS have an effect on women's lives?.....	120
Figure 16: Dating and sex patterns .....	121
Figure 17: How happy participants are with their sex lives.....	122
Figure 18: Desire and self-awareness .....	124
Figure 19: Do you get your desires met in partnered sex? .....	124
Figure 20: How do you ensure your sexual needs/wants are met? .....	125
Figure 21: Factors that would improve participants' sex lives.....	127
Figure 22: Is sex empowering? .....	130
Figure 23: Safety campaigns.....	144
Figure 24: The Salient cartoon image .....	145
Figure 25 Information sources for sexual health issues.....	288
Figure 26 Information sources for male sexuality .....	288
Figure 27: Information sources for female sexuality .....	289
Figure 28: Information sources for female sexual desire.....	289
Figure 29: Information sources for male sexual pleasure .....	290
Figure 30: Information sources for female sexual pleasure.....	290
Figure 31: Information message: sex is fun, have as much as you like .....	291

---

Figure 32: Information message: sex is fun but be careful .....	291
Figure 33: Information message: sex is dangerous .....	292
Figure 34: Information message: sex is for marriage or relationships.....	292
Figure 35: Information message: sex is important for men .....	293
Figure 36: Information message: sex is not that important for women .....	293
Figure 37: How I feel about my sex life with respect to contraception and sexual health ....	294
Figure 38: How I feel about my sex life with respect to male sexuality .....	294
Figure 39: How I feel about my sex life with respect to female sexuality .....	295
Figure 40: How I feel about my sex life with respect to male sexual pleasure .....	295
Figure 41: How I feel about my sex life with respect to female sexual pleasure .....	296
Figure 42: How I feel about my sex life with respect to female sexual desire .....	296

---

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all the young women who participated in this project—without your voices and willingness to speak up I would not have come to understand the cultural moment you live in, and the challenges you face.

A huge thank you to my supervisors, Dr Lesley Hall and Dr Jenny Neale, for their commitment to me over the years, and their unwavering confidence in my ability to not only complete but to have something interesting to say.

Thank you to my wonderful friend Pauline Pau for designing the website.

And to Hannah, without whom I would not be here, my Mum for her faith in me, and my friends, for sticking around through the ‘thesis-crazies’.

---



## Abstract

The sexual behaviour of young emergent adult women in New Zealand has become a target of media attention and commentary. Moralising language is prevalent in the public discourse, describing young women negatively with respect to character and psychology. Research investigating the increase of cultural artefacts such as hooking up or casual sex is often risk-focused, concentrating predominantly on detrimental impacts such as STIs, rape-risks, and depression. Some feminist analyses describe behaviour as postfeminist or as examples of false consciousness. Despite these positions, young New Zealand women are engaging in these and other non-relationship sexual activities in growing numbers, suggesting that current approaches are failing to capture salient explanatory information.

Due to the negative impacts of social constraints such as the sexual double standard, traditional femininity and moralising social commentary on young women it is important to present a more holistic image of their behaviour so as to provide a deeper explanatory view which better accounts for young women's experiences and motivations.

In this study I utilise a mixed method research design to access a wide range of participants on a sensitive research topic. A self-selecting sample of 163 young women aged between 18 and 30, recruited from various university campuses around New Zealand, completed an online survey. From this group 18 heterosexually-identifying young women were selected to participate in instant messaging, email and face to face interviews, and an online discussion group. To analyse the material they provided I use a Third Wave feminist theoretical lens in order to give primacy not only to their voices but also their claims to agency and the importance of subjective positionality. I use Sexual Script Theory as a framework to illuminate the impact of cultural dialogues on individuals, and space was conceptualised as a way to illustrate performances and agency.

Results suggest that young New Zealand women are strongly affected by risk-focused and moralising dialogues to the effect that they have internalised a risk-focused cultural script that guides their sexual interactions and behaviours within socio-sexual culture in constrained and avoidant ways. Other performed scripts such as 'good girl' femininity, traditional masculinity, and the normative performance of heterosex also presented as barriers to subjective sexual experience/development. However, many young women in this study were

---

resistant to some of these scripts, as evidenced in their attempts to occupy traditionally masculine and/or social spaces where non-normative behaviours are (partially) permitted. Their behaviour suggests critical engagement with their socio-sexual environment and some awareness of script elements that dictate acceptable feminine behaviour, and how these constraints can be (at least temporarily) resisted as a means to not only developing sexual subjectivity but also to refashioning modern femininity.

---

## Chapter One: In the Beginning...

Jenkins's (2010) article for the British newspaper *The Independent* is provocatively titled "Raunch or romance—That's the choice women have been given". The headline suggests that the dominant cultural dialogue describes young women's sexual behaviour as a choice between engaging in either 'good girl' or 'bad girl' behaviours, itself nothing new. What is regarded as new, however, is that young women now appear to be 'choosing' to engage not in the romance, but the raunch, and it is this aspect of our current sexualised culture that draws public, media and academic attention.

A common phrase used to describe the predominant tone of media-based public dialogues on female sexual behaviour is 'moral panic'<sup>1</sup>. This 'panic' is reinforced by risk-focused education and social messaging, and a focus by critical non-commercial voices on risk-based research that often represents a 'sex as danger' position (Beasley, 2008, p. 152). Sex and sexualised behaviours such as hooking up, casual sex, fuck buddies, and public sexualised performances are presented to young women as dangerous and encumbered with a long list of associated health and wellbeing risks and psychological harms that are presented as gender-specific (Hamilton & Armstrong, 2009, p. 591).

Despite young men having a long history of engaging in many of the same behaviours, this 'new' cultural artefact has sparked a *gendered* moral panic, with young women in short skirts, flashing breasts, hooking up and behaving 'promiscuously' being topics of cautionary dialogue and publications.

### ***Definitions: What Are We Talking About?***

Definitions for terms such as hooking up can be varied, both within the academic literature and with individual usage, which itself may not be static (Fielder & Carey, 2010, pp. 346-347). This variance is also visible across terms, where factors that outline the concept hooking up are also evident in ideas about casual sex and fuck buddies (see *The Results*, pp. 97-119). Nonetheless, some stipulation of what is being referred to is needed, and so the following (flexible) definitions are offered as a way to provide some context.

---

<sup>1</sup> Cohen first described moral panics in the 1960s. He states: "Societies appear to be subject, every now and then, to periods of moral panic. A condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right-thinking people." (2005, p. 1)

---

To 'hook up' means to

“...engage in any type of sexual activity with someone without a relationship. Hooking up is used to describe casual sexual encounters on a continuum from ‘one-and-done’ (a hook up that takes place only once with someone who may or may not be a stranger) to ‘sex buddies’ (acquaintances who meet regularly for sex but rarely if ever associate otherwise), to ‘friends with benefits’ (friends who do not care to become romantic partners, but may include sex among the activities they enjoy together)” (Kalish & Kimmel, 2011, pp. 140-141).

Thus, a hook up may vary in content from kissing to intercourse. Casual sex generally includes some kind of penetrative sex act outside of a romantic relationship context, where partners may be unknown prior to meeting, or known casually or well. Fuck buddies refers to non-romantic arrangements where individuals have sex but are not involved in any kind of formalised relationship. Public sexual behaviours are performed acts that range from kissing in public, and flashing of parts of the body, to various sexual acts. For definitions relevant to my research see The Results, pp. 97-119.

There are a number of additional definitions that are also required.

*Empowerment* is an often-used but seldom defined term, and a fuller discussion of the term can be found in Chapter Three. Briefly, empowerment takes into account the productive nature of Foucauldian conceptualisations of power, where empowerment references ‘power to’ at both the subjective (intellectual) and experiential levels (Holland, Ramazanoglu, Sharpe & Thomson, 1998 pp. 9, 131). Thus it equates to feeling as though one can act, and being able to do so, but does not equate to a ‘male’ definition of empowerment or empowered behaviour as ‘power over’ (Holland, et al., 1992, p. 251).

*Agency* can be described as “feeling like one can do and act”, which is necessary for a “positive sense of self” (Martin, 1996, p. 10). Sexual subjectivity is an essential component as it can affect one’s ability to be intentionally efficacious in the world (ibid). Sexual subjectivity then becomes the link “between agency and the body/sexuality” (ibid). Thus, *sexual subjectivity* consists of being able to “experience oneself as a sexual being ...[where the individual is a] subject rather than the object of sexual desire” (Horne, 2005, p. 13).

Agency within the context of sexuality, and taking into account the idea of sexual subjectivity, equates to an individual feeling as though they can and do act within sexual contexts. This is a narrow definition of agency with respect to capacity to act, but takes into account the subjective nature of empowerment.

---

Within this definition is an understanding of *sexuality* as both socially constructed by a shared set of social meanings, but also “how we experience and express ourselves as sexual beings” (Rye, 2007, p. 29).

*Heterosexuality* references both the social institution and the sexual/relational practice. As a institution it is hierarchal along lines of gender, and positions women as subordinate and/or inferior to a dominant and normalised male sexual subjectivity/agency/practice/identity (Jackson, 1995, p. 19). As practice, heterosexuality includes the mirco-practices of desire and pleasure, but also extends to gendered roles both inside and outside of the bedroom (p.21). Heterosexual desire is positioned as the normative sexual identity, and as a normative practice centres on heterosex, narrowly conceptualised as penis-in-vagina (PVI) sex (ibid). Within normative heterosexuality, genders are defined in relation to each other where he acts, and she is acted upon (Holland, et al., 2003, p. 86).

*Femininity* is referred to in this thesis as traditional, appropriate and/or good girl/bad girl femininity, in reference to a normative set of practices that are performed in accordance with the cultural scripts that performance in turn reinforces/shapes (see Sexual Script Theory, pp. 62-52 for further discussion). Traditional, good or appropriate femininity is described as asexual, sexually innocent, sexually responsible, “good, decent ...passive” and a sexual object for male desire, but one that performs a regulator y force on that desire (Braun & Gavey, 1999, p. 204; Tolman & Higgins, 1996, pp. 205-211). This good or appropriate femininity is disembodied with respect to subjective experiences and understandings of desire and pleasure (p. 215), and is oriented towards the other, namely the pleasing of, and reification of, a superior masculinity. Resisting undertaking this performance can be difficult and costly.

A dominant *masculinity* in New Zealand can be described as a hegemonic masculinity: the good “kiwi bloke” who is “hard-working, beer-swilling, rugby-playing, homosocial, homophobic,[and] sexually predatory” (Terry & Braun, 2009, p. 165). This masculinity is competitive, phallogentric, driven to orgasm as biological processes (signified by penis obsessions and concerns over potency), requires sexpertise or expert sexual skill, and sexual domination (Potts, 2002). Like femininity this is a difficult performance, and it may be invested in and performed to varying degrees within different relational contexts, and/or set aside/refashioned within relationships (Terry & Braun, 2009, pp. 166-168). Although this is

---

not the *only* kind of masculinity being performed in New Zealand, it is a central traditional script.

*Performance* within this thesis signifies a blend of ideas attributable to Butler and Goffman (for further discussion, see the Additional Theoretical Influences, pp. 57-62). For Butler, performativity refers to the iterative practice of self-stylisations that create the appearance of a particular gender (Butler, 2006). This process is both conscious and unconscious. Goffman (1959, 1969), however leaves more space in his dramaturgical conception of performance for premeditated, rehearsed and intentional performances, which also lead to the appearance of genders and subjectivities. Thus performance within this thesis is both intentional and unintentional, conscious and subconscious, practiced and spontaneous acts that create impressions of particular subjectivities/identities for audiences.

### **The Mainstream Moral Panic**

A cursory survey of some of the more popular texts available in bookstores highlights the dominant risk/danger/negative tone about sexuality, and its gendered nature. For example, Australian author and media commentator Hamilton (2008, cover) encourages readers to ask *What is happening to our girls?* and suggests that “kids are overstimulated, oversold and oversexed”. American journalist Levy (2005, back cover) describes young women today as *Female chauvinist pigs* who throw themselves into a “raunch culture” by self-objectifying themselves and objectifying other women whilst trying to be “one of the guys”. Australian feminist journalist/author McGuire (2008) categorises young women today as either *Princesses or pornstars*, and questions why sexy behaviour is empowering for women, but men are neither visibly engaging in, or apparently required to engage in, similar behaviours in the name of empowerment. In her latest book *Living dolls: The return to sexism*, British author and columnist Walter (2010, p. 6) notes the narrow space of contemporary femininity as sexy and sexualised, and therefore liberated and empowered. Australian feminist academic Siegel (2007, p. 155) asks “Why [we] call such sexed-up behaviour “liberated” and “feminist” and not what it looks like: false consciousness or even, to use an even more out-dated-sounding term, “oppression?”” American author and journalist Paul (2005) and some of those cited above source this cultural change to the rise of pornography and its infiltration into the mainstream media. American feminist researcher and activist Teifer (2010) attributes it to the invention and market domination of drugs like Viagra and the

---

medicalisation of sex. American political analyst and social commentator Liebau's book *Prude* (2007) details the deleterious effects the 'new' spectrum of female sexual behaviour can have on young women, and Step, American author of *Unhooked*, considers the current sexual culture to be of substantial risk to young women, warning that "the female body can be tarnished by too much use" ("Does 'hooking up' really hurt anyone?," 2007). Neo-liberalism, postfeminism, consumption culture, radical feminism and secularism have all been casually implicated in this "rampant sexualisation" of culture (Liebau, 2007, p. 9), of which young women's behaviour is the primary symptom.

Many of these and other mainstream sources frame young women who choose to engage in these kinds of sexualised behaviours as in some way dysfunctional, whether it be psychologically or morally. Teen-aged girls and young women on the popular American talk show *Dr Phil* (McGraw, 2010) are labelled as 'loose' and 'confused', suggesting only two reasons for young women's engagement in non-relationship sexual behaviours, namely a poor moral self or a poor psychological self.

This kind of critique is not limited to overseas countries. In New Zealand, gynaecologist/activist Dr Makary recently described young (New Zealand) women's sexual behaviour as "paddock-mating" and something that ought to be stigmatised like littering (Powley, 2011). On television and in newspaper articles, Dr Makary has called for an "anti-promiscuity" campaign to discourage young women from having promiscuous sex in order to perform their social role of sexual gate-keeping (Collins, 2011; Prescription for Change," 2010). Although there was some formal response to Makary, a review of The New Zealand Herald's Facebook page ([nzherald.co.nz](http://nzherald.co.nz)) discussion on the 'Makary articles' and another article at the time entitled "Girls sleep around 'to keep up with the boys'" (Binning, 2011) illustrated a significant amount of support for his position and a general demonising of young women's sexual behaviour.

These examples present a framing of young women at risk from their own sexuality and sexual behaviour, a still efficacious and live sexual double standard, and as vulnerable to postfeminist neo-liberal media discourses that present them as necessarily 'up for it' sexually (Gill, 2008b, p. 41). This discourse of risk has colonised sexual behaviour and has become a major focus since HIV/AIDS appeared on the sexual landscape (Lupton, 1995, p. 87). Alongside AIDS, STIs such as chlamydia are presented as epidemics affecting adolescents

---

and emerging adults<sup>2</sup> and are significant topics of mainstream and academic focus (Jenkins & Kruse, 2010, p. E11). Although there is a steadily growing body of literature around young women's sexuality, the dominant research focus is on safety and risk, particularly with respect to adolescent sexual behaviour and its associated negative outcomes (Impett & Tolman, 2006, p. 628). Results often highlight risk and frame young women as unsuited to what is generally framed as a positive male environment (see for example Bogle, 2008; Paul & Hayes, 2002). Women's sexualised behaviour is also regarded as reinforcing dominant models of heterosex<sup>3</sup>, and traditional masculinity and femininity<sup>4</sup>.

Finding alternative conceptualisations of young women's sexual behaviour can be difficult, particularly within mainstream media. Generally when non-normative or resistant sexualities are discussed they are done so within the context of non-heterosexual sexualities, where heterosexuality is presented as a normative position against which an "erotics of resistance" to this normative position can be performed (Bell, 2009, p. 211). Heterosexuality and women's place within it is often left uncontested and unquestioned, at both the level of analysis, and practice. Thus, when women whose acts are seen as transgressive are discussed in reference to normative heterosexuality they are either non-normative or negatively framed.

Feminist research can be no less problematic in its framing of young women's sexual behaviour. Concerns over gender oppression have led many feminists to concentrate on the "coercive, exploitative and violent aspects of contemporary sexuality" (Jackson, 2008, p. 34), leading to what could be regarded as "paranoid" analysis of culture and behaviour in order to find false consciousness first and foremost before subjectivity and pleasure<sup>5</sup> (Albury, 2009, p. 648). This is further complicated, as some "feminists are not only skeptical of sexual empowerment/agency, but treat the goal of sexual agency as secondary to fighting institutional power" (Hammers, 2008, p. 549). Thus, whether desire<sup>6</sup> can be an emancipatory

---

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix 1 for description of emerging adults

<sup>3</sup> As biologised and medicalised, with a principle focus on a coital imperative, and correct sexual functioning as outlined in Masters and Johnson's Human Sexual Response Cycle (see Tiefer, 1995)

<sup>4</sup> For outline of these two models, see Sexual Script Theory pp. 62-65

<sup>5</sup> Where pleasure means sexual pleasure, and equates to positive feelings that come with sexual stimulation and engagement (Abramson & Pinkerton, in Rye and Meany, 2007, p. 30). This notion does not conflate sex with pleasure as these two aspects are sometimes not concomitant, thus leaving discussion space to address the variability of the experience of pleasure within sexual situations.

<sup>6</sup> Desire moves beyond the narrow biologised and masculinised notion of a physical, instinctive drive that can be exploitative and selfish, and is better described as lust. (Tolman, pp. 13-14). Instead desire relates to how meaning is made of "bodily, emotional and relational experiences" (p. 14). Desire is a way of knowing, of connecting to the world in relational ways through the body. (p. 20). Coupled with sexual subjectivity as an essential aspect of sense of self, desire is thus a key element in its development, as it is through the knowledges



tool when it is constrained by regulatory normative heterosexuality is an ongoing debate among many feminist researchers (Jackson, 2005, p. 299). Duits and van Zoonen (2006, p. 114) suggest that this is because within the debate around sexualisation the framing of much of women's behaviours is of women lacking agency as though they are simply "docile bodies" upon which dominant discourses are inscribed. Instead of agents negotiating discourses, young women are framed as unaware consumer billboards for sexualised messaging for the benefit of the male gaze. However, being embedded in a patriarchal system does not equate to not being able to act agentially (Överlien, 2003, p. 364). Constraint and docility are not identical.

It is only recently that academic literature and mainstream social commentary that present young women more positively have started to become more evident. Feminist research looking at female sexual subjectivity from a sex positive perspective can be read as a response to negative approaches that have often failed to discuss female sexual desire and pleasure, or to recognise it as a motivational factor that can operate within/against heterosexual social constraints. Much of this research emphasises that the voices of young women are often absent from discussions about their behaviour, and thus attempts to capture them. This kind of research recognises that to tell only one side of this story, the one that describes sex to be predominantly a risk that must be navigated/mitigated before pleasurable and affirming experiences can be engaged in, misrepresents the nature of sex and young women's want to have more of it, with different partners, and under different conditions.

In many ways this more sex-positive approach recognises the complexity of the current sexual culture for young women. As Kalish and Kimmel (2011, p. 138) note, much analysis sees the current hook up culture as an "either/or" for young women: "a step forward for women who seek to expand their erotic repertoire and explore various facets of heterosexual desire" or an experience that "structures that very erotic exploration into definable and normative constructs, constraining the very impulses it enables". Instead they claim that hooking up is both of these things, allowing for both an examination of constraining forces of which many feminists are critical, and the agentic spaces that are available, of which those researching sexual subjectivity and those with a sex-positive frameworks are more supportive.

---

that desire brings that the subject can experience the sexual self in relation to/with others, and can then make sense of herself.

---

This kind of research focus answers the most basic of questions: why are intelligent and culturally critical young women choosing to engage in activities that mainstream pundits list as immoral and dangerous, and many academic voices frame as risky or as an example of cultural duping? Young women may, from their situatedness, be able to see possibilities for growth, development, desire-exploration and pleasure, within non-relationship/permissive spaces. These spaces may also provide opportunities for resistance to and emancipation from constraining cultural scripts such as femininity and heterosexuality—they may be used to do something different (Allen, 2003, p. 232).

Rather than being applauded, however, what is sometimes framed as ‘promiscuous’ behaviour is often analysed and seen as a regrettable result of neo-liberal individualism and the commercialised co-optation of feminist messages. Sexy Spice Girls empowerment is not empowerment but rather a new kind of femininity, where girls *must* have fun (Jackson, 2006, p. 471), and fun is being sexy, agentic, and sexual. Although this may appear positive, critics say that the language of subjectivity is really objectification in a “new...guise” (Gill, 2003, p. 5). In this kind of analysis, behaviour that can be experienced as agentic, empowered and resistant is instead read as normatively reinforcing, and constrains women within a form of femininity that constructs women’s sexuality and desire as male-centric and for the benefit of the male gaze. If it was otherwise, if it was empowering, then ought not men be engaging in these kinds of sexualised behaviours too? (Maguire, 2008, p. 5).

In short, no. Heterosexual male desire has a stable and transhistorical framing as active and empowered, reinforced by biological discourses that frame it as a ‘drive’ that must be recognised, regulated and sated. Female heterosexual desire on the other hand is traditionally framed as passive, regulating, and in many ways invisible (Caruthers, 2005, pp. 11-12). Sexual subjectivity, desire and pleasure-seeking are assumed parts of (heterosexual) masculinity but have often been absent from positive constructions of femininity for much of western history. Despite images of new femininities that are agentic, autonomous and subjective, ethnographic research suggests that there has been little movement away from this traditional femininity (Jackson & Cram, 2003, p. 114). Women as moral agents and women as desiring agents still appear to be somewhat mutually exclusive categories.

Despite this, heterosexual young women’s claims of empowerment derived from engaging in sexualised behaviours might present performances of femininity that are not always capitulating. They may instead be resistant to traditional forms of femininity, masculinity,

---

heterosexuality and moralising discourses. Because there is no single ideology of socially acceptable femininity that permits women to be sexual and still be feminine (Holland, et al, 1992, p.143), young women may be attempting to redefine femininity in a way that includes an active desiring sexual subjectivity.

### **One Small Note**

Discussions of raunch culture do not represent all there is to contemporary sexual culture in many westernised cultures, but rather a set of behaviours and influences that describe and are aimed at particular groups within “a culture of highly consumerised consumer capitalism” (Powell, 2011, p. 13). Particularly, some behaviour of *young* women is primarily described as ‘raunch’, with this kind of sexualised behaviour being viewed as inappropriate for other age groups (my results). Coupland (2000) discusses this within the context of online dating, and suggests it may reference a kind of ageism with respect to participation within a modern sexualised world. Sex is the arena of the youthful. But sex and youth as an intersection are also equated with risk, as youth is equated with excess (Powell discussing Hall, 2010, pp. 11-12). Hence the problematic nature of raunch culture, which seems to capture youth engaging in what is considered excessive and therefore risky sexual behaviour that they are not sufficiently equipped to deal with.

Raunch as an exaggerated representation of young people’s engagement in modern sexual culture does not therefore represent all sexual agents within sexualised western culture, but only a subset who may or may not enact the behaviours it describes.

### **The Point of It All—Thesis Aims**

My initial starting position for this research was to investigate whether or not young New Zealand women replicate the sexualised behaviours with the resultant outcomes outlined in the international literature. I focus on young NZ women as much of the international literature discussing young women is culturally specific. Predominantly the literature discusses the behaviours of young women within the US college campus or British socio-sexual environments. Results from much of this research may therefore also be culturally specific (Schalet, 2010). Focusing on New Zealand women presented an opportunity to examine whether the cultural forces identified in other western countries were also present in New Zealand, as western cultural scripts.

---

### **Introducing New Zealand: Facts about the Nation**

New Zealand is a geographically remote country of just over 4.4 million people. The majority of its population is clustered in urban centres (72%) with three quarters living in the North Island, a third in the Auckland region, and 11.1% in the Wellington region, New Zealand's capital city and site of government (Ministry of Social Development, 2010, p. 14). The country is also ethnically diverse. According to Statistics New Zealand 2012 (2011), citizens of European descent – or Pakeha – constitute just over 67% of the population. Maori, New Zealand's indigenous people, represent 14.6%, and those of Pacific ethnicity 6.9% (Statistics New Zealand, 2010<sup>7</sup>). Those of Asian<sup>8</sup> ethnicity number at 9.5%, with the remainder of New Zealand's population coming from a variety of other ethnicities (ibid). Those of non-Pakeha ethnicity generally live in urbanised areas, with the majority of Maori living in North Island centres (Ministry of Social Development, 2010, p. 14).

New Zealand is a progressive democratic Commonwealth nation operating under a proportional representation or Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) system of election. A diverse mix of ethnicities and genders serve as members of parliament. Gender representation within the political system is strong, with New Zealand being the first country to 'give' women the vote in 1893, and having had two female Prime Ministers. Women first became members of parliament in 1933, and as of 2008 held 34% of parliamentary seats (p. 76). Maori, Pacific and other ethnicities held 25% of the seats (p. 78).

New Zealand ranks well on *The Global Gender Gap Index 2011*, placing 6<sup>th</sup> overall (Hausmann, Tyson & Zahidi, 2011, p. 8), its rankings being bolstered by strong showings in educational attainment and literacy, political empowerment, economic participation, opportunity and income including wage equality and representation across workforce professions (ibid).

New Zealand is committed to human rights on both the international and domestic stages. Its 1990 Human Rights Act was supplemented by the Human Rights Act 1993 which extended (domestic) citizen protections to include protection from discrimination on the grounds of (among other factors) sex, religious belief, ethnic belief, race, ethnicity, disability, age, employment status, and sexual orientation (Ministry of Justice, n.d.). Citizens still

---

<sup>7</sup> Although New Zealand was due for another national census in 2011, several national disasters resulted in its cancellation.

<sup>8</sup> Statistics New Zealand collates the following into the category 'Asia' for census purposes: Chinese, Indian, Korean, Filipino, Japanese, Sri Lankan, Cambodian

experience discrimination and violence across gender, sexuality, ethnicity, age and socioeconomic position, however. Gender discrimination was reported twice as much by females as it was males, and 40% of those surveyed considered women as a group to be actively discriminated against (Ministry of Social Development, 2010, p. 80).

New Zealand women were “twice as likely as men to be victims of sexual offences” (at 4%) with those aged 15-24 most at risk (12%) (Ministry of Social Development, 2010, p. 105). Current partners accounted for one third of sexual assaults committed, and Maori women were three times as likely to be threatened or assaulted by a partner than the national average (ibid)<sup>9</sup>. Fear of crime impacted the quality of life of 45% of New Zealand women (p. 106). New Zealand’s ranking for violence against women is the worst for OECD surveyed countries in several areas. Of fourteen countries surveyed during the period 2000-2010, 30% of New Zealand women reported having experienced violence from an intimate partner, placing it last in the survey (UNWomen). New Zealand fared equally as badly with sexual violence from an intimate partner at 14%, again the worst ranked country of those surveyed (ibid). Thus, although New Zealand ranks well with respect to many gender indicators, discrimination and sexual and intimate partner violence still represent serious social issues for the country.

With respect to sexuality, New Zealanders lose their virginity at an average age 17.8 years (SSL International, 2007, p. 13), and the median age for first marriage is 28.2 years for women, and 29.9 years for men (Statistics New Zealand, 2011), leaving a long period of time in which pre-marital sex can be engaged in. New Zealand women were reported by Durex to have the highest number of sexual partners in a lifetime at 20.2 partners (from their international country sample) (Russell, 2010).

With respect to contraception, New Zealand has provision for accessing abortion but is one of a few countries in the OECD that does not allow it for economic or social reasons, or on request (UNWomen). However New Zealand ranks highly in contraception use. Despite this, rates of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) continue to increase, with young adults under the age of 25 accounting for a vast proportion of infections (“Sexually transmitted infection in New Zealand”, 2007, p. 44). New Zealand rates of infection of chlamydia and gonorrhoea were estimated to be up to four times as high as national rates in Australia and the UK, making STIs a significant health concern for the country (p. 47).

---

<sup>9</sup> Note that these statistics are reported figures, and actual rates of incidents may be higher.

## **The Objectives**

Within this project I wanted to investigate whether or not young New Zealand women claimed that their sexualised behaviours were empowering, and if that was in fact the case. As the research developed, additional objectives emerged, and the investigation into empowerment evolved into an analysis of young women's negotiation and occupation of sexual spaces, and the opportunities those spaces present for young women to resist socialising scripts such as traditional femininity and normative heterosexuality.

As such, the following objectives guided the research:

- to provide a view of a self-selecting group of young New Zealand women's behaviour
- to understand their motivations for engaging in sexualised behaviours, and their feelings about them
- to hear their perspectives about the current socio-sexual culture
- to see if and how young New Zealand women reproduce findings from the international research on young women's sexual behaviours
- to highlight socialising forces that impact on young New Zealand women
- to examine young women's resistance to constraining socialising scripts via their attempts to occupy a variety of socio-sexual spaces
- to ascertain if the current sexual culture provides space for young women to actively engage in the development of sexual subjectivity.

Given the predominant framing of young women's sexual behaviours in risk-focused terms, I will be adding to the current body of literature by presenting some of the voices of young women in contemporary sexual culture in New Zealand. I hope to present a more holistic image of young women's sexual behaviours by examining the above objectives, and looking for evidence of sexually subjective positionalities. In taking a bottom-up (women's voices) rather than top-down (academic commentary on witnessed behaviour) approach I hope to highlight the limiting nature of gendered socialisation and how it impacts on young New Zealand women, and how, if at all, they resist, perceive and/or recognise their social constraints.

---

It is my contention that western sexualised culture provides opportunities for young women to challenge the constraints of femininity and heterosexuality. This contention accords with Holland et al's (1998) and Kippax, Crawford, Waldby and Benton's (1990) assertions that engaging with permissive discourses may present opportunities for young women to challenge cultural constraints that stifle or block sexual subjectivity. By attempting to occupy a variety of sexual spaces that have been and may still be restricted, restrictive and masculine, young women may be engaging in sexual subjectivity development in ways that are not immediately identifiable from an outside perspective.

In Chapter Two I will be examining relevant literature, including some key-risk-based research and sociological studies that have become bench-marks for work on young women's sexual behaviour. This review will comprise of some of the important risk-focused research, as well as more sex-positive and/or feminist research, and a discussion of some feminist analyses. Chapter Three will describe my feminist approach and my rationale for this focus with respect to capturing the voices of young women. Chapter Four will outline the theories which have influenced this study, including my Third Wave feminist position, the utilisation of Sexual Script Theory as an explanatory device, and theories of space. The research design will also be outlined, with some discussion on the merits of a mixed method online approach for sensitive research. In Chapter Five I will present the results of my survey, and the first level of analysis, showing trends in opinions and behaviour. Deeper analysis is presented in Chapter Six, and utilising Sexual Script Theory I highlight some impacts of a risk-based approach to young women's sexuality and young women themselves. Chapter Seven will examine how young women attempt to resist various cultural scripts, to occupy social spaces, and to engage with their sexuality as subjects of their own experiences. Chapter Eight will examine how various normative cultural scripts are reproduced in young women's behaviours, if they are recognised and how they are resisted. Chapter Nine will discuss my conclusions.

---

## Chapter Two: Setting the Scene

The topic of young women's engagement in sexualised behaviours within a raunch culture context often appears to amount to a debate about whether young women should or should not participate in a cultural activity that it is presumed they can opt into and out of. Wouters (2010) however suggests that the rise of sexualisation is evidence of a society that is undergoing fundamental change whereby it is growing less formal with respect to its boundaries between the private and public spheres.

The dualistic positioning of the private and public spheres has long been a topic of feminist consideration. These domains are often stereotypically defined by gender: "whatever women do is defined as being in the private or domestic domain, whereas what men do is in the public domain", and social regulation confines genders to these specific domains (Ramazanoglu, 1989, pp. 62-63). Things that occur within the private sphere – domestic work, child-bearing and rearing, relationships and family life – are characterised as feminine and generally considered to be of less social value than activities in the public sphere, despite their being foundational to much of that which occurs in that sphere (Whelehan, 1995, p. 17). The boundary between the two also signals the reach of the State with respect to regulation and interference. What is in the private sphere is therefore often invisible, hidden away and 'private', namely not for public consumption. This includes sex and intimate relationships and behaviours. Fraser (1990, p. 71) points out however that the boundary between the private and the public is not fixed or natural, and has no a priori foundation. In this respect there is little reason why what is private cannot become public and therefore open to scrutiny, a politics visible in the feminist statement 'the personal is political' and subsequent recognition of the issues of power inherent in the public/private divide which includes sex and sexuality. If it is the case that we are seeing a breakdown between the private and the public as society becomes less formal as Wouters suggests, then sexualisation and the increased visibility of sex within the public sphere and public identities is not surprising.

As noted in the introduction, there are a variety of reactions to this informalisation. For example, rather than seeing young women's involvement in sexualised cultural performance as an out-flowing of Second Wave and sex positive feminist cultural influences that have also helped to challenge and break down the divide between spheres, or young women's attempts to engage with a long silenced, constrained and/or hidden female sexuality, Levy (2005, p.

---



200) sees sexualisation and ‘sexual behaviour as empowerment’ as a “perver[sion]” of feminist ideals of liberation and empowerment. For her, “freedom to be sexually provocative or promiscuous is not enough freedom; it is not the only “women’s issue” worth paying attention to.” Her position suggests that sexual empowerment within a sexualised cultural context ought to be deprioritised so that young women can get on with more important feminist goals, that sex ought to be put back on the other side of the divide, back in the private sphere, and that it is an invalid platform from which to seek change. But if sexualisation is, as Wouters (pp. 726-727) suggests, part of individual psychic (or subjective) development in a more informal society with ever-decreasing ‘mannered’ constraints, rather than the result of commercial/consumer pressures with respect to sexualised consumption, disengagement with sexualisation may not be possible. At least without significant social opportunity costs, part of which may be the opportunity for women to be reconceived of as sexual in ways that encompass agency and subjectivity. Regardless of whether Wouters is correct, sexualisation of the public sphere is becoming more overt and raises questions about the political power of sexuality and sexual behaviour.

The tension this social change creates is visible in the debate between some feminist scholars as to whether desire can be emancipatory when it is constrained by regulating normative heterosexuality (Jackson, 2005, p. 299). On the one hand cultural critics such as McRobbie (for example 2007) and Gill (for example 2008a) consider the current culture to be hypersexualised and heavily constrained by social structures such as neo-liberalism and consumerism. As a result what young women consider to be agentic sexual behaviour is instead capitulation to dominant market and political forces. On the other hand, some Third Wave and sex-positive feminists (for example, Gayle Rubin, Susie Bright, Pat Califia) consider sexuality to be a legitimate arena for emancipatory politics, and for subjectively experienced agency to be valuable. In some regards this can be viewed as a debate over whether to embrace the opportunities presented by sexualisation, or to reject them, but in favour of what is unclear. Important in this debate is whether young women have the capacity to negotiate the current social context in agentic and reflexive ways with respect to their sexuality and sexual behaviour.

Outside of feminist influences, research into young women’s sexual behaviour – particularly casual sex and hooking up – is often motivated by health concerns connected to risky sexual behaviours that are in turn connected to disease. Thus casual sex and hooking up have

---

become the preferred sites for research, where the dominant approach is “problem-focused” (Horne & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2006, p. 126). Research appears to operate from risk and risk-avoidance frameworks that place safety before pleasure, and often fails to address women as desiring subjects. Within such a framework, the prioritisation of safety before pleasure can silence young women’s expressions of desire and frame them as inherently unsuited to particular kinds of sexual interaction, for example casual sex.

Debates about female sexuality are also often entrenched in a number of political agendas. Defining risk is an exercise in social construction and power (Slovic, 1999, p. 689). As Carmody (2009, p. 70) notes, risk as a neoliberal social and governmental focus is a recent invention, shifts responsibility from the state to the individual and results in the responsibility for risk-avoidance being solely with the individual. It is therefore to be expected that much research and mainstream commentary has a risk focus and can sometimes constrain as well as explain the behaviour under examination by reinforcing risk-avoidance rhetoric and situating individuals as the nexus of social control with respect to safety.

The general lack of examination of heterosexuality is an example of the cultural myopia such a focus can create (Ussher, 2005, p. 30). For example, Bogle’s (2008) investigation of hook up culture on American university campuses illustrates the idea of heterosexuality as a complementarity of masculinity and femininity that reduces to an aggressive war of the sexes (Hamilton & Armstrong, 2009, p. 591; Walsh, 2008, p. 758). Men chase, women resist, men win, women lose. As a descriptive project Bogle’s research is illuminating, but offers few strategies for those wishing to opt out of these kinds of gendered interactions, and little analysis of agency and the constraining nature of femininity and masculinity and the concomitant scripts for heterosexual behaviour (Armstrong, 2008, p. 553; Walsh, 2008, p. 758). Bogle’s work may in fact reinforce negative perceptions of hook up culture for young women rather than challenge them because it fails to question the social mechanisms at work.

On the other hand, some feminist research complicates this risk-focus by showing women as desiring subjects constrained by social factors such as institutionalised heterosexuality, femininity and masculinity which inhibit not only the voicing of desire but also its experience, for many young women (see for example Hollway, 1995; Rubin, 2011; Tolman, 2002; Tolman & Higgins, 1996).

---

*In the Literature ...*

One of the first major studies of hook up culture was undertaken by Paul, McManus and Hayes in 2000. Their descriptive study associates hooking up with a number of variables, amongst which are love and attachment styles (low desire/wish for relationships, and romantic game-playing), and the high influence of alcohol (p. 85). Those who engage in coital hook ups (casual sex) are described as more likely to be rebellious, impulsive and relationship-avoidant, whilst those who avoid coital interactions displayed a high concern for safety (ibid). Men more than women are reported to engage in coital hook ups, and women who engage in coital hook ups are speculated to do so out of altruism and the influence of traditional sex roles: “females owe sexual gratification to males” (ibid). All those who hook up also have lower self esteem (ibid). This first investigation presents hooking up as a behaviour that exemplifies traditionally masculine behaviour, which is considered to be problematic for young women who are at risk and incur few benefits from participation. Rather than seeing women’s participation as actively chosen, it is framed as script-following with respect to the above noted altruism and traditional gendered behaviour.

Paul and Hayes’ (2002) subsequent study describes a number of risk variables and findings that are bolstered by additional studies. Many of these studies position women as negatively suited to hooking up, either in terms of consequences from participation or as capitulating to traditional gender roles or social pressures. A number of studies frame women’s hook up activity as relationship-seeking that, as young men are not similarly relationship-seeking, can result in disappointment and emotional hurt (Bradshaw, Kahn, & Saville, 2010, pp. 667-8; Campbell, 2008; Grello, Welsh, & Harper, 2006, p. 256; Paul & Hayes, 2002, p. 642; Shackelford, Goetz, LaMunyon, Quintus, & Weekes-Shackelford, 2004; Stinson, 2010, p. 105). Particularly, emotional and psychological harms such as shame, guilt, low self esteem, feeling used, and depression are often listed as prominent risks for women (Bogle, 2008, p. 173; Eshbaugh & Gute, 2008, p. 86; Grello, et al., 2006, p. 257; Paul & Hayes, 2002, pp. 657-658), in addition to STIs and unplanned pregnancies. In their recently completed study on what they call “hooking up culture” Wade and Heldman (in press) note that involvement in this culture is generally negative for young women because hook ups are most often experienced as meaningless, disempowering, and bereft of pleasure and/or desire, findings supported by other research (England et al., in Fielder & Carey, 2010b, p. 356).

---

Explanations for women's 'poor' performance in the non-relationship sexual arena include evolutionary forces and their resultant gender differences (for example Fugère, Escoto, Cousins, & Haerich, 2008, p. 172; Petersen & Hyde, 2011), biological differences such as the bonding nature of neuropeptides like oxytocin (for example McIlhaney & Bush, 2008, p. 37), and the psychological impacts of the sexual double standard, and its associated reputation risks which are prominent issues for women (Armstrong, Hamilton, & England, 2010; Bogle, 2008; Hamilton & Armstrong, 2009, p. 597; Shoveller, Johnson, Langille, & Mitchell, 2004). These kinds of descriptive studies and analyses suggest that women are not suited to this cultural shift, rather than suggesting that the culture itself fails to provide space for women's participation, that it is inherently suited to forms of traditional masculinity.

Other studies have suggested additional casual factors for participation, particularly in the riskier aspects of hooking up (coital hook ups). Alcohol consumption is often identified as a prominent factor by many researchers (for example Fielder & Carey, 2010b), and is linked to risky sex practices such as no condom use, and resultant unwanted pregnancies and STIs, a particular risk for women (Bersamin, Paschall, Saltz, & Zamboanga, 2011; Kiene, Barta, Tennen, & Armeli, 2009). Alcohol consumption is also implicated in unwanted sexual intercourse due to coercion, or judgement impairment due to alcohol consumption (Flack, et al., 2007; Littleton, Tabernik, Canales, & Backstrom, 2009). This can result in rape, including events that can be officially classified as rape but that young women as 'victims' do not recognise as such (Wade, 2011), highlighting the persistent nature of rape mythology and its impacts on young women.

Lambert, Kahn and Apple's (2003) often cited study establishes pluralistic ignorance as problematic for young adults as they assume their peers are more liberal with respect to sexual attitudes and behaviour engagement. As a result many may feel compelled to hook up, despite their discomfort about doing so (Fielder & Carey, 2010a, p. 1106; Lambert, et al., 2003, pp. 129-132). For women, pluralistic ignorance may inadvertently act to reinforce traditional gender roles whereby women's sexuality is for men's pleasure. Studies such as these suggest that young women's participation is a result of factors somewhat beyond their control: their lack of control under the influence of alcohol, or lack of control under overwhelming social pressures.

Much of this research begs the question as to why young women would engage in hooking up when participation is risky and outcomes negative, particularly as "[h]igh rates ... suggest

---

genuine interest in the activity rather than simply accommodation to men's interests” (Hamilton & Armstrong, 2009, p. 605). This implies that there may be something positive in it for women to account for their general involvement. For example Monguea, Jacobsen and Donnerstein (2007) propose that US college students are looking for boyfriends and girlfriends rather than long-term life partners. This suggests the less serious nature of university relationships and a move away from traditional developmental curves where serious relationships are sought, as this goal now conflicts with changing aspiration curves, life goals, and slower maturation processes (see Arnett 2004, 2006a, 2006b, 2007 for discussion). Wade and Heldman (in press, p.5) noted that women in her study commented on the positive nature of hooking up, but that it was commonly undermined by male behaviour. Despite these kinds of findings, positive aspects of behaviour are often less commented-on because female sexuality has a history of being “understood by studying problem behaviours ...and outcomes... that can have negative social psychological consequences” for young women (Horne, 2005, p. 6). It is only recently that research has begun to look beyond the risk-focus approach in order to explain behaviours and provide more holistic views of the current socio-sexual context and women’s involvement in it.

For example Armstrong, Hamilton and England (2010) note in their study that hooking up provides ways for young women to access sex without having to engage in time- and emotion-costly relationships that can detract from professional aspirations such as education, a finding confirmed by Wade and Heldman (in press). Fielder and Carey (2010a, p. 1106) note that the hook up scene enables young women to sexually interact “with interesting or attractive men without compromising their freedom or independence.” Enjoyable sexual experiences can be had which can prove emotionally fulfilling and/or exciting for young women (Paul & Hayes, 2002; Bradshaw, et al., 2010, p. 666). Kalish and Kimmel (2011) note that hooking up as the dominant mode of heterosexual interaction presents young women with a mechanism by which to protect their reputations, as its ambiguity can allow them to downplay sexual involvement even when active sex-seeking behaviours are engaged in. The hook up context also allows some young women to resist or ignore scripts that describe women’s sexuality as relational (Hamilton & Armstrong, 2009, p. 605), presenting opportunities for challenging gender norms and normative heterosexuality. Recent research also indicates that psychological harms are no more likely for individuals having casual sex encounters than they are for those in relationships (Eisenberg, Ackard, Resnick, & Neumark-Sztainer, 2009). These studies problematise hook up culture as a site of potential harm and

---

poor performance for women whilst also creating space for women's involvement and participation to be read as active and counter to traditionally feminine scripted behaviour enacted within a sexualised environment.

### Feminist Approaches—Going Beyond Risk

Feminist researchers have long recognised “heterosexuality as a problematic site for the perpetuation of gendered power relations” for young women (Beres & Farvid, 2010, p. 379). Because of this many feminist researchers are aware of the constraining nature of heterosexuality, femininity and masculinity and recognise that these social relations underpin the social spaces in which heterosexual young women may engage. As a result their examinations of sexualised and sexual behaviour are generally less specific than for example research that focuses solely on examining hooking up and casual sex. By focusing on young women's experiences within heterosexuality, they provide deeper explanations for the inequalities and negative impacts described in much of the research above.

Most feminist research is based on a starting position that recognises the social construction of sexuality. As Tiefer (1995, p. 7) describes it, sexuality is like “Jell-O ... [and] has no shape without a container, in this case a sociohistorical container of meaning and regulation”. Cultural scripts about the naturalness and innateness of sexual behaviours and desires, and the gendered differences in how these are instantiated, are reframed as normative cultural products that are productive and constraining and have considerable moral content.

Early research by Hollway outlines some of these impacts, and her work has strongly influenced subsequent critical examination of heterosexuality (Gavey, 2005, p. 103). Hollway (1984) frames heterosexuality as a negotiation between the complementary aspects of masculinity and femininity, which are further constrained by three dominant discourses in which relational power is negotiated and exercised: the male sex drive, the have/hold or romance discourse, and the permissive discourse. The male sex drive discourse positions men as biologically driven by sexual desires that require satiation, of which they have little control. This discourse is masculine, positions men as subjects of their own desires, and women as objects (p. 231). Recourse to biology, evolution and reproduction legitimate this discourse and explain social inequalities. It works in tandem with the have/hold discourse which frames women as asexual beings (but with insatiable yet repressed sex drives which must be controlled), who use sex as a way to secure monogamous relationships (Gavey,

---

2005, p. 104; Hollway, 1984, p. 232). Thus men and women within heterosex are antagonistically positioned—he wants sex, whilst she wants a relationship and uses sex to get and ‘hold’ him. Desire is not available to women in these two discourses. In the male sex drive discourse she is a sexually passive object to his desire. Although she occupies the subject position in the have/hold discourse (he is the object of her affection and want for relationship) she is not a *desiring* subject – his desire is dominant, and sex then becomes a way to keep him within the have/hold discourse (Hollway, 1984, pp. 239-241).

For Hollway the only discourse that positions women equally to men with respect to being subjects and pursuers of their own pleasure/desire is the permissive discourse. “Women could now be subjects of a discourse in a way which meant active initiation of a sexual relationship based on the idea that our natural sex drives were equal to (or the same as) men’s” (Hollway, 1998, p.234). As women become more promiscuous and sexually experienced they can move closer to being, if not becoming, sexual subjects. But rather than women occupying or taking up the male sex drive position, Hollway suggests a more egalitarian relation of mutual attraction, agency and subjectivity. Kippax et al., (1990, p. 542) remark that this discourse can provide a starting point for transforming heterosexual relationships as it positions women as agentic subjects. Moralising discourses, however, make it difficult for women to occupy this permissive position, as the mere appearance of permissiveness can stigmatise and ostracise them – women are either sluts or killjoys (Holland, 1984, p. 241). Hollway’s discourses/influences are visible within contemporary analyses of heterosexuality, and provide valuable structure and/or stepping-off points for other (feminist) researchers.

For example, New Zealand researcher Allen (2003) discusses how individuals negotiate power within the heterosexual framework in ways that not only confirm Hollway’s assertions that sexual discourses prioritise male pleasure and desires, but also illustrate how discourse can leave space for a constrained female sexual agency operationalised through choice ideology. Despite the contentiousness of constrained choice Allen notes its subjective impact, stating that “young women ... describe themselves as having experience of power and provide evidence of its effects, ...[which] cannot be simply dismissed as “false power”” (2003, p. 243). This suggests the contestability of Hollway’s discourses, the flexibility of masculinities and femininities, and possible ways for young women to enact the permissive

---

discourse Hollway regarded as a more egalitarian alternative to the male sex drive and have/hold discourses.

In her UK university-based study Flynn (2008) examined young women's negotiation of sexual agency. Her work highlights how young women prioritise the emotional labour inherent in women's roles within heterosexual relationships over their desires in order to perform an appropriate femininity, supporting Hollway's (1984) discussion of the oppositional roles and gender performances the male sex drive and have/hold discourses create for individuals.

Kalish and Kimmel's (2011) examination of hooking up from within a heterosexual framework illuminates the gendered constraints operating on young women's sexual agency. They note that as women resist or move away from traditional femininity they are instead engaging in heterosexual behaviour via a male sex-drive discourse they describe as "the masculinisation of sex" (p. 138). Young women in their study derived benefits from hook up culture and experienced it as an empowering process (pp. 146-148), despite this appearing to be a prioritisation of male ways of being with respect to being subjects of their own desires in other ways. Their work is suggestive of Hollway, in that rather than attempting to engage with Hollway's permissive discourse, young women are instead adopting the male sex drive position as a way to experience subjectivity in desire.

These studies highlight the impact of Hollway's work with respect to shaping and/or supporting contemporary research into 'new' socio-sexual cultural behaviours, but also the longevity of femininities and masculinities that operate within her two dominant discourses (male sex drive, have/hold) and the difficulties young women have with accessing alternatives such as the permissive discourse. As Hollway notes (1984), the impact of stigma can be a deterrent in this regard, evidence of which is the continued presence of the sexual double standard (SDS) and its effects on young women. For example, research suggests that despite increases in female permissiveness, a sexual double standard still exists (Greene & Faulkner, 2005; Manning, Giordano, & Longmore, 2006, p. 475; Paul & Hayes, 2002, p. 641; Skrobot, 2010). New Zealand researchers Jackson and Cram (2003) examine the disruptive nature of the SDS for young women attempting to engage in sexually agentic (and subjective) behaviour and talk. Although their interviewees positioned themselves as agentic and knowledgeable (what Holland et al., [1998, p. 9] describe as intellectual empowerment) their resistance to constraining and dominant heterosexuality was tenuous, and lacked language

---



grounded in embodied experience (Jackson & Cram, 2003, pp. 123-124). Their findings contradict some sociological research that debates the reality, pervasiveness and/or impacts of the sexual double standard (see for example Mark & Miller, 1986; Marks & Fraley, 2005). They highlight the importance of subjective experience and narrative in determining the lived experiences and related social regulation for individuals with respect to the impacts of discourses or sexual scripts.

Schalet's (2010) cross-cultural examination of girls' experiences of heterosexuality in America and Holland illustrates not only the social constructedness of femininity and agency within heterosexual relationships but also how significant cultural context can be with respect to the experience of stigma, and the kinds of femininity available to young women to perform. In her study, American girls present as more vulnerable to the sexual double standard and stigma for failure to perform good girl sexual roles than Dutch participants, highlighting the cultural variation in heterosexuality between these two countries (pp. 325-326). The differences in research outcomes between for example Jackson and Cram, and Mark and Miller, may be partially explained in terms of cultural difference, and provide additional evidence of the value of culturally specific research into the impacts of discourses that promote various kinds of femininity and masculinity.

As with Hollway's research, Holland, et al.,'s (1998, p. 3) investigation into young people's heterosexual experiences also describes masculinity and femininity as oppositional with a heterosexuality that "systematically privilege[s] masculinity". This femininity is disembodied, non-desiring, unempowered, passive, receptive and subordinate to active masculinity. "To be conventionally feminine is to appear sexually unknowing, to aspire to a relationship, to let sex 'happen', to trust to love, and make men happy" (p. 6). Holland et al., (p.12) contend that young women engaging in heterosexual practice must "consent to the construction of adult heterosexuality as the construction of masculinity" and then conform to that construction. Notably,

"an 'ideology of appropriate femininity' positions women as passive. With such a definition of femininity there is no 'overriding conception of a positive and enjoyable female sexuality in which women are both acceptably feminine and in control of their sexuality'" (Holland et al.,1992, p.143).

Power relations embedded in a 'male sex drive' discourse support conformity but punish resistance or non-normative behaviours. For Holland et al., (1998) the power relations within

---

heterosexuality lead not only to what they call ‘male-in-the-bed’<sup>10</sup> but also ‘male-in-the-head’, or internalised surveillance where the internalised gaze is heterosexual and masculine.

Hegemonic masculinity is described as constraining heterosex and heterosexual society (Holland, et al., 1998, p. 27), and suppresses alternative identities and disciplines resistance with stigma and violence. Sexual empowerment for women is therefore difficult, and although young women may be intellectually empowered this may be difficult to put into practice and/or may be restricted to particular relationships (p. 131). Moving into a permissive discourse by adopting a male sex drive mode of behaviour can provide opportunities, although these are usually blocked off. While they may disrupt femininity, they do not challenge or disrupt masculinity (ibid). Holland et al.’s research further illuminates the constraining nature of femininities and masculinities within the heterosexual dyad, the difficulties young women experience, and the risks they face with respect to attempting to move out of relational interactions that are based on a have/hold model towards a positionality that better provides space for desiring female subjectivity.

Adding to this growing investigative field, Tolman and Higgins (1996, p. 206) suggest that femininity and the related “good girl/bad girl dichotomy [that] organizes sexuality for young women” positions women in the constrained position of either being ‘bad’ and therefore non-normative and punishable, or ‘good’ and therefore passive and potentially a victim to the male sex drive/masculinity. If they are to be ‘good’, female sexual agency is not active sexual subjectivity but the regulation of their own and their partner’s sexuality. Like Hollway (1998) and Holland et al., (1998), Tolman and Higgins (1996, p. 211) note that femininity as sexual passivity means being disembodied and acted upon or acting receptively. Resistance in the form of embodied ‘bad girl’ sexual behaviour becomes “deviant and threatening” (ibid), and ‘bad girls’ are thus vulnerable not only to stigma but also the negative impacts of rape mythology. In response to the vulnerability of girls, Tolman and Higgins (p. 221) call for encouraging girls and young women to focus on their sense of “entitlement to ...sexuality”, to build embodied sexual subjectivities as a means to agentic and protective self-care. Critiquing and resisting femininity and hegemonic heterosexuality is important due to the objectifying and constraining nature of these organising forces that subvert the

---

<sup>10</sup> Heterosex as masculine, and constitutive of masculinity, where women’s roles are to support this construction, and prioritise its performance (ibid)

---

experience of desire for girls and women (Gavey, 2005, p. 102; Schalet, 2009, p. 147; Tolman, 2000, p. 102).

Building on work by Tolman and colleagues, Horne and Zimmer-Gembeck (2006) have developed the sexual subjectivity inventory (SSI) as a way to track girls' and young women's sexual subjectivity and the related sense of entitlement to sexual pleasure that sexual subjectivity entails. They found that those who rate higher on the SSI are more agentic with respect to ensuring safe sex practices, are more self-aware with respect to their sexuality, are more confident in pursuing their own sexual desires and goals, are better able to communicate (including less self-silencing) and negotiate their needs and sexual safety, and were better able to resist constraining forces such as the sexual double standard, particularly those who identify as non-heterosexual (Horne, 2005, p. 36; 2006, p. 136). Their research highlights the importance of sexual subjectivity for individuals and its positive social ramifications with respect to health and wellbeing, as well as a means by which young women can move out of traditional femininity and its related non-subjective discourses<sup>11</sup> towards a more egalitarian sexual interaction as suggested by Hollway (1984).

Lamb (2010a, p. 296) highlights a concern that achieving the kind of sexual subjectivity researchers such as Horne or Tolman advocate may be an unachievable goal. This concern is pertinent, and is partially countered by deferring to a developmental model of sexual subjectivity that allows development to be progressional as Lamb (2010b, p. 314) and others (for example Peterson, 2010) suggest. It also suggests the intractability of socio-sexual contexts, that modes of normative femininity and masculinity are so entrenched that the development of a female sexual subjectivity can be viewed as an impossible feat.

Tolman and Higgins (1996), and Horne and Zommer-Gembeck's (2006) work is relevant in light of Impett, Schooler and Tolman's (2006) feminist developmental framework-based research which examines the impacts of internalised femininity with respect to disembodiment and objectification, and its impact on sexual health and self-protective strategies. They note that internalised femininity and self-objectification negatively impact girls' agentic approaches to sexual encounters with respect to safe sex practices, unwanted sex, and agentic behaviour (2006, p. 140). These findings, as with Holland et al.,'s (1992, 1996), suggest the health and wellbeing importance of this kind of research focus as it

---

<sup>11</sup> The use of the term 'discourse' throughout the thesis references the theoretical position of the authors being discussed and is not part of theoretical trajectory of this work.

provides support for more progressive approaches to female sexuality and its positive impacts versus risk potentials.

Engaging in active resistance can be challenging however, as moralising cultural scripts about female sexuality are powerfully constraining (Katz & Farrow, 2000, p. 802). Nevertheless resistance is possible. Dworkin, Beckford and Ehrhardt's (2007) research into the gendered nature of sexual scripts and their impacts on safe sex negotiation within heterosexual relationships note the flexibility of script elements that allow resistance to and subversion of (where subversion equates to the adjustment and/or reconfiguration of performances away from the norm (Brickell, 2005, p. 37)) masculine script dominance at the level of male initiation and decision-making, suggesting that there is room to move away from a male sex drive discourse to some other alternative. Ussher (2005) also discusses the hegemonic nature of sexual scripts prescribing heterosexual behaviour that positions women as responsive rather than active and agentic. She notes that in order to avoid condemnation and stigma for active resistance to gendered sexual scripts young women 'do girl' as a performance of femininity, and in this way subvert heterosexual femininity and experience subjective agency and empowerment (Ussher, 2005, p. 29).

However, resistance is currently complicated by a neo-liberal context which requires individuals to be both self-surveilling and self-policing. As Rye and Meaney (2007, p. 44) note, behaviours such as casual sex are seen as sexually irresponsible because they disregard risk-related warnings in favour of pleasure-seeking, which in turn is regarded as hedonistic and morally suspect. As current cultural scripts about sex are grounded in Victorian "sex negativity" where desires are to be controlled, hedonism thus represents a lack of self control (Rye & Meaney, 2007, p. 45 citing Foucault and Weeks), something that is looked upon negatively in a neo-liberal context driven by discourses of self-care and self-responsibility. This then frames sexually permissive young women not only as deviant with respect to good femininity but also with respect to good citizenship, which is another framework from which they can be judged.

Resistance must also recognise that sexual interactions are dyadic in nature. In their study of the narratives of women Bryant and Schofield (2007, p. 336) argue that (hetero)sexual subjectivity as an embodied process is inherently relational and includes male partners, highlighting the entangled nature of heterosexual practice as a space for agentic negotiation between individuals. In this respect, Carmody's (2009) work on ethical approaches to sex as

---

a way to increase space for agentic sexual participation (and to reduce intimate partner violence) bears particular note as she works from a perspective of active examination not only of femininity and female subjectivity, but also masculinity and male subjectivity, how they interact, and how the prioritisation of self-care can reduce risk factors and increase positive sexual experiences.

Carmody's research is also pertinent when examining past research concerning sex education. Fine's (1988) well-known research examines sex education's effects on the sexual subjectivity development of young women. What Fine (p. 30) calls a "missing discourse of desire" describes school sex education curricula as promoting a discourse of "female sexual victimization" and a narrow normative heterosexual model for sexual engagement. A focus on male sexuality as male sex drive closes off spaces for young women to explore their sexuality, whilst constraining avenues of talk about female desire to risk-oriented discussions. Concepts of female sexual subjectivity are therefore absent, and young women are not shown how to find voice for their desires, or educated to recognise that they have entitlements to experience embodied desires and related pleasures in active and subjective ways. This kind of presentation reduces female sexual subjectivity to active risk avoidance and passive engagement with respect to enjoyable sexual experiences.

As a result there are few places where women can actively engage with their sexual subjectivity safely, but many places that are instead dangerous, creating a conundrum for young women with respect to safe sexual contexts, and presenting significant challenges for individuals deciding to engage in sexual interactions in any context (1988, p. 35). Fine (*ibid*) describes the "dual consciousness" young women develop as a result, where they are at once excited about the potential for or actuality of sexual engagement, whilst being anxious and worried about possible outcomes and scenarios. Two decades on Fine and McClelland (2006) note that little has changed save that young women now perform desire but are still silent and constrained, a position Carmody's (2009) research supports.

In Fine and McClelland's (2006, p. 303) later research, they note that those who are less constrained by socio-structural contexts experience fewer negative outcomes with respect to sexual behaviour, for example unwanted pregnancies. Without a sense of sexual or social entitlement, many young women display more passive and self-sacrificing orientations while those who display or feel a sense of entitlement are in a position to challenge messages of female sexual victimisation and non-sexual subjectivity (*ibid*). Their work is another strand

---

suggesting the importance of encouraging the development of female sexual subjectivities. Through subjective awareness and the ability to recognise entitlements, young women are better able to negotiate safe and enjoyable sexual interactions for their own pleasure in ways that reduce risk.

Many of the qualitative investigations above highlight how heterosexuality “transcribes biological and social maleness and femaleness” (Kitzinger & Wilkinson, 1994, p. 460). Research examining the fundamentals of heterosexuality and heterosex also reveal women’s place within these frameworks with respect to a number of imperatives that constrain women’s sexual behaviour, and are implicit in our conceptualisations of heterosexual acts. For example, New Zealand researcher Gavey (2005, p. 124) notes that the coital imperative is probably the most persistent aspect of normative heterosexuality. Rooted in biological scripts that underpin/justify the male sex drive, it is framed as a universal model for human sexuality, albeit one that is essentialising and reductionist. Within this framework sexological research can present sex and desire as “preexisting, evolution-dictated imperative[s]” that generally ignore “how biological reactions can be learned, or ... expressed or experienced differently in different cultures” (Tiefer, 2000, p. 97). As a biological imperative, drive or natural force, sex is reproductive, entails penetration or PVI, with male orgasm as the requisite outcome. Female sexuality is conceived of as complementary and receptive to a naturalised male sexuality (Tiefer, 1995, p. 21). PVI is the “main event” and all other activities are relegated to the category of foreplay (Gavey, 2005, p. 124). This hierarchy prioritises PVI over other kinds of sex (see Braun, 2004). Thus heterosex is the requisite outcome for the normative script (McPhillips, Braun, Gavey, 2001, p. 233), which begins with kissing and non-sexual touching, foreplay, and penetration (to male orgasm), as the ultimate conclusion.

Braun, Gavey, and McPhillips (2003, p. 243) note that this model conflates male orgasm with the coital imperative, as only male orgasm is an achievable end of PVI, whereas female orgasm is more variable, and essentially unnecessary. If orgasm is seen as evidence of successful intercourse then male orgasm serves this purpose. Female orgasm on the other hand can be invisible and its achievement uncertain, therefore it cannot fulfil this role. As a result the orgasm imperative becomes phallogentric. Problematically, within this framing of the imperative, there is little room for active female sexual subjectivity, pleasure or desire, as these seem to be superfluous.

---

Bejin (in Potts, 2000, p. 57) complicates this model by noting that orgasm is now part of a health and wellbeing discourse that promotes it as something healthy that signifies well-being and sexual competence. Orgasm is not simply a possibility but a requirement, one that requires individuals to be capable. Within this altered heterosex script, men are positioned as active and women's orgasms are their responsibility (Potts, 1998, 2000) He is the 'sexpert', and her performance of orgasm is confirmation of his ability (1998, p. 66). Orgasm replaces desire and pleasure in this script, as neither of these states are necessary for orgasm to occur. Performance and capability are instead required, suggesting that orgasm-attainment is about skill rather than pleasure and/or desire.

This model positions women's bodies, which may not perform as the orgasm imperative requires, as often sexually dysfunctional, a positioning that in turn preserves the "hegemonic sexual discourses" that reinforce sexual subordination, male-body superiority, and normative heterosexuality (Holland, et al., 1998, p. 108). In this way the orgasm imperative challenges young women because it problematises their bodies and experiences as functionally inferior, and leaves little space for subjective experiences feeling valid and acceptable.

In addition to these imperatives around the performance of sex, Hamilton and Armstrong's research (2009) identifies a relational imperative within young adults' gendered situatedness in hook up culture. They outline this imperative as the belief that women "should always want love, romance, relationships, and marriage", and remark that it troubles young women's engagement in hook up culture where the sexual double standard is at work (p. 593). This imperative is a constant pressure, exacerbated by a mythology that good men are difficult to come by and therefore ought to be pursued and held onto (p. 600). This pushes women into committed relationships (in order to keep hold of a scarce resource: [decent] boyfriends), and can interfere with life progression (in this case college education), placing young women in something of a "relational double bind" (pp. 602-604). As a background pressure, this relational imperative also conflicts with desires to participate in hook ups as free agents and highlights the gendered nature of sex roles still evident in modern sexual culture. In many respects, this research presents a more modern image of Hollway's discourses in use, and the problems that arise as they are implemented within a changing socio-sexual context.

The feminist research above presents a different vision of young women's sexual behaviour when compared to that of the more mainstream research also discussed. It serves to explain

---

behaviour within a broader social context, and to provide ways of understanding behaviours that can on the surface appear ill-conceived or deleterious to the individual.

### Feminism's Third Wave and Sexuality as Liberation

Third Wave feminism provides a current feminist position on young women's sexuality that is sex positive and focuses on young women's voices in discussing sexuality, and is vocal and supportive of some sexualised behaviours as political and empowering. The Third Wave is about "judgment-free pleasure and sex" (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000, p. 80). Journalist Williams (2006, para 22) provides an example of the Third wave ideal via her interview with sex-blogger 'Abby Lee' (real name, Zoe Margolis) whom she describes as "the voice of third-wave feminism due to her feminist-influenced ideas [and]... approach to casual unemotional sex".

"As a feminist, I would like to believe, or even pretend to believe, that she is run-of-the-mill, sex-wise, that loads of women are as uninhibited and adventurous and experimental, and approach this much sex with this much joy, but I think Margolis is pretty unusual....."

Meeting her, though, I buy it totally. She has a rare self-possession, she is very charismatic, she has a lot of presence, and she is very much as she describes herself in the book - kind of curvy and imperfect and sexy as anything." (Williams, 2006, para 4-5)

Singling Lee out as a Third Wave feminist recognises the foregrounding of the "cultural production and sexual politics" where desire and pleasure are vehicles for activism (Heywood & Drake, 1997, p.4). In effect the Third Wave's sex positive stance, particularly its girly and feminine incarnations, "recuperates heterosexuality, intercourse, marriage, and sex toys from separatist feminist dismissals" (Heywood, 2006, p.260). This has been problematic insofar as it can appear to reinforce constraining normative heterosexuality. However, Third Wavers would likely reply that it is not conformist due to agency and choice being evoked—young women can choose to opt into or out of heterosexuality, and as they parody and perform it they can resist and transgress its constraints (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000). Thus, "desires aren't simply booby traps set by the patriarchy" (Baumgardner & Richards in Snyder, 2008, p. 179). Third wave anthologies such as *Jane Sexes It Up* (Johnson (Ed), 2002) present individual narratives that reference sexual subjectivity, sexual agency, and resistance to heterosexual and feminine scripts despite their sometimes apparent contradictory and capitulating tone. By recognising that female desire is both socially constructed but

---



beyond construction Third Wavers allow for the creation of space for women's desires to be engaged with and entertained, regardless of how "ugly, inexplicable and frightening" they may be (Johnson discussing Allison, 2002, p. 8).

Third Wave feminists stress the "liberating potential of sexuality" and "women's right to pleasure" (Henry, 2004, p. 88). They also consider sexual freedom to be an entitlement they have a right to access (p. 90), in alignment with many of the feminist researchers discussed above. Third Wave adoptions of sexual subjectivity and the embracing of aspects of sexualised culture are also presented as ways of gaining equality with respect to sexual behaviour and freedom from oppression (Richmond, 2010), and as a way to engage with their sense of entitlement to desire and pleasure without stigma and censure (Lamb, 2010a, p. 297). Sexual subjectivity is also a vehicle of resistance to objectification, with which they are critically engaged (Lamb, 2010a, p. 297).

According to the Third Wave, exploratory sexual subjectivity for women is like "finding out what it feels like to sit in the sexual driver's seat" (Lumby, 1997, p. 85). The variety of sexual performances, whether resistant or stereotypic, offer opportunities for subjective and agentic experience. For example, performing the slut can reinscribe female sexuality as actively desiring, thus breaking down feminine sexual passivity (Attwood, 2007, pp. 239-240 discussing Modleski and Butler). Recognising this, embracing femininity can be recast as "a transgressive opportunity for women to claim sexual power and to create feminine subject positions through their sexuality" (Keenan, 2009, p. 379). Problematically, as Attwood notes (commenting on Griffin, 2007, p. 242) the line between what Griffin calls "sassiness" and sluttiness is thin and often invisible. It can appear elided, yet in practice can be experienced as substantive, suggesting the riskiness of performance. It is this line that some Third Wavers claim is being played with as they attempt to push against and through the limitations inherent in femininity and heterosexuality.

Such engagements are not without criticism however. Lamb (2010a, p. 296) comments that "the kind of sexual person who feels pleasure, desire, and subjectivity may be ironically similar to the commodified, sexualized, marketed teen girl that is also problematic for feminism." Her criticism mirrors those made by for example Gill (2008b) and McRobbie (2009) with respect to postfeminist images of young women as empowered through the embracing of hypersexualisation and commodification. Lamb (2010a, p. 300) is concerned that seeing empowerment as choice + agency ignores the impacts of constraining forces such

---

as those present in the marketplace, echoing concerns over the commodification of agency, choice and women's bodies. She notes that:

“The question is whether feeling empowered and being empowered are the same thing and whether empowerment is merely a feeling or should be connected to power and autonomy in other spheres. Feeling emboldened sexually is not the same as empowered. And if a girl feels empowered, because she has the power to attract attention and admiration via her sexuality, that may be a kind of power of sorts, but it's narrow. That is, it is a feeling of being empowered to be a sexual person. While it is important for girls like boys to feel permitted, even empowered, to be sexual — fully human — we must remember that the kind of empowerment a girl may be feeling when enacting porn images is the power to be sexual primarily and possibly only through imitating one kind of being sexual, a kind oriented towards being a sexy object for someone else.” (p. 301)

Empowerment in this regard is narrow, but it is also a starting point, and as McClelland & Fine (2008) note may provide impetus to seek other entitlements. Peterson (2010, p. 312) suggests that engaging with sexualised culture by for example enacting porn may present new ways of being sexual for women, thus expanding sexual spaces and presenting opportunities to experiment and 'be' something 'other' than normative. Lamb (2010b, p. 316) is critical of this however and suggests that this endorsement may be available to the agentic adult, but not to adolescents and teens, and again represents a highly constrained way of being sexual, one that frames choice as free when in fact it is not. As Fine (2005, p. 55) notes, summarising Hurtado and Sinha, the “more hegemonic the gendered performance ... the more vulnerable [young women] are to public and private exploitation”. Vulnerability then appears to be connected to awareness and critical engagement. Ironically these are part of a model of sexual subjectivity advocated for by many of the researchers above. Appraisals of the efficacy of sexual subjectivity's empowerment potential may be in its developmental aspects, but may also require what Lamb calls for, namely the education of (young) women with respect to cultural critical consciousness (see for example Stewart, 1999).

Inherent in Lamb's criticism is the conflation of new femininity as sexualised agency with the neoliberal subject, and “the extent to which discourses of choice, agency and empowerment have become central” to this conception of the subject (Gill, 2008a, p. 437). Gill (2008a) notes that we ought to be critical of agency within such a commodified context, as what appears to be empowered behaviour may not be agency at all but rather capitulation to neoliberal and capitalist discourses that turn women's choice into a matter of consumption choice instead of 'free' choice.

---

Goodkind (2009, p. 400) describes this neo-liberal choice as a means through which self-regulating discourses work on the individual to ensure self-discipline. Choice and consumption are touted as empowering. Enacting choice as activism at this level, an individual takes responsibility for their choices, thus not looking to structural and institutional oppressions that delimit those choices (ibid). Societal problems then shift from outside the individual to the individual herself (p. 401), and continuing to experience inequalities is the problem of the individual rather than the social context in which she is embedded.

But choice in Third Wave feminism is not as simple as this 'choice rhetoric' would imply. Walker suggests that the issue of choice is embedded in theorising and challenging, rather than simply enacting personal preferences without examination. She states that she wants "...to explore the ways that choices or actions seemingly at odds with mainstream ideas of feminism push us to new definitions and understandings of female empowerment and social change" (Walker, 1995, p. xxxvi). This does not imply choice for choice's sake, or unconsidered individualism, but rather a political engagement with society-level constraints, enacted through conscious choice-making. For Third Wavers choice may surpass all other factors, but it is defended by the argument that we must examine choice in its context, thus making oppressed behaviour into feminist behaviour under the right conditions (Snyder discussing Zeisler, 2008, p. 189). Third Wavers can then act with a "feminist consciousness" defined as "knowledge of what one is doing and why one is doing it." (Snyder-Hall, 2010, p. 256) In this way contradictory practices and actions can be seen as strategic engagements and examples of agency in choice, rather than unconscious capitulation (Renegar & Sowards, 2009, p. 3).

Such a framing of choice builds in a greater degree of agency and autonomy than the neo-liberal version allows. It suggests that decision-making processes can be far more informed than merely choosing between the either/or dichotomy that can repress. Contradictory choice allows individuals to rise above this dichotomy (Renegar & Sowards, 2009, p. 11), and allows them to look for what Daly (1993) calls the third option or choice (that which is beyond the either/or binary), thus avoiding simple choices in favour of the complex and difficult in order to create new ways of being. It allows the individual to choose beyond patriarchal choice structures and to work towards creating new normative frameworks (p. 14). Escaping this dichotomy opens up the landscape of choice enabling agentic creation of

---

different outcomes, especially when considering the complicated nature of the decision-making processes that ‘choice rhetoric’ trivialises (Snyder-Hall, 2010, p. 256).

Disentangling empowered and agentic choice-based behaviour from neoliberal enactments may prove impossible however, as identity and concomitance may be indistinguishable at the collective level. Gill makes the point that we cannot separate out discussions of agency and empowerment from the culture in which acting is embedded (see for discussion 2008a). As Modleski notes

“Today we are in danger of forgetting the crucial fact that like the rest of the world even the cultural analyst may sometimes be a ‘cultural dupe’—which is, after all, only an ugly way of saying that we exist inside ideology, that we are all victims, down to the very depths of our psyches, of political and cultural domination” (1991, p.45).

In this regard paying attention to the cultural moment is important. Forms and modes of resistance are not transhistorical with respect to their efficacy. In an individualistic neoliberal moment, subjective agency may be the starting point for resistance that manifests beyond the individual. But this too is a much debated point, as some would argue that contesting power at the individual level can be ineffective elsewhere (Jackson, 1995, p. 23).

In reply to these criticisms Duits and Van Zoonen (2006, p. 164) comment that any form of disciplinary voice dictating the behaviour of young women is constraining and oppressive, whether it is hypersexualised or otherwise, problematising feminist criticisms about how young women *ought* to be empowered. Duits and van Zoonen (2011, p. 168) remark that “the core irritation of the younger generations has been the denial of their agency”, which in turn devalues their subjectivity, an ironic critical position for those with a feminist research position.

Subversive and resistant agency can be something of a vicious cycle however. Evans, Riley and Shankar (2010, pp. 126-127) remark that women engage in producing their own sexual subjectivities by using the cultural artefacts and “technologies” available to them in ways that can be transgressive, but in order for transgressive acts to be read as such they must be seen through the dominant discourses they are parodying. They further note the propensity for media to co-opt transgressive behaviours and mainstream them in ways that may perpetuate

---

the objectifying and privileged nature of sexualised culture being parodied (p. 127)<sup>12</sup>. In this way I can read the sexualised behaviour of a small group of young women I went to school with as transgressive, whilst seeing identical behaviours enacted today as co-opted and reinforcing. Thus the gap between agent intention and audience perception/interpretation of behaviour is one that is difficult to successfully traverse, particularly when it is complicated by knowing agents still getting ‘caught out’ as Modleski (1991) suggests.

This recognition brings me back to the importance of agency and empowerment as sociohistorically situated and culturally constrained actions, and as states found at the individual level. In this way researchers looking qualitatively at subjectivity account for individual access to feeling and being empowered, and are more likely to see these from personal accounts and qualitative interactions than “the remote shores of the kind of feminism that Gill advocates” (Duits & van Zoonen, 2011, p. 166). Rather than vacillating between two positions, one that recognises agency in behaviour, the other cultural duping, Attwood (2009, p. xxii) suggests “we ... move beyond the simple assumption that sexualisation is in the interests of boys and men”, and consider whether claims of empowerment have merit, and what they might mean on individual and collective levels. This suggests the importance of paying attention to subjectively experienced moments and giving them some primacy over top-down cultural and feminist analyses. But caution is required as, “[w]ith the sexual and the sexist as “closely intertwined” as they are in our culture, it is difficult to assess what is truly freeing and what is subtly undermining of women’s long-term health and happiness” (Barton, drawing on Chancer, 2002, p. 600). Although this highlights the problem of seeing empowered subjectivity in sexualised behaviour, it can also remind researchers and analysts not to overlook agency in a sexualised culture in favour of analyses that can be equally as objectifying and disempowering as capitulation to dominant discourses, particularly within a neo-liberal cultural moment where individualism and consumerism can appear to be ever-dominant and impervious to resistance.

---

<sup>12</sup> A finding borne out in Aubrey’s (2007) research into the power of sexualised media imagery to increase self-objectifying behaviours and body shame in young people.

---

## Chapter Three: How and Why Things Were Done

### Feminist Methodology

Using a feminist methodological perspective recognises the sometimes problematic nature of ‘mainstream’ research practices with respect to capturing women’s voices and lived experiences (for examples of this discussion see Letherby, 2003; Oakley, 2000; Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002; Reinharz, 1992).

A feminist methodology is important for my research for two specific reasons. Firstly, women’s sexuality has been misrepresented by a masculinist model of sexuality (for example, feminist critiques of Masters and Johnson’s Human Sexual Response Cycle by Tiefer, 1995). Secondly, women’s voices are often absent from research on sexuality, being subsumed by universalising models of sexual behaviour and language of desire. Adopting a feminist methodology therefore allowed me to concentrate on voices often marginalised or made invisible by mainstream research.

My feminist methodological approach is grounded in a feminist perspective that recognises the social constructedness of negative and devaluing social inequalities, and their effects on women’s positionalities (Chafetz, 2004, pp. 965-966). Such a feminist perspective is “...attentive to issues of difference, the questioning of social power, resistance to scientific oppression, and a commitment to political activism and social justice” (Hesse-Biber, Leavy, & Yaiser, 2004, p. 3). This focus appears particularly relevant with respect to women’s sexuality, due to the gendered division of labour in heterosexuality and mainstream conceptions of women’s sexuality and desire.

Feminist challengers to mainstream research often scrutinise core assumptions and concepts (Tickner, 2005, p. 6), and question whether research questions and approaches are inclusive of women’s lived experiences. For example, risk-focused research can frame women’s sexuality negatively, whereas a feminist methodological approach can provide opportunities to ask new questions, or to examine deprioritised issues as a way to better capture women’s sexual experiences, and feelings about those experiences.

“[U]nderstanding women as subjects in their own right rather than objects for men” is also important for feminist researchers (Reinharz, 1992, p. 248), particularly within feminist

---

sexuality research. In making research *about* women and *for* women, where “commitment to a political position in which ‘knowledge’ is not simply ‘knowledge *what*’ but also ‘knowledge *for*’”, attempts to help women move away from those oppressions (Stanley, 1990, p. 15). This focus thus aims to capture the gendered sexual experiences that bring women’s lived experiences to light, and mount a challenge to dominant scripts that constrain women’s sexual behaviour.

An important aspect of this is the treating of women’s experience as valid and important sources of data (Akman, Toner, Stuckless, Emmott, & Downie, 2001, p. 213). “[M]ale-defined epistemologies deny the importance of the experiential, the private and personal ...” (Letherby, 2003, p. 42), and therefore make invisible considerable portions of women’s lives and ways of knowing. As a result women are left to make sense of their world through masculine ways of knowing (Smith, 1987). This is especially problematic for women’s sexuality where universalising models of sexual desire, pleasure and performance are predicated on male bodies, a framing that problematises and pathologises women’s bodies, ways of being sexual and experiencing pleasure, and fails to be representative of (some/many) women.

Participants in research that focuses on women’s voices can therefore be transformative for research participants because experiences can be validated, even if interpretations of these experiences are confrontational (Akman, et al., 2001, p. 214). This is particularly so with respect to issues of sexual behaviour and desire, where there is a paucity of research that represents women outside phallogocentric frameworks, or treat women’s experiences as dysfunctional or lesser when interpreted through for example current sexological models. It also highlights the possible therapeutic benefits for some participants who have few or no opportunities to participate in a dialogue about women’s sexual behaviour and desire.

Due to the sensitive nature of the research topic it was important to be aware of potential emotional harms and power relations that could occur during research. Mainstream science has been criticised for exploiting the inherent power differentials between the researcher and the researched (Akman, et al., 2001, p. 219), where hierarchies of power that arise are based on ‘power-over’, “domination, oppression, [and] subordination” (Allen, 2009, p. 293). It was therefore important to recognise potential power-based harms and to mitigate them where possible. Rapport building and researcher reciprocity with respect to my disclosing personal information were useful in this regard. This was particularly clear to me when one

---

interviewee discussed her rape. Rapport-building had helped create a safe and trust-worthy environment for her to eventually discuss this event, in terms of her life course and sexual subjectivity, on her own terms, and at her own discretion.

It was also important to pay attention to the way that power shifted between me as researcher and participants as experts on their lives, and keepers of that knowledge. The balance of power is always fluid and is not always in the researcher's court (Letherby, 2003, p. 115). For example, research participants exercised power over the research in a number of ways, from being non-responsive and distant during online interviews, failing to reply to questions in email interviews, misrepresenting themselves in the survey, missing interview appointments, and at its most basic, choosing how to represent themselves and censor their experiences. All of these aspects shaped the context and content of the research.

The issue of harm during research also affects us as researchers in the form of "compassion stress" (Burr cited in Sampson, Bloor, & Fincham, 2008, p. 923). Although I am aware of this it did not occur to me that I would experience it during the analysis stage. Identifying the Sexual Risk Script was an emotional experience. Rather than the expected stress of empathising with individual women and their experiences, I found myself dealing with the weight of empathising with not only my subject group, but all young women who might be labouring under the same sexual script. It was a very disempowering moment, but it was also very insightful with respect to the power heterosexual scripts have on the sexual subjectivity of some young women today.

### ***Empowerment and Transformative Research***

Feminist research is marked by its political "commitment to the empowerment of women and other oppressed peoples ..." (Sprague & Zimmerman cited in Hesse-Biber, et al., 2004, p. 15). The issue of empowerment is not without its problems however, as it is often undefined within research and dialogue, for the researcher, the research participants, and also the research product's audience. Empowerment in this research context is predicated on the Foucauldian idea of power as productive, and therefore as 'power-to'<sup>13</sup>. It is subjective and may have no discernible external product of action as is visible in the exercise of 'power over' (Peterson, 2010, p. 308). Finding evidence for it may therefore be difficult. As 'power

---

<sup>13</sup> Defined as "an ability to do or achieve something independent of others." With respect to normative content this definition is positive as power to is "not directed at others, but at the individual or the group of actions themselves. The focus is not on the effects of power on others, those subjected to it, but on the power as the ability to act autonomously. In this sense, power is constitutive for society." (Gohler, 2009, pp. 28-29).



to' is also subjective it can be contested because its 'authenticity' cannot be determined. Thus women's voices must be relied on as sources of knowledge about feelings of empowerment in ways that respect the primacy of subjectivity in lived experiences. This conceptualisation of empowerment thus takes into consideration what Holland et al., (1998, pp. 9, 131) call intellectual and experiential empowerment which reflects intentionality and awareness and the ability to manage one's sexual practice in an embodied manner. This position recognises that "even a narrow version of empowerment [as subjectively experienced] may be a developmental step in the process toward a more comprehensive version of empowered sexuality" (Peterson, 2010, p. 312). So, although empowerment claims may be contestable they can still be valuable to the individual as part of a larger developmental process.

If the process of empowerment is to provide knowledge and analytical tools for participants to "analyse their situation in terms of gender and power" (Millen cited in Letherby, 2003, p. 115), then the research process, including the representations of those researched in the final research product, can encourage/enable/assist participants to discover and/or construct their identities (Carr, 2003, pp. 15-16). The research relationship has the power to shape the participant in long-lasting ways, especially in areas such as sexual identity development (discussing Pasupathi in Diamond, 2006, p. 481). Diamond (discussing Fuvish, p.481) posited that the act of answering questions around sexuality may be a powerful force in making coherent an individual's sexual self-concept. This illuminates the power of research to provide conditions that catalyse empowerment for the participant when the research questions are ones that require participant reflexivity, and reflects the activist goals in feminist research. The obvious caution is that research goals can suggest that I as a researcher know best with respect to how participants 'ought' to be empowered and motivated. However, as identities are not fixed other social interactions can drive identity formation in different directions (see Diamond, 2006, pp. 483-484 for examples), suggesting that researcher authority can be undermined and/or troubled. My voice is one among many.

My epistemological commitment to honouring views from somewhere different (see Epistemology pp. 70-72) requires hearing the subjective experiences of participants as reflections of their 'place' within the process of subjectivity development. This makes empowerment a plastic process, the end point of which is indeterminate when viewed at a

---

particular moment in time. To take a moment as indicative of the self is to ignore the developmental process.

What empowerment means for the project design needs now to be explicitly defined, such that the ‘power-to’ formulation of empowerment is clear. In this respect I utilise Carr’s (2003) description of empowerment, based on her analysis and critical appraisal of empowerment frameworks in psychology, social work and feminism. Carr (p. 18) defines empowerment as an “inherently interpersonal process in which individuals collectively define and activate strategies to gain access to knowledge and power”. Empowerment is recognised as a cyclic process of ‘power to’, where agency/action and reflection mutually reinforce the process (p. 13). This is consistent with an understanding of power as productive and constitutive of subjects.

Powerlessness is the default start position for the empowerment process, which Carr views as fluid. This default position allows for the narrow power Lamb refers to, a position that “shifts as people move through the empowerment process, gaining psychological power through conscientization and political power through engagement in social action and the resulting change” (Carr, 2003, p. 14). Conscientization for Carr (p. 15) is “simultaneously an analytical, constructive, and mobilizing process”. This describes the empowerment potential of research participation, and also reflects the identity formation process where discussion can create new ways of being, and unveil hidden aspects of identity. Conscientization is therefore potentially transformative as “[t]he narratives that arise in the course of [conscientization], then, reflect a new range of options for identification and action...” (p. 18).

This model of empowerment illuminates the research process’s potential for empowering participants, where the catalytic potential is shared amongst the group and does not rest solely with the researcher. This was exhibited by the online discussion group, where the participation of young women with varying degrees of sexual experience and differing perspectives acted to encourage a degree of critical engagement and reflexivity. It also manifested in participants being motivated to discuss their sex lives with for example peers, after being involved in various aspects of the research.

### ***A Word About Me—Situating the Researcher***

I came to this research topic with a particular set of ideas around sexuality that were illuminated as the research progressed. This recognition encouraged me to not only question

---

my preconceived ideas on cultural scripts about sexuality, but also to approach the narratives of participants as open-mindedly as possible. As such I was conscious of the need to be reflexively aware of my own multiple positionalities and what that may bring to the research (Tickner, 2005), and the kinds of social worlds that are inside my head (Ribbens cited in Letherby, 2003, p. 96).

In this regard it is important to contextualise the research and analysis by way of a biography. With respect to my feminist pedigree, I am not a feminist by birth, nor by upbringing. I was raised by a single working mother who bought me a BMX and never made me wear skirts if I did not want to (a feminist in many ways, though she might not admit it). It was not until I returned to university in the mid 1990s that feminism entered my lexicon. I was, like so many at that time, an ‘I’m not a feminist but...’ feminist, at least until I took my first Women’s Studies undergraduate courses. Feminism for Dux and Simic (2008, p. 22) as it was for me, was not anything ‘post’ at all, it was new, and exciting, and it did not feel ‘over.’ It settled in and started to shape my life and change my thinking. I therefore consider my feminism to be more of a rebirth.

Proclaiming myself as a Third Wave feminist is a little contentious. Apart from its theoretical haziness, the generational/wave debate is antithetical to me. I am constantly nodding my head to both Second and Third Wave opinions and ideologies regardless of their contradictory positions at times. I am also not a rebellious daughter, as Richards and Baumgardner suggest I must be if I am a Third Waver (2000, p. 137). My mother is my greatest teacher, and I try to listen carefully to those who have gone before me.

The more I understand of the strands that come together to weave the Third Wave tapestry the more I see myself in its fabric. I am not wedded to any particular identity, and often feel myself slipping between instantiations of myself from context to context. My identity is certainly not fixed, a fact that is reflected in my sexuality which for the majority of my life was unquestionably defined as straight, but now vacillates between gay and whatever other political label I may use. Having once resided in the heteronormative world, and now being able to opt out of some aspects of it, I have an extra lens through which to look.

This flexibility is influenced in part by my following of Vedic, Yogic and Buddhist philosophies within my daily life, a factor that may make me somewhat postmodern, but is in fact something different. Ethics of do-no-harm and non-judgment are cornerstones of these

---

philosophical orientations, and they influence my thinking, my orientation towards my research participants, and the goals of this research.

## **Theoretical Perspectives**

### **Why a Third Wave Feminist Stance?**

I wanted to write from a Third Wave feminist theoretical position because I felt that it reflects the kind of feminism that was evident in the analysis—a feminism that was self-aware and active, media-savvy and playful, and one that picked and mixed a variety of theories it found pragmatic and useful—in short, Third Wave. Additionally, it seemed appropriate to use a Third Wave feminist theoretical position because that was the language so often used by participants to engage with this topic. In popular culture we do not often hear women whose conduct is being celebrated, labelled as Postfeminist. That title is reserved for those considered to be throwing off the feminist mantle in order to pull women as a social category back into pre-Second Wave times.

### ***What IS a Third Wave Theoretical Position?***

Third Wave feminism can be inherently difficult to define/describe as the Wave considers definitions to be antithetical to its central principles of inclusivity, multiplicity and contradiction (Evans & Bobel, 2007, p. 207), as categorising is ultimately divisive and creates dichotomies of exclusivity that feed into systems of oppression (p. 218). The difficulty in defining Third Wave feminism is therefore a reflection of the diversity the Wave is attempting to embrace so as to avoid exclusionary and divisive tendencies (Jacob & Licona, 2005, p. 200).

Some younger feminists (see for example Jacob & Licona, 2005), note that the political and social environments in which they come of age are different from that of their feminist mothers. The current age is not one of easily definable political and social injustices but is instead one where systemic and/or structural inequalities appear less visible and are experienced and resisted at the individual level (Kinser, 2004, p. 137). Neoliberal political themes are now part of mainstream culture, most notably the ethos of individualism that removes the state from responsibility for systemic inequalities, transferring responsibility to the individual for their own wellbeing through self-improvement, self-reliance and self-

---

regulation (see for discussion Goodkind, 2009). As a result the language of societal change is pitched as bottom-up rather than top-down activism. The primary site of efficacy is the self, and responsibility for the improvement of life conditions lies solely with the individual. It is arguable whether Third Wave's instantiation of individualism is a direct effect of neo-liberal politics or an out-flowing of its response to postmodern challenges. Either way its micro-level, individualist stance resembles neo-liberalism and neo-liberalism is the political context in which it is embedded and with which it engages.

The Third Wave is "a movement that contains elements of Second Wave critiques of beauty culture, sexual abuse, and power structures while also acknowledging and making use of the pleasure, danger and defining power of those structures" (Heywood & Drake, 1997, p. 11). Third Wavers also experience a "sense of entitlement" (Findlen in Kinser, 2004, p. 134), one produced by Second Wave feminism's impacts which have become embedded in western culture. Feminism is "tucked into our daily acts of righteousness and self-respect. . . . For our generation feminism is like fluoride. We scarcely notice that we have it—it's simply in the water" (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000, p. 17). This sense of entitlement has directed Third Wave engagement in active attempts at redressing inequalities in heterosexual culture, particularly around the right to judgement-free sex.

Third Wavers criticise academic feminism for its inaccessibility and 'jargon-ese' writing styles. In this regard theory is seldom explicitly evident in Third Wave writings, which can be generally characterised as confessional narratives that reflect the embodied politics of the Third Wave, where activism begins with the individual, both as an agent and as a site of resistance. Such story-telling is the Third Wave's adaptation of consciousness-raising where text replaces the in-person group, and personal narratives function as a way of communicating the multiple ways in which oppressions impact on women, how they are resisted and challenged, and how women can 'do' feminism in a postfeminist cultural context. Narrative is therefore seen as a powerful tool by which to share the experiences of negotiating living in such an environment, where the master's house keeps being rebuilt<sup>14</sup> in

---

<sup>14</sup> The master's house refers to Audre Lorde's (2007) criticism of white feminism for its inherent bigotry and adoption of patriarchal tools that deny difference and the richness that it can bring with respect to finding creative solutions to the oppressions women (as differently situated) experience. By insisting that women reach across the "gap of male ignorance ...to educate men as to our existence and needs... [they fall foul of] an old and primary tool of all oppressors to keep the oppressed occupied with the master's concerns." (p.113) Thus, engaging in this kind of practice (of any kind of practice that is the picking up of the tools of the 'master' (the practices of patriarchy)) is simply to reify their power.

more subtle and elaborate ways, such that dismantling it is becoming more complicated (Kinser, 2004, p. 137).

Third Wave feminism is also rooted in critiques by women-of-colour of the Second Wave's early failing to account for the diversity of voices within the movement, the impacts of postcolonial theory, and postmodern and poststructuralist deconstructions of the category of "women". Responding to postmodern challenges to identity categories and the effects of demarcating membership as exclusive, Third Wave feminists are quick to mark their adherence to unmitigated inclusivity in order to be more representative. It is only in this way, Third Wavers say, that feminism can be truly representative. Having come of age in a more "pluralistic context" of multiculturalism, this pluralism informs their feminism (Howry & Wood, 2001, p. 333). The world as they see it is a web of power that is too complicated to allow for a 'one-size-fits-all' feminism (Purvis, 2004, p. 105).

This inclusivity disestablishes feminism as delineated, instead allowing Third Wavers to fit feminism into women's daily lives where sexism and other forms of social injustice are most often experienced (Evans & Bobel, 2007, p. 214). As a result this is "a feminism that does not judge or place boundaries on those that identify with the movement" but allows for multiple positionalities and works to build "strength and solidarity" into coalitions around issues that cut across groups (ibid), rather than dividing them by identities that are reliant on essentialising categories (Fixmer & Wood, 2005, p. 241). This allows these feminists to critique and engage across a wide range of "discursive locations" in a way that creates a dynamic politics (Snyder, 2008, p. 176), one that can be responsive to the needs of communities and individuals who experience the uneven impacts of women's rights gained, and "temporary and contextualized" oppressions (Renegar & Sowards, 2009, p. 9).

Contradiction is a primary tool for Third Wavers and is used to "expose the social construction of reality" (Mann & Huffman, 2005, p. 71), and to challenge dichotomies and meanings. It is enacted within the individual, by individuals, within and across groups, to challenge, redefine and create ambiguity. By working to redefine and/or eliminate stereotypes and labels, identity can be liberating and pluralistic rather than restrictive (Evans & Bobel, 2007, p. 212). It can be fluid and fragmented, internally inconsistent and contradictory.

---

Importantly “contradictions [can] foster a sense of agency for some third wave feminist[s] ... that enables them to understand their identities, diversity, and feminism on their own terms and to explore new possibilities and options for everyday experiences and activism” (Renegar & Sowards, 2009, p. 2). Engaging in acts that challenge and subvert socially constituted meaning allows Third Wave feminists to imagine different social realities and to experiment in a way that increases agency and autonomy for the individual. Being inconsistent can frustrate the audience (p. 5), and be socially challenging. This can work to shift societal conceptions and, as Foucault noted, push them in new directions (cited in Renegar & Sowards, 2009, p. 5). Thus, individual activism can be efficacious at micro- and/or local levels.

Third Wave feminism is often criticised for its focus on the individual rather than on society as a whole. However, embracing individual selves allows for the exploration of worlds from unique positionalities (Conrad, 2001, p. 174), destabilising performances and the reinterpretation of identities and signs (Harnois, 2008, p. 135). In this practice inclusivity paints a diverse image of the impacts of oppressions and we are thus able to see “how the world operates for women” (Snyder, 2008, p. 184). Howry and Wood (2001, p. 328) call this strategy “claiming voice”, whereby individuals can, through their engagement with feminism and other feminists, come to “understand and express their experiences in their own terms”, rather than through the homogenising language of group-speak.

A common criticism of this individualist orientation is that it is politically impotent. However, stating that individualist activism is ineffectual does not recognise the impact that agentic action at the local level can have when deployed in public arenas (Renegar & Sowards, 2009, p. 8). In this respect micro- and local-level political action can still be effective sites for engagement.

Third Wave feminism is often described as having a commitment to the primacy of personal choice, having adopted Gloria Steinem’s declaration that it is not the choices that we make but rather the power to choose that is important (Bailey, 2002, p. 147). Baumgardner and Richards (2003, p. 450) expand this, noting that it is not the choice we make, but rather that we make it freely. Implicit in a narrow reading of choice is the idea choices made by feminists are feminist choices, and that oppressive structures and institutions have been destroyed, leaving women the remaining tool of choice by which to instantiate this new structural equality into their everyday lives (Orr, 1997, p. 34). These straight readings of

---

choice, however, can trivialise the implicit ideas of power and agency embedded in the notion of choice, and reduce it to a lifestyle aspect which can be politically disempowering (Mann & Huffman, 2005, p. 70). Choice for Third Wave feminists is instead an act of political engagement. Choices are not unexamined or enacted within social constraints that are not critically considered, or not considered at all (as outlined in the Literature Review, pp.34-6)

As Snyder-Hall (2010, p. 256) remarked “[t]he contention that “feminism [was] supposed to be about making my own decisions” may sound trite, but it speaks to the issue of self-determination that forms the foundations of feminism”. It recognises that we live in a contradictory and pluralistic society where decision-making cannot be embedded in any stable group identity (p. 259). Engaged responsibility reinforces the requirement of conscious decision-making, moving the Third Wave dedication to choice beyond the discussion of constraint and into the realm of agency, autonomy and directed political action (at the local/micro-level).

Showden (2009, p. 183) notes that “cultural representation and sex seem to be the *subjects* of most third-wave inquiry and activism”, highlighting the Third Wave’s sex positive stance. For Third Wavers this is both a response to a monolithic reading of the Second Wave as “antimale, antisex, antifemininity, and antifun” (Snyder, 2008, p. 179), and to the divisive and repulsing effects of the “sex wars” of the 1980s (Waters, 2007, p. 252). In an effort to distance themselves from stereotypes of feminists as anti-sex, Third Wavers instead embrace and have grown out of the sex positive ‘camp’ (Snyder, 2008, p. 179). Although this can be seen as an individualistic and unexamined position, it reflects the Third Wave’s commitment to non-judgemental inclusivity—in terms of sex and sexuality, no orientation or behaviour is excluded. “If you wanted to be spanked before sex [or] get married ...third wavers claimed, you weren't automatically a traitor to the cause.” (Siegel, 2007, p. 143). Stoller (cited in Waters, 2007, p. 258) notes that Third Wavers admit to not knowing what “female sexuality” actually is, prompting them to refrain from judging how women engage in it, opening up the sexual landscape to be investigated. Instead Third wavers recognise what Gayle Rubin (1999, p.160) described as society’s “need to draw and maintain an imaginary line between good and bad sex”, the need to trouble this line, and sexuality and its performance in general.

Resisting negative and stigmatising language is also important for Third Wavers, as Walker remarks:

---



"For giving our bodies what they want and crave, for exploring ourselves and others, we are punished like Eve reaching for more knowledge. We are called sluts and whores. We are considered impure or psychotic ... We must decide that this is no longer acceptable" (cited in Howry & Wood, 2001, p. 326)

The problematic nature of resisting or co-opting negative language was highlighted by the Slut Walk phenomenon that has recently swept many western countries. Slut Walks began as a response to an incident where a Toronto police officer advised York University students that young women should not dress like "sluts" so as to avoid being raped or sexually assaulted (Alexander, 2011 para 2). Considered as an exercise in resisting rape myth ideology and the shaming of women who are actively engaged with their sexuality, local and international protests quickly ignited, with thousands of supporters around the world taking to the streets. Once out of their local context, however, Slut Walks sparked an ongoing debate around women's obvious sexuality and behaviour, dress and performance. Particularly, beyond rape myth resistance, attempts by activists to reclaim, disempower or resignify the term 'slut' as a way to break down stigma around women's sexuality received considerable commentary, particularly by feminists (see for example Blogando, 2011; Griffin, 2001 para 2; Murphy, 2007, para 33).

Being/performing the slut can be progressive for young women with respect to their sexual subjectivity. Resistance to stigmatising language may be part of this development, as it is stigma that is most often feared by young women<sup>15</sup>. Reclaiming language may be an impossible task, but those who have tried have managed to single themselves out as empowered women—see for example Riot Grrrl and Third Waver Kathleen Hanna. Attempts to resist/reclaim language can be seen more as a way to separate women's active desiring from denigration. Slut Walks can thus be read not only as attempts at redefining the term 'slut' but also presenting contradictory images that break down the potential to use sexually shaming language against all women. Regardless of its efficacy, attempts at language reclamation represent Third Wave engagement as resistance and performance.

As the Third Wave is critically engaged with sexuality, femininity and heterosexuality in practice, using a Third Wave lens provided a means by which young women's agency and criticality could be 'recovered' from criticisms that Third Wave activity is culturally duped and postfeminist (in the media sense). This lens also allowed me to identify agency in the narratives of young women, and to identify its political potential.

---

<sup>15</sup> My results.

### **Additional Theoretical Influences**

Additional theoretical influences (utilised by Third Wave feminists) that have specifically impacted on analysis of this thesis include the work of Foucault, Butler, Goffman and Rubin.

Foucault's work on power has been influential among feminist theorists and researchers. His concept of the productive nature of power within the social matrix provides a powerful way by which to explain and examine women's position within society. Of particular interest to me are Foucault's notion of the panopticon and its effect of creating a self-surveilling population who self-discipline in line with the process of normalisation of individuals within society (see *Discipline and punish*, 1995). Foucault (1995) suggests that formal sources of societal discipline have been replaced by a culture of surveillance, where a pervasive external gaze (one that is intermittent but assumed to be ubiquitous) is internalised due to the assumption of constant surveillance, rendering the individual as their own disciplinary force. Problematically, Foucault positions individuals as subjects constituted by discipline and power, "where certain bodies, certain gestures, certain discourses, certain desires, come to be identified and constituted as individuals" (Foucault, 1980, p. 98). Power creates subjects, subjects are the effects of power—thus subjects become "docile bodies" (Foucault, 1995). These docile bodies engage in disciplinary practices of normalisation, which as Bartky notes are gendered in the support of appropriate gendered identities and reinforce the power relationships that dominate them (Allen, 1992, p. 275; Bartky, 1999). Docile bodies, however, are inherently problematic in denying agency to individuals and situating them as "cultural sponges" with delimited subjectivity (Deveaux, 1992, p. 214). Foucault himself recognised that such a reading can conflate domination with power and leave no space for subjective agency and resistance to disciplinary practices. Thus in his later work he began to look at historical ethical frameworks by which to build "practices of liberty" or ways by which individuals respond to the effects of power (at the micro-level) by enacting a "relation to self" or *rapport à soi* (a technology of the self) that aims at self-constitution within the spectrum of possible choices that power as a productive force presents (Sawicki, 1992, pp. 174-175). Although this presents opportunities for individuals to exercise agency in their own self-constitution, Deveaux (1992, p. 224) notes that as power relations and impacts are external manifestations (individuals being acted upon) and freedoms are determined based on objective determinations, subjective experiences of freedom can remain unseen. This aspect of Foucault is problematic when focusing on subjective development and experiences of empowerment within a sexualised context, particularly when looking at internalised

---

impediments to exercising choice and engaging in self-realisation (ibid). As such it signals a limit to the usefulness of Foucault's work within this thesis, and restricts it to the external exercise of panoptic power, and the internalisation of that disciplinary gaze, so as to leave room for ideas of 'power to' and the value of self-reflexion and empowerment at the subjective level. Here the use of Foucault follows Sawicki's (1991, p. 99) suggestion, that rather than seeing his work as a theory of power (at the micro-level, that reflects wider macro-level issues of 'power over' and 'power to') it is better to view it as an attempt to bring attention to "deep irregularities and impersonal forces that make us what we are". Rather than beholding us to the deficits in this work, this perspective leaves space for women to "develop the "inside" of a changed consciousness as a sphere of freedom...[and become] empowered through self-knowledge, even within conditions that severely limit one's ability to act..." (Collins, 2000, p. 118).

Foucault's influences can be seen in the work of Judith Butler, who takes his social constructionist position and applies it to the manufacture of gender, and gendered relations. Because Butler too is contentious for her dissolution of the subject, and the reliance upon discourse to the effect of making invisible the effects of the material body on meaning and agency, only some aspects of Butler's work are utilised here, and are done so in concert with the work of Goffman.

Butler's postmodern extension of Foucault's social constructionist position is an anti-essentialist attempt to undo identity categories that support a "repressive heterosexual matrix" (Salih in Butler, 2005, p. 90). At the centre of her work in *Gender Trouble* is the collapsing of sex and gender into one another, where sex as body does not pre-exist culture, but is a consequence of it—where we see sex what we find instead is gender, performed (p. 91). As Butler (2006, p. 45) describes it, gender "is the repeated stylization of the body, as a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame" or discourse. Thus gender is a reiterated act, a repeated performance of a role that from the outside looks like a static image of an individual's gender (a static ontological core). Rather than gender pre-existing performance, it is an effect of reiterated performances. It is "done", as a consequence of pre-existence discourse fields that direct its content (Salih in Butler, 2005, p. 91). Thus, Butler defines performativity as such:

"...not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration" (Butler, 2006, p. xv)

---

Importantly, Butler is clear that gender as performance is not something that is chosen by free subjects—individuals have a script that is already predetermined by the discursive frame in which they are embedded (Sahil, 2007, p. 56). If gender does not pre-exist performance for Butler, neither does the subject however (Kirby, 2006, p. 43). Just as gender is an out-flowing of the reiterated effects of performance, so too is the individual as subject. Thus Butler dismisses the relevance of the body in terms of a pre-existing basis for cultural meaning, seeing it only as a surface upon which cultural meaning is laid rather than something that pre-exists meaning (Beasley, 2005, p. 101). In this way she makes room for the breaking down of gender identities that subvert political adherence to categories that in reality are unstable and artificial (p. 102).

Problematically for this work, beyond the dissolution of the category “woman” as a political subject position from which agency can be enacted, a reduction of the body to a surface upon which cultural meaning is written denies the efficacy of the material body to disrupt and destabilise meaning of its own accord. Recognising the materiality of the body does not deny that it is constituted by cultural practices, but simply denies that it is reducible to them (Nelson, 1999, p. 332). Additionally, framing the subject as an effect of discourse in action—of the doing process alone—makes agency and intention problematic, and resistance to dominant discourses more so because they are the effect of “slippages” in performances rather than conscious acts (pp. 336, 339). As Nelson (pp. 347-348) notes, “[h]uman subjects, located in time and space, do identities in much more complex ways than performativity allows.” Performance so rigidly defined also makes problematic the reflexive consideration of action by agents, such that self-contemplation becomes little more than epiphenomena to a discursively determined existence.

Within this thesis the notion of the reiterative process of performativity in social contexts, and the unconscious aspects of this kind of gender-doing, are taken into account, but in order to allow space for material bodies and their spatiality, and to capture agency, intention and reflexion, I supplement it with Goffman’s dramaturgical notions of performance which situate the actor as agent within social spaces, with predetermined scripts and the intentionality and agency to alter these in view of respective audiences. Part of the relevance of Goffman’s work is that it can comfortably sit alongside sexual script theory without presenting conflicts between itself and discursive construction that underpins work by Foucault and Butler.

---

In his work the *Presentation of self in everyday life* (1959; 1969) Goffman lays out his dramaturgical theory. Here he equates everyday life to a performance, where individuals as actors engage in assessing the social settings they are temporally embedded in, and the audiences and other actors around them, to then produce a performance tailored to those elements. Performance then is something that contains intention, but not necessarily so in so far as every performance is a designed contrivance. Rather performance falls along a spectrum, from that the actor believes to be a 'true' representation of self, to that which is highly fictionalised and specifically tailored towards an intentioned outcome that the actor recognises is not 'real', including that which is done without conscious design (1969, p. 9).

Performances are generally orientated towards 'impression management' or presenting the self in a favourable way (p. 6). As Goffman (p. 11) notes "[s]ociety is organized on the principle that any individual who possesses certain social characteristics has a moral right to expect that others will value and treat him in an appropriate way." Thus performances are geared towards audience reactions to actors and their assessments of them as being situationally appropriate (or not, as the case may be). In this regard they can involve all manner of misrepresentation and design (pp. 51-3).

Performances involve a front and back stage. Front stage consists of the stage (physical setting), props and costume, which come together with performance to create a representation of self for an audience (Goffman, 1959, pp. 22-4). Performances are affected by those we interact with, and can be performed in teams towards particular ends (p. 79). Backstage is where the actor is alone, can engage in preparation and rehearsal, and can drop contrived performances and become more 'real' (1959, p. 112; 1969, p. 97). The self as perceived by audiences is a managed impression, a product or dramatic effect of a performance performed, over time (1969, p. 223). It is a social process and therefore has considerable flex with respect to how malleable it is—there are any number of performances we can chose at any one time that are relevant for our intentions as actors with vested interests in impression management. In *Stigma* (1963) Goffman goes further, suggesting that the rules of normalcy that society presents set the tone of the moral performance actors should aim at. For those who do not meet those performance rules performance management equates to hiding deviancy away, or to letting it be visible and then managing the resulted social tensions. Goffman defines stigma not so much as an attribute that can discredit an individual, but rather as part of the process of relationships around an attribute and its attendant stereotypes (pp. 12-13). In this way he allows that what can be a stigmatizing attribute for one category of

---

actors can be void of stigma and/or may in fact provide for another category—an example here would be casual sex, which makes sluts and/or studs of gendered individuals.

Goffman's utility in this research comes by way of his formulation of individual performance which allows for intentionality and agency in a way that is difficult to achieve with Butler's ideas, and provides a way for resistance to be enacted within Butler's performative field. It also takes into account space and place as constituent factors in performance and identity presentation. Thus within this thesis performativity references Butler's social effects upon the individual, whereas performance references Goffman's 'actor engagement' which has inherent in it varying degrees of intentionality and agency.

Lastly it is worth mentioning the impact of seminal ideas from Rubin's work, principally "Thinking sex" (2011), for her contribution to feminist understandings of how normative categories of good and bad sex are (following Foucault) historically shaped and play out in western cultures as societal norms. Rubin notes that there are a number of "ideological formations" that have a firm grip on how we understand sexuality: sexual essentialism, "sex negativity, the fallacy of misplaced scale, the hierarchal valuation of sex acts, the domino theory of sexual peril, and the lack of a concept of benign sexual variation" (p. 148). Sex negativity is most important for Rubin, as it frames sex "as dangerous, destructive, [and] negative", and "in terms of its worst possible expression" in ways that no other physical capacity is prone to (ibid). The impact of this societal ideology is immediately evident in the 'sex as risk' medico-cultural script. Sex acts are also hierarchically valued, with married, procreative, love-based heterosex at the top of the "erotic pyramid" of act classification—a sex act caste system (p. 149). For sex to be good, normal and/or natural, it must be "coupled, relational, within the same generation, and occur at home", whilst bad sex includes that which is promiscuous, casual, non-procreative, in some way public, and involves fetishes, sex toys, and non-normative sex roles (p. 151). Status and stigma attach to acts/identities as they are positioned on the pyramid, with those at or nearest the top earning the most social acceptance and praise, and those nearer the bottom being stigmatised as deviant, evident of immorality or psychological fault or malfunction (pp. 149-150). The line between good and bad sex is what keeps society safe from the "domino theory of sexual peril" whereby if the line between good sex (morally sanctioned) and bad sex (emotionally void) is crossed (away from the good, to the bad) then society will plunge into sexual chaos (p. 151). As Rubin notes this

---

“kind of sexual morality .... grants virtue to the dominant groups, and relegates vice to the underprivileged ... [rather than by judging] sexual acts by the way partners treat one another, the level of mutual consideration, the presence of absence of coercion, and the quantity and quality of the pleasures they provide.” (p. 154).

The footprints of Rubin’s ideas are evident not only in my analysis of the data, but also in participant analyses of their own behaviours and that of those around them, as well as the normative structure of performed sexual scripts and disciplinary practices that participants (and young women observed in the field) engage in.

### **Sexual Script Theory (SST)**

In attempting to capture the interrelation between social context, socialisation and the individual it is useful to use Simon and Gagnon’s (2003, p. 492) Sexual Script Theory (SST) for its explanatory power and succinctness, its rejection of the “explanatory privilege” of biological discourses about sexuality and its commitment to the concept of the “socially acquired character of sexual life”. SST has been a popular explanatory frame work for some feminist researchers as it is adept at capturing gendered dialogues and roles, and offers an effective model by which to map those roles, discuss their origins and impacts, and analyse behaviours (Frith & Kitzinger, 2001, p. 210). Importantly, “[s]cripting theory necessarily broadens the conceptualization of sexuality to encompass both its social dimensions and the relational contexts in which sexuality emerges” (Kim, et al., 2007, p. 146). The advantage of SST for feminist researchers is notably the ability to account for gendered roles, and their impacts and origins, but also to negate their immutability.

Sexual scripts are “mutually shared conventions that guide actors to enact sexual situations interdependently” in a particular socio-cultural and/or historical location (Dworkin, et al., 2007, p. 150), and operate like guides, or an “operating syntax” (Simon & Gagnon, 1984, p. 53). They are derived from individuals’ immediate socio-cultural environment through the process of acculturation, are not biologically driven, and are flexible and adaptable (Lauman, Gagnon, Michael, & Michaels, 1994, p. 5). By adopting/creating/utilising a range of scripts, agents are able to act within a variety of socio-cultural contexts and circumstances in a manner that allows them to function in ways that are satisfactory to the situation/context, but also to the individual. Scripts are therefore variable, and can be enacted in distinct micro-locations and micro-situations.

Scripts operate on four levels:

---

- cultural scripts or scenarios, where broad-stroke ideas of sexuality such as heteronormativity<sup>16</sup> are embedded. They operate at the systemic or institutional level and present abstract conditions and are thus insubstantial enough to allow for variation and non-uniformity (Simon & Gagnon, 1984, p. 53, 1986, p. 99). They are guides and highlight the collective culture's rules, cues and heuristic options for how to behave in various sexual situations (Maticka-Tyndale & Herold, 1997, para 4).
- subcultural scripts, where identity groups' scripts are embedded, such as ethnic or sexual identity groups (Plante, 2006, p. 56).
- interpersonal scripts, where scripting through peer/familial groups occurs. These operate at the level of interaction between individuals. Guides are derived from cultural scripts and scripts are adjusted at the intrapsychic level, allowing individuals to improvise so as to negotiate the incongruencies thrown up in the collisions between real world events and anticipated events. (Simon & Gagnon, 1984, p. 53).
- intrapsychic scripts where subjective mental processes attribute meaning to experience and are integrated into our cognitive schemas. These are personal-level scripts that operate on an individual level, and "involve the meanings, internal states, and patterns of arousal specific to an individual" (ibid). They can operate like 'dress rehearsals' or ways of practicing behaviours when new or alternative situations arise (ibid).

Scripts are significant in the identity development process, where individuals shift from acceptance of assimilated scripts, to questioning of those scripts, and their subsequent alternations as the self is created through self-examination (Simon & Gagnon, 1986, p. 100).

### ***Gendered Scripts—Rules for Girls and Boys***

Men and women are bound by generalised gendered scripts, predominantly delimited by the organising concepts of femininity, masculinity, and heteronormative male-directed sexual behaviour, rooted in a romantic love-seeking post-war model (Sanders, 2008, p. 401). For women, these include behavioural directives that rely on traditionalist notions of women as sexually passive, sexually innocent, more interested in love than sex, wanting to please, relationship-oriented in both overall romance-goal-orientation and sexual purposiveness, monogamous, non-promiscuous and controlling of sexual access. This normative cluster of

---

<sup>16</sup> Cohen defines heteronormativity as the practices and institutions "that legitimize and privilege heterosexuality and heterosexual relationships as fundamental and "natural" within society." (1997, p. 440)



directives results in the compliant woman being viewed as “good” or “nice” (Caruthers, 2005, p. 11), and allows her to avoid stigma. It encourages women to “deny or devalue their own sexual desire, to seek to please boys/men, to “wish and wait” to be chosen and to trade their own sexuality as a commodity” (Kim, et al., 2007, p. 146). Self-objectification to attract a partner and sexual gate-keeping are also part of this script. However, “a sexual script that requires women to please and to be emotionally available to men also makes it difficult for women to refuse sex.... [particularly when it is] an expression of love or caring” (Frith & Kitzinger, 2001, p. 215). This is a risky script for women but to step outside of it is to risk being seen as dirty, deviant, or ‘bad’—equally undesirable outcomes. Although some research points to some shifts in women’s sexual scripts, “traditional scripts still tend to characterize many heterosexual relationships in Western countries” (Dworkin & O’Sullivan, 2005, p. 151), particularly within the early stages of relationships (Morgan & Zurbriggen, 2007, p. 533).

Masculine scripts are still often viewed as aggressive and dominating, exemplified by the male sex drive which is characterised as biological and uncontrollable. It exemplifies Hollway’s ‘male sex drive’ discourse, where men are maximally sex-seeking with a variety of partners without commitment or emotional involvement. Expanding on this Mahalik et al., (2003) identified 11 “distinct masculine norms” (Backus & Mahalik, 2011, p. 2) that are part of dominant American society:

“Winning, Emotional Control, Risk-Taking, Violence, Power Over Women, Dominance, Playboy (lack of emotional involvement in sexual relationships), Self-Reliance, Primacy of Work, Disdain for Homosexuals, and Pursuit of Status.”  
(Mahalik et al., 2003, p. 3)

It is fair to say that many of these characteristics are part of New Zealand’s normative traditional masculine script, where sexual and emotional violence against women are notable problems, and masculine behaviours in hook up culture mirror many of those listed above.

These gendered scripts are seen as complementary and are meant to “fit together to reproduce particular and limited forms of sexuality that are deemed ‘normal’, all in the service of reproducing and sustaining compulsory heterosexuality” (Tolman, Striepe & Harmon, p. 10). In following the traditional script young women would be expected to find non-relationship sexual culture difficult and costly when being confronted by traditionally masculine men.

---

These scripts also support and legitimate the sexual double standard, where men are expected to be sexually prolific in their behaviour in terms of sexual partners and experiences, and women to be sexually reserved, limiting their sexual behaviour to the context of romantic relationships (Greene & Faulkner, 2005, p. 240). Behaving normatively—performing the dominant sexual script and also adhering to the sexual double standard—is an important aspect of socio-sexual conformity for individuals, rewarding them with acceptance and approval, despite the poor psychological outcomes that such behaviour can engender (Sanchez, Crocker, & Boike, 2005, p. 1446). Behaviour that contravenes either/both the dominant sexual script and the sexual double standard can be judged deviant or socially unacceptable (Wiederman, 2005, p. 498). The risks within heterosexuality are higher for women than they are for men however. Adhering to the traditional feminine script can result in a woman's sexual desires being subordinated to male desire/pleasure, or not being satisfactorily attended to because the script provides women with few skills with which to negotiate sexual relationships satisfactorily (Gomez & Marin, 1996, p. 360). Thus script-following can lead to sexual dissatisfaction for women (Sanchez, et al., 2005, p. 1445). Being assertive in seeking sexual satisfaction within a relationship may also result in her male partner feeling threatened (Wiederman, 2005, pp. 499-500), which can have negative consequences for both parties. Seeking sexual satisfaction outside of a relationship can result in her being perceived as socially deviant.

Resisting traditional or normative scripts may therefore be disincentivised for both men and women—for men with respect to lost privilege and perceived freedoms, and for women in terms of costs such as reputational damage and peer ostracism.

### **Sexual Subjectivity**

Sexual subjectivity within this thesis is not so much a theoretical guide as a working concept that describes a number of features I consider to be important with respect to young women's agency within the current sexual culture. It is a useful concept as it contains fundamental aspects of feminist concern with respect to young women's sexuality. The definition I rely on comes from work done by Horne and Zimmer-Gembeck (2006).

Horne and Zimmer-Gembeck (p. 125) build on Tolman's definition which states that sexual subjectivity entails that girls/women experience an "entitlement to sexual pleasure and sexual safety" whilst also being aware of constraining social forces that work against girls'/women's

---

experiences of those entitlements. Working from Martin, Horne and Zimmer-Gembeck (2006, p. 126) also note the importance of conceiving of the self as a subject rather than an object, which requires experiencing of bodily pleasures in an embodied and subjective manner. Martin (1996, p. 10) also notes the importance of agency, describing it as the ability to exert power, the feeling of being able to make choices and to act on those choices, and remarked on the integral nature of sexual subjectivity in agency.

Within sexual subjectivity, desire is operationalised as “(a) a sense of entitlement to sexual desire and pleasure and (b) self-efficacy in achieving sexual pleasure” (Horne & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2006, p. 127). With this and the above aspects in mind, Horne and Zimmer-Gembeck designed the Female Sexual Subjectivity Inventory (FSSI) for research purposes. The FSSI consists of three core elements:

“(a) sexual body-esteem (self-perceptions of sexual attractiveness and desirability), (b) sexual desire and pleasure (including three subscales: sense of entitlement to sexual pleasure from self, sense of entitlement to sexual pleasure from partner, and self-efficacy in achieving sexual pleasure), and (c) sexual self-reflection (critical reflection of sexual self and sexual experiences).” (p. 136)

The value of this framework in terms of analysis allowed for the pinpointing of various aspects of young women’s behaviour and recognition of the importance of these experiences with respect to feeling empowered and agentic within their sex lives.

### **Doing Space**

The spaces in which gendered and sexualised performances are enacted by young (heterosexual) women appear to be becoming increasingly blurry with respect to the private/public divide as the sexualisation of public and urban spaces increases (Chatterton & Hollands, 2003). Although many such performances are noted for their acquiescence to the male gaze rather than as a subjective engagement (see for example Bordo, 2003), I consider this movement from the private to the public to be a knowing engagement by some young women. They may be utilising a number of spaces as a way of destabilising constructions of the feminine to facilitate subjective developmental work around sexuality and sexual subjectivities, and/or to experience these aspects of self in process in liberated contexts<sup>17</sup>. In some ways it seems appropriate to consider this as a colonisation of previously exclusive

---

<sup>17</sup> i.e spaces where behaviours are not normally available to be performed

masculine spaces by women as desiring subjects (rather than desirable objects). Thus, occupying these spaces, particularly in unfeminine ways, can be potentially transformative.

An outline of what space ‘means’ is required to surface this discussion. Primarily I draw on the influences of Massey (1994, 2005), the recent writing of Green, Follert, Osterlund and Paquin (2010), and Goffman (2001) for a framework by which to examine place and space and the performances that can take place therein.

Massey (1994, 2005) describes space and the spatial as the intersection of social relations that occur across time, making spaces relational, dynamic, and multiplicitous due to the intersection of, and continual in- and outflow of, actors and interrelations. Because of this, space is never complete nor closed, is always under construction, and is open to multiple codings/interpretations by multiple positionalities. Thus spaces are not *static* constructions but rather instantiated social arenas that are fluid and changeable (Smith & Katz in Rose, 1996, p. 57).

In this regard spaces are not inherently masculine or feminine (or any other category) because they are empty of meaning—they are constructed as gendered due to the constitutive gendered interactions and relations that happen within them (Massey, 1994, p. 121). This is not a one-way process however, as spaces themselves also lend themselves/contribute to the construction of gendered performances (p. 181). Influence in fact comes not only from local and internal spatial relations, but also from the intersecting of global trajectories—the relational influences of things that are not within a space, but are outside it yet still impact on it (Anderson, 2008, p. 229). We could think here of the impact of Americanised geographically particularised culture on a geographically and culturally removed country like New Zealand, for example. Because all these other spaces are in a constant state of flux, so too is the one on which we focus. Discussing Doel, Anderson (2008) describes Massey’s project similarly, namely that space ought best be thought of as a verb rather than a noun due to the osmotic qualities of spatial boundaries that allow for a constant flow of relations into and out of and next to and contiguous to any particular space. Rose (1999, p. 248), talks similarly of space as something that is “done” in ways similar to Butler’s performance of gender. For Massey (1994, 9.7) this means that spatial identities are as multiplicitous and in flux as those of postmodern human subjects.

---

Places then become spaces caught at a moment of time (Massey, 1994, p. 5). Thus places too have no fixed identity, because they are influenced and constituted by the social relations that occur within and around them at a time, and at a material location.

I want to take this a step further, however, to account for the material interactions places and material geographies can have on spaces as social relations. Taking my cue from Green et al., (2010), Goffman (1969) and Massey (2005) I note how places can influence spaces by their very materiality, how they bring their own rules to spatial relations, how their physical dynamics can create or close down opportunities for particular kinds of social relations, and how places as stages and material aspects such as props all add to the kinds of performances that places create and permit within spatial relations. Green et al., (2012) draw their examples from “tearooms”, public toilets that are spaces of sexual interactions for men looking for same-sex experiences. They note the generative nature of place, how some public bathrooms allow for easy access to anonymous sex whilst others do not, by virtue of their physical properties and constitutedness. “Sexual spaces” they remark (p. 11), “operate as much as socializing agents as containers for sexual sociality.” For Goffman (1969) the materiality of place constitutes “a region” or a stage (a setting) and includes scenery, props and location—some of which we can take with us, some of which stays put. This is where performances take place, and its aspects are influential. In this way there is space to take account of the materiality of place, place’s material constituents, including the materiality of actors who move in and out of spaces and influence how spaces are experienced, and what performances are permitted. Thus we capture how both places and spaces can act upon agents to influence their performances, and thus be constitutive (Green, et al., 2010, p. 8).

Because space so conceived is only temporary and is in the constant process of becoming, spatial influences can be resisted by destabilising, unexpected or foreign performances, regardless of how normatively fixed they may appear. This leaves room for spaces to be political as they are negotiated and reconfigured within their constituting social relations (Massey, 2005, p. 147). But just as spaces are unstable and thus potentially political so too are they opportunities for resistance (Pitcher, 2006, p. 202). As spaces are colonised and recolonised what was once transgressive can instead become normalised (p. 205). For example, a young woman flashing her breasts at a party was a transgressive act when I was a teenager. However, the mainstreaming and popular co-opting of this kind of transgressive behaviour has led (or may be leading) to its normalisation, reducing its transgressiveness.

---

What was once political resistance can result in space change in ways that actors of influence can not anticipate.

When performances of both space and identity create discomfort it is likely that a contravention of these internalised normative rules is taking place. These discomforts signal a challenge to internal scripts of appropriate behaviour—they signal a threat to the bounded self, the interior space. As Bondi (2005, p. 145) notes “disturbing experiences prompt avoidant behaviours in which sufferers seek forms of protection or boundary reinforcement”. In the case of sexualised behaviours, internal reactions to behaviours can push the agent back towards normative femininity by for example framing of the self as guilty, or the excusing of behaviour through alcohol consumption to mark the self as normative despite non-normative performances (Peralta, 2008). At the group performance level, stigmatising behaviour can act as an external constraint to discipline the internal space of the non-normatively performing agent, and to restore the dominant spatial script—‘that’ behaviour is not appropriate ‘here’.

However, non-normative behaviour has the ability to be liberating. As Bondi suggests:

“to tap into the excitement that is the other side of panic is to embrace the radical otherness of ‘disorderly’ spatial experiences, glimpse the potentialities ... and ‘do’ space differently.” (2005, p. 146)

It is in this way that I suggest the occupation of spaces previously not framed as spaces for women’s enactment of sexual subjectivity has the potential to do space differently, and to expand the restrictive boundaries of femininity such that gender may be performed differently, namely as (by) desiring (female) subjects.

The examination of places and spaces also reveals how both are gendered, how they contribute to gendered performances and are created by them, and how place/space identities affect the subjectivities of actors that move in and out of them. McDowell’s (1995) examination of women working within the merchant banking industry in England provides a good example of how spatial relations create rules of occupation that impact directly on performance, from how femininity is enlisted and displayed, and the adoption of masculine performance traits, to codes for deportment and dress. It illustrates how the gendering of spaces acts to restrict women in ways generally not experienced by most men. For women to enter into restricted spaces in ways that are not permitted by the dominant disciplining

---

dialogues/scripts represent opportunities for resistance to constraining and rule-driven femininities (Rose cited in Bondi, 2005, p. 144).

This applies too to subjectivities. The self as performer is both influenced by and is a constituting factor of spaces, making identity performances (or expressions of subjectivity) contingent and specific. Utilising Goffman (1969) we could describe these as public performances tailored to different audiences on different stages. The materiality of the actor is itself important beyond the social codings laid upon it. Bodies, like props and plant, are not blank slates to be manipulated to the spatial relation they are employed in without bringing their own rules and constraints. They are not merely containers for isolated subjectivities either—like places and spaces, subjectivities are relational and multiple and co-existent with spaces and other subjectivities (Probyn, 2003, pp. 288, 292, 298). Pratt and Hanson (1994, p. 25) remind us however that we take aspects of subjectivity with us: there is “a stickiness to identity that is grounded in the fact that many women’s lives are [for example] lived locally”. We can see this in the sometimes uniform performance of feminine subjectivities across spaces. The body provides a porous boundary against which spaces can be experienced, and a medium through which they can also be performed in gendered ways affected by their own form. Their appearances can be adjusted, their performances tailored, and the experiences of spatial relations impact on subjectivities through their sensory capacities (Waite, Jessop, & Gorman-Murray, 2011). They thus take gender into spaces, and spaces infiltrate them to influence internal spaces where subjectivities are (partially) in process, influencing subjectivities and performances. The internalisation of femininity and normative heterosexuality bound the interior space of the individual, which in turn bounds external spaces with respect to occupation.

In discussing space in the analysis I illustrate how these aspects bear weight on the experiences of sexual subjectivity of participants, and those observed in the Wellington CBD during my field work.

### **Epistemology**

As a Third Waver I am committed to something of a pick ‘n’ mix epistemology that results from an as yet unformed (Third Wave) future feminist theory (Hemmings, 2009, p. 37). In this regard I have chosen to follow the epistemological path of LeMoncheck (1997), particularly because her position was developed within a discussion about women’s sexual

---

agency and expression, but also because Third Wave commitments to inclusivity are easily brought into this epistemological framework.

LeMoncheck (1997, pp. 15-19) outlines three main epistemological positions feminist researchers often utilise. The “view from nowhere” captures the positivist objective position of sterile unattached research and therefore a universalised view of sexuality across all individuals. The “view from somewhere better” describes standpoint epistemology’s privileging of certain positionalities and knowers over others and with respect to a study on sexuality can result in the privileging of women’s sexuality over that of men, and vice versa. The “view from everywhere” describes the postmodern epistemological position of multiplicity of truths and positionalities, the “non-partiality of total knowledge” and the disillusion of gender as an analytical category.

LeMoncheck’s (p. 20) alternative position is the “view from somewhere different” (VSD), defined by the following: “(1) that my “world” is not the only social location worth knowing; (2) no matter how much or how often I “world”-travel, my “world” will always be partial, because I am always somewhere; and (3) there are other “worlds” whose members may wish to travel to my own.” This position is beneficial when conceptualising identities as fluid and unstable, and one’s position within social contexts is multivariate. It allows for the appreciation of fluid and unique positionalities, provides a way to access lived experiences that differ in terms of identity and sexual agency and the experience of oppression and/or constraint, as well as a way to appreciate experiences as constructed within and by unstable subjectivities.

“This meeting of worlds will produce ... a dialectical interchange between quite different points of view, and a nuanced and complex understanding of the instabilities, ambiguities and contradictions of female sexual experience” (Bartky, 1998, p. 387).

A variety of women’s sexual experiences and agencies are open to investigation under this ‘view’ because no one position on sexuality connotes ‘truth’ about every woman’s lived sexual ‘world’. I use this ‘view’ to examine how social contexts construct subjectivities through experience, and how they may differ by simply being different (rather than other).

This epistemology captures the Third Wave dedication to inclusivity, the non-judgemental embracing of diverse subjectivities, and the avoidance of binaries and dichotomies. It also

---



allows for Third Wave's embodied engagement, as material situatedness is unproblematic for a VSD which is able to incorporate instantiated yet unstable identities.

In the next chapter I discuss the research design.

## Chapter Four: How I Did It

In this section I outline the research, discussing the rationale for my choice of a mixed-method design incorporating a transformative approach, with a focus on incorporating sensitive research practices.

### **Methods, Feminist Methods, and Mixed Methods.**

"Feminists should use any and every means available for investigating the 'condition of women in sexist society'." (Stanley, 1990, p. 12)

As Stanley suggests, if researchers are committed to exploratory, explanatory and transformative research with social justice goals, then no method should be discounted. Instead, they should be chosen with research questions and goals in mind (Letherby, 2004, p. 179). This approach allows for innovation and flexibility in the design process and the design itself, and is visible in the wide range of mixed methods approaches undertaken by feminist researchers (for a literature review on feminist mixed method approaches, see Sweetman, Badiee, & Creswell, 2010). In this way research is responsive to participant and researcher needs, and is adaptive to emergent issues and directions that may arise from the data.

The initial decision to undertake a mixed method approach was influenced by the recognition that different methods elicit different performances from participants, as they create different contexts for communication/performance—what Goffman (cited by Branaman in Goffman, Lemert & Branaman, (1997), p.li) calls a interactive “frame”. Participants as agents identify the kind of performance they are about to engage in and the scripts available to them in that situation, and adjust to meet those requirements. For example, the interview is a communicative event with its own set of expectations with respect to performances, ones that differ from other communicative frames (Barnard, 2009, p. 428).

As ‘women discussing sex’ is regarded as a taboo, creating a variety of spaces for young women to engage in this conversation was important as social pressures (for example the threat of stigma) could dissuade them from doing so. Multiple points of access provided ways for young women to contribute their voices to the discussion whilst reducing personal costs/risks.

---

The combining of quantitative and qualitative methods also presented an opportunity to “understand the lived experiences of a small number of participants [whilst providing]... numerical support to indicate the extent to which the experiences of a few are actually happening on a larger scale” (Shapiro, Setterlund, & Cragg, 2003, p. 32). This was important for identifying social-level structures and their impacts on individuals.

This project is a sequential mixed method design, where the first quantitative method, a survey, informs and directs the remainder of the research design by providing key concepts and themes for later discussion in a number of concurrent qualitative methods.

### **Transformative Goals Need a Mixing of Methods**

A commitment to (potentially) catalysing empowerment amongst participants was an important influence on the research design. I adopted a transformative approach to create space for this so as to “emphasize the agency role for the people involved in the research.” (Mertens, 2009, p. 2) Sweetman, Badiee and Creswell (2010) identify a number of criteria from Mertens’ transformative framework:

“Framed as questions, the criteria are as follows: (a) Do the authors openly reference a problem in a community of concern? (b) Do the authors openly declare a theoretical lens? (c) Were the research questions (or purposes) written with an advocacy stance? [added by Sweetman et al.], (d) Did the literature review include discussions of diversity and oppression? (e) Did the authors discuss appropriate labeling of the participants? (f) Did data collection and outcomes benefit the community? (g) Did the participants initiate the research, and/or were they actively engaged in the project? [added by Sweetman et al.]... (h) did the results elucidate power relationships? (i) Did the results facilitate social change? (pp. 444-445)

This is a substantial list that many researchers do not fully meet (ibid). However, a mixed method design allowed me to meet more of these criteria than a singular approach may have done. Having a two stage sequential design incorporating re-iteration or feed-back similar to that outlined in my discussion of Carr’s (2003) empowerment model was also aimed at catalysing social change. This design built in the flexibility that helped me avoid rigidity that could restrict dataflow and close off new avenues of discovery (Lobe & Vehovar, 2009, p. 558).

---

### **Softly Softly—Mixed Methods and Sensitive Topics**

Many discussions on the ethics of sensitive research topics list sexuality as an area of caution, as intrusions into the private realm are more likely to be considered sensitive (Lee & Renzetti, 1990, p. 512). What constitutes sensitive research, however, can be difficult to discern, as the concept goes beyond, and sometimes against, common sense ideas and is often dealt with as though it is self-explanatory (p. 510). I used, with amendments, Lee and Renzetti's outline of a sensitive research topic as:

“[...]one which potentially poses for those involved a substantial threat, the emergence of which renders problematic for the researcher [and/or the participant(s)] and/or the research the collection, holding, and/or dissemination of research data.” (p. 512).

Discussing personal aspects of their sex lives has the potential to open participants up to a host of possible harms and harmful outcomes. One of my principal concerns was that talking about their sex lives could cause emotional distress to participants if discussions turned to issues such as stigma, non-normative opinions or the recalling of painful experiences. The research design therefore provided space for participants to choose how they wanted to contribute, so that beyond measures I had taken to protect them against possible harms, they could also self-protect. The approach taken for my research data collection was approved by the VUW Human Ethics Committee, and also reflected my feminist methodological position. As a result, all the instruments were designed to allow the participant as much control as possible with respect to how they wished to participate, answering questions (or not), and withdrawing at any point during their participation.

My initial understanding of sex as a sensitive subject that could cause discomfort was challenged by how casually some participants treated the topic and their narrations. Many participants failed to find it as challenging as I had anticipated. This reflects not only the instability of the idea 'sensitive research', but also the potential for topics to move in and out of sensitive research categories for particular populations and groups. Assuming a topic is sensitive for participants before discovering whether or not this is the case has the potential to close down avenues of conversation and interaction. Thankfully, my first interview strongly disrupted the 'sensitive topic' framing of sex and allowed me to approach each interviewee as neither comfortable nor uncomfortable with the subject until they indicated how they felt.

---

**Don't Blow My Cover...**

The issues of confidentiality and anonymity were complex. In general sociological research the acceptable practice is to apply pseudonyms to respondents and to remove identifying details from descriptions so as to safeguard identities (Guenther, 2009, p. 412). However, doing so can negate attempts at making spaces for 'giving voice' to participants, potentially disempowering and silencing them and undermining their "challenges [to]... systems of oppression and injustice" (p. 414). This issue was complicated by the revealing nature of the narratives participants gave on sex and sexuality, and the potential impacts research products have on participants and their lives. Pseudonyms and anonymity can therefore provide some space between the participant and the research product that may reduce harms.

Participants were asked how they wished to be referred to in the text. Most were happy to use pseudonyms, and all were emailed (at publication) to let them know how they would be referenced in the text so they could identify themselves when reading the results. However, three participants chose to use their real names. Two voiced strong feminist identities, so although the material they provided was in-depth and detailed, I felt their willingness to be identified reflected their political commitments to the importance of open discussions about young women's sexual behaviour, and their comfort with their sexuality. The third participant expressed no reservations.

The risk for participants of using real names was partially offset by my not distinguishing between pseudonyms and real names in the text. Although this may dilute the political impact of using real names, in terms of my ethical responsibilities to participant wellbeing I felt creating some space between the text and the participant would mitigate some potential harms. Knowing how to identify themselves in the text gives participants the ability to claim voice for themselves if they wish, but also allows them to be invisible. I felt this was a middle ground that would allow participants to retain the power of naming, but allowed them to self-protect.

Survey respondents are referred to throughout the thesis by the number of their survey. As there were a large number of survey completions individualising each respondent by attributing names would be both time-consuming and confusing for the reader. Thus, Rx 'names' reference anonymous individuals.

---

### **Putting the Pieces Together—The Design**

The initial design was a two-stage mixed method approach. The first stage, a survey, was to be followed by a sequenced second stage: observation, face to face interviews with follow-up email questions, a focus group, and lastly follow-up interviews. The sequential design was intended to inform successive steps, but also to obtain data from a variety of different participant contexts—anonymity (the survey), in person (interviews), and within the group dynamic (focus groups). The purpose of the follow-up interviews was to clarify any questions I had about their narratives, and to determine if participants had changed their perspectives and/or behaviour due to the impact of taking part in the research.

The design was changed, however, due to the large number of survey responses, and related time and resource constraints. The nature of sensitive topics and engaging with potential participants also prompted me to think of other ways participants might want to communicate, if not in person.

The design was adjusted at the second stage, and instruments were run concurrently. I began with internet-mediated (IM) interviews and a web-based discussion group to replace the in-person focus groups. Email correspondence for follow up questions was ongoing. A small number of face to face interviews were conducted for those who did not want to participate through IM, and also to check the quality and depth of material generated from IM interviews. As a result of this change, the majority of the research was conducted using online methods.

### **Doing It Online**

There are multiple benefits for research using online methods. Online methods are substantially cheaper in terms of time and money than physical methods such as postal surveys, in person interviews and focus groups (Lobe & Vehovar, 2009, p. 588). Data are produced as ready-made transcripts, saving time and eliminating transcription errors. Interactions can take place anywhere, rather than at predetermined and foreign venues, allowing researchers and participants to interact easily and comfortably. Time commitments for participants are less, and can be flexibly scheduled. Comfortable environments allow for open communication and rapport-building, which develops naturally over internet platforms (Vroman & Kovacich, 2002). Online methods also present varying degrees of anonymity,

---

which may allow some participants to feel comfortable with greater levels of disclosure. Methods such as “online questionnaires and e-mail interviews can significantly broaden a cohort of respondents” (Murthy, 2008, p. 842), by for example, accessing those too shy to participate in person, those with commitments restricting their availability, or those who are geographically dispersed.

Early research on online communications predicted they would be lean, bereft of social cues and non-verbal information, making the medium “cold”, “impersonal” and “unsocial” (Kozinets, 2010, p. 23). Status equalisation (the flattening out of social hierarchies online) was also predicted as a lack of “social context clues” would reduce difference and increase “communication across social barriers” (ibid). Some “scientists thought that the technology... undermined [the] social structure that was required for appropriate and hospitable relations” and would result in hostile and aggressive behaviour online (ibid). Unequal access to the internet and lack of technological literacy across cohorts predicted biased results by inherently skewing sampling. However, these early conclusions and concerns have not been borne out.

With respect to access to technology and technological literacy, New Zealand internet access and competency is amongst the highest in the world for those aged 15-24 (Unicef cited in Harevelt, 2009). For teens, the internet and particularly instant messaging, is becoming the “preferred mode of communication” (Stern, 2007, p. 2).

Online communication is rich in ways that suggest both adaptation to the medium and the transferability of communication conventions (Salmons, 2010, p. 6).

"Textual cues such as the emoticons and smiles of text messaging... have already arisen to replace the body language and voice inflections of face-to-face interactions. While traditional qualitative research is heavily influenced by the visible expressions of class, gender, prestige, ethnicity, age and notions of ability, the interactional nature of the online interview draws on the very conventional discourses, mannered behaviours and pre-interpreted meanings in which these social categories are embedded – not visible to the ‘naked’ eye, perhaps, but nevertheless ‘visible’ in the discourse." (Seymour, 2001, p. 162)

Status equalisation has not occurred, as social markers are visible in language use, frequency of postings, opinions, kinds of interactions, and how users ‘hold the floor’ (Kozinets, 2010, p. 24).

---

Electronic paralanguage has filled the gap of non-verbal cues, and electronic communications are detailed and rich in meaning (p. 23). Computer-mediated communication (CMC) resembles oral conversation where meaning overtakes form, and transcripts look like “written conversation” (Madge & O’Connor, p.9).

The relative anonymity of internet environments would suggest that there are opportunities to represent or perform fake identities online. “As the saying goes, no one knows if you are a dog on the internet” (Salmons, 2010, p. 76). However, research findings indicate that online performances are no more likely to be misrepresentations than those found in the material world, suggesting that users do not fundamentally misrepresent themselves. For example, Westlake (2008, p. 27) notes that although SNSs<sup>18</sup> are different environments, users are “socialized in face-to-face interaction, [and so] are often conscious of applying the rules of such interaction to the cyber world”. Identity markers such as gender roles are also visible (Stern, 2007, p. 113). Online contexts represent an extension of social contexts, and as a result personalities presented online reflect those presented offline (Back, et al., 2010, p. 372). Thus, these online communication environments are simply another stage upon which agents perform identities, and are equally governed by normative rules of behaviour and presentation.

In this regard I considered online representations to be as trustworthy as material representations and performances. The creation and maintenance of idealised or fictional identities can be difficult as there are methods for checking the veracity of identity claims (ibid), of which most are aware<sup>19</sup>. Additionally the complexity and fluidity of identity construction, inherently connected to our moral self, makes it difficult to construct and *maintain* identities that are not connected with our ‘true selves’ (Horn, 1998, p.6), so “[most] often in ...IM, users adhere to a consistent presentation of themselves to acquaintances” (Stern, 2007, p. 8). The “disinhibition effect” of online communication, whereby features such as perceived anonymity, invisibility, and lack of physical interaction, elevate the likelihood that individuals’ online representations are not only in accordance with their material representation, but may also be more revealing as the online environment allows for

---

<sup>18</sup> Social Networking Sites

<sup>19</sup> Search engines such as Google and SNSs like Facebook provide ways to mine considerable amounts of data about individuals, providing ways to verify identities.

---



the “emergence of “true self””<sup>20</sup> for some individuals (Barak & Gluck-Ofri, 2007, p. 408). In fact the “risk of receiving false data in IM interviews is small” (Stieger & Göritz, 2006, p. 552). This all suggests that online interview methods are no more or less problematic with respect to participant performances than face to face interview methods.

### ***A Note on Interviews in General***

It is important to take a moment to be clear on what the interview represents within this thesis due to the contestability of qualitative findings and the situatedness of participants.

Interviews are instances of narrative and story-telling, the piecing together of fragmented and partial memory into a censored dialogue that seeks to make sense of a past as presented in the present (Green, 2004b, p. 11). Thus narratives are an exercise in the construction of ‘historical memory’ and as such present individuals as they try to make sense of themselves as constructed by their own histories within the current context (Frisch in Green, 2004a, p. 3). Memory is not an unfiltered repository for facts but is instead deeply implicated in the processing and “re/construction” of meaning as it is brought out of the past and into the present (Portelli, p. 5). In this respect narrative and storytelling do not present a laying out of facts but rather are exercises in the creation of the self for the benefit of an audience (Borland, 1991, p. 64; Laurie, 2004, p. 62). This is not a passive situation however, where an interviewer stumbles across a narrative for analysis. Stories are co-created between the interviewee and the interviewer, and as such reflects the relationship between the two as dialogue (Portelli, pp. 1-2). The censored, edited story is told for the interviewer’s (and interviewee’s) benefit, because of who the interviewer is, and what requirements they bring to the stage of narration.

This places narrations outside of fact in the objective positivist sense. Stories are history distorted by the partiality of memory and the impact of subjectivity. “They tell us not what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, what they now think they did.” (Portelli in Charlton, Myers, Sharpless, & Ballard, 2007, p. 49). Thus stories tell us as much about the subject in the past as the subject in the present (Charlton, et al., p. 51). This rightly muddies any attachment we have to seeking ‘truth’ statements, and as such connects with LeMoncheck’s (1997, p. 20) “view from somewhere different”, where storytelling allows us to travel to worlds that are not our own, to hear partial stories constructed and experienced by unstable subjectivities (that at a minimum shift with their

---

<sup>20</sup> What constitutes a ‘true self’ is unclear. It may be more helpful to understand this as a less heavily performed ‘front stage’ presentation (as per Goffman, 1959).

audiences). In hearing the subjectivity in events recounted audiences also hear subject positions, scripts and moral requirements that are part of the un/anticipated performance, and macro- and micro-level normative forces that direct performances. Listeners hear stories of what is important about the experience of being embedded in social context, from situated agents, regardless of the mode of story-telling (whether online or in person).

### **Volunteers, Take One Step Forward**

The sample for the survey was filtered by gender, age, education, and nationality. These filters were broad enough to capture various New Zealand-born ethnic groups, although the sample was predominantly Pakeha<sup>21</sup>. Participant age was restricted to 18-30 year-old young women, with a core group of 18-25, to capture those in the developmental category emerging adulthood (see Appendix 1). Recruiting primarily from university populations reflected not only the convenience of access, but also that many international studies on emergent adult sexual behaviour recruit from similar populations (allowing some comparisons).

Additionally, higher education increases the likelihood that individuals will experience a more liberated sex life (Cubbins & Tafner, 2000, p. 233), thus increasing the chances of participants engaging in the kinds of behaviours under examination.

Young women within the sample criteria were also more likely to:

- have fewer life responsibilities that would divert focus from self-exploration and identity formation
- be single, or engaged in casual/serially monogamous relationships (and not be married)
- be engaged in sexually exploratory behaviours as they were within a large cohort of individuals with similar interests and ideological positionalities who are also engaged in identity exploration and sexual experimentation
- be web-literate and competent
- have access to computers and the internet (personally and on campus).

As the survey received an unexpectedly high response rate (generating more data than anticipated), an additional filter was added by which to reduce the number of possible respondents who wished to participate in the second stage of the research. As a result of this,

---

<sup>21</sup> New Zealander of European descent (see Chapter 1, pp 20-22, for demographic characteristics)

analysis has predominantly focused on heterosexually-identifying participants and their experiences.

Although a variety of sexual orientations were claimed by survey respondents I did not consider this variance between the two stages to negatively impact on analysis. As all survey respondents would display effects of socialising discourses such as normative heterosexuality, femininity and masculinity (Chung, 2005, p. 447), I expected little variance in positionalities and opinions, which the data generally confirmed. This lack of variance suggested that other life factors such as sexual and life experience were better predictors of resistance to socialising discourses than just sexual orientation.

### *The Sample*

Research participants represent a convenience sample of self-selected volunteers. A small number were snowball sampled from my personal and academic email lists. The majority of respondents were recruited via flyers (see Appendix 2) that were posted on Victoria University of Wellington and the University of Auckland campuses<sup>22</sup> which directed potential participants to my research website (see Appendix 4). Although the recruitment criteria on the flyer and website were quite broad, the flyer's content would have encouraged some whilst deterring others. Flyers were placed in prominent public areas, but also in women's toilets around the campuses. Toilet cubicles provided time and privacy for women to read the flyer and tear off an information tab without being seen. A poll on the website found that 87% of those who visited the site had seen the flyer in a toilet. Advertisements were also run in the *The Salient* (Victoria University of Wellington's campus magazine) and *Craccum* (University of Auckland's campus magazine) for the first half of the first trimester, beginning with Orientation Week, a high-impact time due to high student presence on campus<sup>23</sup>.

These recruitment methods were chosen because they were fairly non-invasive and presented an opportunity for participants to come forward and participate without feeling obligated to take part, as can be the case with some direct recruitment methods. The one-off nature of the email was to mitigate 'spamming' issues, which can be off-putting to possible participants which in turn can lower participation rates (Hewson, Yule, Laurent, & Vogel, 2003, p. 82).

---

<sup>22</sup> These are the two main universities for these cities (see Section 1, pp. 20-22 for demographic information).

<sup>23</sup> I attempted to advertise in other campus magazines, but despite numerous emails to Otago, Canterbury, Waikato and Massey no replies were received.

The website proved a convenient and effective means of presenting an amount of salient information to prospective participants in a concise and consistent manner. It included a link to the survey, an inquiry form for those interested in participating further, a contact email address, and details of my ethics approval and contact information for my supervisors and the University's ethics committee. Fifty seven young women emailed me offering their time for stage two. There were 22 possible (heterosexual) participants, 21 aged 18-25, and one aged 30. Of the 22 selected participants, two withdrew, and one was removed as she did not return the email Consent Form. The remaining 18 were invited to participate in the online discussion group, and an online or face to face (f2f) interview. From this group 10 were selected for online interviews, stratified by age to capture a demographic spread. This age-based selection process was random. Four additional participants requested f2f interviews. All interviewees were corresponded with by email, including interview follow-up questions. Of the 18, 17 were located throughout New Zealand, whilst one was located overseas.

### ***Limitations of the Sample***

This research focuses on the experiences of 163 young women who presented as examples of the impacts of a number of cultural and individual level scripts. They were a self-selecting sample of young women who wanted to speak out on a topic they considered to be important. As a result they may not represent the voices of those who did not wish to be heard, who were too restrained to participate, or who had no knowledge of the research. Additionally, the sample was generally recruited from university environments, and as such participants were well-educated, and generally of Pakeha/European background. Thus they occupied some space of privilege which, as emerging adults, probably offered them greater opportunities to approach their sexuality as an entitlement than some other classes or ethnicities may experience.

### ***Consent***

Consent was approached in a number of ways to account for a variety of participation impacts. Research indicates that some participants can be critical of the consent process, seeing it as bureaucratic and as restricting researchers with respect to making ethical decisions as issues arise during research (Wiles, Charles, Crow, & Heath, 2006, p. 286). Additionally, Mason (2002, p. 82) remarks that it "may be impossible to receive a consent which is fully informed", suggesting that no matter how much information researchers provide it will never cover all possible outcomes. Additionally, my participants were

---

intelligent young women, and my overt attention to consent could have been seen as paternalistic and patronising (Davidson, 2008, p. 59). A balanced approach to consent should recognise that self-determination ought to be balanced with other concerns and interests with respect to consent, and where possible, individuals' *self-determination* ought to be prioritised (Hansson, 1998). To address these issues, and to pay suitable attention to the sensitive nature of the research, consent was informally renegotiated frequently throughout the research process. This ensured that participants were aware of their right to withdraw or reduce their participation, and that they were in control of their disclosures.

Consent procedures were different for each stage of the research. For the survey, consent information was listed on the research website, and on the survey page which served as a screening element. Without clicking 'yes' to the consent statement prospective respondents could not proceed.

Formal consent for the second stage of the research was via an information page and a consent form which was emailed to all potential discussion group members and interviewees (see Appendix 5). Reminders of consent and the ability to withdraw were on the welcome page of the online discussion group website, and the f2f and online interviews participants were reminded that they were free not to answer any questions, to stop the interview at any time, and/or withdraw from the research. This informal renegotiation kept consent live but reduced bureaucracy.

## **Research Instruments**

### ***Ticking Boxes Online—The Survey***

Online surveys have a number of benefits. Their design scope allows the building of engaging interfaces which encourage more "sophisticated interactions" than paper surveys (Gaiser & Schreiner, 2009, p. 70). They also allow respondents "...to provide specific information about themselves and their contexts that they would be reluctant to share in person" where anonymity is less well assured (Shields, 2003, p. 402). This is advantageous for sensitive research, where more anonymity better supports participation for some individuals (Jansen & Davis, 1998, p. 291). CMC can facilitate deeper and more expansive disclosure, and more honest and contemplative replies and increase descriptive and emotive language compared to interview answers for some (Seymour, 2001, p. 163; Shields, 2003, pp.

---

401-406). Greater degrees of honesty and willingness to give socially non-conforming answers were also a noted advantage (Shields, 2003, p. 400).

The online survey (see Appendix 4) was run to establish content for definitions, frequencies of behaviour (witnessed and enacted), and opinions about target behaviours. It was also intended to pre-engage participants who might participate in stage two of the project by encouraging them to reflect on their opinions and behaviours. This pre-engagement may have presented concepts that were new or that participants may not have used before within the context of their own lived experiences (Greaves et al., in Rose, 2001, p. 7). The survey data also allowed me to adjust stage two instruments to achieve deeper understanding of various aspects of the research according to responses given (Lobe & Vehovar, 2009, p. 592).

The survey was anonymous and did not record email addresses or identify the respondents other than by their ISP<sup>24</sup> address. This enabled me to only identify participant locations and was meaningless for surveys taken on publicly accessible computers (Hewson, et al., 2003, p. 84).

Quantitative questions provided estimates of the frequency of participation in target activities which could be compared with participant information gained from other methods, and findings from the literature. Participants defined concepts such as 'hooking up' which helped ensure that I and the participants had a common understanding, and enabled me to compare their definitions with the literature. Qualitative questions were designed to gather opinions about closed question content.

After redrafting and pretesting, the survey was run on the Qualtrics survey platform. The survey was 'open' so that respondents could navigate both backwards and forwards to pre-read questions and review past answers where relevant. This gave respondents more control over their response process as they could decide if they wanted to progress, choose what questions they wanted to skip, adjust prior answers later on if they had additional thoughts triggered by later questions, and could refer to definitions they themselves had provided when discussing later questions (Crawford cited in Andrews, Nonnecke, & Preece, 2003, p. 12).

An introduction section included the consent statement and several demographic questions requesting information about gender, age and nationality. This section screened out

---

<sup>24</sup> ISP – Internet Service Provider address – a way of identifying a computer on a network

approximately 20% of survey starts who did not fit the sample requirements. Upon completion a thank you screen provided contact information for respondents who wanted to communicate with me for any reason (including debriefing).

The risk of participants attempting to return and ‘re-present’ themselves was partially mitigated by the Qualtrics platform tracking ISP addresses, allowing me to filter out respondents. Of the 251 individual logins to the survey, non-qualifiers were filtered out as follows:

- six males logged in but did not progress past the introduction screen. One logged in again and passed this screen but his survey was identified and removed. His responses had already raised concerns with respect to tone and content. Confirming his gender via ISP address allowed me to link his first attempt at logging in to his completed survey
- twenty-two non-New Zealanders logged in. Four logged back in and retook the survey but were removed via ISP address identification
- two under aged participants attempted to log in but did not progress
- forty-six logins did not complete
- twelve completions were removed as they showed identical ISP addresses. This eliminated possible ‘peer group clusters’, whereby two friends may have taken the survey one after the other from a shared computer
- 163 completions were classed as valid.

Overall, the number of logins far exceeded my initial expectations. The website went live on January 26<sup>th</sup> 2010, and the survey on January 30<sup>th</sup> 2010 when I emailed the recruitment information. Flyers were posted around the University of Victoria’s campus from mid-February 2010. Responses averaged 1 per day for February, tracking my initial expectations. I travelled to University of Auckland and posted flyers around campus on March 7<sup>th</sup>, during Orientation Week (on both Auckland and Wellington campuses). From March, logins jumped from one per day to seven per day, peaking at nineteen logins per day. The survey was closed on March 26<sup>th</sup> 2010.

Question response rates were as predicted:

---

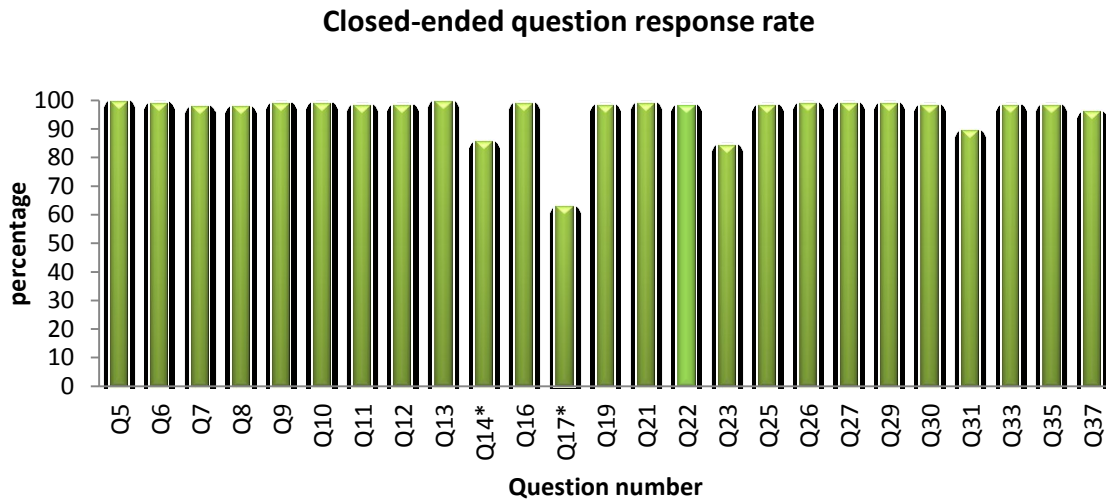


Figure 1: Range of response to closed-ended questions

Closed-ended questions had a strong response rate. Those closed-ended questions that show a significant drop in response rates were within a skip-logic sequence (marked with an \*). For example, Q 13, “Have you ever hooked up?” (Yes/No answer matrix) was followed by Q14\*, “How often ....” If the respondent had answered no to Q13 then Q14\* was skipped. 99.39% answered Q 13, 85.28% answered Q14—the 14.11% variance can be accounted for by those who answered no to Q13.

Open-ended question response rates tracked as follows:

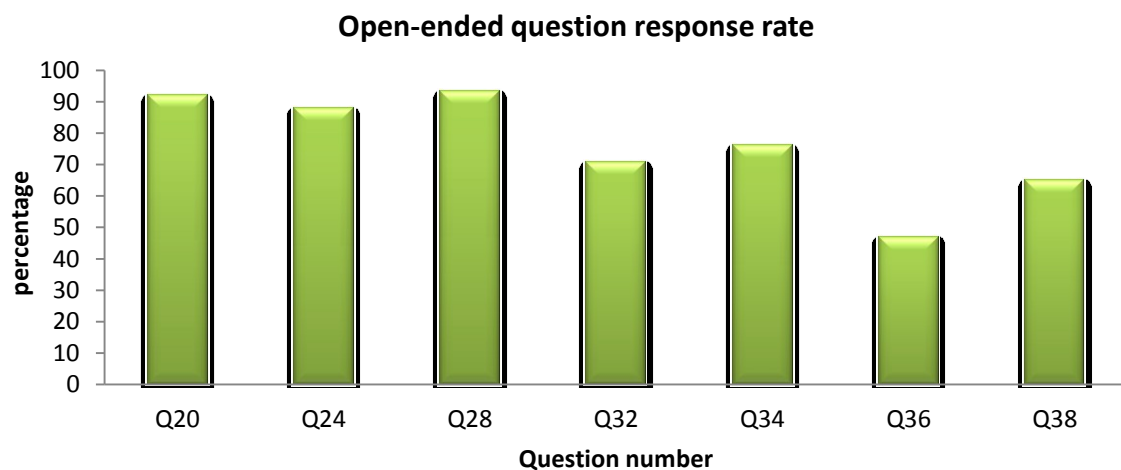


Figure 2: Range of response to open-ended questions



The open-ended questions were aimed at gathering opinions as well as comments on personal experience. Lower responses may reflect a lack of opinion, a lack of previous engagement with the question topic, or simply a desire not to answer.

### *Observing*

I engaged in field observations of young women in public spaces where sexualised behaviour may occur to see if the kinds of behaviours sensationalised in the media and other public forums was being engaged in. I also wanted to observe the social environment many young women participate in, as being able to reference shared experiences would help me to engage more with the participants (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 118). I chose Courtenay Place and Manners Mall, the bar and nightclub hubs of central Wellington, which are close to the University and campus accommodation. I was also able to make some opportunistic observations from my inner city apartment window. Large scale student accommodation was situated nearby and there were frequent bus-stop parties<sup>25</sup> held across the road. These observations happened by accident, when I was awoken one night by late-night shouting and a brawl on the street below. From my window I noticed the bus-stop party which turned out to be a frequent occurrence.

I was somewhat reluctant to undertake observations as the data collection period progressed, and it was not until reading supplementary literature that I understood why. Discussing her research, Tilley (1998, p. 322) noted that the researcher brings another set of eyes into the research environment, “albeit a different kind” from what women may be used to or expecting. Tilley also remarked (referencing Hansen, p. 133) that she felt like something of a “professional ‘voyeur’ ... by observing behaviour that is not intended for public viewing”. Upon reflection, I realised my reluctance was related to this sense of voyeurism. The performances I witnessed on Courtenay Place and Manners Mall were meant for public consumption, but *not by me*. I am confident that if the young women I observed knew that I was their inadvertent audience, they would have adjusted their behaviour

What ranks as private space is contestable, and in some ways individuated, as it extends to spaces we transport around with us when we are in the public domain. For example, we do not expect our private conversations had on public street corners to be data available to covert researchers. Similarly I would suggest that we as performers do not expect our behaviour to

---

<sup>25</sup> Young adults would congregate in the bus stop, drink and talk for several hours before moving on to late night venues.

be consumed by audiences we are not anticipating. Just because performances are conducted in public, it does not mean they are public performances.

This raises issues around what I call the ‘unanticipated gaze’ and its potential impact on agents. Principally, the chance for harm<sup>26</sup> as a result of my ‘unanticipated gaze’ is greater than many other ‘unanticipated gazes’ because of my academic position and the power inherent therein. As such my responsibility as a researcher motivated me to follow my ethical intuitions and disengage from the field as quickly as I could. My decision that saturation had been reached may have been related to my perceptions of how ethical my observations were.

### *Interviewing*

Goffman (cited in Rapley, 2001, p. 307) suggests that within the interview context the interviewee performs a moral subject script, one that is influenced by their perception of the interviewer. Assumptions are made regarding moral expectations and the kinds of performances that are required to meet these assumed expectations. Performance in my mind goes further than this. Identity construction is as much about approval, rebellion, being visible, and being heard, as being moral. It is possible that for my topic interviewees wished to be viewed as immoral or amoral in hopes of seeming uncaring of social conventions. Others may have wished to appear every bit the moral actor, and others may have sat anywhere between these two points. The research context offered opportunities for interviewees to be for example disruptive, resistant or conformist. The interview space also offered different stages for performance.

### Online Interviews

Online interview have been described as “less dominated by the corporeal presence” than f2f interviews (Seymour, 2001, p. 160). This relative absence of the corporal body presented a number of advantages. The “computer mediated environment allow[s] participants to say things they may not say face-to-face” (Cabiria [personal communication] cited in Salmons, 2010, p. 14), which not only enables honesty and self-disclosure by participants, but also allowed me to interact with young women who may have been too shy to participate otherwise. The distance the online method created between myself and the interviewee, and the disembodied nature of our presentations of self, also reduced opportunities for judgement

---

<sup>26</sup> Being obviously observed can be confronting and may result in embarrassment, discomfort, and for me confrontation. Harm here includes both the observer and the observed

and reaction. My ‘invisibility’ shielded the participant from perceived judgements (for example, micro-facial expressions, closed body language), reducing potential harms.

The interviews can be loosely described as semi-structured. A three-question interview guide (see Appendix 8) was used to initiate conversation and give participants a starting place for talk. This also ensured that there was sufficient overlap between interviews for analysis. Because all three interview questions reflected the survey content and all interviewees had completed the survey, there were no ‘surprises’ with respect to unexpected content and questioning. Having only three questions also reflected my intention to “let the subject talk” (Hester & Francis, 1994, p. 692)—subject here referring both to the participant and the topic. Sensitive topics were only discussed when the interviewee had initiated conversation in that direction.

Salmons (2010, p. 129) notes that online interviews can take up to twice as long as face to face interviews, and generate less text. This was made up for by conducting two IM interviews with most online participants. Most interviews lasted the allotted 90 minutes, and required a second interview to complete the three question interview guide and provide time and space for additional comments from participants. Generally these second interviews lasted a minimum of 60 minutes. Because the IM process is slower than the f2f interview both researcher and participant have time to be reflective, creating rich text that helps to offset the lesser quantity of data. For some participants I found IM chat to be similar to a stream of consciousness, the direction of which was altered by my occasional questions and engagement.

The flexibility of the medium allowed interviewees to reschedule easily, take quick breaks, and relax in the comfort of their own environments. At the end of each interview I reminded participants how to access the interview transcript in their browser or offered to send transcripts back to them. Follow-up questions were conducted via email, allowing participants time to reflect on their answers, and to access their interview transcripts for further information and reference.

#### Interviews In-person

Four face to face (f2f) interviews were conducted to allow those who did not wish to participate online to contribute. These were also run in order to provide another source of data to compare the richness and degree of thick description produced through the online

---

methods. Interviews were conducted at Victoria University's library (a neutral space), and recorded on a digital recorder, then transcribed.

The biggest difference between the IM and f2f interviews was access to visual cues for both myself and the interviewee, and appearance. With respect to the research topic, attractiveness as a social status marker and its subsequent connection to accessing sexual partners allowed me to contextualise the narratives of the four f2f interviewees in ways I was not able to do with the online interviewees. For example, the attractiveness of my oldest participant likely increased her opportunities for sexual encounters (see for example Carmalt, Cawley, Joyner, & Sobal, 2008; Schützwohl, Fuchs, McKibbin, & Shackelford, 2009). As such my appearance-based assumptions allowed me to estimate that she had had a reasonable amount of success in acquiring sexual partners, thereby readying me for this aspect of her narrative (an assumption born out in the interview).

I was also aware that researcher role ascription by participants can create power differentials that are difficult to break down in sensitive topic discussions. As such I attempted to make my appearance somewhat status neutral by looking more like a 'uni student' than an 'authoritative academic'. As I look young for my age, my overall appearance may have allowed me to get closer to the sample group in terms of peer-ship and develop rapport more quickly. My intention here was to encourage the feeling in my participants that they were knowledgeable and expert in the stories they were telling.

Interviews ran for between 60 and 90 minutes. As expected, they yielded more material in terms of transcript length and visual data. However, I would describe the differences between the quality of data generated in f2f versus online interviews as different rather than 'better' or 'worse' (Rapley, 2001, p. 303). The body was a valuable source of information that revealed social categories which were of value with respect to later analysis (Seymour, 2001, p. 156). Emotive content was also rich, and generally positive, despite the traumatic incidents relayed by two of the participants. This may reflect the general environment of the interviews and positive rapport building, or the ability for humour and positive talk to convey stories that can be too painful to relate in other ways.

What was clear in all the interviews, but particularly those where participants chose to be interviewed face to face, was the *degree* of agency each woman exhibited with respect to her sex life. As De Vault and Gross (2007, p. 188) remark, agentic women are often visible in

---

the ways they challenge oppressive conditions, and this was clear in f2f interviews, in one manner or another. The choice to be interviewed in person challenged the cultural dialogue that talking about sex is taboo, particularly for women. Aspects of their stories, such as the embracing and reclaiming of the ‘slut’ label by Bex, and the resistance to victimhood associated with rape by Megan, further positioned these women as resistant. These portrayals encouraged me to consider that these participants were able to protect themselves in the research process. They were already visible in terms of being possible targets of social critique with respect to their sex lives, and perhaps the research arena only symbolised an extension of this dialogue. Self-protection was visible in the considered approach they all took in divulging information to me as the interview progressed. My physical presence may have been a constant background reminder of the fact that the interview was a research event, and not simply a conversation or therapeutic opportunity (Seymour, 2001, p. 163).

#### Email Interviews and Follow-ups

An email interview was conducted with one young woman who wished to participate but had difficulty finding time for an interview. A follow-up interview was conducted by email with another participant who did not have the time to do a second online. Follow-up questions were sent via email after all interviews in order to clarify outstanding points. This method allowed participants to further reflect on both the survey and interview. The slow rate of response and the lower overall rate of participation was a predicted disadvantage of this method, exacerbated by the fact that follow-up questions were sent at the end of the research process, by which stage participant motivation for continued involvement was waning. Those that did take the time to respond, however, did so in a thoughtful and engaged manner.

#### ***Talking Together Online***

A web-based discussion group (see Appendix 6) was established to run concurrently with the interviews, as a replacement for the originally planned focus groups. The asynchronous nature of the web discussion group allowed members to participate when it suited them, and engage in reflexive discussions which encouraged concise and topic-centred responses (Russel & Bullock in James & Busher, 2006, p. 416). The disinhibition effect also allowed a deeper level of talk in a public environment that would be considered more private in terms of content and personal perspectives (Stewart & Williams, 2005, p. 399).

---

Focus groups have been noted for allowing researchers to access shared understandings of topics under discussion, as well as highlighting how individuals react within groups under such discursive contexts (Gibbs, 1997). Generating a variety of opinions within group contexts exposes participants to a multitude of different perspectives which can both confirm and challenge personal opinions, thoughts and beliefs. Group interactions can also throw into relief “taken-for-granted categories and beliefs” around sex and sexuality that can remain invisible or unelucidated within other research contexts (Montell, 1999, p. 47). As Gibbs (1997 para 13) notes, this can be an empowering engagement for some participants and a possible catalyst for change, whether at the personal or societal level. Focus groups also create an environment where the researcher’s presence and authority is counter-balanced by participant voices, reducing power dynamics and allowing participants to determine the direction of discussion around what they determine to be relevant and/or important, and how begin and participate in those conversations (Wilkinson, 1998, pp. 114-116).

Web discussion groups take advantage of these aspects of focus groups, but come with their own challenges. Bloor, Frankland, Thomas & Robson (2001, p. 34) note that “group atrophy” (Stewart & Williams, 2005, p. 400) and no-shows can be an issue for particular groups, so it is advisable to recruit numbers larger than those recommended for traditional in-person focus groups. I therefore recruited 18 participants to the web discussion group in hopes of maintaining a good number of active participants. Participants, however, engage with these kinds of online platforms in various ways. Correll (1995, pp. 289-295) lists four types of users: “regulars”, “newbies”, “lurkers” and “bashers”. Lurkers hover and view without engaging but may at some point decide to become newbies who start to interact. After a while they may become regulars. Bashers are those who are not group members and harass the group (ibid). The web discussion group was created to allow for lurkers, regulars and newbies but not bashers. Additionally netiquette rules were posted on the welcome page, along with a reminder about the research context of the space to encourage respectful participation. The Google group web discussion group was also confidential space, and user identities were anonymous to everyone but myself. In this way participants were protected from potential bashers, as well as being provided with a safe private space.

Although the discussion yielded some interesting conversation threads interactions tapered off fairly quickly. Despite inviting 18 participants to join only a small core of young women posted regularly. Predictably the small number of regulars resulted in rapid group atrophy

---

characterised by a lack of posting, and the absence of any group identity (Stewart & Williams, 2005, p. 403). The regulars were a core group of three or four participants who were engaged with the questions asked, and with each other. Principally Gemma provided long and interesting posts which the others frequently talked around. Despite the low participation the content of comments posted were challenging and illuminating for some of the group<sup>27</sup>, as well as for the research.

### **One Last Thing ...**

The effect of using a mixed method approach with a feedback loop (Lobe & Vehovar, 2009) was not only to ensure that the research objectives were targeted, but also that flexibility was built into the research project overall. Having such an ‘organic’ process encouraged a great deal of attention to the data, which in turn prompted a number of changes not only in design but also in my approach to the research objectives. Because the instruments provided data that spoke more widely to the issues affecting young women, the research instrument at stage one of the design was not as well focused with respect to changing research aims. However, valuable data informed stage two of the design, both in direction and content. Stage two instruments therefore provided more compelling data and expanded on insights found in the surveys.

In the next chapter I will discuss this data, highlighting major themes and patterns.

---

<sup>27</sup> Participant comments on their involvement in the project confirmed this.

---

## Chapter Five: Women's Words—the Survey

This chapter presents the findings from the 163 survey responses.

### The Analysis

Qualitative analysis of the data was conducted using Nvivo 8 software. Once surveys were refined to exclude invalid completions a primary analysis was run to discover dominant themes within the data. A large number of commonalities emerged. As this was a primary test analysis the results were discarded, save for the thematic indicators. The second level of analysis used the themes from the test analysis as a guide, which was then supplemented by additional themes that the second round of analysis revealed.

My primary intention at both levels of analysis was to allow themes to emerge from the data. This was important for several reasons: firstly I was aware that New Zealand may offer different explanatory or experiential data compared to that generated from overseas studies. Secondly, I was aware from the interview process that participants were telling me things that did not fit within my conceptual framework (with respect to what I knew and understood, both as a generation X woman with my own cultural background, and also an academic in the process of knowledge acquisition), and thus I was aware of the need to try and suspend what I could of my own filters. Thematic pattern-seeking at the first level of analysis proved a helpful way to do this, and alerted me to topics that I might not have found otherwise.

Analysis of the surveys was completed first, to provide both content for the interviews with respect to follow-up questions and themes to explore, and a thematic framework by which to analyse the interviews. Analysis was an iterative process in this regard, as each examination of the data produced different insights with respect to knowledge-building. As themes became clear at one level of analysis, they enabled the identification and examination of themes at subsequent levels. I found the process particularly helpful not only in finding valuable insights within the data, but also in enabling me to become deeply familiar with the primary material.

Statistical data that arose from the analysis is descriptive only, due to the qualitative nature of the study, the size of the sample and its self-selected character. The statistics serve to

---



highlight general patterns of opinion and behaviour amongst the participant group and cannot be generalised to the broader population.

Demographic information sought at the end of the survey was intended to sort data into categories of ethnicity, religiosity, sexual orientation and age. Although the international literature (see for example Halpern, Waller, Spriggs & Hallfors, 2006) notes that these factors can have significant impacts on attitudes and behaviours of individuals with respect to their sex lives, what patterns emerged from the data with respect to descriptive statistical variances were often contradicted and/or negated by answers to the open-ended questions.

The first section of this chapter will review the findings, whilst the discussion section will briefly situate these findings in the context of international research.

## **The Results**

### **What is Real Sex?**

Figure 1 below illustrates what the survey population considered to be ‘real’ sex.

Establishing content for this concept was important due to shifting ideas around what real sex can mean for some individuals—for example recent research (see for example Bogle, 2008, p. 27; Grello, et al., 2006, p. 255) suggests that some young people do not consider oral sex to be ‘real’ sex, an exclusion which then enables them to maintain their virginity status whilst still engaging in sexual activities.

---

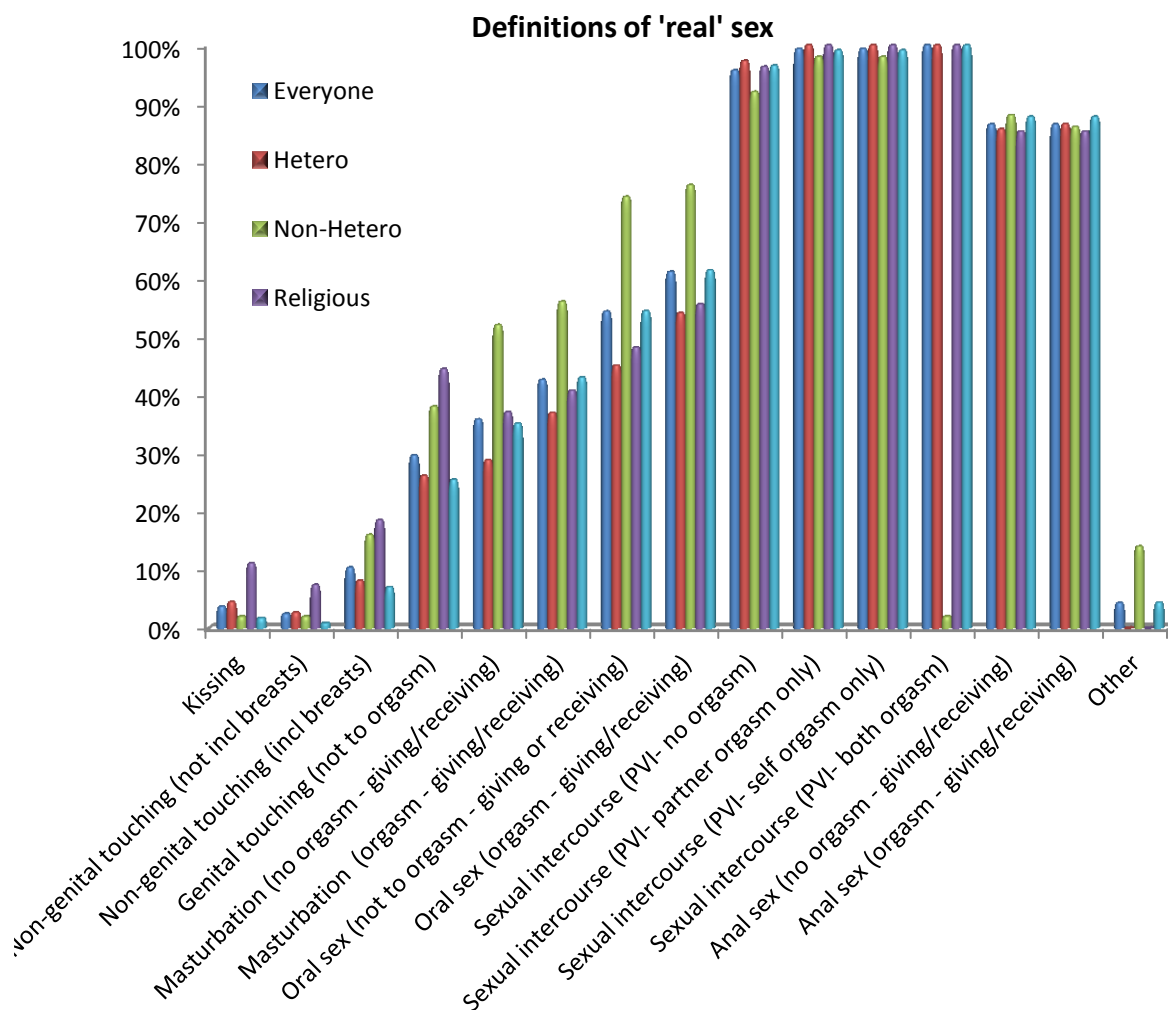


Figure 3: Definitions of 'real' sex by group

Predominantly ‘real’ sex for participants was PVI—penetration was the primary element rather than orgasm, evident not only in the number of those who considered anal sex to constitute ‘real’ sex but also the reduction in those who did not consider oral sex to constitute real sex. Orgasm was the second factor in classifying an activity as ‘real’. This reflects adherence to a coital imperative that has become conflated with a health model of sex as orgasm-seeking to create an orgasm imperative.

Those who identified as non-heterosexual captured a wider range of sex acts in their definition of ‘real’ sex. They were also the only group who identified activities beyond the categories offered in the survey (using the ‘other’ category). These additional acts centred on oral practices, penetration and orgasm, and were similar to results from those identifying as heterosexual—namely they reflected a coital and/or orgasm imperative.

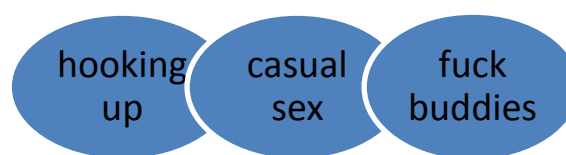
Those who indicated a religious identity also differed from the group average in terms of their attribution of non-penetrative sex acts to the ‘real’ sex definition. Acts that involved genital contact were also more commonly endorsed, suggesting that those with religious identities have a more inclusive definition of ‘real’ sex. This was not reflected in comments made by many who ascribed to this identity however.

### **Spot the Difference: Hooking Up, Casual Sex and Fuck Buddies**

Hooking up, casual sex and fuck buddies were difficult terms to define as there was overlap between all three. Determining what the research participant considered to be a hook up versus casual sex or a fuck buddy arrangement was therefore important.

The definitions of hook ups were particularly variable, and were affected by sexual experience, as indicated by participants’ comments. Participants generally indicated that the more sexual experience they had had, the more a hook up would mean for them with respect to acts engaged in.

The definition of casual sex was also variable, sitting somewhere between a hook up and a fuck buddy. For some it was a one night stand, for others it was an arrangement where sex was had with a familiar person, but did not constitute a relationship of *any* kind, including the slightly more formal fuck buddy agreement. There appeared to be some overlap between these three terms as the diagram below indicates:



*Figure 4: Overlap in definitions*

### **What is Hooking Up?**

Figure 7 represents the spread of activities that constituted hooking up for respondents. There were three distinct aspects to hooking up, which can be described as ‘above the waist’, ‘below the waist non-penetrative’, and ‘penetrative’ acts. As acts became more “serious” with respect to approaching definitions of ‘real’ sex so the likelihood of their being included as part of a hook up declined.

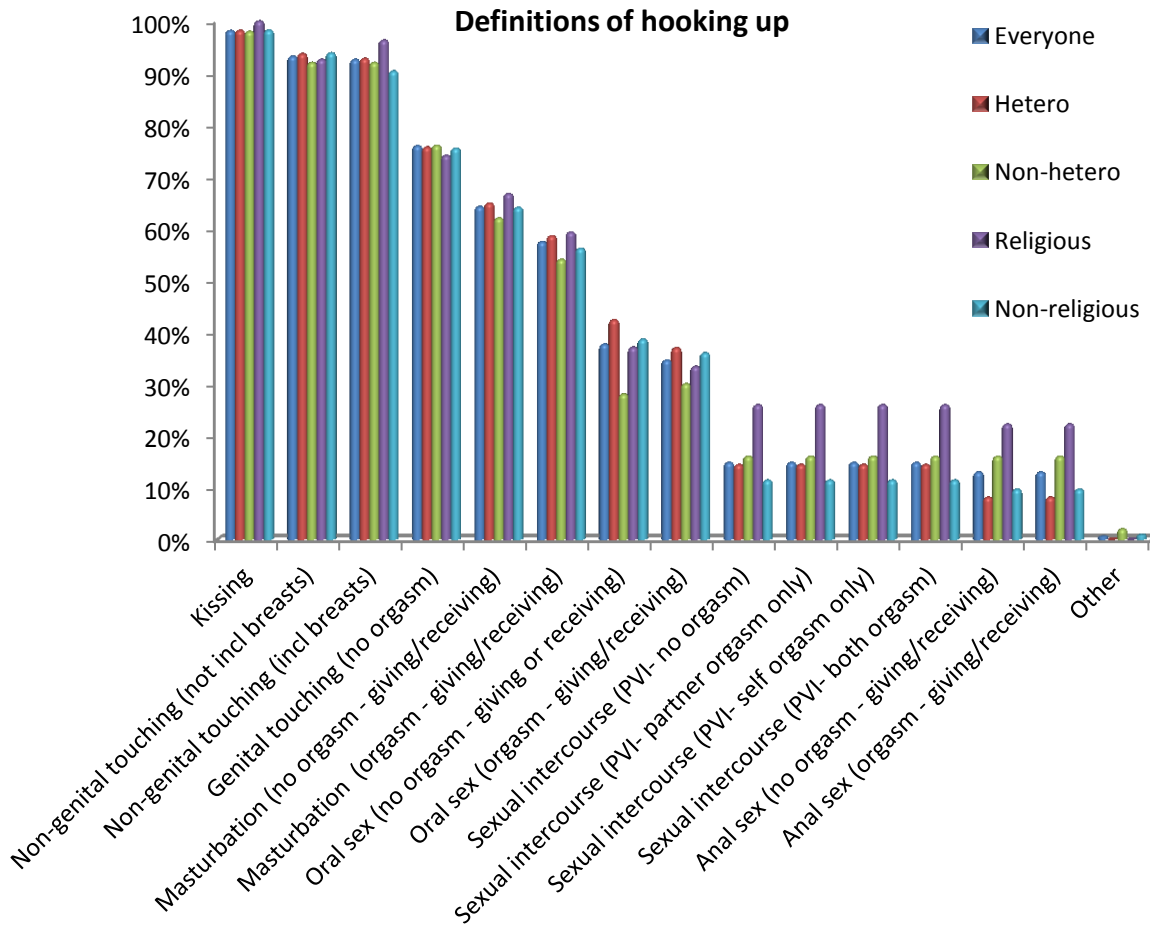


Figure 5: Definitions of hooking up by group

Those who claimed a religious identity had a more inclusive definition, reflecting a similar propensity for inclusion of acts commensurate with ‘real’ sex definitions.

The other notable variation was with the non-heterosexual group—principally the ‘below the waist non-penetrative’ grouping is divided again, between genital touching activities and oral sex activities, reflecting a ‘real’ sex category that included more acts as noted above.

Participation trends for hook ups showed little variance between groups, as the figure below indicates:

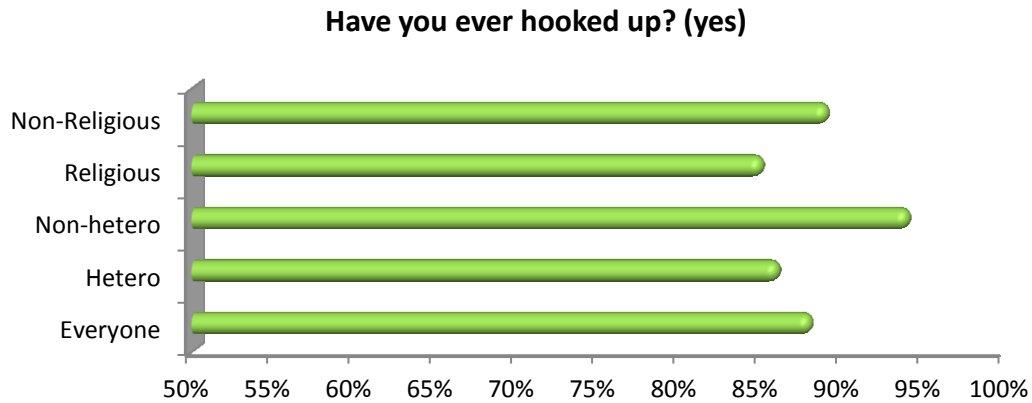


Figure 6: Have you ever hooked up?

The majority of respondents indicated that they had hooked up at some point in their sexually active lives. Non-heterosexual identifying young women appeared to have a higher rate of hook ups than other groups. Those identifying as religious and those identifying as heterosexual appeared to be slightly less involved in hooking up.

The chart below indicates trends in the frequency of hook ups by groups within the sample<sup>28</sup>:

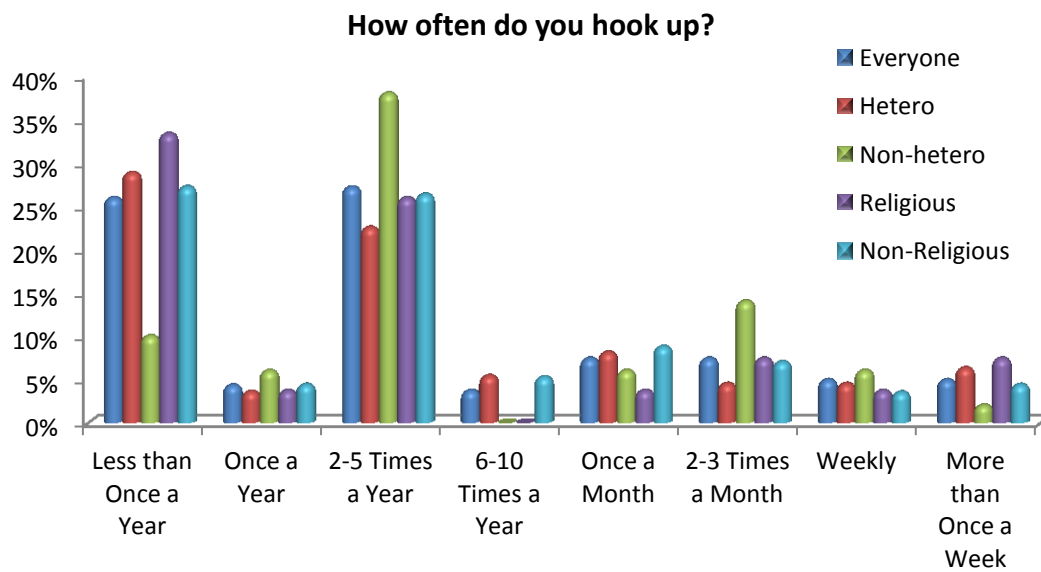


Figure 7: Frequency of hook ups

<sup>28</sup> Although recent research (see Greene & Faulkner, 2005, p. 240 for discussion) suggests that women have a tendency to under-report their sexual engagements, the anonymity of this survey may have served to offset this tendency.

The ‘less than once a year’ category included low frequency of engagement but also those who had only hooked up once in their lives.

The tendency for many participants to consider hooking up as an above the waist non-penetrative activity, and thus less “serious” than casual sex or relationship engagement, may partially account for its commonality. Sexual orientation and religious identification appeared to have some effect on the trends within the sample, but these were minimal.

Higher participation rates in hooking up activities by non-heterosexuals may reflect a more lenient attitude with respect to sex than that displayed by other groups. Comments made by this group were predominantly accepting with fewer condemnatory statements, particularly when compared to those made by heterosexually-identifying respondents.

### ***Why They Hook Up***

Hooking up was discussed in explanatory terms by a number of respondents. For some it was seen as an age-related activity that is engaged in for a certain period during emerging adulthood, which may lessen with age and experience. Some respondents noted that it was a good way to “scope out potential partners” in less serious or involved ways than relationship engagement. For others it was a way to access sex or intimacy when they expressly did not want to engage in relationships or “anything more serious”<sup>29</sup> than a hook up. Others also noted that it was a good way to explore their sexuality without relationship complications, for example, meeting desires, or experiencing different partners.

Alcohol was noted by some as a contributing and causative factor in hooking up, particularly because of its disinhibiting effects. Some thought it positive as it lessened the chance of rejection by prospective partners, embarrassment and self-consciousness, and could boost self-esteem as a result of feeling attractive due to disinhibited behaviour. Negative comments about alcohol-related hooking up were more common however, with some focus on the possibility of being used or exploited by strangers or people they would not normally consider hooking up with when sober.

Alcohol was also mentioned as contributing to higher numbers of hook ups by some participants—“the number of people I would have hooked up with would be less than half at

---

<sup>29</sup> Quotes from participants are as they were presented in their text, unless spelling/grammar make reading difficult

least if alcohol wasn't involved.” Generally, participant comments appeared more ‘forgiving’ of behaviour, however, suggesting that alcohol consumption was an accessible excuse for deviant behaviour.

Peer pressure was mentioned briefly. Some participants noted that when they were younger they had hooked up not for fun but because their friends were doing it, or because it was expected of them with respect to displaying normative behaviour for their age and peer group. Social expectations noted by some participants suggested that some engagement may reflect the need to ‘fit in’ by performing the correct amount of sexual display. As an extension, some respondents mentioned the effects of a sexualised culture and the media in promulgating images that normalised hooking up, linking media as a super peer in the behaviour of young women<sup>30</sup> (Brown, Halpern, & L'Engle, 2005). Hooking up was also mentioned with respect to pressure on young women to “compete” with or behave similarly to “the boys”. Beyond peer group emulation, hooking up as status conferring was also suggested, as it was “cool” or “fashionable” to be seen as sexy and/or sexually active or engaged, and to be wanted as a result.

Respondents identified self-esteem as a predominant reason why some young women engaged in hook ups. Some noted that it was a way to boost self-esteem, whilst others mentioned that it reflected low self-esteem and a need to feel wanted or attractive. This was seen as both a negative and positive motivator—negative because it suggested deficiency, but also positive because as an activity it could strengthen self-esteem.

### ***Hooking Up—A Closer Look***

Many participants noted that hooking up was a common or normal occurrence, not only for their age group but also as part of New Zealand’s culture. Most participants described hooking up as fine, fun, and/or harmless, but often with stipulations with respect to how, where and when it was permissible. These stipulations highlighted risk factors for young women.

A central concern for participants was that those who engaged in hooking up activities ensured their safety with respect to sexual, emotional and physical health. As hooking up did

---

<sup>30</sup> Brown, Halpern & L'Engle (2005, p. 421) suggest that media as a source of information on sex and sexuality, as well as images of sexual role models, may be filling the role of a knowledgeable sexual peer for some adolescents and emerging adults.

not include 'real' sex for many participants, safety concerns were evenly distributed between factors such as contraception, consent, and feeling confident about agent engagement. Some noted that it was a better alternative than casual sex which was seen as riskier, not only with respect to health, but also reputation.

Emotional safety also included the management of expectations and a need to ensure that all parties understood what the hook up would mean, if anything at all. Cautions over the probable lack of emotional content were frequent. This concern referenced encouraging young women to not expect more with respect to emotional engagement or possible relationship outcomes, and also to safeguard against misinterpretation of intent with respect to how much sexual activity the agent wanted to participate in. In this regard some advised caution with respect to thinking through hook ups, focusing on what they might mean and their related consequences, who they were engaged in with, and where. Related to this aspect were concerns over coercion and exploitation. Preferences for non-strangers were voiced, as well as advisory statements with respect to not being "blind drunk", not feeling "obligated to hook up" and being "mindful of what they're doing". Safety management was a primary concern and reflected a high degree of self-responsibility, not only for one's own behaviour and safety but also in managing the situation and context of the hook up, and who the hook up was with.

The acceptability of hooking up was also constrained by a number of factors that indicated the need for discretion. Many respondents noted that hook ups were fine if they were in the appropriate location where such activity was not only accepted but expected, for instance bars and nightclubs. Engaging in hook ups, particularly the more serious kind (which would include below the waist non-penetrative and penetrative sex acts), in contexts where these kinds of behaviours were not sanctioned was negatively judged by participants, and advised against. Similarly the kinds of behaviours engaged in were also limited, with kissing and dancing commonly sanctioned, but more serious acts such as below the waist acts were discouraged. The frequency of hooking up was also a notable factor for acceptability. Several respondents gave examples of what would constitute too many hook ups or too many partners, for example "a different guy every week" or "multiple men in a night", and if it "doesn't happen [too] often". However, the socially acceptable number of hook ups per week and the acceptable number of different partners were not mentioned.

---



Beyond the safety concerns listed above there were a number of negative opinions about hooking up. Hooking up was noted by some to be an activity engaged in by promiscuous girls, and for others increased the likelihood that the agent would be judged as a “slut”.

Some noted that hooking up was a pointless activity as it would not lead to a relationship, could be unsatisfying, and was meaningless, particularly in respect to the connection between sex and emotion. Others noted that it better benefitted men than women, and could also lead to, or was evidence of, objectification.

Positive comments centred on female sexual subjectivity. Some respondents noted that it was a good way for young women to satisfy “certain carnal needs” and was a “healthy outlet” for desires. Others noted that it was a good way to “hone... skills”, learn about their “preferences” with respect to sexual activities, was a way of “exploring sexuality” and “discover[ing] their own desire and what [they] are comfortable with.” Some commented that hooking up had had a positive impact on their self-confidence and self esteem.

Opinions on judgement and social acceptance of hooking up were mixed, but many suggested an active sexual double standard. Some respondents noted that for young women, reclaiming or “regaining” their sexuality was a “right” (entitlement) and part of that process was the removal of stigma from activities that, when engaged in by young women (but not men), were often judged negatively. Being able to engage in sexual activities equally was also noted, with some respondents expressing that “if boys can do it, why shouldn’t girls”.

Some commented that the social context had changed. Young women could now do what they wanted and felt that it was acceptable behaviour, or that women should not be ashamed of their desires. Others noted that it was behaviour that was gossiped about in a fun way, and that judgement was less likely to occur for engaging in hook up behaviours.

Others noted, however, that unacceptable behaviours could generate negative reputations and stigma, but what constituted acceptable behaviour was not explicitly outlined. Rather it appeared as though finding the correct level of engagement was a matter of experience, trial and error. Several participants related negative experiences that had affected their orientation towards hooking up with respect to what they would do, with whom, where and how.

---

### What is Casual Sex?

Casual sex was characterised by penetrative sex acts, although oral sex was more strongly indicated for all groups, a notable difference when comparing ‘real’ sex with casual sex, particularly among those with a religious identity.

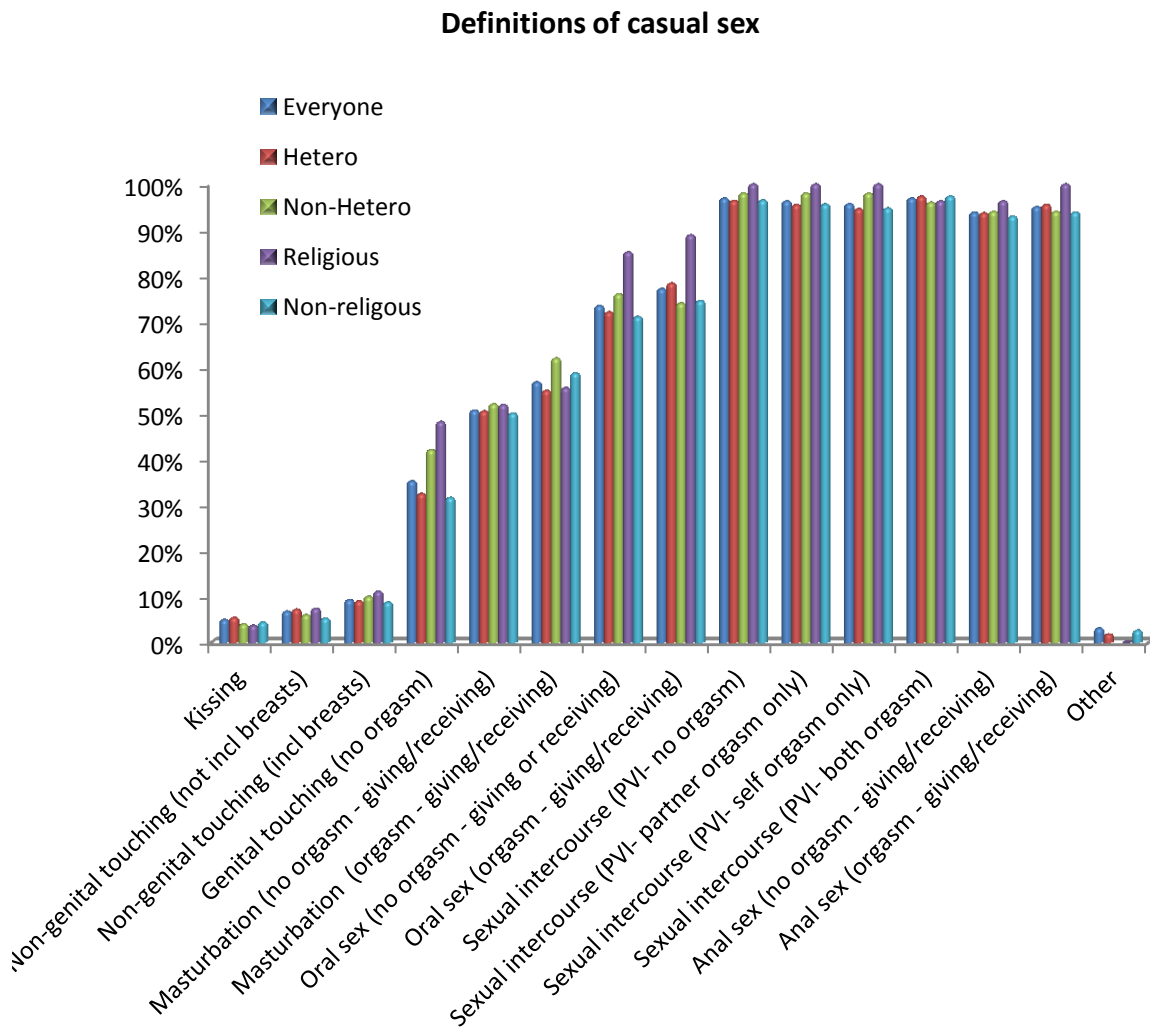


Figure 8: Definitions of casual sex

Rates of participation in casual sex were lower than those for hooking up, and can be partially accounted for by the perceived differences in acts and the associated risks. As participants noted above, hooking up was considered to be less risky than casual sex. It was therefore expected that instances of casual sex would be lower for young women.

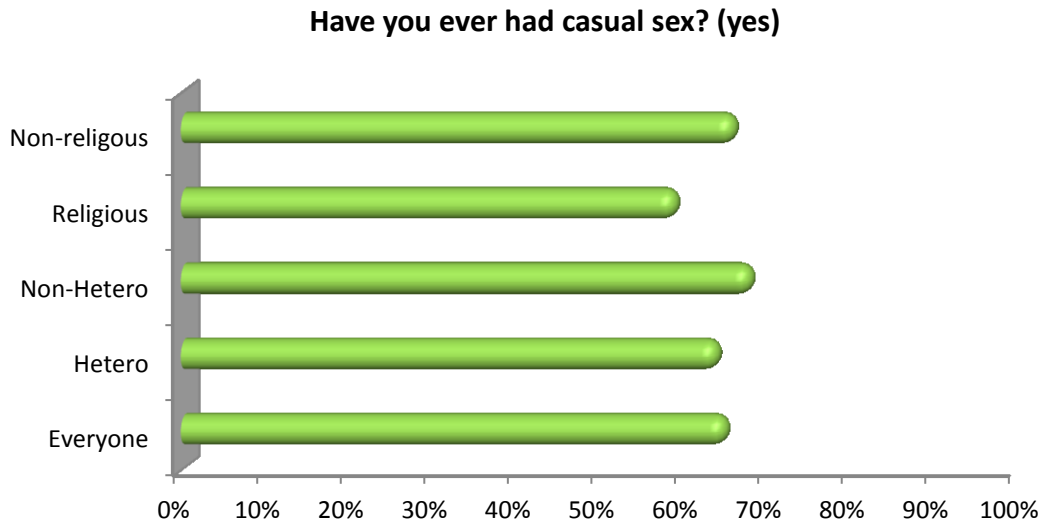


Figure 9: Have you ever had casual sex?

Differences between the groups were as expected, displaying similar patterns to hooking up. Non-heterosexual young women again had the highest level of engagement. It is possible, however, that non-heterosexual ‘real’ sex and its more inclusive definition may account for some of this variance.

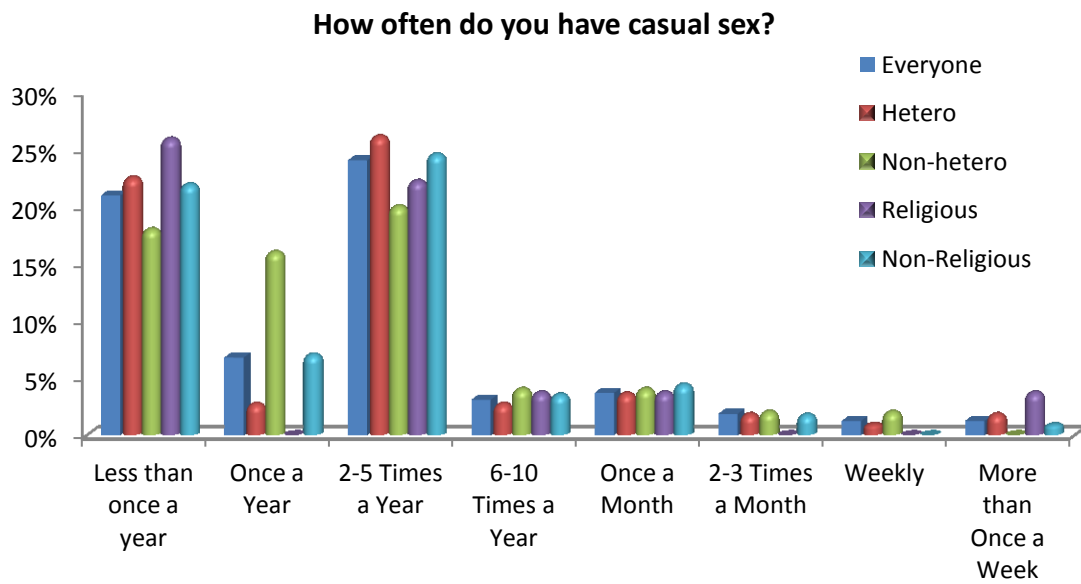


Figure 10: Frequency of casual sex

Patterns of engagement in casual sex were similar to hooking up, though numbers for engagement were predictably lower. Again the category ‘less than once a year’ included those who had only engaged in casual sex once. Engagement was clustered at the lower end

of the scale, with a notable decline in engagement for more than five times a year. Again non-heterosexually identifying women had higher rates of engagement which could reflect increased engagement or the inclusion of more acts within the 'real' sex (but not casual sex) definition. Engaging in casual sex only once or several times a year was the predominant pattern.

Participants discussed casual sex in more cautionary language than hooking up, reflecting the difference in attitudes towards it.

### ***Why They Have Casual Sex***

Some young women expressed the view that women who engaged in casual sex were relationship-seeking. Opinions on the success of this behaviour were not encouraging. However, several participants noted that they were now in long term relationships which began as a casual encounter. Others noted that it was something they had done when they had left a relationship but still wanted to have sex without the burden of starting a new relationship—generally because of hurt feelings and emotional issues connected to the prior relationship. For some who were unable to find a relationship partner, casual sex was an alternative means to accessing sex. Some noted that casual sex was something that was engaged in if they (or women in general) were looking for affection or attention.

Casual sex was again related to age for some participants. It was seen as something younger women might engage in if they did not want a relationship, or were too busy for a relationship. Others noted that casual sex was a sanctioned activity for younger women, but once past a certain age it might be judged as “slutty”. However, several participants related casual sex to their sex lives as older women, that it was something that got easier with age and experience, and that as self-confidence grew the “need to be well-behaved” no longer excluded the possibility of engaging in casual sex. Casual sex was described as an important facet of sexual self-development by a participant.

Alcohol was again listed as a causal factor for engagement as well as a mitigating factor, lessening possible social censure, though less so than for hooking up. More predominantly alcohol as a causative factor was seen as risky, and more likely to place individuals in unsafe situations. Respondents who related negative experiences often cited alcohol as a determining factor.

---

Engaging in casual sex was also mentioned as a social pressure, namely peer pressure and gender competitiveness (“keep[ing] up with the boys”).

### *Casual Sex—A Closer Look*

Some participants noted that casual sex was common, or becoming more common, but that it was not discussed or admitted to for fear of judgement. Again casual sex was “fine” or “fun” under conditions similar to those mentioned for hooking up, reflecting the amount of casual sex implicit in the definition of hooking up, and the generally cautionary tone of participants with respect to non-relationship sexual engagement.

Sexual health risks were predominant. Casual sex was fine as long as young women were proactive in protecting themselves from STIs and unwanted pregnancies. Some noted a preference for a partner that was not a complete stranger to them, so as to mitigate some of the perceived risks inherent in ‘stranger sex’, for example physical danger.

The need to be cognitively aware of the situation was frequently mentioned, with some participants noting that young women needed to “have their wits about them and know exactly what they are doing and who they are doing it with”. Being mentally prepared for casual sex extended to not being coerced or pressured into an encounter, being happy with the decision to engage in casual sex, and doing it for the ‘right’ reasons. It also included being prepared for to “disattach” from sex emotionally, and being able to “handle the lack of emotion” in sex with respect to a partner’s orientation, highlighting the underlying idea that sex is emotional for women.

It was important for many participants that both sexual partners were aware of the casual nature of the engagement and if it would “lead” anywhere, or nowhere. Honesty was therefore important. Some remarked that it was important to prioritise their own needs with respect to sexual pleasure, and that the experience should be enjoyable.

As with hook ups, the frequency and number of partners was important, as was discretion. Young women should not have too many different partners, nor have casual sex too regularly—for example not “every week” for the act, or new partner acquisition. However, as with hooking up, little indication was given with respect to what was considered an acceptable amount of casual sex to have. As casual sex was discussed in weekly terms, it suggested that frequency and number of partners is less than that permitted for hook ups,

---

despite the similarity in clustering of statistics for frequency of engagement by participants for both hooking up and casual sex.

Negative assessments of casual sex were stronger than those for hooking up. Some participants considered it a dangerous activity due to the possible risk factors listed above, predominantly with respect to safe sex. The likelihood of STIs, having to use the ECP<sup>31</sup>, and ensuring men use condoms were mentioned. Stranger-partners were also noted as potential sources of danger with respect to their sexual history, and the possibility of their being physically or emotionally dangerous. Concerns around coercion or lack of consent were also referred to.

The lack of emotional content in casual sex and its concomitant risk factors related to two concepts implicit in some opinions: that sex was inherently meaningful, and that emotional connections were liable to happen during casual sex. Some respondents commented that sex was something better reserved for relationships because it was emotional and meaningful. Hurt feelings were therefore a frequent concern, again because no relationship was forthcoming, or that any emotional connection was one-sided. Some young women noted that casual sex was an easier undertaking for men as they were able to emotionally disengage during sex. Some young women noted that casual sex in general was a regretful activity that would invariably generate negative feelings such as shame and guilt, and evidenced a lack of self-respect.

The quality of casual sex was referenced. Some noted that it was not as good as relationship sex because a casual partner would not know your body or your preferences. The low likelihood of orgasm and general sexual satisfaction from casual sex was often mentioned. Some participants noted that they would be less inclined to ask for what they wanted (generally due to embarrassment and/or lack of trust) and be sexually agentic within a casual sex context, further exacerbating an unsatisfying outcome. Some mentioned that casual sex was more of a benefit to men, and that it could confirm objectifying ideas about women.

For some casual sex was irresponsible and not to be encouraged because they considered casual sex to reflect a lack of forethought with respect to possible consequences and outcomes, particularly safe sex issues.

---

<sup>31</sup> Emergency Contraceptive Pill

Positive assessments about casual sex overlapped hook up benefits. It was a way for women to meet their own sexual needs and desires without complicating emotional connections, a good way to boost self-esteem, and could be empowering to engage in under the ‘correct’ circumstances. This was particularly so for those who engaged in casual sex as a matter of conscious choice and were self-aware. For several participants having casual sex was seen as a personal achievement. Some mentioned that sex could be different due to different partners or not being bound by relationship precedents or “notions” of acceptable sexual behaviour. Others noted it was a good way to explore their own sexuality, to determine what they liked and did not like, and to understand what sex meant for them.

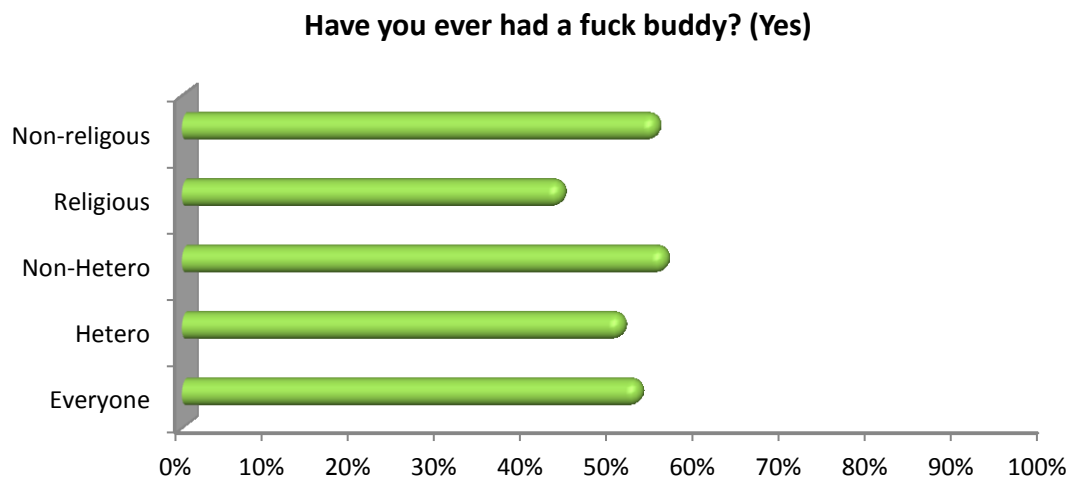
Some participants noted that women should be able to engage in casual sex with the same freedoms and lack of emotional engagement as men. However, the use of “should” suggested these young women understood that they were not able to do so, principally due to the stigma and the sexual double standard around casual sex and women. The strength of this stigma was evident in the number of comments describing casual sex as “slutty” or “promiscuous”, and potentially damaging to a young woman’s reputation. Some noted a sexual double standard that judged women “far more harshly than men”. They noted that the men they had slept with had a tendency to denigrate and judge them about casual sex, exacerbating the sensation of a double standard. Others noted that casual sex needed to be engaged in discreetly and not talked about so as to avoid censure.

There were a few comments, however, that noted that casual sex had become more acceptable for young women, and that their peers were less likely to judge, depending on the circumstances.

### **What are Fuck Buddies?**

Fuck buddies were generally described as inhabiting the space between casual sex and formal relationships. Principally a fuck buddy was someone who was known, and with whom an agreement had been entered into, to engage in sex without having any kind of formal relationship or deeper emotional connection beyond friendship and/or ‘liking’ one another enough to have sex.

---



*Figure 11: Have you ever had a fuck buddy?*

Groups displayed similar patterns to casual sex and hook ups, with religiously identified individuals showing lower rates of engagement. However, the variance between all groups was small. Engagement in fuck buddy arrangements was lower than engagement in casual sex overall, and commensurate with the decline in engagement in activities that were more serious. Fuck buddies were described as fine or fun as long as they were engaged with under certain circumstances, reflecting the conditional aspect of all sexual activities thus far discussed. Cautionary statements, however, were more prevalent with respect to risk factors for young women, centring on emotional connections and the chance of complications.

### ***Why They Have Fuck Buddies***

Causal factors were narrowly discussed by respondents, with fewer cited reasons for engaging in fuck buddy arrangements, and few of which were positive. Participants' most cited reasons for fuck buddy arrangement was low self esteem, little self respect, or commitment issues. Relationship seeking was also noted as a possible reason for engagement.

### ***Fuck Buddies—A Closer Look***

Some participants noted that fuck buddy arrangements were common, but were undertaken discreetly or secretly due to the stigma associated with the relationship for women. They were seen as better than or less dangerous than casual sex as sexual partners were known which participants felt guaranteed a higher level of safety compared to a stranger-partner. This included the likelihood of knowing the partner's sexual history, of being able to have



regular STI checks, and responsible contraceptive use. Fuck buddies reduced the number of possible sexual partners and were therefore positive.

Fuck buddies were considered better than relationships as they were a way to access sex when wanted, provided more regular sex, and an opportunity to “know yourself better” sexually without the “complications of a serious relationship”. Specifically, they provided the “benefits of a relationship without the problems [and] more freedom”.

Issues of safety also extended to emotional risk. Again participants should be prepared for the lack of relationship/emotional connection, and the possibility of hurt feelings due to developing possible attachments beyond arrangement parameters. Careful consideration of engagement also encompassed partner selection, and ensuring that it was being engaged in for the right reasons, for example not because of low self esteem.

As with casual sex and hooking up, a fuck buddy arrangement was sanctioned under certain conditions. Of principal concern was that both parties in the arrangement were aware of the boundaries of the relationship, and that those boundaries were maintained. Being honest with respect to intentions and feelings was important, as was acting in a way to ensure that feelings were not hurt. Selecting someone you could trust was therefore critical, to avoid emotional and physical danger, but also to help ensure good communication.

Fuck buddies were considered by some as a good way to access sex with a partner who would more likely understand their sexual desires and needs, increasing the likelihood of sexual pleasure and satisfaction. They were also a good way to “let some steam off, “conversate”<sup>32</sup> and emulate being in a relationship with a person without having to be dedicated or 'going out' with them. Some considered them a way to gain sexual experience and greater understanding of their own sexual needs and desires. Others noted that it boosted their self-esteem—for one young woman this was the case after the end of a sexually unfulfilling long term relationship. Some who discussed their fuck buddy arrangements considered them successful, and a “godsend”.

Negative opinions about fuck buddy arrangements focused on the potential for negative judgement by others, and emotional risks. Some respondents considered fuck buddies to be degrading for both men and women. Others indicated low self esteem or poor self-worth in

---

<sup>32</sup> Respondent term – in context, to talk with, engage in conversation

young women, and that male partners may have low opinions of the individual. Fuck buddies were also linked to promiscuous behaviour and “slutty” reputations. Some commented that it was unnecessary, or not something to be encouraged.

Fuck buddies were again problematic due to the propensity for women to develop emotional connections with their sex partner. Some suggested that for women “there is no such thing as “no strings” [sex]” and as a result feelings were likely to be hurt. This again reflected the concept that sex was meaningful and emotional (more so for women), making fuck buddies inherently problematic as they demeaned sex because of a lack of emotional content. Such arrangements would be unfulfilling as a result. Other risk factors made fuck buddies untenable for some. For example, the propensity for emotional connections to develop was seen to make these engagements “messy”, complicated and confusing, and would result in upset mental and emotional states, including low self esteem, feeling used and broken-hearted. These outcomes would be exacerbated if the young woman was hoping for a relationship where none was forthcoming.

The lack of emotional connection/content also left some participants feeling disrespected and used due to the way their partners treated them. Some noted that fuck buddies were fine but that they tended to be criticised and judged if they were acknowledged, resulting in a need to be discreet. The “crude reputation” attributed to the arrangement was a barrier to engagement despite the sometimes relaxed attitude to it: “its just sex. chill out. its fun.” Although negative judgements were strong, for example those who engaged in fuck buddy relationships were deemed “sluts” or had low self esteem, they were less critical than those around casual sex. Sexual contact with a known individual appeared to mitigate some of the risk of stigma for participants, although discretion was still required.

### **What is Public Sexual Behaviour (PSB)?**

Engagement and enactment of a variety of sexualised behaviours in public contexts was an almost unanimous characteristic of participant behaviour. During observation in the field I witnessed some of these behaviours first hand, despite my not having access to venues where much of this behaviour was reported to be performed, for example in bars and clubs. Kissing and non-genital sexual touching were seen, along with underwear flashing and erotic dancing. I saw a young woman dance erotically on the bonnet of a police car for her friends and the watching officer, and another young woman giving a young man a ‘hand-job’ in a club

---

doorway. Participants noted that venues provided contexts where sexualised behaviour was more likely to occur, for example Rachel described seeing a young couple having sex in the middle of the dance floor of a club. These experiences were reflective of the kinds of behaviours seen by participants: see the figure below.

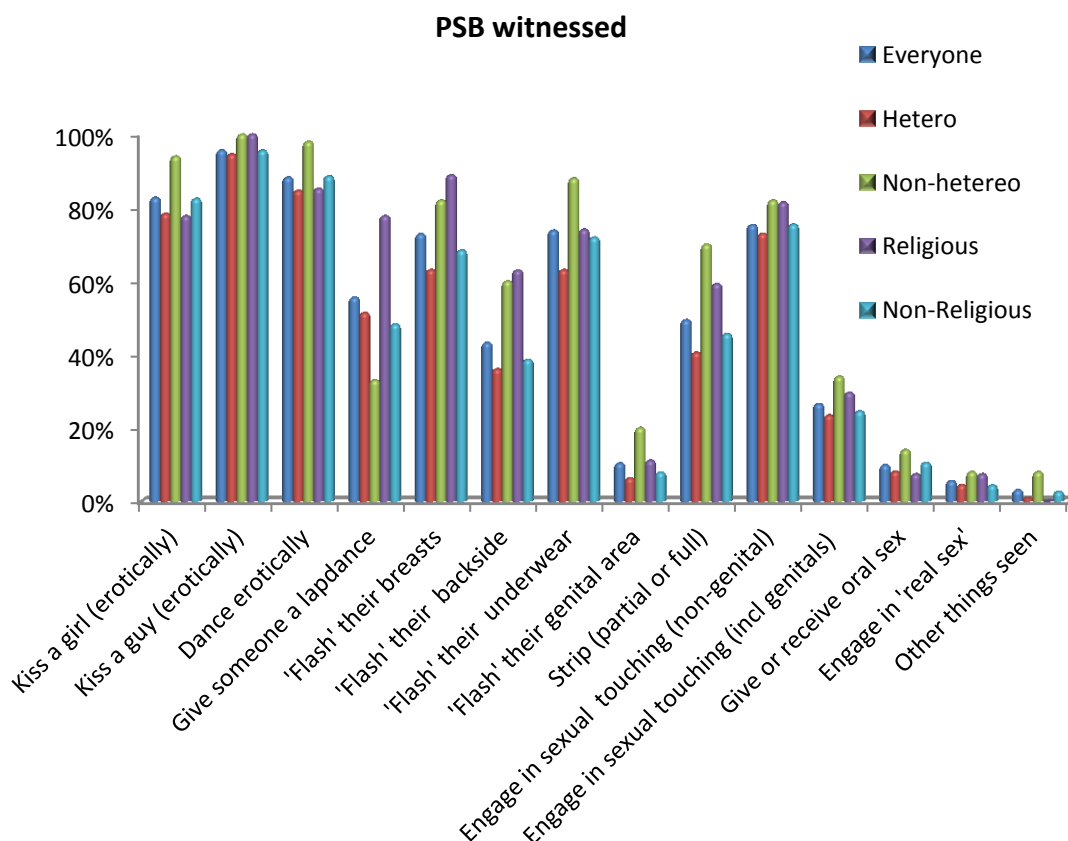


Figure 12: Public sexual behaviours (PSB) witnessed by participants

Activities seen included non-genital activities and were less commensurate with activities that would be considered ‘real’ sex. Activities with high engagement were those considered to be socially acceptable for public display, as indicated by participant comments. The above therefore represents normative prescriptions on behaviour, with those behaviours less engaged in being less acceptable, or more appropriate for more limited environments.

Behaviour engaged in varied by groups. Non-heterosexual young women had a higher level of engagement for all activities. Again, patterns of participation were similar for all groups when compared to behaviours witnessed, although participation rates were lower. This may represent a genuine reduction in engagement when compared to witnessing, or under-

reporting by participants. The latter may be the case when the number of participants admitting to these behaviours in the comments section of the survey are accounted for and then read in concert with comments expressing regret for engagement, and judgement by others about those who engage in the behaviours below.

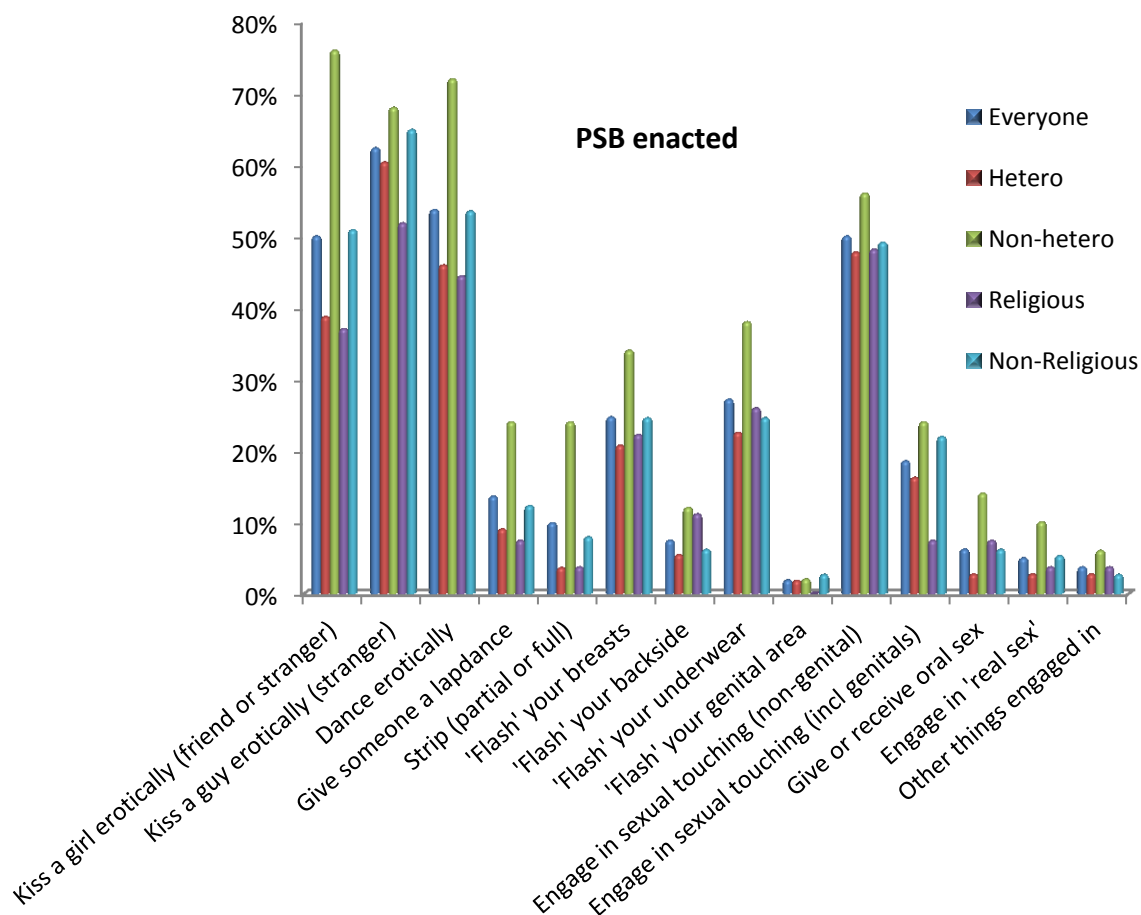


Figure 13: Public sexual behaviours (PSB) engaged in by participants

Participant reactions to public sexual behaviour were similar to those for hooking up and reflected similarities in the behaviours in the two categories. Negative judgements were often made by those who had also engaged in various activities, a fact noted with some irony by some. The variety of themes, however, exemplified the complexity with respect to influences, motivations and outcomes for this behaviour. Some participants were aware of this, and expressed thoughts around the tensions young women negotiated with respect to managing social expectations and potential stigma.

### ***Why They Flash (and Other Such Things)***

Alcohol was often cited as a causal factor in public sexual behaviour, with alcohol and public sexual behaviour often described as concomitant. Alcohol was seen as a disinhibiting factor, enabling behaviour that would not be engaged in otherwise, namely when sober. This was positive for some but negative for others who saw it resulting in regrets later on. Alcohol also acted as an explanatory device for behaviours that would not normally be engaged in, allowing some stigma to be avoided: “you can get away with more things when your drinking and blame it [solely] on the fact you are drinking”. It was also cited in behaviour that was seen as evidence of a loss of control by the agent, and was therefore less personally excusable.

Public sexual behaviours were considered to be attention-seeking by some, sometimes described it as performative and enacted to attract a particular kind of audience (particularly male attention). It was also thought to be done to be seen as sexy, popular or cool. These aspects were considered an indication of low self esteem by some. However, others noted that it was a validating behaviour as they felt sexy and confident as a result of these performances. Further to this, some mentioned that it was a way to push personal boundaries and experiment with their sexual selves, to feel “free” or to be “risqué”.

Public sexual behaviour was often linked with a phase of life or being younger, beyond which its acceptability declined. The context in which these behaviours were enacted was also important with respect to acceptability and appropriateness.

### ***Showing How We Do It—A Closer Look***

Some participants considered PSB to be harmless, “not a huge deal”, common, normal, and something that “we all do”. Others noted that behaviours were done as a joke and/or to entertain peers and partners. For a few these performances could be empowering in the “right situations”.

Again PSB was fine or fun for some, but conditionally. The most noticeable restrictions on these behaviours related to context and the spectrum of acts performed. As the graph above indicates, some behaviours were more acceptable than others, most notably kissing (of either gender), erotic dancing and ‘above the waist’ touching. Comments from participants confirmed this division in the acceptability of display, with activities deemed more serious or which went “underneath clothes” regarded as private and therefore publicly inappropriate.

---

Only a certain number of activities were considered permissible for public spaces like clubs, bars and parties. Safe environments also included where audiences were judged to be trustworthy.

Activities that included genital activity were generally considered to be “way too far”, “slutty”, “wrong and gross”, and were judged negatively. Not offending or embarrassing others when engaging in these behaviours was important, as was the choice of audience and venue.

Some participants discussed public sexual behaviours as reflective of body confidence, and strong self esteem. They (sometimes) felt empowered, particularly when it was something they had done for themselves rather than others, and they did not care what others thought of them or their behaviour as a result. For some this was seen as an achievement of sorts, for others as part of a developmental process with respect to building a strong sexual subjectivity and increasing self-confidence. Thus the behaviours were particularly related to choice in that agents engaged in them because they wanted to, for their own personal reasons, including enjoyment.

Negative opinions focused primarily on the inappropriateness of behaviours seen in certain contexts. Kissing and dancing were acceptable, but most other behaviours were “gross” and could ruin by-standers’ nights, and should be kept to private environments. Consequently more ‘extreme’ behaviours were seen as unnecessary and not to be encouraged. If one went “too far” the behaviour was degrading and embarrassing for the agent, and indicated a lack of self-respect and/or low self-esteem. Lack of self-control was mentioned, and for those discussing their actions in reference to this, regret and shame were experienced, particularly when events were recalled after the fact.

Some noted the propensity for the behaviour to result in the individual being objectified, others that it garnered attention from “the type of boys” they would not want to “hang out with”, thus exposing young women to risks such as being “taken advantage of”.

Negative judgements about public sexual behaviours were common, and condemnatory. Excessive behaviours were seen as “slutty”, labelled a young woman as “easy”, and indicated low self esteem or attention-seeking. Several respondents indicated a double standard with respect to these kinds of behaviours, for example a young man who engaged in public sexual

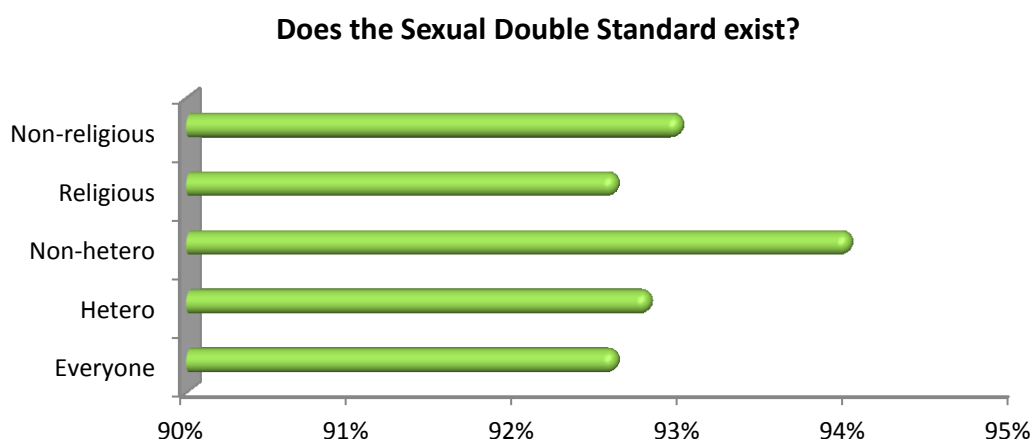
---

behaviours would be regarded as a “scallywag”, whereas young women were open to being judged as promiscuous, “skanks”, “whores” and “bitches”.

Others noted that they did not care what others thought of them, or that some young women did not care about negative opinions. Many were aware that they were judgemental of many of the behaviours they had themselves performed, suggesting that their current judgements may be a consequence of prior negative experiences, or pressures to socialise others through stigma.

### **The Oh So Persistent Sexual Double Standard (SDS)**

The survey question framed the sexual double standard (SDS) as labelling men as ‘studs’ and women as ‘sluts’ for enacting similar kinds and amounts of sexual behaviour. Almost all respondents considered the SDS to exist. Some respondents made direct references to the SDS.



*Figure 14: Does the sexual double standard exist?*

A small difference was evident with respect to non-heterosexual women’s perception of the SDS, which may reflect their general awareness of inequalities with respect to sexuality.

All respondents noted that the SDS had at least some effect on women’s sex lives, with over half noting that it had a strong or very strong effect. Those that considered the SDS to have little effect on their lives also tended to have had little or no engagement in hooking up, casual sex, fuck buddies and public sexual behaviours, suggesting that avoidance of activities

that would be censured also removed them (somewhat) from the impact of the SDS.

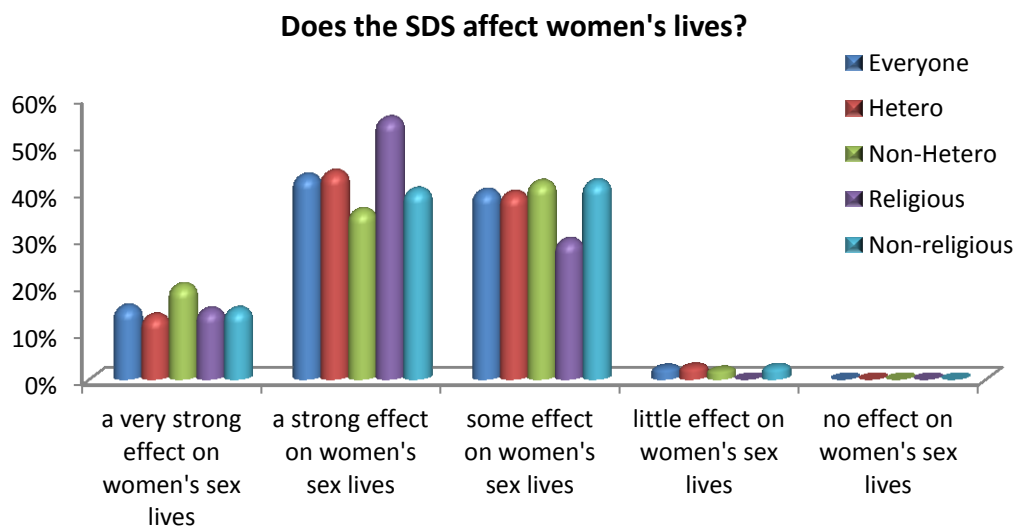


Figure 15: Does the SDS have an effect on women's lives?

Participants commented on the SDS in a number of contexts. As noted, the SDS encouraged discretion across a range of non-relationship behaviours. Some remarked that men were “allowed” to think of sex more than women, were permitted to express their desires for sex, or their desire for “non-standard” sexual activities, more than women (if it was sanctioned for women at all). Other participants indicated that the SDS was frustrating, and that it impacted on how they felt about their sex lives. Some participants noted that women should be able to engage in and experience the same degrees of sexual freedom and experimentation as men.

### What We Get up to behind Closed Doors

The subjective experiences of young women with respect to their relationships and sexual engagements, and their thoughts and feelings about these, were canvassed. Questions were aimed at identifying changes in agency with respect to social expectations, for example that men are traditionally the initiators in sex, as well as capturing participant opinions about their own agency, and any restrictions they may have experienced.

### *Dating... Passé?*

The figure below illustrates dating patterns with respect to sexual engagement. In early discussions with a friend in her mid-40s about my research, she mentioned her 21 year old daughter's dating patterns and how they had changed when compared to her own



remembered habits. Notably she explained how her daughter had described it. In her mother’s time dating occurred before sex, but now sex sometimes occurred before dating, and dating sometimes occurred predicated upon whether the sexual partner was sufficiently interesting to continue getting to know beyond the sexual encounter. The results below indicate this change.



Figure 16: Dating and sex patterns

These results are in general accordance with figures on casual sex, the proportion of those who have not had casual sex being commensurate with those who always date before having sex with that partner. Variance among the groups is minimal, indicating a general shift in attitudes towards extra-relationship sex. As noted in the comments on casual sex, this shift is not without its negative impacts, the cautionary nature of which is evident in the clumping of results towards a higher likelihood of dating before sex.

***Feels So Good... or Not***

The figure below indicates how satisfied participants were with their sex lives. However, questions inquiring about factors that would improve their sex lives tended to contradict indications of happiness, some to a small degree, some considerably.

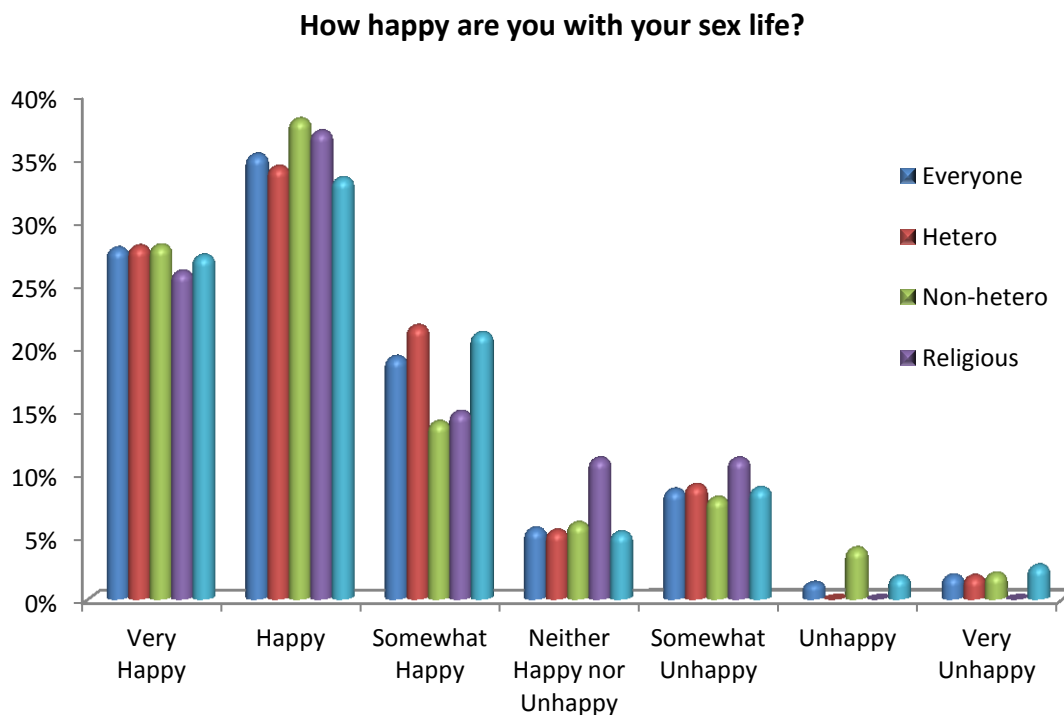


Figure 17: How happy participants are with their sex lives

Having a caring partner was an important factor in reported satisfaction. Partners were also described as attentive and generous with respect to ensuring participant sexual satisfaction. This included having a partner who was concerned with their pleasure, and knew their bodies and preferences, increasing the likelihood of satisfying sex. Caring partners were seen as trustworthy and provided safe environments, allowing young women to feel more comfortable and confident, be more experimental, to engage in active learning with respect to their sexuality and preferences, and to openly communicate their desires.

A number of relationship issues were mentioned. Some participants noted that they were unable to ask for or share some of their desires with their partners as they were concerned about being judged, or because they were self-conscious or shy. Some noted that they wanted more sex or more frequent sex than they were getting, due to a partner’s lower libido or stressful work schedules. Not being able to orgasm during sex was an issue for others, although some noted that it did not “bother” them much. Several participants remarked that their partner were not adventurous or skilled enough. Health issues were a notable factor with respect to diminished sexual satisfaction, with painful sex (for either/both partners)

listed as a major challenge. Contraception was mentioned as libido-suppressing, as were concerns about the risk of pregnancy.

Others noted that they were not sufficiently experienced and therefore lacked confidence with respect to being able to perform well for their partner. Some commented that they felt anxious and intimidated by more experienced and experimental partners. Issues referencing body self-esteem were mentioned by some, and fear of judgement was expressed. These factors impacted negatively on sexual experiences and sex lives.

A number of young women noted that they did not have sex lives and were looking for partners, whilst others were in long distance relationships which affected their access to sex. Several participants were virgins. Communication was an important factor with respect to having good sex for those who were not in formal relationships. Self-confidence and self-awareness around knowing their desires was also important. Casual sex was also mentioned as a way to get the quantity of sex wanted, however, some remarked that as they were not willing to engage in casual sex they were not getting as much sex as they desired. Others noted that the quality of casual sex was not (as) satisfying.

Some participants noted the beneficial aspects of vibrators and masturbation. For some vibrators allowed them to reach orgasm and to understand that aspect of their sexuality so they could achieve it in partnered sex. Others noted that masturbation and vibrator use ensured that they were sexually happy without a partner, or with a partner who did not sufficiently meet their needs.

### ***Getting What You Want, When You Want It, How You Want It***

Many young women commented that they were still learning about their sexuality, their desires and preferences. It was important to establish how self-knowing the participants felt themselves to be so as to consider what effect it may have on their sexual agency, when considering the impact of the feminine and heterosexual scripts on women. Results regarding where information on female sexuality and desire was acquired indicated that the majority of participants learned about this from their peer group, close friends and sexual partners, and researched the internet and media. Self-discovery was the most prominent source of information, reflecting the importance of an active sex life for young women, as well as the relevance of agency and confidence with respect to self-knowledge (see figures 26-30).

---

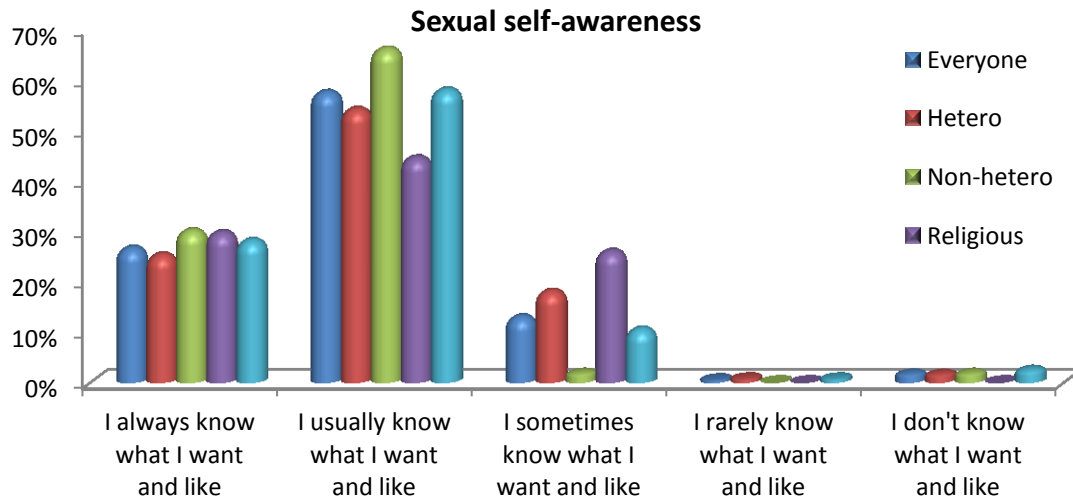


Figure 18: Desire and self-awareness

As the above figure indicates, the participants were generally confident with respect to self-awareness of their desires. However, this awareness did not guarantee that participants got what they wanted in sexual interactions as the figure below indicates.

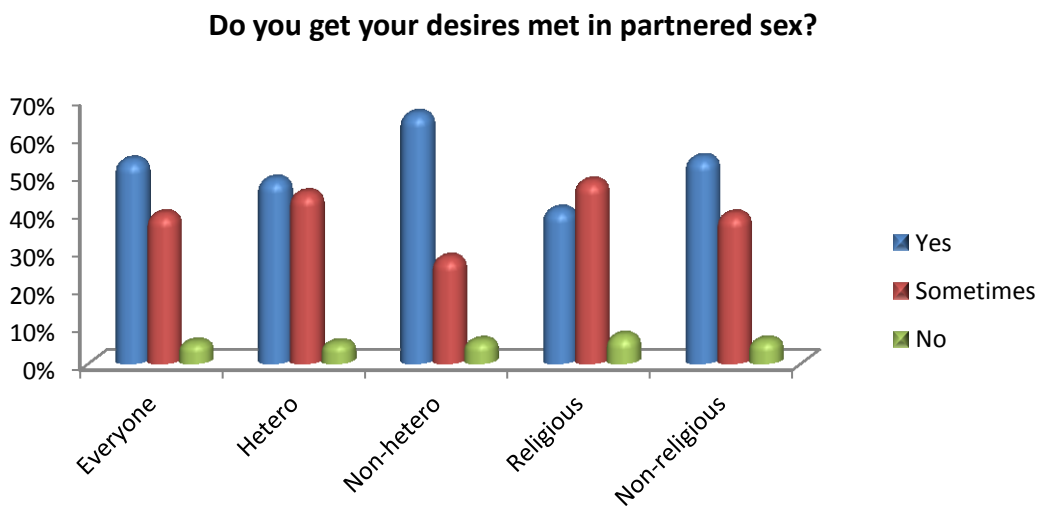


Figure 19: Do you get your desires met in partnered sex?

Those with non-heterosexual identities were more likely to get what they wanted during sex, compared to all other groups. This difference may be explained by sexual orientation (for example same-sex experiences provide partners with more familiar bodies that are more

easily learned due to a presumed common frame of reference/embodiment), but also the impact of heterosexual practices and scripts on those who ascribe to heterosexual identities.

When asked how they got what they wanted during and from sex, participants accessed a number of different approaches, with variable success as the figure below indicates.

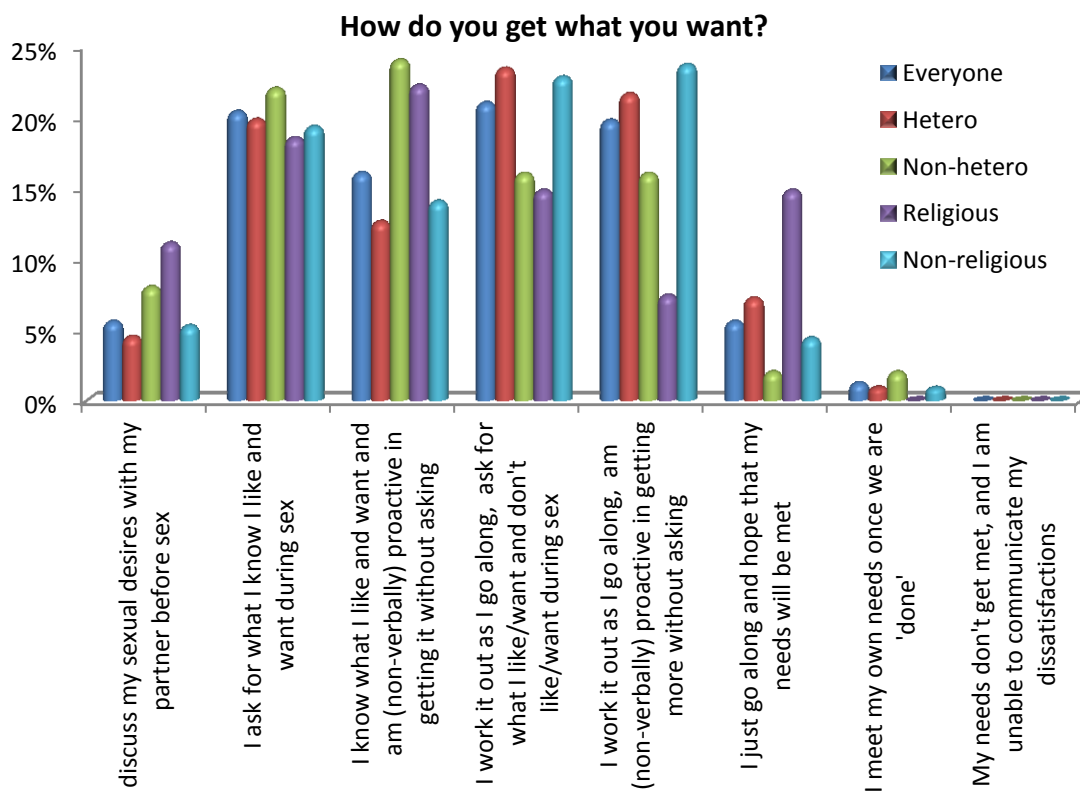


Figure 20: How do you ensure your sexual needs/wants are met?

Respondents were restricted to a single answer for this question to ascertain the most predominant method of getting what they wanted sexually, but many commented that they utilised a number of strategies, depending on the circumstances. A general distinction with respect to agency and communication was whether or not the partner was a casual one or known to the participant. Some were less likely to ask a casual/new partner for what they wanted due to shyness or embarrassment. Some needed to feel comfortable with a sexual partner before they would express or discuss their wants and desires. These tendencies may explain some of the sexual dissatisfaction expressed by young women with respect to casual sex.

Some participants also remarked that what they wanted changed with different partners, in respect to sexual skills or their own moods, resulting in a “go with the flow” strategy. Hormones, stress and mental states were also listed as factors that contributed to diminished desire, satisfaction and agency.

The variety of strategies indicated above illustrates the spectrum of experience and confidence within the sample group. Some suggested that their partners knew them (or should know them) well enough that explicit communication about desires was not necessary. They already knew what to do, and so (at least some) satisfaction was assured. Others noted that they used body language and manoeuvred themselves into positions that were enjoyable, to help ensure their satisfaction. Some also described how vocal positive reinforcement communicated what they enjoyed and encouraged their partners.

Verbal communication was challenging. For some “winging it” meant that they did not know what they wanted, desired or enjoyed until during the sex act, making communication difficult. They were able to identify what they did not enjoy, but establishing pleasurable alternatives was often not possible because knowing “what to change” was elusive. For some this was explicitly tied to “getting-to-know-my-own-body” issues. Participants noted that their communication confidence and sex lives were improving as they learned their own bodies and desires.

Verbal communication was complicated by other factors. Some participants expressed their fear of hurting their partner’s feelings by communicating their desires, not wanting to “offend” or “pressure” their sexual partner, or make them feel inadequate. The impact of this approach was evident for one respondent who remarked that she had been faking orgasms with her partner and as a result has a dissatisfying sex life. A few respondents remarked that they couldn’t express their desires because their partners were in control of the sex act and there was no space or opportunity for them to assert themselves. Feeling shy or embarrassed about expressing desires was a considerable communication barrier for participants. Some felt “silly” or worried that they would sound like a “bad porn star”, or that their desires would be judged. Many felt their sex lives would improve if they were able to express themselves more easily, and/or were able to discuss sex and their desires with peers, friends and others outside the bounds of their relationship.

---

Those in long-term relationships commented that communication with their partner was easy, allowing them to express their desires and experiment and explore. If non-verbal communication of desires and enjoyment was relied on, many still noted that communicating alternatives was not problematic, remarking that communication was less important as they knew what “[made] each other tick”. This reduced the need to ask or explain. Others suggested that their communication was healthy, honest and frequent due to a good partnership.

Some participants were notably agentic in their approach to their own desires and satisfaction, taking “control” in order to make sure their needs were met, for example by giving instructions. Some participants also illustrated the prioritisation of their desires by explaining how they showed their partners what they enjoyed, or that they ensured that both partners reached orgasm, or by talking openly about strategies that ensured satisfaction.

***Practice Makes Perfect***

The gap between knowing what you want and getting what you want was further illuminated by listed factors that would make participant sex lives better.

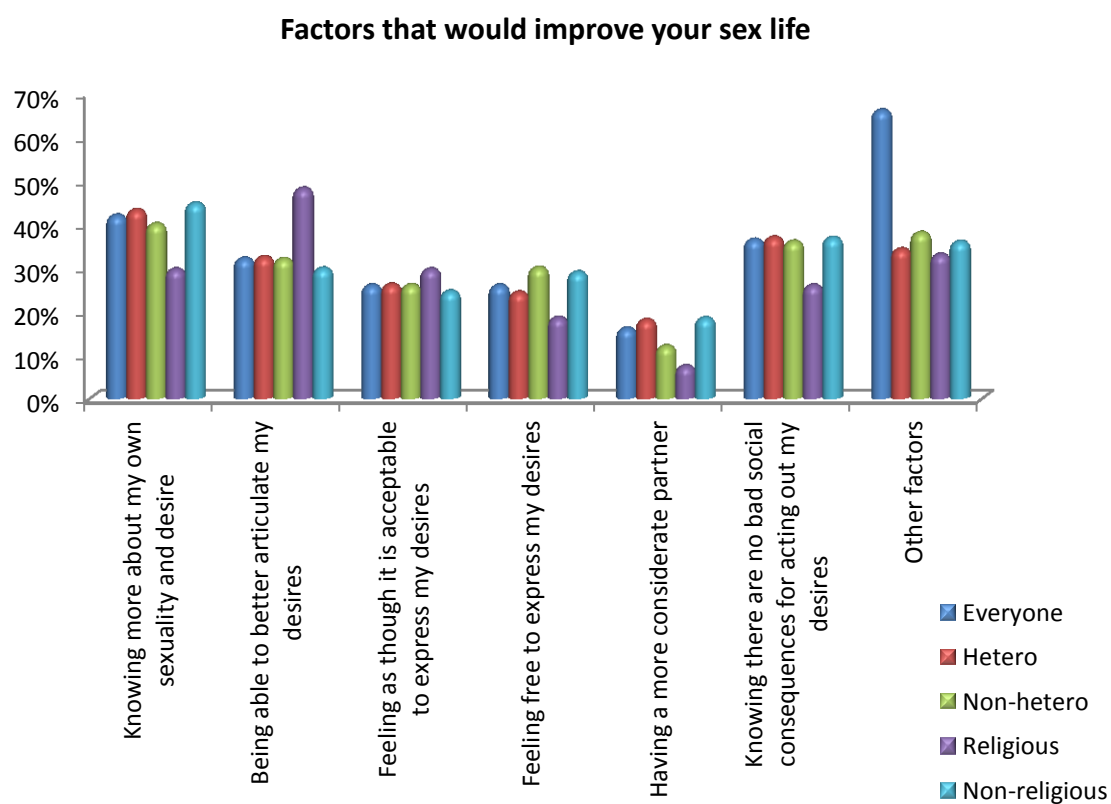


Figure 21: Factors that would improve participants' sex lives

Despite many participants indicating that they knew what they liked and wanted, many indicated that their sex lives would improve if they knew more about their sexuality and desires. This was the most mentioned factor. Many noted that learning about their bodies and desires was a continual process, and that they still had much to discover. Embarrassment and shyness due to perceived inexperience or insufficient understanding of their bodies and desires was common. Many wanted to feel more confident in and comfortable about expressing their desires once they understood what they were. Thus self-knowledge was seen by many to be foundational to better confidence and communication in sexual situations, and for some to allow them to move away from submissive roles during sex.

Understanding their partners' desires was also important for a few respondents. They discussed not knowing if they were sufficiently pleasing their partners, or if they were meeting their desires.

Many who indicated that the removal of social consequences for acting on their desires would benefit their sex lives also indicated that feeling free to express their desires, and that it was acceptable to do so, was important. This clustering of opinions suggested that the impact of judgement from partners, peers and society were major factors that, once removed, would greatly benefit young women.

Many respondents related the felt impacts of judgement in their sex lives in a variety of ways. Some said they had to be discreet about their desires, especially if they might be seen as "kinky" or "devious". Feeling judged for a "normal healthy sexual appetite" was common. As a result they were not free to discuss their desires, and were at risk of censure (and for some, resultant guilt and shame) should aspects of their private lives become publicly known. Others did not want to be thought of as "morally bad" or judged as "slutty" by their partners because of their behaviour, desires and fantasies. Fear of judgement by a partner extended for a few to inadequate sexual performance, body image, and past sexual histories that participants felt they would be criticised for and about. These were restrictive factors.

Religious guilt was mentioned by a number of respondents, particularly those who identified as non-heterosexual, and often despite a lack of current religious identity. This signalled the impact of religious upbringing and its long-term impacts with respect to sexual agency and expression. Overcoming "christian guilt" was important for these participants.

---



Many felt that the removal of the above three aspects, namely ignorance over their own desires, the inability to communicate, and fear of judgement would result in increased confidence and comfort about/in their sex lives. Having a partner was also a contributing factor, as partners were regarded as providing safe and trusting environments for self-expression, and some protection from judgement.

The perceived benefits of having a regular partner were attested to by young women hoping to find one with the intention of improving their sex lives. Partners were also assumed to actively engage in learning their bodies and preferences, and would have a vested interest in satisfying them in ways that surpassed casual engagements with respect to satisfaction and enjoyment. Several noted that sometimes they felt as though their casual partner “could be fucking anything”.

A number of additional issues impacted on participants’ sexual lives. More sex and more varied sex was wanted, with some participants remarking that their partner’s lower desire for sex, or life responsibilities, restricted how much sex they had. Others noted that they were too shy to express their more unorthodox desires, or that their partners were too “vanilla”, and so they were unable to experience the variety of sexual activities they wanted<sup>33</sup>. Interest in non-monogamous relationship types was expressed by some with non-heterosexual identities.

More considerate partners were wanted by some participants who noted their frustrations with partners who did not sufficiently reciprocate in bed, or were “lazy”. Some felt they could not express their dissatisfaction as they did not want to “pressure” their partners and affect the sex they currently had.

Orgasm issues were frequently mentioned. Not being able to orgasm during/from sex with a partner was a concern, with some commenting that they wished they could orgasm as easily as their male partners. Other concerns included feeling responsible for being unable to orgasm, or that their sexual partner would be bored or tired or would not enjoy sex due to the time it took for the participant to achieve orgasm.

---

<sup>33</sup> These assessments were subjective, with participants not disclosing what they considered to be “vanilla” or deviant desires.

### Conquering the World One Orgasm at a Time

In discussing empowerment, a list of possible options was provided to give content to the term for participants (see Appendix 4, survey question 9). Empowerment referred to ‘power to’ rather than ‘power over’, centred on autonomy and agency and concomitant aspects such as being able to act assertively, recognising and acting upon choice, self-direction and confidence. Some participants added to the list, predominantly with statements indicating that empowerment signalled liberation from social restrictions.

Respondents varied in how empowering they found sex to be.

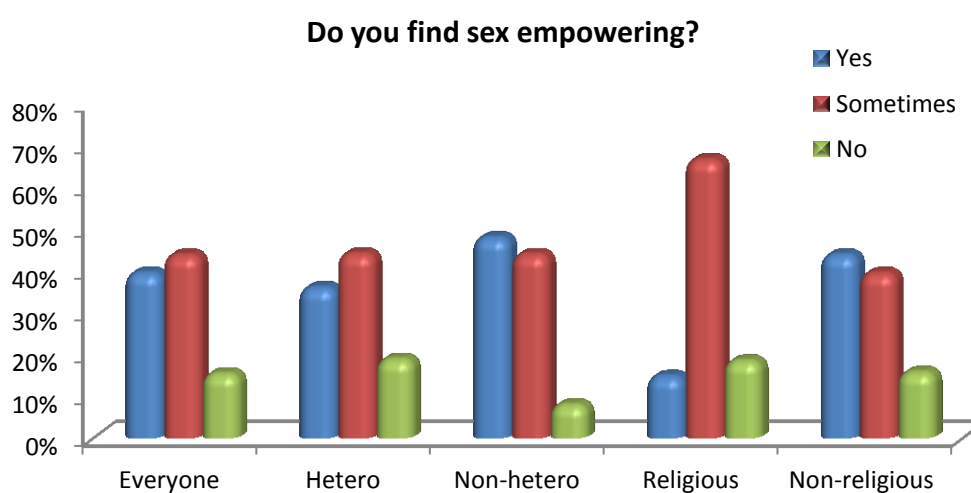


Figure 22: Is sex empowering?

Those who did not find sex empowering either found sex to be disempowering rather than empowering, or did not consider sex to be an activity that conferred ‘power to’ in any way.

Some of those who did not find sex empowering used empowerment as ‘power over’, and so did not feel as though sex was an achievement of any kind, unless as one participant noted it was used to her “advantage”. For others, sex was more about connecting with their partner, or that sex was “just” sex, namely something that was natural or was an inevitable part of a relationship and therefore had no empowerment qualities. Some noted that their empowerment came not from sex but achievements in the public sphere.

Context, “mindset” and the particular situation were contingencies upon which empowerment, or lack thereof, was predicated. Several interviewees noted particular events

in which they had felt especially empowered, notable for their sense of safety, trust and lack of potential judgement, indicating that these factors allowed women to engage in empowered ways with their sexuality.

Those who discussed sex or sexual events as disempowering cited a number of reasons. Negative sexual experiences impacted on many with respect to confidence and agency, leaving them feeling disempowered about those events and subsequent sexual encounters as a result. Abuse was predictably strong in this regard. Others noted that having sex for reasons not connected to their own desires for sex could also be disempowering, for example regretted drunken sex, sex to save a relationship, sex that prioritised male desire, having sex with a partner when it was not desired, or casual sex that lacked respect or recognition were described. These kinds of sexual encounters left many participants feeling degraded. Others commented that a lack of meaning or emotional connection in a sexual encounter could also be disempowering.

Stigma and judgement were disempowering factors. Having a bad reputation was described as undermining and negating feelings of empowerment. Feeling sexually inadequate with respect to skill, and the fear of being judged as such were also cited.

Positive assessments of sex and empowerment were more prevalent. Feeling sexually confident was empowering for many. Specifically, the ability to feel sexually free, be expressive and to not care about judgement when expressing their sexuality, was important. Seeing the self as sexually competent, sexy and/or attractive was also central to empowerment and self-validation as being a sexual being. Positive sexual experiences boosted self-esteem, self-image, positive body-image, feelings of acceptance and being cared for, and for some explicitly affected other aspects of their lives.

Some participants talked about agency as empowering. Being in control of their sexuality, determining when and how sex was had, and being able to choose with whom, were positive aspects. Initiating sex and acting on their desires was notable in this regard, as was the power to say no to sex (or particular activities or partners) as well as yes. Choice was also an important aspect for some participants with respect to entering into sexual situations on their own “terms”.

---

‘Power over’ was mentioned by some participants, with respect to male partners, as well as their own sexuality. Understanding their ability to arouse men and to control men who wanted sex was mentioned. For others sex was an accomplishment, something they had ‘power over’ with respect to mastering their own bodies, the bodies of others, and the sex act itself.

The ability to give and receive pleasure was also empowering. Pleasing a partner sexually was mentioned often, with orgasm the standard for a personal sense of accomplishment and power with respect to facilitating satisfaction (Nicolson, 2003). It also confirmed sexual desirability and skill, which was also empowering. Some also noted that achieving orgasm or satisfaction themselves within the partnered sex act was empowering as they felt closer to their partner and in control of their sexuality with respect to getting what they wanted from it.

## **Discussion**

The survey results outlined above present an image of young women’s participation in and feelings/opinions about the sexual culture in which they live that in many ways mirror finding from the international literature. This suggests the widespread nature of various social and individual script elements throughout many westernised countries, and the operationalising effects they can have on some young women’s sex lives and sexual performances.

Definitions of ‘real sex’ were in line with other international studies (for example Gute, 2008; Richters & Song, 1999) and other New Zealand research (for example McPhillips, Braun & Gavey, 2001), where participants predominantly described it as penetrative intercourse (PVI) which referenced a coital imperative. Definitions of hooking up, and its flexibility and ambiguity also mirrored US (Bogle, 2008; Fielder & Carey, 2010; Paul, 2006), Australian (Kalish & Kimmel, 2011) and New Zealand (Allen, 2004) studies with respect to the wide range of activities the category encompassed, and its overlap with other definitions such as casual sex and fuck buddy arrangements. For my participants, casual sex resembled ‘real sex’ in definition, although more considered oral sex as part of casual sex than ‘real sex’, suggesting that casual sex activities pertained to a slightly wider range of activities due to its casual nature. This finding partially supports Gute’s (2008) research on the effects of relationship status on definitions of sex, where non-relationship ‘real sex’ tends to include a wider range of sex acts such as oral sex, accounting for some differences in definitions between ‘real sex’, casual sex and hooking up. The decline in participation in casual sex

---

compared to hooking up, and the 'above the waist' nature of activities in hooking up more popularly engaged in, is also commensurate with Wade and Heldman's (in press, p. 3) research which suggests that hooking up may provide ways for emerging adults to sexually engage without having riskier casual sex.

The age-relatedness of non-relationship activities appeared to be commensurate with Arnett's (2006, pp. 317-319) research about this as part of a developmental period, where emerging adults are exploring their sexuality and partner preferences. It also appeared similar to Bogle's (2008, p. 42) findings where, as students age, their behaviour moves away from non-relationship sexual behaviour towards relationship seeking. Age was also implicated in participants comments that hook ups tended to involve a greater range of sexual activities including a greater likelihood of PVI sex, a finding Kalish (2007) also identified.

Many of the experiences and opinions expressed by the young women in my research are commensurate with international findings. For example, the need to be smart about engaging in non-relationships behaviours was a common theme here and in US research (for example Kalish & Kimmel, 2011). Cautionary statements about what to be mindful of in the non-relationship sexual context, either as a result of bad experiences or general advice, were similar to those outlined in Littleton, Tabernik, Canales and Backstrom's (2009) research into bad hook ups and rape scripts. My findings and those of Owen, et al., (2010) in the US illustrate the cross-cultural use of alcohol as an excuse to engage in behaviours not normally enacted or condoned when sober. Bogle's (2008) comprehensive study revealed factors such as hooking up with known partners to be part of cohort culture and/or to fit in, and that young women must be careful with respect to their conduct so as not to go too far with casual partners and risk 'slut-labelling' but at the same time avoid being perceived as prudish. The experience and negative effect of the sexual double standard was also evident in both my work and that of Skrobot (2010) on US campuses. Armstrong, Hamilton and England's (2010) US research also highlighted the sexual double standard and its negative impacts on, for example, how young women feel retrospectively about their hook up experiences, in ways similar to those expressed by my participants. Jonason and Marks' (2009) US investigation into the sexual double standard's relationship to the kinds of sex acts deemed socially acceptable versus those liable to censure confirms my own findings showing a spectrum of behaviours and their related social acceptability or intolerance.

---

Experiences of non-relationship engagements also reflect similarities in terms of both negative and positive consequences and impacts. Quality of sex in non-relationship contexts was seldom described positively, as with Wade's (2011) US research group. Paul and Hayes (2002) outlined other negative impacts such as feelings of shame and regret, feeling used, and fears about sexual health issues, all of which were also evident in my results. The risk of asymmetric emotional attachments was visible in both my and Bradshaw, Kahn and Saville's (2010) work. Wade (2011) also highlighted the positive nature of casual sex for young women with respect to learning about sex, their bodies, desires and boundaries, a strong theme in my findings.

Relationships were noted by my participants for their superior quality of sex, where partners were more attentive to their pleasure and were more likely to have satisfying sex, a result echoed by Armstrong, Hamilton and England (2010). An orgasm imperative, and a recognition of male partners as sexperts (Potts, 2000) was also evident. Generally within their sex lives participants displayed evidence of what Cacchioni (2007) calls "sex work". Notably some participants engaged in "Performance Work" where orgasms were faked or pleasure performed to support partner performance (p. 307). "Discipline Work" was discussed in honing sex skills, or the recognition that this work needed to be engaged in (p. 308), or that they needed to get to know their bodies and desires (also common) (p. 315). Relationships were however pitched as sites where resistance to some gender-role aspects could be challenged (Holland, et al., 1998, p. 12).

Although Third Wave feminist voices that support the idea of an unfettered female sexuality can present images of women's increasing sexual agency as achievable, the survey results appear to suggest otherwise. Discussion of empowerment within the overall context of the survey results presented a complex picture of optimism about the potential for subjective, enjoyable sex lives that was complicated by the reality of attempting to negotiate a socio-sexual context shaped by cultural scripts grounded in a sexual double standard and gendered sexual scripts. Respondents who explicitly identified as feminist appeared no less troubled by social factors than others.

Generally, the survey findings are in accordance with the growing body of exploratory research into the content of the socio-sexual culture in which emerging adult young women are engaged. As Schalet (2010) notes however, cultural contexts can affect how what appears to be a wide-reaching cultural script with respect to feminine sexual script enactment

---

can be instantiated in various micro-contexts, in this case New Zealand. Beyond the patterns of behaviour outlined in the survey results above, the impact of social messaging and cultural context appear to have had some impact on the young women I researched. Although New Zealand does not have a sex education ethos that actively promotes abstinence as a response to entry into sociosexual culture for young people, it does however have a strong risk-orientation with respect to social messaging around STIs, unplanned pregnancies and single-motherhood, and rape mythology.

In the next section I will examine the effects of risk as a significant part of New Zealand's social discourse, and its impacts on young women's sexual agency and activity.

---

## Chapter Six: Listening to Voices

The following analyses and discussions (in Chapter's Six, Seven and Eight) are based on qualitative material from the surveys, interviews, the web discussion group, and field observations. Stories, opinions, narratives and conversations provided rich insight and highlighted a number of script elements that appeared to be persistent and constraining.

### The Sexual Risk Script—The Rules In New Zealand

Criticisms about choice often focus on the assumption that many young women consider their choices to be free/unconstrained (Gill, 2007, p. 74). Results from my research suggest otherwise. A number of constraints were consistently listed by participants, referencing dominant scripts such as femininity and its place within the heterosexual dyad, as well as aspects of the cultural dialogue that frame sex as risky for women. The Sexual Risk Script (SRS) describes the constraints many participants were aware of, and represents an internalised cultural guide referencing safe sexual conduct for young women.

The SRS was identified primarily through participant comments. Statements supportive of hooking up, casual sex and fuck buddies were usually conditional, rather than being direct endorsements. For example statements such as “I think it’s ok as long as...”, “so long as...”, “but if...” were followed by clauses suggesting factors agents should be wary/aware of, that functioned as behavioural constraints. Alternatively, endorsements were sometimes followed by cautionary narratives or statements, suggesting negative impacts for agents in general, or that the respondent had personally encountered. In conjunction with straight-forward judgement and warning statements, these suggested a set of rules/a script for young women to adopt when participating in the socio-sexual environment. For example:

“There's nothing wrong with it as long as you are being safe (using contraception and protecting yourself against STDs) and as long as you're not cheating on anyone or lying or hurting anyones feelings” (R111 on CS<sup>34</sup>)

---

<sup>34</sup> HU = hooking up; CS = casual sex; FB = fuck buddies



The SDS focuses on three primary elements: safety, stigma, and control. These elements interact and overlap, creating a complex dialogue for young women with respect to risk calculation when deciding whether or not to engage in some kind of sexual activity. It points to the successful internalising of cultural scripts so that young women now self-surveil their behaviours and gate-keep their own sexual engagements (Bartky, 1990), as a way to avoid a plethora of risks.

### **Safety**

Safety was a significant theme that was mentioned in relation to the aspects of sexual behaviour under examination: public sexual behaviour, hooking up, casual sex, fuck buddies, and relationships. Young women talked in general terms about safety issues, for example:

“Too many are not being safe while doing it” (R86 on HU)

“they need to be careful to keep themselves safe” (R71 on CS)

“as long as they are protecting themselves and not being dishonest” (R111 on FB)

The non-specificity of these comments highlight that the concept danger in its various guises did not require explanation or elucidation beyond the word ‘safe’. Using this blanket term indicated what the audience would know that the speaker meant—that sex is potentially dangerous to young women’s health and well-being.

### ***Sexual Health Risks***

Sexual health concerns were a predicted theme, due to the visibility of safe sex messages, and sex education programs offered within the New Zealand schooling system that are sexual health- and risk-oriented (Allen, 2001). Several interviewees noted the biological focus of sex education:

“in 3<sup>rd</sup> form science they had like part of the curriculum was the man’s penis goes inside the women’s vagina, like fill in the blanks....I think in 6<sup>th</sup> form they watched a birth video.... In 5<sup>th</sup> form I had these people come in and do an abstinence course/talk .... If sex was mentioned then generally it was talking about the "negative" consequences of it.” (Bex).

Media sources available in New Zealand also convey and reinforce safe sex practice messages (Jackson, 2005a):

---

“I always got info like that from girly magazines like Cosmo. ... I feel like that kinda really drilled it into me to always use condoms and preferably [sic] another form of contraception as well. .... Also, at my high school they used scare tactics about STDs, and yeah, it worked 😊” (Kelly)

Participants were predominantly focused on safe sex practices with respect to STI's and fears of unwanted pregnancies. The risk-averse quality of comments was common.

“It's good fun but [as] long as your safe cause STI's and unwanted Pregnancy are heavy issues” (R207 on CS)

“the fear of getting pregnant and "ruining my life" is one that they have strongly emphasised (R70 on parental messaging around sex)

Concerns around partner sexual histories were also prevalent:

“It can be dangerous if you don't know the person or their medical history” (R124 on HU)

This dialogue emphasised positive self-care in ways similar to those outlined by New Zealand researchers Beres and Pantea (2010), with respect to negotiating the boundaries of normative heterosexuality. By being conscious of sexual health issues and the possibility of engaging in risky sexual practices and their resultant consequences, as well as other factors discussed below, participants protected themselves within their gendered positionalities from negative effects experienced when being unreflexively non-normative.

The overall tone of comments discussing safety framed sex as risky but fine/fun/ok as long as sufficient precautions were taken. This tension between risk and enjoyment prioritised safety and presented a difficult matrix for negotiation when every casual partner is a potential risk-vector. This cautionary messaging presented as inhibiting, however, despite its self-care focus.

Positively, the prevalence of this dialogue indicated that young women were aware of the need to exercise caution with respect to safe sex practices and the potential for STIs and unwanted pregnancies. There was some indication that this message was not sufficiently balanced with other positive aspects of sex, which would allow young women to be less fearful but more informed with respect to all facets of sexual behaviour.

“schools/parents/churches [push] the idea of sex as something that has to be controlled and medicated and hedged in and 'resisted' .... [at] no time [during] my

---

adolescence did anyone ever say to me, hey, sex is really fun, and feels great. make sure you treat yourself and others with respect. and just left it at that[.] i think that would've been a good mediating force to have in between the two extremes” (Kim)

Focus on the ‘terrible’ nature of unwanted pregnancies and STIs and the invisible nature of the risk—that disease is invisible and can affect anyone—made sexual health difficult to negotiate, particularly when the presented risks may exceed the real dangers. The overall effect of safe sex messaging was an explicit awareness of risk, such that as long as this aspect was sufficiently addressed they were all right to progress with a sexual engagement.

### ***Emotional and Psychological Risks***

Concerns over emotional risk centred on the possibility of having feelings hurt when engaging in non-relationship sexual activities, and the possibility of a one-sided emotional connection that would not be reciprocated (Bradshaw, 2010, p. 668)<sup>35</sup>.

“Too easy for woman [sic] to get emotionally involved and hurt by it when the male moves on.” (R151 on FB)

“people think its just fun but can hurt people (usually females)” (R226 on HU)

Hurt feelings were often mentioned with reference to relationship-seeking, where activities were performed in the hope of establishing contact, continuing contact or beginning a relationship with a potential partner (Bogle, 2008, p. 29). This was thought to be particularly risky and most concluded it would end badly for the individual. Many respondents who discussed sexual encounters cited hurt feelings as a predominant reason for their behavioural adjustments with respect to their future behaviour, highlighting the power of past emotional hurt to regulate future intentions and actions. Although this in itself reflected self-protective strategies which were to be expected, it also suggested that young women were generalising the need to protect against particular men or situations/interactions, to all men in these kinds of situations/interactions. Such a universalising tendency was also visible in some young women’s concerns over physical threats, evidencing the persistence of rape mythology, and cultural adoptions of outdated essentialist approaches to sexual violence (Carmody, 2009b).

Psychological risk related to issues of self-esteem and self-responsibility. Engagement in non-relationship activities was a result of self-esteem issues, would lead to self-esteem issues

---

<sup>35</sup> Many statements outlined script elements of traditional femininity and the male sex drive script, namely that sex is an emotional act for women, whereas men perform the male sex drive script.

if engaged in or would exacerbate existing self-esteem issues (as seen in research by for example, Eshbaugh & Gute, 2008; Fielder & Carey 2010; Paul, et al., 2000).

“The presence of such a buddy, to me indicates low-self esteem/commitment issues.” (R68 on FB)

“I think that young women can often use it as a means to feel good about themselves as it makes you feel 'wanted' and 'loved'... this is of course untrue and can lead too [sic] further issues” (R42 on HU)

Not only did participants not wish to develop self-esteem issues as a result of their actions, they also did not wish to be judged as having low self-esteem as this could be stigmatising. The judgemental tone of some comments regarding young women who engage in non-relationship activities was indicative of the degree of stigma (apparently) low self-esteem-based activities can generate:

“it does give the impression of low self-esteem; that you dont value yourself enough to protect your dignity and move it to somewhere private, or that you're just letting guys do whatever they want, wherever they want” (Amanda on HU)

“Its degrading to women. I feel that if a woman has 'fuck buddies' she must have such low self esteem” (R143 on FB)

R143's statements connecting degradation and low self-esteem reflect the strength of this idea, one that was discussed in gendered terms, and referenced the sexual double standard with respect to casual sexual behaviours.

Perceptions of self-esteem are complex, however, as there is potential for a dislocation between an agent's subjective experience of their behaviour and the external gaze of an audience that can interpret the mental/emotional state of the agent in unanticipated ways, leaving them open to (unmerited) stigma and censure. What an agent experiences as empowering may be interpreted as low self-esteem by an audience. Gemma provided an example:

“I met this woman who was a friend of a male friend of mine. ... I always used to feel like maybe I should think well of her for that reason. But I didn't like her. She was obviously sexual (she used to talk about getting drunk and picking up guys), and she dyed her hair blonde, and I thought she was silly, undignified, maybe even objectified, a foolish, weak sort of person.

... I suddenly realised how wrong I'd been. She wasn't silly at all. She was strong, and clever, and capable of voicing her opinions, and I misjudged her because I

---

was prejudiced against openly sexual women. I was! Even as an avowed feminist, struggling to articulate a sexuality of my own. It was built into me so deep, I barely even questioned it.” (Gemma)

There are two ways of reading the above—one can be stigmatising and detrimental, the other can be validating and can provide an external source of empowerment that can have ramifications for women within the sexual sphere (Whitehead, 2009, pp. 240-41).

Misreading behaviour by not accounting for subjectivity can result in the denial of agency and be disempowering, whilst recognising empowered behaviour can be potentially transformative. Negotiating this gap affects young women as both targets of misdirected criticism, as well as critics of the behaviours of others. This is exacerbated by social messaging that predisposes audiences to frame behaviours as examples of low self esteem, attention-seeking, and promiscuity rather than agentic subjective behaviour.

What is also ironic about Gemma’s narrative is that gender conformity and approval-seeking for that conformity (here, performing good femininity) can result in lowered self-esteem (Sanchez, Crocker & Boike, 2005), and engagement in casual sex can result in heightened self-esteem in (some) young women (Weaver & Herold, 2000, p. 38). Behaviours that often generate the opinion that someone has low self-esteem can instead indicate strong self-esteem due to a willingness of the individual to risk social censure for non-conformity to social norms.

A number of other psychological risks and recommendations were mentioned by participants, and are prominent in the literature. Being able to cope with the lack of relationship potential in an activity, or its lack of emotional content was a strong conditional prerequisite for successful engagement in casual sex and hook ups. In this respect it was important that participants be self aware so as to avoid emotional risks associated with lack of attention to self. The risk for young women was outlined by R126:

“Casual sex often leaves young women dissatisfied because they don't acknowledge that they want something alot deeper emotionally and end up feeling down because of their choices to engage in casual sex” (R126)

“You should take your time in choosing them, and set clear boundries [sic], for future emotions sake and always be straight up” (R244 on FBs)

Allusions to rational decision-making were also important for risk-avoidance for some participants:

---

“I think it's a part of exploring sexuality and that it can be a good thing as long as young women are still mindful of what they're doing and who they're doing it with.” (R156 on HU)

“as long as they have their wits about them and know exactly what they're doing and who they're doing it with, i say more power to them” (Jess on HU)

Other statements outlining emotional and psychological risk factors included concerns over coercion and exploitation, and issues of trustworthiness of partners.

Emotional and psychological risks were seen by many as inevitable for activities such as fuck buddies and casual sex, particularly if young women engaging in these activities were vulnerable to begin with (for example they had low self-esteem). Avoidance of sexual situations that exemplified risk would therefore safeguard young women from being hurt, and from being judged as deficient in terms of low self-esteem. This risk-avoidance strategy is partially predicated on the implicit idea that women are relationally motivated (Hamilton & Armstrong, 2009), are unsuited psychologically to the non-relational sexual environment (see for example Grello, Welsh & Harper, 2006), and implicitly references a feminine script that couples sex with love for women (Holland et al., 1998, p. 101).

## **Sexual Partners**

### ***Physical Risks***

Physical risk was discussed in reference to both non-relationship sexual encounters, and relationships. With respect to non-relationship encounters, “crazy” guys were of concern for some participants. The concept of ‘stranger danger’ was evident, both in reference to not knowing your partner, and a preference for ‘fuck buddies’ over casual sex because sexual partners were known, and therefore presumably trustworthy.

“if they don't know the guy, he could be some sort of rapist or crazy sadist” (Jess on HU)

“I think establishing trust and good communication with the man whom they are having casual sex with it also very important, as to avoid physical and emotional danger.” (R93 on FB)

“you don't know the person, they could be dangerous or ... I don't know, they could... just ...be a bit dodgy or something like that (Kelly)

---

Monica remarked that trying to hook up with strangers “freaked” her out. Amanda outlined her concerns around physical safety:

“the big safety thing for me is avoiding rape - not walking by myself in the dark etc. The idea of rape is so ingrained into every girl we have to restrict our activities way] more than guys do to keep ourselves safe, and that really sucks.” (Amanda)

These kinds of comments were almost exclusively about casual or stranger-partners, and referenced a rape mythology that situates women as potential victims of strangers, despite the fact that most sexual assaults are committed by someone known to the victim (Rape Prevention Education, n.d.). The impact of this mythology on young women appeared significant, with some participants noting they engaged in self-protective/self-care behaviours or general avoidances, so as to mitigate this perceived risk.

In their research, Fisher and Sloan (2003) suggest that women are socialised to fear rape and therefore as a correlate have heightened fear around the potential for other forms of physical crime. Woolnough’s (2009) recent work supports Schwarz and Brand’s (1983, p. 75) early research investigating the feminist argument that “rape ...has an intimidating effect on nonraped women” and can result in adjusted behaviours towards more stereotypic roles. These findings highlight the persistence of rape dialogue, rape mythology, and the victim/perpetrator binary in early feminist work (Carmody, 2009a, p. 3), and their impacts on women’s behaviour across time. As an element of cultural scripts, rape fears result in self-protective behaviours, the use of which equate to a self-help strategy to avoid or deter victimisation. They extend to active (physically resistant) and passive (avoiding danger areas/behaviours/individuals) self-protective behaviours (Woolnough, pp. 42-43).

Given the weight of socialisation in New Zealand around the likelihood that a woman could be raped or sexually assaulted during her lifetime (exemplified by Amanda’s comment above), and the prevalence of secondary and tertiary approaches to reducing sexual assault (Carmody, 2009a, p. 5), the enactment of self-protective behaviours is to be expected. As Gemma noted, concern for sexual safety had significant impacts on the development of her sexual subjectivity:

“My mother was always worried I’d be raped; I found some of the restrictions that she placed on me as a result to be crippling to my sexual development for as long as I followed them.” (Gemma)

---

Public campaigns add to cautionary messages promulgated by sex educators, parents and peers. The advertisements below were prevalent in the Wellington CBD area during the data collection period (February to October 2010).



(Wellington City Council Safety Unit, 2008/9) (Wellington City Council Safety Unit, 2010/11)

*Figure 23: Safety campaigns*

These images suggest that it is not safe for a woman to be out in the city alone. The second newer campaign image (right) presents a group of young men and women, and suggests that young women will be safer if in the company not only of other young women but also of known young men who will provide another level of safety. There is some irony in this newer message when considering that known men are far more often rape-perpetrators than strangers, and that New Zealand has a high incidence of sexual assaults by known perpetrators when compared to other OECD countries (United Nations Statistics Division, 2010, pp. 133-135).

The image below was published in an issue of Victoria University of Wellington's student magazine *The Salient* and captured a number of cultural dialogues/scripts surrounding (apparently) sexually active young women in New Zealand.



ht © 2010 Grant Buist (after Hogarth & Searle)



**3) Contraception:** Narrowly avoids impregnation by rugby team during Orientation.

(Buist, 2010)

*Figure 24: The Salient cartoon image*

This illustration encapsulates the physical risk factors which some young women in the research expressed concerns about, and references the sexual partner/danger aspect of the SRS is evident. Young men are depicted as unrelenting sexual forces to be held at bay, reflecting the male sexual sex drive cultural script. Avoiding “impregnation by the rugby team” is not seen as a possible (gang) rape event by the image’s author, but as a cultural event, possibly reflecting the disjuncture between events explicitly identified as rape and those that young women have more difficulty categorising in this way. Examples of failed rape event identification include excessive alcohol consumption and sex that is not consented to, which can be referenced as a “bad hook up” (Littleton, et al., 2009, p. 799), or a hook up ‘gone too far’ to stop. Beyond overt comments, illustrations such as this in the University’s student publication signal the cultural dialogue that young women are immersed in<sup>36</sup>, and illustrate gender differences in conceptions of violence in New Zealand—as emotionally negative for females but something to “laugh” over for young men (Jackson, Cram & Seymour, 2000, p. 33). The risk to young women of the kind illustrated above was also

<sup>36</sup> Ironically, the cartoon’s author considers his cartoon to be of benefit to young students, offering advice on what to avoid, and that perhaps if anyone ought to be offended by his depiction of Orientation Week, it ought to be men (anarkaytie, 2010)

mentioned in reference to newspaper articles and cautionary tales heard around “O” week<sup>37</sup> by some interviewees, suggesting that this image is not entirely fictitious.

References to dangerous sexual partners reflected the essentialist conceptualisation of men as sexually persistent and potentially physically dangerous (Edwards, 1993, p. 93). The reality of the possibility of physical harm was exemplified by the number of respondents who reported some kind of sexual violation or negative physical experience.

The impact rape dialogues can have on behaviour and feelings about partners was illustrated by Nicole.

“the simple fact that he is bigger and stronger than me makes me a little scared. He is the loveliest [sic] person and would never do anything to hurt me in anyway but I just find it so hard to completely let go and completely trust him.” (Nicole)

Although identifying her partner as a potential risk is not unwarranted in view of the United Nations Statistics Division (2010) statistics illustrating the high rates of rape and sexual assaults perpetrated by known individuals in New Zealand, the overt nature of this concern has negative impacts on Nicole’s feelings about her relationship and her partner. Self-protective behaviours in this regard are detrimental rather than productive.

Self-protective behaviours as ‘self-help’ correlated with dialogue around self-responsibility and was reflective of the influence of (Third Wave) feminist and neo-liberal rhetorical reliance on the self to solve issues, and self-mediate away from systemic and institutionalised dangers rather than looking for systemic and/or institutional change (Baker, 2010). I note this due to the absence of dialogue about the persistence of rape mythology, or particular kinds of men/masculinity as problematic. Although some young women voiced their frustrations over double standards of sexual behaviour, none mentioned the need to adjust the behaviours of (some) men with respect to rape and assault (or other undesired sexual behaviours). Rather, the focus was on female behavioural adaptation to avoid potential danger, which implicitly situates the issue as gendered, and men as unchangeable.

As an intrapsychic script element, this concern for physical safety and the need to be responsible for ensuring one’s own personal safety (enacting ‘self-help’) acted as a restrictive force on behaviour, and was reflected in statements made by young women about their

---

<sup>37</sup> University Orientation week

reluctance to engage in some sexual behaviours. In discussing her rape, Megan noted that it was a “good thing in a kind of a way”, a learning curve, as she now knew how to take better care of herself (also noted by Baker, 2010, p. 194), suggesting that the socio-sexual context itself was dangerous rather than certain individual men within it. Her dialogue focused on changes she had made in her own behaviour to avoid a society-level risk, and did not touch on whether risks could be addressed in any other way.

Similarly, Rachel described being out one evening and despite not drinking to excess (she suspected her drink had been spiked), she passed out. She awoke to a man having sex with her. She remarked that she felt embarrassed about the event and that it was a “wake up call” for her, and as a result she is more cautious in her behaviour. Rachel’s narrative of her sexual violation did not critique male behaviour, only her own. Although this aspect of self-care is undoubtedly positive with respect to minimising future risks and mediating self-criticisms, it emphasised how the weight of social responsibility is being borne by women, to the apparent exclusion of men (ibid).

Physical danger was mentioned in conjunction with statements around excessive alcohol consumption by other participants. Jess related an incident of finding a friend passed out on the couch at a house party, with her underwear around her ankles and a condom next to her. Beth recounted an evening out where a companion was very drunk and was on the verge of being taken away by a stranger. Although these two stories are ambiguous with respect to the cautionary aspects of events (concerns could have centred on for example the risk of STIs and partner histories), I suggest that consent issues were implicit in Jess’s and Beth’s concerns for their friends. As Liz related first hand, she “once found [her]self in a situation where [she] was *being taken advantage of* but was too drunk to do anything about/even realise it” (emphasis added), indicating that she was unable to consent to what had happened to her. Liz described herself as lucky that “nothing terrible happened”, but again her tone was cautionary with respect to female behaviour, and any critique or mention at all of the young man who attempted to “take advantage” of her was absent (Liz did not use a name or a pronoun to actively indicate ‘him’, and used passive language to describe the incident, further highlighting his absence from her narrative). This implicitly references social understandings/framings of consent as performative, rather than negotiable (Kazan, 1998).

I suspect that as a mediating force the potential rape discourse affects many young New Zealand women. An English male friend noted how when attempting to date young New

---

Zealand women he felt frustrated as many seemed scared that he would “jump” them, an orientation he contrasted with young English women. Thus although many respondents may not have expressly mentioned rape as a concern, it is likely that an awareness of rape as a risk impacted their behaviour, and was implicit in their generalised statements.

### *Just Another Conquest*

Feelings of being used were of concern to young women, a theme that is prominent in the international literature. In her study Campbell (2008, p. 157) notes that despite young women recording positive experiences with one-night-stand episodes, they “felt greater regret than men about having been “used””. However, concerns over sexual episodes resulting in feelings of being used also require some contextualisation with respect to why young women may feel this way. Some young women in my study related stories of successful hook ups and casual sex encounters without the resulting feelings of being used, but others noted particular times when such non-relationship events had not been successful, highlighting some of the issues behind feeling used in sexual encounters, as Sahra outlined:

“one guy just [walked] out of my bedroom and immediately left without saying anything that really hurt ... i would take that back in a heart beat, i hated that i just been used and let it happen ... knowing that the person isn't exactly interested in you as a 'person' and more interested in their sexual conquests etc, gives me the feeling of just being used for sex. ...what is missing is a genuine interest in the person for just not sexual gain”

Feeling used would be a reasonable response to such an event, a sentiment supported by Campbell (p.168), and the survey respondents below:

“in the end men always think 'right, ive had her, where's the next one' they never give a shit about you, ultimately” (R105 on her sex life).

“If I feel like I’m being used as just a warm body, it’s not [empowering] and even if the sex is enjoyable, I feel badly about it later on.” (R203 on sex and empowerment)

“My fuck buddy was a good experience in that they taught me a lot about what I wanted from any of my relationships- they did this by treating me like shit.” (R10 on FB)

Objectification appeared to be a strong contributing factor to concerns around feelings of being used. The quotes above suggest awareness of male disidentification with women as feeling subjects and the impacts this can have (as in the literature, see for example Calogero, 2004).

---

“They're demeaning towards women, we get treated like objects.” (R109 on PSB)

I want “someone who sees me for more than just a vagina” (Angela on losing her virginity)

Sahra related how her partner became “verbally abusive to [her] about not meeting him and having sex with him ....that he was only wanting one thing, and the one time [she] said no to him, he became abusive and starting swearing at [her]...”

These comments and stories reference the impact of objectification experienced as being instrumental to another's sexual ends (namely his satisfaction), their fungibility<sup>38</sup> and considered lack of subjectivity (see Nussbaum, 1995). Participants appeared to be aware of this risk and were weary of men as a category in this regard, and engaged in related self-protective behaviours.

Rather than pointing to the need for behavioural adjustments by young women (as the SRS suggests), reorientation of the attitudes of some young men could result in more enjoyable and less emotionally risky sexual events for young women. Moving away from traditional masculinities that constrain sexual behaviour to unemotional engagement and maximum partner-seeking would reduce this risk (see Backus & Mahalik, 2011 for discussion on traditional masculinity), as would a reorientation towards an ethic of care of the self as a framework for sexual interactions (Carmody, 2009b).

### ***Getting Pushed into Things***

Respondents used conditional statements to outline concerns around coercion or exploitation in sexual situations (mirroring international findings, for example Bogle, 2008; Wade & Heldman, in press; 2011).

“as long as the woman isn't being exploited in any way” (R23 on PSB)

“As long as you know what you are doing and aren't being pressured into it then its okay.” (R87 on CS)

---

<sup>38</sup> Feminist philosopher Nussbaum notes that objectification is often not defined, but is taken to include only a negative and morally problematic form (p. 7). Within her classification of morally problematic objectification Nussbaum lists fungibility, or the ability to replace one object with another of the kind, in relationship to human subjects, as an important factor in defining objectification (see Nussbaum, 1999, for full discussion).

Concerns were often linked to alcohol use and impaired consent. Some noted pressure to be sexual or engage in sexual activities that generated feelings of unease at the time, or regret and/or self-questioning after the event:

“some guys i guess i felt the pressure from and i didn't like that feeling, [I ] ... wanted it to be neutral between us, but most of them were fun in the end but still felt like i was encouraged to have sex wen i wasn't too sure i wanted too... just in furture [sic] i probably would say no if i wasn't 100% sure.” (Sahra)

Negative consequences such a feelings of regret and shame were mentioned in conjunction with comments about personal control. For Sahra, not having full control over herself led to misgivings about her participation in the sex acts in question. This sentiment was voiced by others, often in the context of alcohol’s disinhibiting effects, which they felt increased the likelihood of coercion and exploitation (see *Seeing the World through Beer-goggles*, pp 165-176).

Kim noted that casual sex for her elicited the “vague sense of 'it's not ok', associated with STIs and people being used/coerced” and indicating education or society-level messages about the relationship between casual sex and female autonomy—namely with casual sex women’s involvement was more likely to be an indication of failed autonomy and self-control (Jackson & Cram, 2003, p.120), or a failure to enact the traditional sexual gatekeeper role or ‘good girl’ femininity.

### ***Trust—A Rare Commodity***

Trust was frequently mentioned by participants, particularly in reference to a preference for relationship-based sexual activities. Trustworthiness as a sexual partner characteristic, and the cautionary tone of participants who related stories about incidents involving untrustworthy partners and the impacts of those events, were common through all sexual spaces. Laura commented that

“guys really can and do lose interest once you've slept with them if you're not careful. I therefore have learned to (usually) wait till I trust someone before I get into bed with them.” (Laura)

Her statement, echoed by other participants, presents a stereotypical image of men as being interested in women only for sex, and therefore being generally trustworthy in non-relationship situations.

---

Similarly Nicole related an incident where an encounter with a young man had not progressed safely or as she had anticipated/hoped for—“yeah it still really upsets me, he was the first guy i trusted and the first guy who showed interest in me” (Nicole). Her comment suggested broken trust can have far-reaching effects for young women, lasting impacts on their sex lives, and can prompt self-protective behaviours.

### **Stigma in Its Many Forms**

A large number of participants mentioned the effects of judgement and stigma or were wary of these effects, with respect to all aspects of their sexual behaviour, including relationships (as in the international literature, see for example Hamilton & Armstrong, 2009, p. 597). The ubiquity of this concern and the clearly stated inhibiting effects of judgement and/or the possibility of judgement were significant constraints on activities, attitudes to activities, and attitudes to self. Judgement was thus both an external and internal factor for participants. Concerns centred on fears around peer judgement and social stigma, and feelings of shame, regret and embarrassment often accompanied activities that were not considered socially acceptable (see also Paul & Hayes, 2002; Petersen & Hyde, 2011). This suggested self-surveillance and self-disciplining activities related to proper performances of femininity and other normative scripts.

### ***Feeling Judged—Sticks and Stones***

Young women voiced their concerns about the possibility of details of their sex lives becoming public, and the potential for being judged for actions that were either in the public sphere, or were in the private sphere but could become public knowledge.

“casual sex makes you a slut so you need to hide it” (R105 on CS)

“I feel happy with what I know about and how I express my sexuality and desire but sometimes still worry about health consequences/ what people would think if they found out” (R56 on improving her sex life)

Some participants discussed the permissibility of activities such as casual sex and hook ups, as long as they were kept discreet, whilst others commented on keeping their private sex lives hidden for fear of judgement. Messages were frequent, warning that young women must “be careful how far they go [as they] could give the wrong message to peepz” (R81 on PSB) when they were in public spaces. The threat of being stigmatized was a frequent aspect of

---

those warnings. For example, hooking up is “a fun learning experience if kept under control e.g. slutty reputations being made "she'll be easy" (R98).

Comments about discretion also included cautions to limit the number of partners (perceived, potential or actual), reflecting the gendered nature of sexual interactions and their proscriptions against multiple partner seeking as masculine (Fenigstein & Preston, 2007). The prominence of this theme illustrates the strength of stigma as a script element for young women. Derogatory language such as ‘slut’ or ‘slutty’ exemplified the kinds of stigma young women are vulnerable to:

“girls who do the above activites [sic] were a bit slutty” (R10 on PSB)

“It's bordering on a bit 'slutty' in my opinion” (R21 on CS)

“Quite slutty but better than a one night stand” (R41 on FB)

The threat of ‘slut’ labelling was discussed by young women in the web discussion group in a discussion thread on promiscuity. Kim commented that the term ‘slut’ was “a personal attack in a way... [that] to attack the sexual decisions someone makes seems pretty aggressive”, about which there was some agreement. Gemma went on to note that as a slur or label “‘slut’ is visceral. It's a punch to the guts. .... 'Slut' chucks you into the dirt, spits on you, and squishes you under its heel.” Avoiding this label was therefore seen as a priority for many participants, the effect of which was to constrain the sexual behaviour and development of young women, as Lisa noted:

“If sex were a safe, fun activity without all the media and *imposed judgement of right or wrong* on it then I think that the more sex you have (given the people with of course) the better it will probably get as you get to know yourself.” (Lisa) (emphasis added)

However, for those who did engage in reputationally risky behaviours the effects were noteworthy. Some young women reported feeling empowered, or having experiences that were valuable with respect to developing a sexual subjectivity. For others, the threat of judgement determined how they felt about their engagement in reputationally risky activities after the fact. Feelings of empowerment and enjoyment can be negated by *ipso facto* peer judgement.

“My sex life is definitely dampened when something I enjoyed is judged by friends, making me feel guilty.” (R41)



“at present for women it is harder to feel open about our desires and activities as they are most likely to be frowned upon and be labeled as a slut” (R104)

“I hate the feeling of paranoia that inadvertently goes with feeling sexually free, which i guess doesnt make you that free now does it.” (R185)

Gemma stated the issues for young women succinctly:

“Displaying sexual attraction when you just want sex is [tricky] because you end up afraid of being judged. .... There's always the possibility that people will lose respect for you [and] think you're "slutty" or whatever” (Gemma)

How young women negotiate their sex lives were therefore limited:

“What to do- be a slut and risk never finding love, or turn off my sex drive until I find some nice wholesome man to spend my life with??” (Liz)

Liz’s comment illustrates a tension for young women with respect to the social spaces available to them in which they experience their sexual subjectivity. These spaces are strongly mediated by a culturally entrenched good-girl/bad-girl dichotomy, where good femininity equates to sexual passivity and a relational orientation, and bad femininity equates to resistance that engenders stigma and resultant ostracism (Tolman & Higgins, 1996, pp. 205-6).

This is further complicated by the pressure to be sexually active (Fielder & Carey, 2010, p. 1106) (also see section: Losing Your ‘V’ Plates for Love... for further discussion). Sahra indicated that despite the fear of being judged as slutty a certain amount of sexualness needed to be performed so as not to be stigmatised in the opposite direction of prudishness or sexually repression.

“umm....i guess you get judged for not conforming, you might be considered not normal and an outsider, nobody wants that i assume....” (Sahra)

Monica described the social pressure she felt in her mid-teens with respect to being minimally sexually active and fitting in, a pressure she continued to experience up until she lost her virginity at age 19. These competing pressures put young women in the Goldilocks zone, the ‘just right’ space of socially acceptable amounts of and kinds of sexual activity. Being too much (slutty), or too little (prudish), not ‘just right’ can result in stigma.

---

This tension manifested in statements about fear of judgement within relationships and the sex act itself. One participant described how, in her past sex life, she had engaged in sexual activities that observers or peers might now consider to be out of character. Keeping that past hidden impinged on her current sex life as she felt she could not be honest about it with her current partner, who assumed she was less experienced than she actually was.

Attempting to get their sexuality 'just right' complicated young women's relationship sex lives, not only with respect to experience, but also desires, further reflecting the regulatory power of the good-girl/bad-girl dichotomy :

“Sexuality is something that even strong, independent women struggle with. It's hard to communicate even with a partner you love and trust that you want to try more, different 'kinky' things without having that concern in the back of your head that he will judge you, even if you \*know\* he wont.” (R131)

What constituted too “kinky”, or “hopeless” at sex is unknown and was something Nicole indicated she experienced as a feeling rather than a particular idea. Her narrative suggested that she had learned from some experiences but also that her understanding about how to be a good girl came from socialisation. Although her partner was open and sexually ‘adventurous’, her self-surveilling and self-disciplining acted as a constraining factor on her sex life, about which she was aware and experienced some frustration. Her narrative suggested how difficult it can be to move beyond those ‘just right’ constraints for some young women.

This ‘just right’ orientation was also evident in comments from young women who expressed their embarrassment or shyness about asking for what they wanted sexually with a partner, a condition that was exacerbated by non-relationship sexual interactions. R126 noted that her sex life would improve if it was acceptable for her to express her desires, if she was free to do so, and if there were no bad social consequences for acting them out.

“to be able to express my desires, or even fantasies, without feeling embarrassed, would be great, would make my sex life a million times better as i feel too shy to express or even carry out these desires” (R126)

R199 felt similarly, adding that “I'm inexperienced, because I'm shy”, further reinforcing the impact of the potential for judgement and the difficulty the ‘just right’ space represents with respect to young women successfully and expressing their sexual subjectivity. Young women therefore appeared to be attempting to occupy a narrow ‘just right’ space that in fact

---

may not exist, as the binary of good and bad girl femininity does not appear to allow a third space in which to act (Tolman & Higgins, 1996, p. 205).

### *Feeling Bad and Giving Themselves a Hard Time*

Judgement for participants was also inwardly-directed, creating feelings of shame, regret and guilt about their behaviours, illustrating notable self-policing. Liz outlined the relationship between socialisation and the impacts of self-judgement relating to sexual behaviour:

“I think the main reason I feel bad after any casual encounter is because I feel slutty, but the only reason I feel that way is because I have been taught that it is.” (Liz)

Others noted the power of external judgement to generate feelings of shame, regret and guilt:

“when people find out i have had casual sex i feel ashamed.” (R105)

Every non-relationship sexual activity was judged negatively in some way by some participants, indicating the haziness of the normative proscriber for appropriate behaviour. Failure to exemplify this mysterious ideal of ‘just right’ behaviour was assumed to necessitate self-disciplining, evident in its emotional correlates, shame, regret and guilt (Bartky, 1990, p. 60).

“i just don't feel comfortable with hooking up with lots of diferent [sic] guys so if i do i judge myself.” (Amanda)

“I'm not [condemning] all casual sex but my one experience has put me off entirely, not just for the bad sex and STI and all that, but because I felt desperate and skanky afterwards and totally dirty.” (R185)

Internal reactions suggested that young women are aware of their transgressions which manifested as negative emotions about their lack of compliance to feminine scripts of ‘good’ sexual behaviour. In this way young women are constrained not only by external stigmatising sources, but also internal discomforts that alert them to their ‘bad’ behaviours, therefore apparently making them justified targets for external stigma (Holland et al., 1998, p.127).

### **It's All about Control**

Many respondents implicitly referenced control issues, or discussed the need for control directly—both self-control and situational control—suggesting the need for careful self-regulation and self-discipline in order to keep within the bounds of acceptable behaviour.

---

This control was about self-constraint and controlling external events that could compromise reputations.

### ***Get a Grip on Yourself Girl!***

Respondents discussed lack of self-control relating to behaviours they were displeased with or had experienced negative emotions about. Lack of control, particularly in relation to alcohol-fuelled behaviours, was framed as regrettable. Nicole discussed an incident where she was sexually forward with an unknown young man, which illustrated the impact of what she retrospectively considered to be a loss of control:

“there was one really horrible occassion [sic] that I've only been told about when i pushed myself on a guy i didn't know. ... i feel horrible about [it] ... mostly because i drank far too much, lost control and did stuff i wouldn't normally.” (Nicole)

Although the disinhibiting effects of alcohol are positive for some young women (it can allow them to go “off-script” (Wade & Heldman, in press)), it was viewed negatively on this occasion by Nicole as it impaired her self-control and decision-making abilities, which led in turn to guilt and regret.

Amanda expressed similar sentiments, noting that any normative behaviour she might enact whilst she was not in control was worthy of self-censure:

“its more of a personal embarassment [sic] in that i expect more of myself” (Amanda)

Both young women suggested that self-control is a requirement for a successful sexual encounter if they want to avoid future regret. Thus, being in control implied the management of performance of the contextually appropriate social script of the time. The failure to perform that script opens an individual up self-censure and behavioural adjustment, in Nicole’s case passive receptivity rather than active, sexual experience-seeking.

Other respondents highlighted the importance of self-control so as to avoid social censure:

“Is a fun learning experience if kept under control e.g. slutty reputations being made "she'll be easy"” (R98 on HU)

Sahra’s comment below shows how maintaining control (“I still have boundaries”) was what enabled her to keep her behaviour within acceptable social limits.

---

“I have danced and kissed in public...mostly under the influence of alcohol, I know I still have boundaries though, I wouldn't go to far as I know people would be watching and I wouldn't want to embrass [sic] myself or my friends haha... Regret is a big [risk], embarrassment and the lack of self control ... is something I don't think I would ever be proud of” (Sahra)

Controlling the self included controlling one's reputation, the difficulty of managing peer perception, and the resultant impacts that could have on behaviour. Kelly noted that some of the males around her were sexually derogatory towards women, that she wanted to avoid being similarly labelled, and as a result controlled her behaviour in an attempt to be “respected”. Other respondents commented that as long as young women were controlling themselves and their behaviours then whatever activities they entered into were permissible. The contradiction inherent in this position is clear however—self-control with respect to filtering one's own behaviour to avoid censure limits activities available for free expression. Performances as controlled reflects what an individual thinks is permissible rather than what she might actually want (as a form of impression management (Goffman, 1959)). Nicole related the impact of this kind of performance on her sense of sexual subjectivity:

“there's a difference between feeling in control and controlling yourself, like I seem to give myself a lot of rules on what i can and can't do and can be quite hard on myself so that doesn't make me feel sexy...” (Nicole)

Although Nicole's comment illustrated self-awareness not mirrored by many participants, others described incidents that had prompted them to control their behaviour because of negative self-judgement, social censure or consequences. Thus the internalisation of scripts as disciplinary forces leaves young women to police themselves to avoid punitive responses from external panoptic gazes (Foucault, 1995).

### ***Sexual Gatekeeping***

Controlling sexual access reflected the sexual gatekeeper aspect of the femininity script, where the role of young women is to limit access to sex as a way to control men's insatiable sex drive, whilst men's is to outsmart or coerce women into sex (Wiederman, 2005, p. 498). This script element was reflected in comments suggesting the need for conservative dress or to not get too drunk, so as avoid sexual coercion/exploitation. Controlling access was not simply about saying no until they were happy to say yes to a ‘persistent’ suitor (a behaviour that references a limited consent process (see Anderson, 2005)). It was also about controlling the context and/or situation in which sex could occur, maintaining personal boundaries

---

around when, how and what sex happened, and whether it was within non-relationship or relationship-based sexual activities.

“yea i think i have control over myself like ive never let a guy pressure me into doing something i didnt want too” (Amber)

Lack of control again comes at a price. Lucy remarked that young women who get drunk “and end up sleeping with a guy they meet in a kebab shop” are subjects of pity, partially “because they weren't in control of the situation”. Enacting the gatekeeper role is therefore an important aspect of appropriate performance, which is reinforced by the lack of sympathy afforded to those who fail to do so (Baker, 2010, p. 199).

Controlling access also related to filtering possible partners for other aspects of the SRS, such as men who are unsafe and/or untrustworthy.

“I've never worried about losing my power or control during sex or anything, probably because I'm controlling who I do it with so much that when I finally do it I'll trust the guy completely.” (Amanda)

“I do think you have to be careful ... incase ... [hooking up is] interpreted as being a sexual invitation, at which point you have to be firm about what you want [and] expect. I've never gone further than kissing and touching with a "hook up" and probably wont” (R185)

R185's comment implies that her role was not only to control her own behaviour so as not to give the wrong impression but also to mediate the situation so as to ensure that sex did not occur, the assumption being that if she did not say no it was inevitable (Gilbert, Walker, McKinney & Snell, 1999). This script element reduces young women's agency, and excludes the possibility of them saying yes to something different to that which is on offer (Bussel, 2008).

Controlling sexual access was complicated by pressures to be both sexually active but also sexually self-regulating. The coercive pressure to be socially desirable or “cool”, and its opposing threat of social invisibility if such performances are not engaged in, appeared to act as an obligatory force for some. The need to fit in could override subjective feelings of unease (Lambert, Kahn & Apple, 2003, p. 129). When to ‘grant access’ and when to withhold it is another manifestation of the ‘just right’ kind of sexual agency young women are required to enact.

---

**Just to Be Clear ...**

There is much merit in the efficaciousness of elements of the SRS. It illustrates the impacts of social messaging and education about various consequences associated with 'risky' sexual practices. It shows the power of sex education programs to encourage general self-responsibility and self-care by young women, at least as a part of the common dialogue they engage in.

However, collectively the themes present a collective disciplinary force that creates distinctly gendered ways in which women can express their sexual agency and subjectivity. As an intrapsychic script, the self-disciplinary practices it proscribes serve to mediate the experiences of many of the young women in the research with respect to decision-making and action-taking. As a cultural script its proscriptive power is notable for its retributivist content, whereby young women learn from experience by negative repercussions outlined in the conditional "if...then" statements that highlight the script's content. In combination, scripts encourage self-policing and the policing of others through stigma and judgement. Thus, it is questionable how beneficial the SRS is in its entirety, for young women. As Megan noted, New Zealand girls appear too cautious when compared to those she has seen in other western countries. This may negatively impact on the development on their sexual subjectivity (Tolman, 2002, p. 123).

The lack of proactive dialogue available to young women by which they can balance out the inhibiting effects of the SRS was commented on by participants, indicating their awareness of its constraining forces and the lack of socially acceptable alternatives available to them within the heterosexual framework (Tolman & Higgins, 1996, p. 205).

Performance of and adherence to the SRS and its various elements varied among participants. For some adherence was unquestioned and rigid, whilst for others, especially those who had expressed interest in or identified as non-heterosexual or feminist, resistance to and avoidance of the SRS was more notable. This was expected and appeared to be connected to whether young women identified heteronormative positionalities, if they questioned them, and whether they inhabited them.

---

### **Choices, Choices, Choices—Prescriptive Impacts of the SRS**

The SRS and its conditions appear to result in a variety of different responses. There was some active resistance to the script, but more commonly two strategies were indicated with respect to enabling women to experience or express some degree of sexual subjectivity beyond the constraints of the SRS. The first was to enter into a relationship, where sexual expression and exploration may be permitted within a less constrained environment and which was assumed to offer some protection from social censure, sexual, emotional, psychological health risks, and partner-related issues. The second was to attempt to perform the ‘together woman’ identity, through which women may be able to successfully navigate the non-relationship sexual environment without having to seek a relationship.

#### **Looking for Mr Relationship**

“...girls today may be able to have sex without stigma, but only with a steady boyfriend. For girls, love justifies desire. A young woman still cannot be respected if she admits an appetite driven sexuality. If a young woman has sexual liaisons outside of publicly acknowledged “coupledom,” she is at risk of being defamed.” (Risman & Schwartz in Sheff, 2005, p. 263)

Originally my expectation had been that young women would confirm that non-relationship experiences would allow them to be more exploratory and subjectively engaged due to having fewer emotional, psychological or reputational investments with a casual partner. This was not the case however, with only a few respondents making these kinds of observations. Although non-relationship activities were cited by many individuals as positive, whether as individual instances or as a short-term activity, participants noted that relationships provided a number of factors that not only made their sex lives more satisfactory, but also allowed them to explore their sexual desires and sexual subjectivity more easily and freely. This preference extended not only to monogamous relationships (including some open relationships) but also to fuck buddies. In many respects this reflected the SRS’s propensity to push young women towards a relational imperative (Hamilton & Armstrong, 2009, p. 597).

The SRS outlined what participants considered to be the preferred characteristics of sexual engagements in relationships. Safety with respect to sexual health, and emotional and psychological wellbeing were supposed to increase, whilst partner risks were perceived to be reduced (despite the recorded high rates of intimate relationship abuse women are vulnerable

---



to (Chung, 2005)). Sexual histories were more likely to be known, and the risk of STIs was less compared to casual sex. Issues such as coercion and feeling used were considered to be less likely than in non-relationship interactions. Perceptions were noted by many young women as benefits of relationships. Despite many describing abuse within relationships, many participants made statements highlighting safety factors as salient reasons for their current levels of satisfaction when discussing their sex lives.

Known partners were assumed to be more trustworthy than unknown/casual partners. Trust was a predominant key word and was seen as an advantage, reducing physical and emotional dangers and increasing communication, which would enable young women to explore and express their desires and/or enjoy sex more. This allowed some to experiment sexually and not worry if things went 'wrong' or did not work out well, and entertain more "deviant" desires. Some respondents suggested that trust was equated with a lack of, or reduction in, possible judgement with respect to their appearance, body-image, sexual performance and sexual desires.

Some noted that women engage emotionally when having sex and find it difficult not to do so, thus framing sex is an inherently intimate and emotional activity. These factors elevated relationship sex and reflected a romanticised relational imperative (Hollway, 1998). Having a caring partner also impacted on the quality of sex had as male partners were thought to have a vested interest in ensuring female partner satisfaction, they also knew their bodies and what they (participants) liked, and were able to engage in 'learning the body' over the medium to long term. Relationship partners were also considered to be less likely to treat their partners in negatively objectifying ways.

The contrast between non-relationship and relationship contexts for engaging in sexual activities, learned through the experiences of self and peers, social messaging and educational outlets, appeared to present non-relationship sexual activities as having a significantly lower rate of success, where success equates to risk avoidance and experience of pleasure and self-expression. This, and the above preferences, reflects an implicit understanding of the conditional double standard, where women are permitted to sexually engage within the bonds of a committed relationship without the risk of stigma for their behaviours (Sprecher, McKinney, & Orbuch, 1987, p. 24). It is therefore reasonable to assume that many young women would opt for relationships rather than persisting within a risky environment, where they have a reduced likelihood of success.

---

### **Doing the Together Woman**

Philips (2000, L 972) outlines what she calls the “together woman” discourse as an alternative to a more traditional “pleasing woman” discourse which references traditional femininity. The together woman is “free, sexually sophisticated, and entitled” to agentic and pleasurable sexual encounters, be they romantic or otherwise (ibid). She is sassy and is the “embodiment of female sexual liberation”, never being needy or desperate, but instead confident and “sexually competent” (L982). She is by definition agentic (L996). Phillips notes that she is something of a neo-liberal product, being self-responsible and individualistic, and in control of herself and her life circumstances (L1050-64). The together woman would thus engage in non-relationship behaviours because she wants to and because she finds it empowering (Caruthers, 2005, p. 14).

In identifying the SRS in the data a version of Philips ‘together woman’ also appeared. Because the SRS’s highlights negative impacts of a failure to adhere to disciplinary forces of, or to adequately perform, appropriate femininity, it also reflects characteristics or factors that would allow women to successfully engage in non-relationship behaviours without necessarily experiencing these negative impacts. This version of the together woman is similar to Phillips, but comes with additional requirements that may make her an impossible performance.

As sexual health issues were of primary concern for young women, managing all aspects of one’s sexual health is a core requirement. The ‘together woman’ must be able to confidently manage the use of condoms and contraception, including the ECP, and associated stigma which she must be able to handle. The requirement of self-responsibility includes her partner’s behaviour, for which she is also responsible as she understands that she carries the majority of the burden of risk. Emotional impacts from the contraction of STIs and the possibility of unwanted pregnancies are emotional and psychological factors the together woman must also be prepared for. In this regard she must be prepared to perform a kind of sexual labour that men as a social category are generally free from.

The together woman must be content or reconciled with the likelihood of no emotional connections in non-relationship activities. She must also be aware of her partner’s likely casual expectations and of the narrow likelihood of the interaction leading to a relationship. If she develops emotional attachments where none are reciprocated she must not bemoan her situation as it is a consequence of her own making.

---

The together woman should be able to select her casual partners astutely, to ensure that she is respected and treated adequately, whatever her benchmark may be. This includes avoiding partners that may pose a physical risk. Ideally she should be able to assess potential partners for the possibility of physical risk, but if she is not able to do so effectively then she must be able to control the sexual situation so as to either avoid physical danger or 'save' herself from that danger should something transpire. If a negative physical event occurs she must act self-responsibly, either by stopping the event, protecting herself, removing herself from further harm, or dealing responsibly with any repercussions.

Consequently the together woman must also have good self-esteem. This is related not only to her ability to deal with possible situations, for example, of being used for sex, but also with respect to her motivations for engaging in sexual activities to begin with, which must be pleasure-seeking. The together woman must also be immune to social censure and peer judgement. Negative opinions should not affect or deter her. Having high self-esteem will reduce social stigma associated with her sexual behaviour (Shoveller, et al., 2004, p. 480), so self-esteem must also be maintained as a way of negotiating stigma.

The together woman must be in control of her actions at all times, so as to avoid coercion or exploitation. Self-control extends to sexual access, or controlling who she engages in sexual activities with. She should also be able to control the sexual situation, by determining the context and terms of the sexual encounter, or at the very least not losing her autonomy if these factors are determined by someone else. Control also encompasses her own sexual satisfaction. She must understand her own desires and her body, and be able to ensure her own satisfaction. She should be a competent and confident communicator and should not feel embarrassed or shy about communicating her desires. Engaging in casual encounters should be worth her while.

This is a substantial list, and given a choice between attempting to perform the together woman or engaging in a relationship I would expect many young women to opt for the latter, in light of the negative impacts of an *unsuccessful* together woman performance and the effort it requires.

Although many participants can be seen as attempting to perform the together woman, for at least a period in their sexual histories, few presented as successful at it. Even though together women were admirable with respect to their self-confidence and sexual freedom, most

---

participants indicated they were more orientated towards relationships than attempting to perform the together woman because the risks are too high.

The SRS therefore appeared to be a disciplinary device that is closely related to the relationship imperative and good girl femininity, and may act as a cultural level device to ensure women are relationship-oriented rather than choosing to occupy spaces in which non-relationships sexual behaviours can be engaged in.

The next chapter moves from an examination of scripts to spaces.

---

## Chapter Seven: Spaces and Places

### Making Spaces Out in the World

The sexualisation of modern culture appears to be opening up an increasing number of spaces (or at least points of access to previously barred spaces) in which young women can behave sexually, not only as objects of desire but also as subjects of their own desires and sexual experiences. These public and private spaces confer privileges and enable ways of being that have not always been available to women, and therefore present opportunities for agency and autonomous expression. This section looks at how young women are attempting to occupy these spaces, and some effects of their occupation.

As discussed in the Theory Section, spaces include not only external social spaces but the internal spaces of subjects. Confluences of relations between actors and their material and social environments produce any number of normative rules and codifications that affect subject performances, some of which are transferrable across spaces and places. Within socio-sexual culture, hooking up, casual sex, fuck buddies and relationships can be described as relations that both define, and are defined by the spaces/places in which they occur. Their gendered nature can be seen in how masculinity, femininity and heterosexuality are performed in general, and across the public/private divide. For example, casual sex is often regarded as a masculine activity/masculine province as it is bounded by a number of spatial relation rules that reference traditional masculinity (for example, that sex is physical and not emotional) but do not appear conducive to feminine performances as equally socially and spatially constructed (for example that sex is emotional, first and foremost). The presence of certain masculinities can affect the performance in and occupation of space for young women where for example hook ups are part of the social relations that constitute a space (Waitt, et al., 2011a, p. 268).

Although many of these recently available spaces constrain behaviour to gendered normative ranges that are socially reinforced by a surveilling public, they can still provide opportunities for resistance to and breaking of the rules of spatial occupation and the stretching of feminised sexual spaces into those of masculine sexual spaces. We can see this resistance to sexual space rules in the past development of women's sexuality away from a femininity

---

script that did not permit pre-marital sex to one that permits pre-marital sex within the bounds of a formal relationship (Sprecher, 1987).

Identifying resistant and/or empowered behaviour can be difficult however due to the nature of, invisibility of and/or contestability of some of the spaces open to resistance and recodification. Identification is complicated by two factors. Firstly, the recognition that spaces may facilitate developmental processes that may not look empowered or subjective in and of themselves, but within a developmental curve may be fundamental to the progression of these aspects of self as seen from within. Secondly, the multiple situatednesses of audiences and the knowledges they bring to their interpretations may elide, dissolve or ignore empowerment and/or subjectivity of the actors under scrutiny.

In this regard although resistant/challenging performances may not appear so from an external perspective they may destabilise an individual's internal boundedness, which is also guided by the rules of normative scripts which are pulled into action to varying degrees within a variety of spaces. Thus spaces and places may present opportunities for resistance to this internal bounding, and such resistance may affect social spaces by creating room for female occupation of masculinised spaces or the expansion and/or redefinition of sexualised spaces open to women in constructive ways.

Much of this analysis arose out of the data patterns that suggested the SRS. Just as the Script presents rules for how young women are to conduct themselves, so too did it suggest cultural scripts that function as guides for spatial relations and occupations. These rule-sets work differently in public and private spaces, but at their heart is the requirement for deportment that is appropriately feminine.

### **Seeing the World through Beer-goggles**

Alcohol was often implicated in the sexual performances in both public and private spaces by participants. Although the role of alcohol in sexual interactions was not a focus of this research the strength of its concomitant appearance with for example hooking up warranted some examination. This will briefly cover some of the less mainstream research approaches to the use of alcohol in socio-sexual situations, focusing primarily on readings that trouble the notion of alcohol as a direct cause of risky sexual behaviours. Secondly, I outline how alcohol may be used by young women to occupy sexualised spaces more easily and with less risk than such occupation would afford actors if they were sober.

---

### *A Brief Look at Some of the Literature*

Research on alcohol and non-relationship sexual events presents mixed conclusions. White, Fleming, Catalano and Bailey's (2009, p. 706) examination of the intersection of alcohol consumption and engagement in casual sex presents "individuals who more often drank before sex ... [as] more likely to engage in casual sex", which suggests a causal connection. However, that finding is contradicted by other research examining the frequency of women engaging in casual sex with strangers when alcohol is consumed, challenging the causal role of alcohol on the decision making processes (ibid). Velez-Blasini (2008, p. 118) contests causality, noting the sometimes "spurious" nature of these claims with respect to alcohol and risky sexual behaviours. In his research he found that alcohol is less often associated with events where (penetrative) sex occurs (p. 123), and goes on to conclude that alcohol and casual sex may simply co-occur rather than being causally related. Thus the relationship between alcohol, gender and sexual activity appears to be more complicated than a causal relationship that denies agency in behaviour and opens space for a broader discussion about its use for other social ends (see for example Waitt, et al., 2011a).

Although research that associates alcohol with 'risky' sexual behaviour is important and valuable (see for example Bellis, et al., 2008; Flack, et al., 2007; Kiene, et al., 2009; Testa, Van Zile-Tamsen, Livingston, & Buddie, 2006; Ven & Beck, 2009), events during my research led me to look beyond causal linkages to consider different readings of the relationship between alcohol consumption and sexual behaviour in terms of facilitation and enablement. Alternative approaches to research frame alcohol as for example a facilitator of sexual behaviour rather than a direct cause, and preclude a reading of such engagements as necessarily or inherently risky or risk-orientated (see George, et al., 2006; Lindgren, Pantalone, Lewis, & George, 2009; Velez-Blasini, 2008). This research focus presents alcohol as more dynamic with respect to explanatory power than direct biologised causality (namely biological rather than social processes).

Alcohol consumption is itself performed as a gendered activity. How it is undertaken and what it signifies can vary markedly depending on factors such as gender, age and class. For example, research in New Zealand highlights how heavy drinking is often associated with masculine behaviour and women who drink excessively can be heavily stigmatised for unfeminine behaviour (Lyons & Willott, 2008, p. 704). Measham (2002, pp. 358-359) describes women's engagement with alcohol and drugs as an exercise in "controlled loss of

---

control”, where consumption must be within certain parameters—not too drunk but just drunk enough—so as to also avoid unfeminine or non-normative behaviour. Uninhibited alcohol-catalysed sexual behaviour can be seen as unfeminine too as it fails to accord with ‘good’/appropriately feminine models of women as sexually private or discreet (Montemurro & McClure, 2005, pp. 284-285). Thus alcohol consumption, as with sexual behaviour, must be self-surveilled and controlled to keep individual behaviour within socially acceptable (feminine) bounds when conducted in public spaces where others can see transgressions, indiscretions, and performance failures. The public nature of displays of alcohol and sexual behaviour are strictly bounded by spatial rules, as R241 suggests:

“If someone was a bit drunk, getting touchy with their partner in the presence of friends doing similar things then I think it's fine. If someone is wasted and/or has misread the tone of the event then it can be bad taste.” (R241)

Women’s consumption of alcohol and subsequent engagement in sexual behaviours therefore places young women at risk as their consumption habits and sexual performances can both open them up to being stigmatised. However, this concomitance may also allow young women to sexually perform in ways not sanctioned without the presence of alcohol (Waite, et al., 2011b).

### ***Alcohol as a Spatial Element***

Alcohol appears to have a role in social space creation and creating access to pre-existing spaces for various performances, as well as being a facilitative mechanism for group socialisation. Places and spaces are adapted and created to enable socialisation around the consumption of alcohol, as evident in town planning, building adaptation and specialisation, and rules for regulation of the use of these public spaces.

How young women gain and maintain access to these spaces, and are expected to perform in them, has changed considerably over time however. Women’s entry into and occupation of drinking spaces has “historically been constrained by norms about morality and respectability” (Valentine, 1993, p. 405). For example as pubs moved away from food and lodging to focus more strongly on alcohol supply in the 18<sup>th</sup> century women’s access was curtailed because it was not a ‘suitable’ place for women (Kadel, 2010, p. 156). In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, women’s access to drinking establishments was also barred or controlled by gendered social mechanisms such as ‘ladies entrances’ (Powers, 1995). These kinds of gendered regulations have changed in terms of legal and overt social rules, but social rules on

---



how drinking is conducted is still deeply gendered. How men and women drink, and are permitted to drink in New Zealand, serves to regulate how women are permitted to occupy drinking venues, and the extent to which they can perform the intersection of alcohol consumption and a normative femininity (Lyons & Willott, 2008). This is further complicated by the socio-sexual aspects of these spaces, where the multiplicity of performance management must fit within the narrow divide between not enough (the lightweight drinker, the prude), and too much (the drunk, the slut).

The boundaries of this middle space occupation—or the ‘just right’ performance—can be resisted or played with by utilising alcohol’s representational and/or facilitative power/efficacy and how it influences the social framing, reading or interpretation of performances by audiences. Some non-normative sexual behaviours may be permitted within public spaces where alcohol consumption occurs, though these are generally bounded by rules which were presented as being clear to participants.

These boundaries/rules can be blurred by alcohol’s disinhibiting effects, however, which can cause young women to move beyond a controlled loss of control to become unexpectedly and/or unintentionally deviant. Within some spaces this deviance was acceptable, whilst others appeared to tolerate deviance from the norm less. For example casual sex in public spaces was less acceptable than breast flashing when drunk (and carried higher social penalties), and breast flashing was permissible in some spaces/places but not others. Thus, although alcohol allowed deviance, it was still constrained by identifiable gendered spatial characteristics which limited the kinds of activities that young women could engage in safely without punitive stigma or self-recrimination.

### ***Where It’s At***

In their study Rúdólfsdóttir and Morgan (2009, p. 498) note that drinking venues such as bars are perceived as comfortable and *safe* as they have friendly and fun-orientated atmospheres as individuals are often in the company of protective peers. In Wellington, Courtenay Place and Manners Mall—spaces where socialisation and alcohol consumption co-occur—I noted most women travelling in packs/groups or pairs, and engaging in protective behaviours when their friends were interacting with (presumably unknown) men. Several participants described protective strategies with respect to friends’ excessive alcohol consumption and unintended sexual engagements at bars and private parties, suggesting some reliable

---

protection from risky sexual engagements, which may enable young women to relax in particular spaces because they feel they are protected by peers and/or known/familiar others (also noted by Armstrong, Hamilton & Sweeney, 2006, p. 594; Waitt et al., 2011).

I remember once my friend was making out with a guy, and it looked like he was trying to get her to leave with him. She was MUCH drunker than him, so we were uncomfortable with them leaving together in case something happened that she wouldn't have been happy about in the morning. We basically just pulled her away from him and babysat her. Bossy maybe, but i'd rather annoy her at the time than have her do something she'd regret. (Beth)

Rúdólfsdóttir and Morgan (2009, p. 498) also remark that these alcohol-associated spaces present reduced risk with respect to negative judgment and therefore provide opportunities for transgressive behaviour with respect to heteronormative and feminine performances, a sentiment also expressed by several of my participants. For example, on the party atmosphere in her university hall of residence, Kelly noted that other students “didn’t really care [about gossip] ... especially after they’d been drinking”. Alcohol consumption therefore appeared to provide a buffer between experience and expected stigma.

Inhabiting the streets also appeared to have its own set of rules. Massey (1994, p. 234) notes that spaces where men access sex are not places that permit women, unless they are there to be consumed as a product/object. Califa (1994, p. 205) adds that “the city has become a sign of desire: promiscuity, perversity, prostitution...” which also does not frame women’s presence positively. This is particularly so at night when women wandering the streets, particularly alone, can be read as unrespectable and/or morally suspect (Massey, 1994, p. 234). This old association is partially evident, I think, in criticisms of young women in their ‘going-out clothes’ as looking slutty or like prostitutes—the only women expected to occupy city streets at night (Wilson in Johnston & Longhurst, 2010, p. 82). Thus travelling in a pack may present a mode by which to occupy public city spaces at night in less risky ways. Their behaviour can be framed as ‘socialising with the girls’ (Waitt, et al., 2011) so as to avoid being viewed as canvassing for male attention. Packs also serve to protect against the ever-present risk of rape (as evident in the *Safe in the City* campaign) that inhibits urban social spaces at night (Massey, 1994, p. 234; Valentine, 1994, p. 405, pp. 410-11). It is therefore understandable that I do not remember seeing any socialising young women who were on their own. In fact, the oddity of a *woman* alone in the city centre at night was evident in my own experiences. In the literature, the *flâneur*—the lone wanderer and observer who immerses himself in the city life—is a masculine figure whose presence is generally accepted

---

(Johnston & Longhurst, 2010, pp. 80-81). Women do not often appear to occupy this role, particularly at night. My inhabiting this role during my field observations highlighted the absence of women performing this role in that space, and how challenging it may be in general for women to do so. For me it was an uncomfortable experience during which I was sure I was viewed with suspicion. Those who noticed my presence as a woman alone, observing the night life (generally bouncers and door staff) referenced some confusion and suspicion by way of body language and facial expressions, as I wandered repeatedly through ‘their’ streets. I was not dressed in my ‘going out clothes’ but nor did I look or behave like bar staff or someone going home after a night shift. I occupied a space that had no place for me, as I was *flâneur* but female. This suggests how young women must occupy these kinds of spaces without drawing suspicion—namely by a defined performance of respectable femininity that is not done alone (unless for an acceptable purpose). Because young women as sex-seeking within this space are not acceptable either, alcohol may also provide a socially acceptable way to occupy this space.

How night city spaces are occupied displayed a degree of variance that partially depended on alcohol consumption. During my observations in public spaces, levels of intoxication in young women appeared to accord with Measham’s (2002) controlled loss of control (the number of uncontrollably drunk young women seen was proportionally low), and transgressive behaviours were generally confined to permissive spaces—for example, erotic dancing was performed in clubs, but seldom on the street. Breast flashing was seen in Manners Mall near student drinking venues but not in Courtenay Place, a more high-end night scene. Street-level behaviour was generally restricted to embraces and kissing, and transgressive behaviours were often subject to surprised or disapproving looks from bystanders.

Rachel noted that she had seen significant amounts of sexualised behaviour in certain youth-frequented venues in the city, where shadows and an atmosphere of consent with respect to group expectations created space to engage in more socially defined rule-breaking activities. Her comments were commensurate with a large number of respondents who noted that behaviours were space-dependent: “mostly it’s in dark bars/clubs so lighting and alcohol ‘excuses’ what would usually be ‘indecent’” (R43), suggesting a blurring of the line between public and private, where sexual activities are expected and accepted (Green, et al., 2010, p. 11). As Knopp (1995, p. 152) remarks, city spaces code for a variety of expressions of

---

sexuality, which depend on a number of variables with respect to gender. Alcohol shifts these codings and presents them as temporarily osmotic or plastic in how genders access them and perform within them (ibid).

In this way alcohol can facilitate space-creation and/or space occupation and performance of activities that sit outside the sober, normative, appropriately feminine framework allowing non-normative behaviours to be somewhat accepted and expected. Having “drunken fun” could reduce the likelihood of stigmatising judgement, at least within peer groups and space cohorts.

The public reaction to the sexualised behaviour of young women in suburban Petone (a Lower Hutt suburb) is a good example. Whilst sitting having a drink at the outside tables of a local bar one evening, a young woman and her friend, both exhibiting signs of alcohol consumption, flirted with a police officer parked outside the bar. One of the young women lounged provocatively on the bonnet of his car, and then ‘snuggled’ up to him, giving a ‘sexy’ performance for his enjoyment whilst her friend took photos on her phone. Although my companions and I, and several other patrons within earshot, voiced surprise at her behaviour, it was however generally accepted due to her apparent intoxication.

Once within permissive spaces, alcohol has other roles to play. Research suggests it is consumed for its disinhibiting effects which can make hooking up easier; to provide “liquid courage”, and “after-the-fact” justifications for non-normative behaviour; to increase confidence and enable communication; to enhance sexual experiences; and to indicate that drinking individuals are open to sexual advances (see Bellis, et al., 2008; Lindgren, et al., 2009; Ven & Beck, 2009; Waitt, et al., 2011). Many of these effects were discussed or alluded to by participants.

The disinhibiting effects of alcohol for PSB and hooking up were noted by some participants who commented that many of the activities they engaged in were not ones that they would do sober (also noted in Waitt, et al., 2010). They listed lack of courage and/or confidence, feeling self-conscious, or exercising strong (and admittedly restrictive) self-control when sober, as factors that alcohol diminished or negated. Nicole noted that she could “let go of her strong internal constraints with the help of alcohol, which then allowed her to “do more of what [she] actually want[s] to do”.

---

Acting as a “catalyst” or as “Dutch courage” was also a significant function of alcohol. Although for some this led to regret, for others it was positive, enabling them to express or explore their sexual subjectivity or identity in ways not generally permissible in other spaces. However, this was complicated for some participants who displayed an awareness of what was acceptable within the disinhibiting spectrum of alcohol consumption:

“I think the flashing was pretty harmless and just a bit of fun but i feel horrible about the other thing mostly because i drank far too much, lost control and did stuff i wouldn't normally.” (Nicole)

“I am terrible when I get drunk, I just don't care and I 'm really bad for PDA<sup>39</sup> so I um can't talk coz I 'm like hey!! [laugh] yeah, alright, let's go, and everyone is like woooooo!” (Megan)

Megan stated she did not care about engaging in sexual behaviours when she was drunk, and her peer group appeared to support her and not judge her intoxicated behaviour. She was aware, however, that what she had engaged in was not sanctioned within many public spaces but was instead non-normative space occupation that challenged spatial rules that were visible in her friends' reactions. Megan's tone throughout the interview suggested that she did not take herself or her behaviour too seriously, but her mediated behaviour<sup>40</sup> and underlying judgemental language suggest otherwise.

Post-behaviour regret—mentioned by a number of participants—appeared to signal a reappraisal of behaviour when sober. As Montemurro and McClure (2005, p. 286) note, feeling in some way uncomfortable about an event, for example embarrassment or guilt, indicates that women have internalised good femininity with respect to normative behaviour. Hindsight provides an opportunity to recognise behaviours that break with good normative rules of performance which can then create discomfort, manifesting as regret and guilt. What is regretted may represent what is *too* subversive for the individual because it contradicts and/or destabilises internalised good/appropriate femininity, beyond what can be legitimated by alcohol's disinhibiting effects (Owen, 2010). It is behaviour gone too far which has violated public space occupation rules as defined by the group from which approval, acceptance and membership is desired.

Alongside these complicated requirements for self-regulation, alcohol consumption in New

---

<sup>39</sup> Public displays of affection

<sup>40</sup> Megan did not frequent the city but socialised in safe private spaces due to her public-space rape that had subsequently 'taught' her that particular public spaces are no longer safe.

Zealand is itself complicated by its capacity to code women as potentially unfeminine unless drinking is done in feminine ways, for example drinking wine and not beer (Campbell, 2000). Modes of consumption can problematically position young women by compromising their ability to perform good girl femininity/scripts, as research indicates that even the appearance of alcohol consumption can signal that a young woman is “more sexually available and willing” than when sober (George, et al., 2006, p. 282; also Young, McCabe & Boyd, 2007). This association between alcohol and sexual receptivity can automatically mark a young woman as *potentially* sexually unfeminine even before she engages in any sexual behaviour. Compared to the sober woman she is more likely to break the rules of respectability.

For example, “older women, attractive women and women who are out in public very drunk ... are condemned for their drinking” and are framed as promiscuous and sexually wayward in New Zealand (Lyons & Willott, 2008, p. 704). This suggests how difficult alcohol consumption can be for women in public spaces, and also how it can frame them to spatial audiences. If this is the dominant understanding, as comments from some participants suggested (young women are “getting drunk to just meet someone”), then alcohol use in spaces open to engaging with prospective sexual partners may be a strategy being actively engaged in by young women. As several noted, going to “town” and drinking made engaging with others easier because they knew their chances of misinterpretation were reduced (as in Bogle, 2008, p. 63).

“I guess its easier when you're drunk .... I'd hook up with randoms sober if I knew that they were keen.” (Angela)

Angela’s comment references not only that alcohol signals sexually receptivity, but also lessened the chances of “rejection”, making approaching potential partners feel less risky.

Lindgren et al., (2009, p. 10) note that alcohol can “be a tool used by [young] women to minimize the stigma associated with expressions of female sexuality”, reinforcing Tolman’s (2002, p. 164) assertion that young women who are subjectively engaged with their sexuality may utilise a variety of social mechanisms to hide that agency/subjectivity so as to avoid the risk of stigma. Alcohol appeared to function this way for some participants as it tended to lessen the potential for judgement over faulty decision-making. Participants referenced how it can be blamed for poor choices in partners (‘oops I was drunk’), for aiming too high and failing to ‘score’ (‘oops I was drunk’), and minimising the impact of rejection by presenting an excuse to self and others for poor judgement (‘oops I was drunk’). Peralta (2008, p. 374)

---

calls this the “deviance disavowal phenomenon”, where alcohol/drunkenness is used as an excuse for non-normative behaviour. The forgiving tone of some comments suggested individuals were not to be held too responsible for their actions as the disinhibiting effects of alcohol could facilitate behaviour normally controlled for.

“I think that alot of the time, if not all, it is influenced by the atmosphere and other influences such as alcohol and drugs and that because of this it is acceptable.” (R163 on PSB)

As a rationale, blaming alcohol for behaviours that one might later regret could also serve to lessen feelings of guilt, allowing young women to circumvent some responsibility for their behaviours at the level of society despite being sanctioned at the sub-cultural or peer-group level at the time (Ven & Beck, 2009, p. 631).

“I think you can get away with more things when your drinking and blame it solely on the fact you are drinking, so you [are] not taking personal responsibility in a way” (Sahra)

As some participants noted, drunken sexual behaviour was “fun” as long as the individual was not “wasted” as the “alcohol makes that ok” (controlled loss of control), and thus not something to feel guilty about. Others were reflective about behaviour enacted at a younger age, noting that it was a “silly and youthful and drunken phase” which was excusable in terms of self-criticism. Thus, blaming alcohol removed the necessity for self-analysis and associated feelings of guilt and regret.

The above suggests a tactical engagement with alcohol consumption on both a personal and social level that participants were not unaware of:

“I think most girls do want to do it [hooking up/casual sex], they just need the kind of excuse, I mean ... umm if anyone was to call them names, or look down on them, they could say, aaw I was drunk, but ...that’s not necessarily why they did it. I think it’s just kind of ...a safety net... really, and coz... I don’t know, girls aren’t allowed to have *sexual* desire.. so they need to have that alcohol to just give them a reason to do it.” (Kelly)

Kelly’s explanations of alcohol protective and enabling was echoed by other reflective participants. They could still be ‘good’, appropriately feminine women who transgress ‘by accident’. This strategy appeared to provide an accessible and useable justification for sexual self-expression and play. If the range of choices for engaging in sexual behaviour are ‘be sober, do X and get labelled a slut’ or ‘be seen/known to consume alcohol, do X, and

---

avoid judgement', it is not surprising that many young women would choose to drink whilst engaging in sexualised behaviours.

Young women's alcohol consumption can also be seen as a way of resisting "gender ideals and social processes aimed at controlling women" where heavy drinking is seen as negating the "ideals of women as self-denying, restrained, [and] nurturing" (Day, 2010, pp. 242-243). Alcohol appeared to facilitate similar resistance with respect to sexual behaviour by expanding the range of performances permitted on public stages. Day (2010) however, issues a caution on how to interpret women's occupation of masculine alcohol consumption space, which can be extended to how young women attempt to occupy spaces where masculine non-relationship sexual interactions take place. These cautions suggest what Kalish & Kimmel (2011, p. 138) call the "masculinisation of sex" rather than actual resistant and subversive behaviour. As Kraack (in Lyons & Willott, 2008, p. 700) remarks the "appropriation of hegemonic practices does not directly challenge them" but rather reinforces the privileging of one way of being over another, and makes "any form of independent, agentic femininity not framed by masculine values ... elusive" (Day, 2010, p. 244).

These warnings can be complicated and/or troubled, however, if analyses look at behaviour not as attempts at performing masculine sex but rather are attempts to occupy masculine spaces where resistance to feminine scripts can be performed. Alcohol's role may be to facilitate entry into a space that is otherwise not sanctioned by blurring the appearance of agency. Additionally, if masculine behaviours are being engaged in, they may not necessarily be *sexual* for young women. Engaging in masculine ways of *drinking* as a way to gain access to and occupy some masculine socio-sexual spaces does not equate to performing masculine sexual scripts. Very few participants described themselves as approaching non-relationship sexual partners with the kinds of instrumental behaviours this version of masculine scripts was recognised to require. Thus 'masculine' ways of drinking may be being conflated with having masculine non-relationship sexual engagements. This is difficult to ascertain, as although alcohol allows various forms of resistant/non-normative behaviour with respect to deviations from the feminine script, it was unclear what this meant with respect to performed script content.

A second difficulty in the reading of alcohol-facilitated sexual behaviour as agency refers back to Peralta's (2008) "deviance disavowal phenomenon". Although performances are potentially subversive, they fail to affect normative rules for behaviour because they are

---



exceptional and in some ways non-agentic behaviour, and as a result can have reduced or no effect on shifting gender behaviours away from more normative proscriptions (Waite, et al., 2011b, p. 270).

Regardless, alcohol appeared to create spaces and/or provide access to spaces in which some young women can resist, albeit in restricted ways, passive and sexually desireless femininity, and attempt to exercise a sense of entitlement to active sexual engagement and experience which they cannot access elsewhere, save in a committed relationship. Drunken fun allowed some participants to experiment and experience various sexual activities where otherwise they might not, and to overcome strict adherence to intrapersonal scripts. Alcohol's disinhibiting effects allowed some to approach potential partners, engage in sexual activities with partners, or behave in sexualised ways that are not otherwise permitted. Thus, as a facilitative device, space-creator, and space access mode, alcohol consumption presented young women with opportunities not otherwise available. Although these performances may be limited in their efficacy to change spatial relations in public spaces directly, they sometimes appeared to have positive effects on participants that contributed to a more subjective self-understanding.

### **Doing It in Public**

“sometimes I feel like the only point people go into town is to pick up .... just in O week and stuff everyone just ... goes mental yeah” (Kelly)

Participants mentioned a variety of public spaces in which varying sexual performances could be engaged in—bars, nightclubs, house parties, school camps and social club outings. Many of them presented opportunities for young women to engage in destabilising and self-exploratory behaviours but again, all of them came with rules of appropriate performance, and mechanisms for legitimating occupation and performances.

### **Flashing at the Bar**

For participants, PSBs were the most commonly engaged-in performances. They were often facilitated by alcohol and a dialogue of fun-seeking motivations, performed within permissive spaces where they are more expected, if enacted within limits (Ronen, 2010, p. 363). But what was permissible in most public spaces was generally restricted to the kinds of heterosexual public rituals that are sanctioned in the majority of public spaces, for example in

---

New Zealand, heterosexual couples kissing or holding hands (Johnston & Longhurst, 2010, p. 85). More intimate behaviours such as sexual touching were restricted to private spaces where they were hidden from view. Clubs and bars provided dark corners for slightly more non-normative behaviours, and house parties provided private space for sexual engagements, thus blurring the distinction between public and private spaces and public and private sexuality.

Within the city this blurring was quite evident. The variety of sexual behaviours expanded the further I got from the more heavily surveilled public areas such as Courtenay Place and Manners Mall. Quieter streets and side alleys offered spaces for behaviours beyond the above mentioned acceptable heterosexual repertoire. The witnessed hand job was in the back streets of the city, and the more exhibitionist behaviours that were performed at the bus stop parties were also some distance from more heavily populated Courtenay Place/Manners Mall.

In their study of women's exhibitionist behaviours Hugh-Jones, Gough and Littlewood (2005, p. 275) note that exhibitionist performances can act as forms of resistance to the dominant discourses (scripts) that proscribe feminine passivity, creating a context in which a shift in power can be experienced by the agent (from the observer to the agent). Alternatively, exhibitionist behaviours can be framed as not only sexual but fun and experience-seeking when interpreted as extrovert behaviours within the youth community (pp. 270-271). Both of these framings were evident in participant discussions of their more "outrageous" performances.

A 'fun-seeking' dialogue (what Jackson & Cram (2003, p. 124) calls a "discourse of play") was often used by participants to legitimise their performances away from inappropriate femininity, reframing them as youthful and fun-loving rather than desiring and sexual, much as Hugh-Jones et al., (2005) suggest. Performances could be enacted for the benefit of audiences in accepting spaces where peer-group tolerance was higher. This "fun" dialogue troubled agency as sexual subjectivity, however.

When done "as a joke" performances have little value beyond entertainment, and individual expressions of self are not to be taken seriously because individuals are being "outrageous", not sexual. Behaviours are "harmless" or "not a big deal", suggesting that they have little or no content that can be read as meaningful. Thus fun-seeking as a protective strategy strips the content out of behaviours with respect to challenging normative proscriptors on

---

behaviour. Despite allowing subjective engagement in normally stigmatised behaviours, fun-seeking like alcohol facilitation can dilute the power of sexual engagements (Peralta, 2008; Waitt, et al., 2011b, p. 270). Opportunities to be recognised as a sexual subject can be undermined by assessments that suggest that although sexual behaviours were engaged in, being sexual was not the intent of the agent because agents were often recognised as not being authentic or meaningful when alcohol-enabled or fun-seeking. Bad girl performances cannot be ‘owned’ by the agent—they are novel or out of character, anomalous and/or empty events for which little responsibility can be taken. The individual remains safe, but despite feeling subjectively resistant and progressive in their behaviours they are not seen this way and cultural scripts are not directly challenged (ibid).

However, within permissive spaces young women can feel the excitement of disorderly spatial experiences (Bondi, 2005, p. 146). With safety mechanisms such as alcohol and fun-seeking, young women can explore their own sexual subjectivity, experimenting with sexualised performances to see how they feel. In this respect some participants noted that PSBs could be empowering. Nicole noted that when she flashed at a party:

“it felt like more for me, letting go .... I think the alcohol made a difference, but yeah i still felt like showing that part of my body was kind of a is me and if you don't like it you can piss off kind of thing.” (Nicole)

Alcohol and the party space provided a safe and accepting environment in which to act, which was also buffered by peer support as she was “always ... with a friend who would do the same thing”. This can be read as a process of developing body confidence (Horne & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2006). This instance of exhibitionism positively affected Nicole, and suggested that for some PSBs may have little to do with seeking to be objectified (in the negative sense), as some critics suggest (Anderson, 2008, p. 124). Young women may instead by attempting to locate and/or situate themselves within a confusing cultural environment.

Gemma recounted an occasion where a particular social space allowed her to experience resistant unfeminine behaviour as empowering.

“Another experience I once had that was very empowering was when I went to a showing of the Rocky Horror Picture Show [<sup>41</sup>] wearing my first ever miniskirt, and

---

<sup>41</sup> RHPS is the story of a traditional heterosexual couple who stumble onto the mansion of a transvestite and the ‘Adonis’ he is ‘making’. The context of the story is sexualised, and the couple have a sexual awakening. Showings of the film are often themed, with patrons dressing up as their favourite characters, the context being sexualised and sexy.

fishnets, and ankle boots and afterwards, the next day a couple of the other girls who had been dressed even more daringly were sort of smily like a sort of camaraderie among slutty girls and it was empowering to know that I could be sexual (even just in that little way) and get a reaction that wasn't disapproving..." (Gemma)

Gemma went on to note that she was experimenting with "This idea of "how can I be sexual in a way that, at least to some extent, fits in with and is accepted by the people around me". Her comment stresses how important selecting the 'right' space for a particular performance, can be, especially when challenging normative framings is the goal. Nicole narrated a similarly empowering experience where she had participated in topless dancing within a women's only space, which was primal and empowering for her. Thus permissive spaces and permitting audiences can present actors with opportunities for subjectively powerful experiences and self-exploration beyond the bounds of normatively framed spaces and scripts.

The absence of stigma from these social spaces was integral for both young women with respect to how they felt about their bodies and themselves as sexual subjects. This suggests that when young women are accepted as being sexual within a particular space, they are then permitted to accept themselves as such (further reinforced in the following discussion on relationships and space).

### **Ambiguity as a Pass Card**

Hooking up relied on alcohol and fun-seeking as mechanisms for justification, but the ambiguity of what hooking up is, or means, provided another means of protection for participants. The ambiguousness of hooking up is noted in the literature (see for example Bogle, 2008, p. 28; Glenn & Marquardt, 2001; Kalish & Kimmel, 2011; Peterson & Muehlenhard, (2007), and by interviewee comments:

"Just that I've always called [kissing] 'hooking up.' .... I know that it's supposed to be sex, but I've only ever seen that on American tv. Always made me wonder which one it was." (Angela)

To complicate matters, hooking up and a hook up can also mean different things:

"thers [sic] a different between hook ups and hooking up ... for me, hooking up is kissing with tongue but a casual hook up is a one night stand" (Amanda)

---

As the definition spans from kissing to casual sex, it allows individuals to do two things: to downplay the sexual content of an encounter ('it was just a hook-up'), or to claim more content than was actually engaged in ('we hooked up!').

"I'm not quite sure what it means, For some people it just means french kissing , but for others it means casual sex" (R69)

Researchers note the gendered nature of this engagement, where men claim more sexual activity but women less (Bogle, 2008, p. 28; Schalet, 2010, pp321-324). This ambiguity allows both young men and women to protect their reputations (Epstein, Calzo, Smiler & Ward, 2009, p. 420; Kalish & Kimmel, 2011, p. 142). However, I suggest that ambiguity also allows young women to adjust their representations to particular audiences so as to be 'just right' with respect to sexiness/sexualness. Managing representations in this respect is audience-dependent – one peer group may require a hook up to have sexual content to avoid stigma for not being sexual enough, whilst another may constrain content to avoid being stigmatised for being too sexual.

"i think in my friends case it was kind of the 'cool' thing to do, if you didn't do it you were classed as 'uncool' ... cool is now not about you as a person but often what you do sexually etc, its almost cool now to be very promiscuous" (Sahra)

Spatial relations in this way are productive, having the power to steer young women into performances that they may not be all that comfortable with, and would not perform in front of others in other circumstances. The ambiguity of what hooking up implies appears to allow young women to engage in behaviours that if clearly defined, would put those challenging the rules of what is suitable for women to perform in public, at risk. R132 noted that:

"It is seen as "better" to hook up than to have casual sex, but only because it seems more sociall[y] acceptable and less 'slutty'" (R132)

Ambiguity therefore mitigates risk, and as such presents a way of 'passing' as heteronormatively feminine within public spaces whilst engaging in behaviours that for women are meant for the private spaces of respectability and invisibility (Johnston & Longhurst, 2010, p. 85)

There is an inherent permissiveness in the ambiguity of hooking up that, when it is part of the social relations of place, opens up opportunities for engagement in aspects of sexual

---

subjectivity and exploration in ways similar to those noted in research on queering spaces for sexual interaction (see for example discussion in Green, et al., 2010; Rubin, 2011).

“I think that it can be fun and is part of discovery your own desire and what you are [comfortable] with.” (R163)

This permissiveness, evident in some places more than others, can have notable effects on young women who are not socialised to understand themselves as sexually desirable.

“Having someone shove their tongue down your throat makes me feel desirable” (Angela)

The subjectiveness of this experience can be troubled however, as Jess’s comment about friends who hook up with guys in bars suggest:

“it sound[s] like there's an underlying reason as to why you want to go out to bars with your friends. it's not just to go out and have fun with your girl friends, but to show that you're desired by everyone else at the bar.” (Jess)

Thus spaces where hook ups occur can provide opportunities for engaging in pleasure-seeking and expressing a sense of entitlement to pleasure and the right to be able to efficaciously pursue getting it. Participants discussed a club popular with university students where the range of sex acts in the hook up spectrum that can be enacted in public spaces exceeded anything I saw in my field observations. The material plant of the venue—low lighting, loud music, dark spaces—created a liminal sexual space where borders between public and private could be played with. Rachel reported seeing any number of sex acts here, including a young couple having sex on the dance floor. The contravention of this kind of interaction comes from the flouting of heterosexual rules of interactions that centre on “romantic love, steady relationships or long term commitment” expressed in appropriate places (Lieshout in Bell, 1995, p. 307). Having public space hook ups that are sensation-focused are morally contrary and suspect (*ibid*), and as such, unfeminine.

Places that have reputations for excessively permissive spatial rules can present as problematic however. Waitt et al., (2011, p. 261) noted in their research that some venues could compromise young women’s feminine representations and performances, simply by them being there too long. How places can frame young women was evident in how young women presented themselves (for example dress and deportment) in relation to the venues they frequented.

---

Although hook ups are ambiguous from an external perspective, and young women are protected to some degree from the stigma associated with more sexual hook ups, the agent herself cannot always avoid reflecting on her performance. Internalised disciplinary behaviour was evident in a number of respondent replies that indicated discomfort felt when they had not constrained their own actions in accordance with their internalised scripts and spatial rules. As Rubin (p.149) notes, “[s]exual acts are burdened with an excess of significance”, which can inadvertently and quickly stick to women.

“if I ever make out with guys I don't know or whatever I feel dirty, and regret it later.”  
(Amanda)

Hooking up therefore appeared to complicate agency. Despite appearing to provide opportunities for an adapted version of what Giddens (1993, p.147) calls “episodic sexuality”, many young women were unable to evade their own inner critics, which could quickly step in to fill the gap of an absent critical audience. Thus, those that were uncritically invested in performing good femininity may find hook up spaces challenging and may fall back on moralising, self-surveilling practices to mitigate future risks, despite the addition of hooking up’s ambiguity and, perhaps, pluralistic ignorance.

Good/appropriate femininity and/or hegemonic heterosexuality can be used as a justificatory strategy for hooking up however. As hooking up has begun to take over from dating as the primary context in which young women can find socially permissible sexual partners (relationship partners) it is a means by which relationship seeking can be engaged in (Bogle, 2008, pp. 11-23; Wade & Heldman, in press, p. 3), providing legitimacy for space occupation and performances. The pursuit of that normative heterosexual ideal, ‘romantic love’, can morally, aesthetically and emotionally validate sexual activity (Jackson, 1999, p. 103), and read as attempts to ascend the erotic pyramid into socially valued modes of sexual behaviour (Rubin, 2011, p. 149). Relationship seeking is not without its challenges however, and many respondents commented that it was a bad idea.

“It can be harmless and fun but there is definite potential for confusion about the intentions (of those involved in the 'hook- up') and chance for one or two people getting upset” (R118)

This related to the disjunction between traditional masculinity and femininity within the casual context—women as relationship-seeking were antithetical to men as objectifying in the instrumentalist and fungible sense, and avoiding or managing interactions with them

---

problematised relationship seeking intentions/other socialising activities (Waite, 2011, p. 269).

“The guys that I have 'dated' [hooked up with] just wanted sex.” (Angela)

“more guys than girls just want sex and dont care about a relationship” (R239)

Relationship-seeking in this context can therefore be something of a numbers game as women try to remain in the inside of Rubin’s (2011, p. 152) “Charmed Circle”, and men in the “Outer Limits” of appropriate gendered sexuality. Many young women are on a quest to find one of the few good guys out there (also known as the 'scarcity myth', Hartman, 2010), the hypothetical Prince Charming (Kaufmann, 2008), with whom they can have a monogamous, stable relationship and be rescued from the vagaries of the hook up scene.

Whilst some men engage in reputational gain (or at least neutrality) within hooking up (Backus & Mahalik, 2011), and enjoy the privileges of access to unencumbered sex that are part of the gendered “activity space” in which casual sex interactions take place (Women & Geography Study Group of the IBG, 1986, p. 29). Reputational risk inherent in hooking up also makes it a disadvantageous activity for young women to engage in over the long term. Thus the number of men relationship-seeking may be less than the number of young women doing so (Boggle, 2008, p. 156). In this respect the principle of least interest where the one who cares least has the most power allows men to engage in sex without commitment or promise of a possible relationship (Waller cited in Bogle, 2008, p. 174). This may explain the generally expressed short-lived preference for hooking up over relationships among participants.

“I’ve met guys who are out on the prowl and if they interact with a woman who is obviously sexually attracted to them and is forward about it, it kind of puts the ball in the guy's court.” (Jess)

In my 'relationship' with 'John', I was always the one putting myself out there and letting him know how I felt and what I wanted from him. The ball was always in his court and I feel like I let him take all the power from me ... He knew that he had all the power, and he abused it.... he played me and because I completely let him.  
(Kelly)

Young women on the other hand must provide something that may encourage a young man to stay with her. As the current currency appears to be sexual engagements where “Men often just want sex from anything with legs” (R130), women may inadvertently become disenfranchised from or disenchanted with the romance dialogue in the face of male

---



unromantic behaviour, and the recognition that chances are low with respect to getting a relationship out of a hook up. A number of young women thus described hooking up as a meaningless activity:

“it feels kinda pointless unless u see a future together” (Amanda)

“Don't get the point, its not a relationship so why bother” (R234)

This strategy was not universally doomed to failure however. Several participants commented that they were in long term relationships with a partner with whom they had hooked up and/or had casual sex. “My current boyfriend actually began as casual sex” (Liz). Despite these examples, the likelihood of this being an outcome was considered low by participants, particularly by those who framed men who operated in permissive space as sex-seeking and not the kind of men who were relationship-ready or worthy.

“I have been involved in casual hook ups in the past, and they just left me feeling upset. The sex/sexual activities were great, but I wanted more, an actual relationship from it, which I never got from those men” (Beth)

The ‘sex as inherently emotional for women’ dialogue was also a script element that appeared to undermine young women’s occupation of permissive spaces. Although some women may subvert their abilities to engage in non-relationship sexual interactions without emotional content, it may still be present:

“not that I loved everyone I've ever had sex with, but I [think] essentially that's what I hope for” (Monica)

“Casual sex often leaves young women dissatisfied because they don't acknowledge that they want something alot deeper emotionally and end up feeling down because of their choices to engage in casual sex” (R126)

Thus, as a space in which to try to adhere to a relational imperative, permissive social spaces offer access to the kinds of sexual interactions that could ultimately be emotionally costly. However, they could also present opportunities for engagement that ignore these imperatives when they fail to yield the desired results.

“one nighters came first, i was looking for a relationship but i couldn't find anyone i wanted to go out with so just decided I'd take [casual] sex/hook ups instead” (Sahra)

Thus, permissive spaces that allow casual sex and hooking up can challenge heterosexuality’s romance focus, presenting two discernible opportunities for young women: to either

---

disengage from performing the romance script and explore their sexual desires and subjectivities within a casual context; or to remain committed to the romance script by leaving permissive space either by way of, or in hopes, of finding a relationship to take its place. The latter appeared to be the predominant choice for most participants as a long-term option.

Choosing to stay, to not choose private spaces where relationships are performed with their incumbent sexual rules, becomes riskier over time, however. For example, reputational risk can increase with age and the appearance of experience as hook ups expand to include reputationally risky casual sex—hooking up is defensible for younger women, but was liable to be more heavily judged for older women:

“depends how old you are. can be more acceptable if your younger and still exploring.” (R95 on HU)

Part of this age-specificity may have to do with the redefinition of the maturation process into adulthood. Explanations within the emergent adult age bracket do not lean towards responsibility and/or stability, but are instead about experimentation and exploration (Arnett, 2004, p. 4; 2006b, pp. 8-9). This period appeared to be bracketed by the education process for a many (Bogle, 2008, p. 54), after which life should become more serious, and individuals should attend to life path requirements which include stable relationships (Arnett, 2004, p. 105). Although men are permitted to retain a ‘Peter Pan’ orientation to sex and relationships, it is likely that the discourses of compulsory motherhood and compulsory matrimony (Robson, 2009), women’s place in the home, relational imperatives (Hamilton & Armstrong, 2009), the disproportionate burden of sexual risks that accompany hooking up in all its forms for women (see the SRS), and the stigma of singlehood that places single women “outside the room” (Kaufmann, 2008, p. 25) present pressures that have to be addressed throughout the identity development process. Participating in hooking up in permissive space may therefore be framed as practice, where young women can be less serious about relationship-seeking, but only for a time. The background requirement seemed to be that even if relationships were not formed from hook ups then young women were expected to leave in preference for a relationship should the opportunity present itself, particularly as they aged. Up until that time permissive spaces appear to provide some opportunities for young women with respect to developing sexual subjectivity, despite being constrained by the limited permissiveness evident in the gendered nature of space occupation.

---

Monica's story is an example of how space occupation can contribute to sexual subjectivity and self-knowledge. As self-described "late-developer", Monica described her feelings of unease about not being sufficiently sexually active by the standards of her peer group/cohort. She narrated her sense of awkwardness and powerlessness, and her want not to be recognised as sexual or desirable during her mid-teens.

"the idea of being sexual filled me with guilt and dread... [I had] insecurit[ies] about what to do, I was afraid that i would be laughed at, not know 'what' to do, to the point where it was easier to do nothing. ... I was a real tom-boy too, very insecure about how I looked"

As Monica was a year younger than her peer group she may have been occupying a liminal space between childhood sexlessness and teen sexuality that was placed under pressure by her more mature peers who expected her to engage in sexual activities such as hooking up and having boyfriends. University and its associated social spaces, hooking up and relationship-seeking, provided her with a less serious context in which to experiment with a variety of sexual performances. She began to experience herself as a desirable partner and experiment to discover her sexual preferences, engaging with aspects of sexual subjectivity that would position her to exploit the opportunities her relationships would later provide (and to which she would sometimes return). These 'practice' spaces may provide a starting point for sexual subjectivity development for young women who have had little or no other way of accessing this aspect of themselves.

Although critics of young women's behaviour in permissive spaces argue that it benefits masculine sexuality as non-committal and pleasure-seeking (Campbell, 2008), I suggest that these paces provide opportunities to chose behaviours/performances that exceed what has been experienced in the past. As Hamilton and Armstrong (2009, p. 605) note, women's genuine interest in hook ups does not necessarily equate to their fulfilling men's interests, but may in fact represent a genuine engagement with the sexual self. Although (traditional) heterosexuality benefits masculinity, young women may benefit too as they attempt to move into, and occupy, this previously segregated space and access some of its relational privileges. There is no requirement to perform traditional masculine sexual behaviour, so these spaces present opportunities for young women to experience sex and sexuality outside of feminised and private spaces.

---

“Sometimes you just need to kiss someone- nothing more. Some people crave intimate situations when they're single, without wanting to get into anything more serious.” (R68)

Young women acting in these spaces have an opportunity to disentangle sex and desire from emotion and intimacy, to break away from the required romance of heterosexuality for women, to see what sex and sexuality can mean for them when so unencumbered.

### **No Space for Casual Sex**

If permissive spaces allow young women access to an ambiguous range of non-relationship sexual activities, they are more restrictive with respect to the explicitly defined category of casual sex. Waitt et al.,’s (2011) research suggests that spaces that position heterosexual young women as available for casual sex are ones to be avoided or only temporarily occupied. If public spaces where sex can be accessed are associated with disreputable women (as Massey, 1994, suggests), or queer subjectivities (see for example Bell, 1995; Green, et al., 2010), then young women influenced by normative heterosexual social pressures may feel the need to avoid being seen as explicitly sex-seeking in public spaces due to these associations (among others).

Although casual sex can take some advantage of justificatory dialogues such as alcohol excuses and fun-seeking (“it's possible it just gets accepted as 'one of those dumb and funny things you do when you're drunk'.” (Kim)), some participants attempted to distance themselves from it (“Ok for others”), suggesting that these strategies were not fool-proof with respect to protecting participants and their reputations.

Whilst understanding that casual sex is something that they have the right to access—“Women and men should be free to do as they wish” (R102)—the punitive social costs of being known to have casual sex made it an inaccessible choice for many. These tensions were not lost on some participants:

“I worry about being a 'slut'; I theoretically disagree with the entire premise that girls should restrict the number of people they sleep with simply to avoid having a high 'number', and therefore risking ostracism/judgement/becoming unattractive to men. However, I can't seem to shake it .... I worry so much about the fact that I am unlikely to find a marriage partner, because my 'number' is likely to be quite high by the time I settle down. I know that this is ridiculous for so many reasons...” (Liz)

Trying to reconcile the need to conform to proscriptions of appropriate/good femininity with

---

a want to enjoy their sexuality without the need for commitment, young women find themselves in a very gendered bind. Freedom and fun butt against social forces that attempt to push young women back towards the relative safety of home as a space for female sexual expression. Public spaces are dangerous places.

“Casual sex to me ... seems like it could be dangerous because I've been warned about the dangers of being a woman alone at night, intoxicated, with a man I don't know etc. my whole life and from a whole raft of people!” (Kim)

Physical risks are coupled with pervasive moral messages that position young women who have casual sex as other (Massey, 1994, p. 234).

“I still wanted sex, quite badly at times but my parents attitude to casual sex was always along the lines of "I suppose people can do that if they want, but you wouldn't want to do that, would you?"” (Gemma)

Thus the threat of deviancy is closely associated with casual sex for many participants and their peers, parents, and social cohorts. One of the few successful ways young women had found to avoid judgement was to keep casual sex encounters discreet, either by categorising them as hook ups or managing how and where they were conducted. For example, Gemma's casual sex encounters were conducted away from her home environment (where peer groups and family members could act as surveilling and disciplining forces (Bogle, 2008, p.18)), and her partners were outside of her social circles and thus more socially anonymous.

“The [first] guy I had sex with ...I had no reason to think I'd ever see him again or that anyone he spoke to about it would recognise me” (Gemma)

Despite anonymous sex offering a kind of hedonistic experience for some groups (Lieshout in Bell, 1995, p. 307), it may instead symbolise an extension of the safety of private spaces in similar ways that ‘closed doors’ can shut out prying eyes. Because homes are subject to “rules and regulations” that are embedded in our familial/peer/community relationships (as well as public rules of appropriate heterosexual performance (Johnston & Longhurst, 2010, pp. 41-45)), the only way to ensure that the evidence of casual sex never ‘leaks out’ of that privacy and into our community environment is to remove the act even further—to foreign locations, with strangers who have an infinite ‘degree of separation’ to a young women's relationships network. Although Gemma's machinations to engage in casual sex without the risk of judgement were the most notable example, the overall necessity for working to ensure discretion was a much commented upon, and therefore explicit requirement for participants.

---

“casual sex makes you a slut so you need to hide it”

Tolman’s (2002, p. 134) classification of hidden desire fits this kind of sexual engagement— young women are aware of themselves as desiring subjects yet act to manage these desires, allowing themselves to be desiring only in certain safe spaces where the threat of stigma is managed or reduced. Discretion, alcohol consumption and the recategorisation of behaviours as ambiguous hooking up allow young women to hide their desiring selves from judging audiences. In many ways, these tactics can be read as an attempt to bring the protection of private space out into public spatial relations.

Resisting moralising stigma that came with attempts at permissive space occupation was difficult when stigma called into question the genderedness of those under a judging lens. Many participants suggested that sex for women was different than sex for men, and framed their understanding of casual sex as a gendered activity.

“The guys that I have 'dated' [hooked up with] just wanted sex.” (Angela)

“casual sex is something I find really hard to wrap my head around, that young women would want to do something meant to be special with someone they don't know” (R50)

Feminising sex as emotional was a prominent theme for all kinds of sexual interactions, and although it is a valid aspect of sexual expression for many women the essentialising nature of these comments served to recast engagement in casual sex not as agentic but as atypical/unfeminine. Resistance to this dialogue signalled an awareness of the potential to uncouple sex from love, and to behave differently.

“i think casual sex is probably a really good opportunity to have some no strings attached fun, where you're not bound by ... preconceived notions of what's acceptable or not.... you can be a bit more aggressive about getting what you want and maybe not so 'thoughtful” (Kim)

Kalish and Kimmel (2011) suggest that permissive interactions reflect a ‘masculinisation of sex’, but there is little in what Kim outlines above that is inherently masculine. If anything, her comments appear not-feminine, and suggest that there are many ways in which to occupy socio-sexual spaces beyond a masculine-feminine binary:

“I think it felt liberating because I knew that it was my choice, that I was in control and sexy and could have him (or not) if I wanted.”

---

“ i think that if a woman wants to have casual sex [it] is sexually empowering as well because she's doing it under her terms and she's merely wanting to satisfy a craving” (Jess)

At its most basic, permissive spaces may simply provide opportunities for young women to understand themselves as subjects of desire that others may wish to engage sexually with:

“for me, getting some guy to agree to have sex with me, and finding that I could go through with it, were almost more important than anything that actually happened once we were in the bedroom... it meant I could prove to myself that yes, I was capable of finding a partner” (Gemma)

Gemma’s comment helped illuminate the self doubts that many young women may have, from the moment they enter into spaces of socio-sexual interaction, regardless of their orientation to the scripts of femininity and heterosexuality. Despite Gemma being a self-professed feminist with strong ideas on what and how sex should work for her with respect to feeling empowered and agentic and resisting normative scripts, she was not immune to engaging in this aspect of the current sexual culture as a way to understand herself.

### **No Strings Attached ... or Sitting on the ‘/’<sup>42</sup>**

Fuck buddy arrangements would seem to provide young women who are not relationship-seeking with the best set of options with respect to engaging in sex that meet many of the requirements set out in the SRS whilst pursuing their desires outside of a relationship context. They sit on something of a liminal space between private and public, where the kinds of sex engaged in are usually those associated with both public spaces (unemotional, unromantic sex) and private spaces (sex that can mimic ‘relationship’ agreements and can take place in home spaces). In this regard they offer some protection against the threat of promiscuity judgement, but are threatening because they are contra to the central tenet of heterosexual relationships—romantic, love-focused.

“[S]ex does not have to involve relationships” (R4), was a common opinion voiced by participants. Relationships were viewed as requiring commitment and could prove complicated and problematic, reflecting some young women’s want to avoid the emotional labour incumbent in relationships (Wade and Heldman, in press). For those without the time

---

<sup>42</sup> The ‘/’ is that of the public/private, which may be a space where individuals and activities can reside, without being reducible to either domain (Bell, 1995, p. 312), or may in fact inhabit both, suggesting its vacuousness.

for commitments it was a satisfactory alternative, one which made sense to many participants who were studying (Wade, 2011).

Fuck buddies could provide “all of the pros of a relationship, [and none] of the cons!” (R66) They were better than casual sex as they provided access to sex that can “feel safer and easier than casual sex.” (R43). Known partners were perceived to be generally trustworthy, and fuck buddy arrangements could “reduce number of sexual partners and therefore associated health risks.” (R2)

Known partners also increased the chances of more satisfying sex as they were in a position to learn the body and associated preferences. Thus, they offered opportunities to explore sexual desires and preferences

“They are a way of young women experimenting [sic] and gaining experience whilst exploring their own sexuality” (R129)

Many of the positive comments about fuck buddies legitimated them by referring to women’s “sex drives” as natural, as “urges”, and as “sexual frustration[s]” that needed to be eased—an adoption of the male sex drive script and biological discourses about sexuality and desire. This provided young women with justifications for their behaviour and provided ways for them to move beyond the romance script and into the ‘/’ between public and private spaces of sex that are usually preserved for (heterosexual) men. Whether accessing the masculine preserve of the fuck buddy and/or booty call<sup>43</sup> equates to a masculine performance, or attempts to occupy masculine spaces in different (non-masculine) ways, depended upon the participant and her orientation to the arrangement.

Fuck buddy arrangements were framed as potentially successful if they were ethical arrangements (also noted by Carmody, 2009). They required good communication between partners about their wants and intentions, respectful treatment and some element of care, and for both partners to be ‘on the same page’ with respect to their expectations and requirements.

“Probably fun as long as emotions are managed and the two buddies talk about it.” (R12)

“However they can work out really well if you genuinely care about each other beyond the other persons 'sexual utility' to yourself” (R56)

---

<sup>43</sup> A booty call is someone with whom ‘you’ can have a sexual hook up without being in a formal relationship (Douglas, 2004)



However these requirements were challenging when reflecting on how little preparation young people are given with respect to sex education (formal and otherwise), and how difficult it was for many participants to communicate honestly and confidently about sex. This is further problematised by media imagery that reinforces the idea of romantic heterosexuality (see for example Jackson, 2005b, p. 309), the gendered role-framing of femininity as passive and wanting (Gavey, 1993, p. 93), and men as sexually knowing. This all contributes to making the establishment of ideal fuck buddy relationships difficult due to their atypicality, despite the potential they present with respect to subjective engagement.

The subversive potential inherent in fuck buddy relationships is partially in the decoupling of romantic emotion from sex for women, undermining romance scripts and relational imperatives, presenting young women with alternative ways of engaging in respectful sexual partnerships without conflating love with sex. The number of women who ascribed to this was much smaller than those who considered fuck buddies to be problematic precisely because they were not sufficiently emotional. The predominant criticism of fuck buddy relationships was that they were degrading for women and demeaned sex, often due to the absence of romantic love.

“Its degrading to women. I feel that if a woman has 'fuck buddies' she must have such low self esteem” (R143)

Low self-esteem's implication in all non-relationship sex suggested that women's (narrowly defined) agentic behaviour should be restricted to healthy, active relationship-seeking, rather than sex-seeking. Sex-seeking without a relationship imperative or an enactment of the performance rules of romantic heterosexuality was pathologised, thus having fuck buddies was considered to be dysfunctional behaviour that mentally healthy young women would not engage in. Trying to occupy a liminal space was equated with deviancy.

Fuck buddies were also seen as a way of degrading the 'sanctity' of relationships.

“They have little idea of self worth, nor the idea that being in a relationship is a positive thing.” (R206)

If the assumption, then, is that “emotion and sex always go together for girls” (Amber), separating sex from a (loving) relationship therefore suggests that fuck buddies are in some way uncaring, non-nurturing, unfeminine, and 'unfemale'.

---

Relationships as some sort of sacred or special space represents the associations between relationships and homes, homes and women, and women as nurturing and caring (Johnston & Longhurst, 2010). Although sex is a requisite part of a relationship (Tyler, 2008, p. 366), it is not something that is engaged in for its own sake, according to some participants. In fact the deprioritisation of (pleasurable) sex in favour of a “loving [and] nurturing relationship” references the primacy of romance and the relational imperative that reflects feminine ideas about women’s sex roles. This kind of sentiment appeared to underlie a number of responses that suggested fuck buddies are degrading, and was reinforced by comments suggesting that sex ought to be “meaningful with someone you love.” (R247) In this regard fuck buddies present as emotionally risky for women, because if women conflate love with sex (a safer practice for women (Holland et al., 1998, p. 101)), fuck buddy arrangements represent the antithesis of this conflation.

“they can be great to relieving sexual frustration but in my experience, women have trouble seperating [sic] sex from emotion and usually end up broken-hearted.” (R90)

For some this result reflected the presumption that fuck buddy arrangements were a relationship-seeking exercise that would not end well due to gendered sex roles. The ‘not ending well’ aspect suggested failure not so much of a balanced yet non-romantic relationship but unreciprocated romantic feelings by traditionally masculine men who were not interested in relationships.

“From what I have heard most young women call it a "fuck buddy" but tend to end up hurt when it doesn't lead anywhere (but there are exceptions!)” (R132)

Although one participant noted that she was in a long term relationship that evolved from a fuck buddy arrangement the overwhelming opinion was that chances of this sort of outcome were low. If this arrangement was seen as normatively challenging, its ‘inherent’ risks seemed to far overshadow the positive opportunities it may offer.

Fuck buddies that are entered into with an ethical approach of communication, respect, care, and the required sexual health precautions, appear to provide an alternative way for young women to engage in the development of a sexually subjective self without moving to private space-situated romanticised relationships. Fuck buddies are however open to some kinds of traditionally masculine behaviour that participants were wary of in permissive space interactions.

---

“Until recently I've been seeing a guy one or two times a month for sex; while the sex itself was [reasonably] good, I don't necessarily feel good about it afterwards (a feeling made more complicated by the fact he is my ex). It made me feel somewhat cheap, especially as he wasn't necessarily very respectful. In the last month or so I've been seeing someone else who I guess I'm not totally used to yet sexually but who is enthusiastic and enjoys sex /with me/ which makes it more emotionally fulfilling.”  
(R203)

R203's experiences with different partners suggests the need to enter into fuck buddy arrangements from an ethical position aiming at mutual enjoyment. Although not a loving relationship, they can still be emotionally satisfying/safe, and the preference for sex as meaningful and intimate can still be achieved. Romantic love is not necessary for young women who do not want it. Comments suggesting that sex and emotion do not necessarily have to go together may be more suggestive of love not being necessary, rather than caring and some sort of less involved emotional connection. Laura's fuck buddy experience with her friend provided a successful example based on friendship and platonic love/caring which provided sufficient emotional grounds for a safe sexual relationship to be engaged in without having to commit to the complications of love-based relationships and their incumbent demands on women, for example emotional labour (Jackson, 1995, p. 21). She also exhibited how a fuck buddy relationship does not need to d/evolve into either bad behaviour or one partner becoming romantically oriented towards the other. Friendships can still be maintained within and outside of the arrangement, and emotional safety managed.

That most participants were sceptical about the possibility of success in fuck buddy arrangements reflects the strength of social pressures that dictate women and sex belong within the framework of romantic (heterosexual) relationships, with their attendant gender roles and space occupations. Fuck buddies present an opportunity to occupy private spaces where sex is had in ways that are different and not typically feminine. But it is atypicality that is itself problematic, as it associates women with either masculine sexual performance traits, or traits that mark women out as in some way 'other', deviant and/or dysfunctional. Stigma therefore makes these arrangements hard to access and drives them into hermetically sealed private spaces where their disruptive power is hidden away from judging audiences.

---

### **Choosing from a Lack of Options**

A number of young women expressed their resistance to the idea that sex and relationships are concomitant for women, and that sex is necessarily emotional. Some wanted a freer context in which to engage in sex:

“we should be able to do what we like, when we like, with whom we like without social consequences.” (R42)

Some participants suggested the bounded nature of permissive spaces socialised young women into feeling bad about having casual sex and hooking up:

“If casual sex was not so dangerous healthwise and socially, I can't see any reason I would feel bad about it.” (Lisa)

Feeling bad after non-relationship sexual interactions was a much reported reaction (mirroring other research, see for example Campbell, 2008; Eshbaugh & Gute, 2008; Seig, 2007), and highlighted how internalised stigma and gendered spatial rules conflict with want to participate in non-relationship sexual behaviours. These cultural and intrapsychic script elements can push young women towards relationship space, or into avoiding sexual interactions altogether when single.

“I don't feel like having sex with anyone I'm not in a relationship with, which I think is kind of annoying - sometimes I want to be able to go out, experiment and feel good about it...” (Amanda)

Although relationships were less risky, choosing them so as to access sex was not necessarily a positive choice for young women:

“we discussed recently how we feel it is unfair to abstain from sex simply because we do not have long term boyfriends. I am not one to be in a mediocre relationship just for the hell of it” (Liz)

Despite some participants seeing relationships as a compromise they had to make in order to have the sex they wanted, the risks incumbent in for example casual sex made the choice difficult, especially when risks had also been internalised:

“there seem to be so many negative consequences and the biggest concern for me aside from the obvious is getting emotionally hurt and trusting someone enough to have casual sex with them etc. Because even though it's not like it is with someone you care about it is still personal and intimate [sic] and I'm just not that trusting. If that wasn't a concern or an issue, if i wasn't perfectly happy with my partner and if sti's and pregnancy weren't possibilities i think i would” (Nicole)

---

Nicole and other participants suggested that one of the principle issues with attempting to safely occupy and act in permissive spaces centred on the very men they were possibly interacting with.

Yost and Zurbriggen's (2006) US study on (non-relationship) sexual engagements outlined the different motivational factors and attitudes for both men and women in permissive spaces, illustrating the gendered nature of these spaces as traditionally masculine, and the kinds of characteristics/attitudes more likely to be exhibited by those who engage in these behaviours. Men from the study who displayed more traditionally masculine traits were more likely to display attitudes that reflected belief in "victim-blaming myths about rape" (p. 170), "*higher levels of power motivation and lower levels of affiliation-intimacy motivation*" (p. 163, their italics). New Zealand researchers Terry and Braun (2009) discuss some of these traits as what they call 'immature masculinity'. Men in this developmental stage are characterised by a focus on PVI, objectifying and instrumentalist treatment of women, and having heterosex as proof of their masculinity (p. 168). Comments from my participants reflected their concerns about these characteristics. Narratives of negative experiences that motivated young women to no longer engage in non-relationship space sex-seeking described instrumentalist and objectifying approaches by some young men.

"I had been avoiding any sexual relationships for almost a year after I had my feelings hurt by sleeping with a boyfriend I really liked who dumped me the next week." (Liz)

Thus preconceptions around the kinds of potential partners available in permissive space based on stereotypes of masculine behaviour, and reinforced by actual behaviour, may act to discourage women from these spaces. Additionally, because this 'immature masculinity' may be the dominant and persisting constructive force in permissive spaces, the agentic subjective and resistant approaches some young women take with respect to accessing sexual partners may be ineffective in the face of masculinity based on power and control (Wilkins, 2004, p. 346).

Me: so good hook ups are ones where the guys act mature and respectful and the ones that aren't are where the guys are on the conquest

Amber: yea i think so, conquest is a good way to put it its like they think that they tricked the girl when thats not necessarily true

Research also suggests that men with lower interest in non-relationship sexual engagement are less likely to display negative traditional masculine traits and are more egalitarian in their

---

attitudes towards women (Walker, Tokar & Fisher, 2000, p. 106). Terry and Braun (2009, pp. 171-172) describe this as an (imagined) maturation of masculinity, where long-term relationships are evidence of this maturing process. For those women aware of gender disparities, issues of equality and constraining social factors on women's lives and sex lives, non-traditional or mature masculine partners may be more attractive (Backus & Mahalik, 2011 for discussion). Bex and Gemma described their partners this way<sup>44</sup>, and both experienced sex lives that were egalitarian, sexually fulfilling, and exploratory and referenced sufficient space for their desires to be subjectively engaged with.

Thus, the literature and participant comments suggest that if the non-relationship space was populated by men who posed less emotional and stigma-related risks to young women then some young women would be inclined to participate in these spaces more and eschew relationships. The young women who were willing to ignore the risks associated with the SRS and traditionally masculine orientations to non-relationship sex considered non-relationship space, at least in the short term, to be a place for growth in ways perhaps not accessible in relationship space.

“I think it was that I had had what I wanted from casual sex: an introduction. In some ways it was a good way to learn. It meant that mistakes didn't linger.”  
(Gemma)

For some, permissive spaces—anywhere not considered relationship space—offered a plethora of sexual opportunities that could be exciting and adventurous in ways that relationships were not.

“It has always been a not-so-secret fantasy of mine to have a different lover from all corners of the world. I would love to have those experiences and see for myself who are the best lovers! As well as that, I simply wanted to experience what the sexual world has to offer. Yes, there are negative consequences to sex, but if I was not in a relationship and I was certain to take all the precautions, then yes, I would be having a more 'promiscuous' lifestyle. To be honest, sometimes I fear that because I'm in a serious relationship right now, that means I will never sleep with a different man again. I know that makes me sound like a horrible, 'slutty' person, and I love my partner to bits, but I feel like I might be missing out on something.” (Kelly)

Wanting to experience a range of different partners and sexual styles was also mentioned by other participants, suggesting young women may be variety-seeking in ways similar to young men. Feeling guilty for wanting more than her current relationship offered positioned Kelly

---

<sup>44</sup> Bex described her partner as intelligent, non-conventional, egalitarian and sexually evolved. Gemma's partner was described as a feminist, and self-aware

as slutty rather than self-aware, a discomfort that reflected the tensions between the ideals of romantic relationships as committed and wholly satisfying, expectations of women as sexual preferably within relationships, and the reality of desiring subjectivity.

Other members of the web discussion group raised their concerns around the possible permanency of their current relationships, and the impact that would have on their sex lives:

“I've been with my boyfriend coming up 2 years, since I was at school, and I see all my friends meeting guys at uni and at bars and I feel like such a boring old lady going home to my monogamous relationship. I love him, I really do, but sometimes I wish I'd met him a few years later. So I could have all the experiences of youth like my friends, but still spend the rest of my life with him.” (Beth)

Not being able to as easily and freely access the same privileges afforded to heterosexual men with respect to sexual experiences outside of relationships may present as not only frustration but also a truncation of spaces in which young women can discover and experience their sexual subjectivity, as the spaces in which sex is permitted for women (relationships) provide a paucity of experiences for some.

Participant stories and comments suggested an inevitability to ending up in a relationship, and that it may happen sooner than some young women who want to be more sexually exploratory would prefer—even in hindsight. However, choosing to remain in non-relationship space was an expensive decision in terms of long-term reputational damage, which young women appeared to be aware of. The choice between unrestricted sexual access in relationships or restricted access<sup>45</sup> in permissive space provided incentives that promoted relationships above casual interactions for many.

### **Relationships—Coveted (Private) Space**

Participants were generally more positive about relationships than non-relationships with respect to sex. This was to be expected when considering the sexual component of relationships is most often conducted in private spaces—homes inhabited by either one partner or both. Homes as private, heterosexualised spaces (*vis-à-vis* their spatial orientation) present as places that are safer with respect to external monitoring (despite not actually being so), and where sex is expected to happen (Johnston & Longhurst, 2010, pp. 41-44). Homes also place women on ‘their’ side of the binary of gender-associated spaces. Men inhabit

---

<sup>45</sup> Such as recognising SRS constraints, and traditional masculinity

public spaces and can engage in and access sex in sanctioned ways (for example, picking up women in a bar), whereas women's place is traditionally the home space, and sex acts there are legitimated under a number of rationales that do not necessarily present women as sexually desiring but rather construct femininity as sexually passive or asexual (for example, to keep a husband happy, the performance of conjugal duties, to have a family, as a service in exchange for home and safe-keeping). Despite their gender constraints homes as private spaces for sex also present opportunities "where inhabitants can escape the disciplinary practices that regulate our bodies in everyday life" (Bell & Valentine, 1995, p. 108). Thus, despite relationships as an expression of the rules of heterosexual (home) space occupation representing a retreat into normative feminine roles/performances, they can also present opportunities for shedding the traditional/appropriate/good feminine performance in favour of something different.

How young people move beyond the restrictive gendered sexual performances, and the heteronormative framing of relationships and their constitutive gender roles and rules for space occupation is not as simple as the above quote might suggest. 'Normal sex' is that which is performed in the heterosexual monogamous relationship (Valentine, 1992), and as such is predicated on rules as to what that 'normal' equates to—for example a biologised, PVI-prioritising, procreative model (Tiefer, 2000). The privacy and discretion afforded by homes does not necessarily provide an escape from this limitation, which may in fact be reinforced by the symbolism inherent in the located heterosexual relationship.

Nicole's narration was an example of the constrained nature of good/appropriate femininity performed within the home/relationship. She explained how she felt a need to control her sexual behaviour because she would feel "too sexy" if she performed acts that went too far beyond the normative range that fit within her understanding of how she should behave sexually in a committed heterosexual relationship<sup>46</sup>. When her partner wanted to engage in certain kinds of sexual acts that sat outside this range, she felt uncomfortable and challenged. Her feelings referenced the internal discord produced when internalised ideals of behaviour such as femininity and normative heterosexuality are challenged by non-normative events (Gaither & Sellbom, 2003, p. 164).

Nicole: I feel good about myself as 'a sexual being' in the relationship, but almost within boundaries .... I sometimes feel uncomfortable when he want's to try new things....

---

<sup>46</sup> Nicole did not indicate what these behaviours were.



Me: ....how do you handle those moments?

Nicole: I don't really, they upset me, cause I like to think I'm all enlightenend and confident but in some situations I'm really not.

As self-aware as Nicole presented herself to be with respect to understanding the social and personal drivers behind her discomfort and self-constraint, she still struggled with how to deal with her 'too sexy' discomforts. Acquiescing to her partner's requests would disrupt her role as restricting or restraining a hedonistic and relentless male desire (Gaither & Sellbom, 2003) (Nicole described her older and more experienced partner as "a bit of a slut"<sup>47</sup>) and could thus frame her as a 'bad girl' in her partner's (and her own) eyes.

Although 'bad girl' sexual acts *may* be engaged in within private relationship spaces (Jackson & Cram, 2003, p. 120), they were sometimes described as "filthy", marking them out as deviant, despite this deviance being hidden away in supposedly permissive domestic/private spaces. Problematically, private spaces still pose risks for heterosexual women when deviance is involved—for example public reactions to private sex acts such as S/M (see for example Rubin, 2011, Chapter 4), which can situate practitioners as deviant, inhuman, deserving of bad outcomes/events, and as legitimised targets of social disgust, denigration and stigma. But because sex is a required part of a heterosexual relationship (Tyler, 2008, p. 366), women's deviance within this space can be legitimised as relationship maintenance and not necessarily desiring behaviours. Male partners can be 'blamed' or held responsible for introducing young women to 'deviant' sex acts (Allen, 2003, p. 236; Gavey, 1993, p. 93), which was something several participants indicated.

Monica described her teen romantic life as a time when she felt unsure of herself: "unless people came to [her], or [she] was absolutely 100% certain they were into [her]" she had no clear idea of her attractiveness and/or desirability as a potential romantic/sex partner. As a result she was reserved and seldom engaged in sexual activities and felt frustrated at her own passivity. Her first boyfriend and sexual partner was also "shy and self conscious" and therefore did not help her to use that space to engage in sexual exploration to the degree she wanted. She understood sex could be more than the sum of her experiences but her lack of confidence stopped her pursuing her curiosity and desire. However, this changed when she entered into a relationship with an older man who had a wider range of sexual preferences

---

<sup>47</sup> Although 'slut' here references multiple sexual partners and a wide variety of sexual behaviours 'slut' as a derogatory term applied to men does not confer stigma as it does for young women, but appears to be more of a descriptive term that references variety in sexual experiences and activities, and can be somewhat comedic or complimentary.

than she had previously experienced, and was “a leader” with respect to expanding her sexual experience. This move beyond the narrower confines of normative heterosex was coupled with what Monica described as a different kind of sexual acceptance than she had previously experienced.

“And he ADORED me which was a huge confidence boost. I really felt that I was sexy [sic] for the first time in my life and that was the penny drop moment. I realized when I felt confident as a sexual being everything changed. I could take the lead, try new things and always feel safe, like I wouldn’t be judged.”

This period of “ego stroking” (Monica) and acceptance helped establish relationship sexual spaces as safe places in which to trouble heteronormative sexual performances by acting subjectively rather than passively. Research suggests that those who are less physically self-conscious and have more body-image confidence are more likely to be more confident and efficacious in pursuing their desires (Yamamiya, Cash and Thompson, 2006, pp. 425-426), a result that can be seen in Monica’s and other participants’ descriptions.

“I assume if I had a better body or had better self esteem I would enjoy sex more, less thinking and worrying what guys are thinking or judging you on while you are having sex” (R180)

Where non-relationship spaces can provide indeterminate instances of positive validation, Monica’s relationship provided a more constant and consistent experience of herself as desirable, helping her to feel confident about her body and her ability to please a partner (and herself) in ways she felt she could sustain outside of that space. After the relationship with her older partner she had several casual sex encounters, which she described as “very liberating”, before entering into another long-term relationship where she continued to be more subjectively engaged with respect to her sexual expression. Other participants related how partners changed the content of their sex lives:

“going from my rather sweet and sugar n spice first boyfriend to a relationship with a guy who's been into threesoms and anal and toys and bondage or whatever stuff that i felt pretty naiive about was a bit intimidating but in a kinda exciting way” (Kim)

“I feel like I'm only just discovering my sexuality, despite being sexually active from when I was 14. When I was 14, boys did things to you, and I knew I was supposed to like it but I didn't know what they thought they were doing. I didn't have my first orgasm until I was 17! Nobody told me what masturbabtion was or how it worked. I knew vaguely what a clitoris was, but not where it was or what it was capable of. Thank god I lost my virginity to an older man who taught me a lot in the long time we were together. He really made me feel comfortable with my body.” (R10)

Although Monica's narrative outlined the positive aspects of being recognised as desirable as part of becoming a desiring subject, as Nussbaum (1995) suggests, it however remained contingent upon her heterosexual male partner. Just because her older lover permitted her to engage with her sexual subjectivity, a repressive lover may not sanction such engagements. Thus, within spaces where relationships are performed, non-normative sexual performances are done with the permission of male partners who not only determine what desires can be entertained but whether they can be entertained at all. Monica outlined this when describing her sex life with her current partner:

“Recently I have been craving slightly more prolonged, slow sexual experiences rather than our more furious passionate encounters, and also oral sex (which he feels uncomfortable about). But I'm reluctant to talk about these things with him as I don't want to set back his growing confidence.”

Her partner's discomfort reflected not only his ideas of complimentary masculine and feminine sexual performances within normative heterosexuality, but also his capacity to inhibit non-normative performances (in a way that perhaps she could not). Thus both her male partners illustrate how they can open up or close down ways for young women to occupy private sexual spaces. A notable number of respondents indicated that their partners were in some way in control of what sex happened and how, either through explicit control, or male partners being positioned as knowers and leaders who, rather than helping young women discover what they wanted, determined what kinds of sex was had based on their (male?) desires.

Resisting male partners as 'sexual directors' was dangerous however. Women as initiators or determiners of the sex act can disrupt the male sex drive script and destabilise masculinity (Gilbert, et al., 1999, p. 768), and relationships in general. In this respect women's role is one of emotional labour in the form of ego protection which takes precedence over female desires and pleasure (Jackson, 1995). Unwillingness to upset partners suggested an understanding of how female agency and desire can threaten masculinity, but also how protecting masculinity can also limit women's ability to negotiate the sex they want.

“Even though I said earlier that I have an open and honest relationship in which I can say anything, I cant say too much too often, because this would make him feel pressured, which is not a smart or productive idea! In regards to the consideration aspect, although he almost always indicates that he wants me to give him oral sex prior to intercourse, he usually doesnt really even touch my nether regions himself. He sort of lies there knowing I want it and will thoroughly enjoy it with minimum effort from him.” (R107)

---

Beyond masculinity, relationships involve power and sexual dynamics that can be asymmetrical and somewhat contradictory. Despite domestic environments being the providence of women the space is still controlled by an 'other' to the effect that aspects of identity (in this case sexual desire/subjectivity) can be suppressed or thwarted (Valentine, 1992, p. 400). Homes for men are, after all, their castles.

The difficulties masculinity posed for some young women who wanted their desires met but were constrained in some way by masculinity, were commonly commented on:

“its harder to say what you want alot of the time because he is usually in control in the act of sex” (R208)

“My boyfriend just does what he wants and i dont really do much.” (R143)

Although women may take up sexual space in private spaces they are still beholden to a dominant masculinity that exerts power to direct the sex act in ways that are difficult to contest safely (Gilbert, et al., 1999, p. 768).

“I had a boyfriend but I felt he was too 'vanilla' in bed and didn't enjoy it. Any experimentation I attempted was met with criticism. He put me down alot and my sexual confidence suffered greatly. Whereas before I felt confident in my abilities to enjoy myself during sex as well as please my partner, I now just felt timid, insecure, self-conscious and complacent. We broke up and since then I have had only one sexual encounter, which was negative. It didn't result in orgasm for either party. I miss sex but I have no confidence anymore.” (R42)

Rather than R42's own feelings acting as a constraint, her partner performed the disciplining role of enforcing feminine behaviour by restricting sexual activity to not only what he wanted to perform but what he judged to be suitable. Attempts at resisting femininity and normative heterosexuality can thus be closed off by disciplining/dominant masculine performances in ways that can far outlast the context in which they occurred. This disciplining can reach through all sexual spaces, and can determine performances and frustrate participants:

“[What would make my sex life better?] less thinking and worrying what guys are thinking or judging you on while you are having sex, also acting out my desires that might not be an accepted thing in society without thinking that the guy must think I'm a weirdo or morally bad.” (R131)

“Also my own desires etc are only being recognised by me trying things out and seeing whether they work or not. Being in a restrictive household/society represses a person's ability to do this.” (R70)

“Some desires i feel embarrassed [sic] about because it makes me feel like a bit of a slut even though im not, and i dont want my partner thinking that of me.” (R125)

As masculine sexuality is often framed as more variety-seeking and experimental (Gaither & Sellbom, 2003), female partner expectations of male sexuality may typically anticipate sensation-seeking, whereas male expectations of female sexuality as passive may not. Negotiating sexual variety may therefore be easier for men than women, where attempts to determine the content of a sexual episode by women may upset male ideas not only of femininity but also heterosexual masculinity (Holland, et al., 1998, pp. 110-111).

The amount of investment in safeguarding gender roles in the heterosexual relationship dyad/space performed by young women primarily involved a retreat from desiring sexual agency to femininity, passivity, male ego-boosting and non-confrontational behaviour within ‘normative’ power relations. As Holland, et al., (1998, p. 113) describe it:

“normative heterosexuality and normative heterosexual acts define young people in relation to each other, him as actor, her as acted upon; his agency, her subordination; her body for his pleasure. His body for his pleasure too.”

This interactive paradigm seemed particularly entrenched in the way many participants described their relationships. Privileging of normative rules of heterosex can be seen in the dominant definition of real sex as PVI, where the vagina is “the primary site for male pleasure” (Waldby cited in Hillier, Harrison, & Bodwitch, 1999, p. 78; endorsed by participants), and the privileging of penetration over women’s enjoyment of non-PVI activities such as oral sex, which as noted above some partners withheld. In some respects this prioritising of male sexual desires is not surprising when women deprioritise themselves in favour of male needs in a variety of other areas of life (Jackson, 1995, p. 25), particularly within the private/home space. The rules for being a good partner centred on, to some extent, the sexual service of men, at least as of primary import in how sex was had, when, where and at what pace. Thus, being sexual within relationships was often driven by male-partner sexual preferences, where participants subordinated their own desires to those of their male partner (Holland, et al., 1998, p. 118).

Many respondents exhibited this propensity to match their male partner’s sex drive, following a partner-determined range of sex acts, from “vanilla” preferences that reduced the capacity for sexual exploration, to variety-seeking that determined the direction of sexual exploration. Deprioritising their own sexual wants in favour of their partners was not always visible to

---

young women, even those who considered themselves to be subjectively aware, illuminating the pervasive regulatory force of normative heterosexual practices with respect to gender roles.

“The first relationship I was in, I found that my partner had very specific ideas about the sort of sex that would work for him, and that while he was willing to deviate from that occasionally for my sake, the main themes were pretty much set. Fascinating as his style was (I was more than happy to stay for a while and learn from it), it did get stifling eventually. It's odd because, at the time, I felt that I had enough control to feel safe and respected -- where by 'safe' I meant 'capable of saying no whenever I needed to' and by 'respected' I meant that if I asked for something he'd recognise that I had a right to want things for myself and go out of his way to make room for that. In hindsight, though, I realise that asking for something really did mean "going out of the way" -- the default track was what he wanted. Anything that I wanted was a diversion from the main story.” (Gemma)

The secondary nature of women's pleasure and desire as something that is adjunct to the main sex act was evident in the number of comments by participants about their ability to say no and/or to be able to ask for what they wanted in sex. Rather than female pleasure and desire being an assumed part of the sex act, it had to be consciously cared about to be accommodated in a way that male partner pleasure did not.

Deprioritisation of female pleasure and desire in favour of male pleasure and desire was visible in other complicated ways:

“I have a higher sex drive than him and secretly think he is a bit lazy in the sack, even though I can't really complain because I do 'come' and do thoroughly [enjoy] our love making.” (R107)

R107's comment suggests that because orgasm was achieved and she enjoyed herself she has no cause for complaint. Although desiring masculinity may be permitted to be actively variety-seeking in the course of orgasm-attainment (see for example Nicole's partner), this does not seem to be a default reciprocal condition. It is reasonable to interpret this as an impact of different conceptions of male and female sexuality—men are more desiring than women, therefore what is satisfactory for him ought to be more than satisfactory for her. Coupled with the social dialogue about the difficulties women have around achieving orgasm (Tiefer, 2010), that it occurred at all may be seen by male partners as more important than how it happened. That she might want (or wanted) difference in the sex act might therefore go unaddressed, something some young women accepted without pursuing change.

---

“My partner and I have sex about once a week. On most occasions we both orgasm but sometimes I don't. I am happy but it could be better and slightly more frequent” (R77)

This is further complicated for women by the recognition that relationships are supposed to be the context in which sexual wants/desires/needs are more likely to be met compared to non-relational interactions. This can make complaining complex, particularly when the deprioritisation of participant satisfaction can be legitimised:

“sometimes my boyfriend comes before i do and then doesnt follow up. he also works nights so mostly i have a vibrator that i use when im aroused” (R129)

R129 suggests women's role in the heterosexual dyad is more to do with sexual servicing of his desires than the mutual addressing of desires of both partners. His lack of reciprocity can be remedied by her agency which is framed as a suitable replacement. Instead of female partner desire and satisfaction residing within the partnered sex act, it is instead outside of it, as an addendum to the main event. Once his pleasure is taken care of, she could then take care of her own, reducing her role to that of servicing his needs (and then perhaps her own).

“I meet my own needs and then *we* meet his.” (R165, emphasis added)

Although reciprocity in sex as a *quid pro quo* arrangement can provide opportunities for women to act as sexual agents and pursue their own desires (Braun, et al., 2003), participant ability to ensure its occurrence was undermined by dominant masculinity and male sex drive as prioritised need, where male orgasm can signal the end of sex, and female orgasm can be less meaningful (pp. 247-248).

Deprioritisation was also justified by over familiarity or being comfortable with one another:

“I love my fiancee very much and we know what each other likes and are comfortable with each other to not be nervous at all - however, this also means sometimes he doesn't try as hard as he used to to 'get me there' so I could be a little happier I suppose!” (R173)

The “I suppose” again suggests that the value and legitimacy of female pleasure is contestable with respect to its priority within heterosex. For other respondents the total absence of female desire and pleasure further reinforced the service role some young women appeared to perform within the relationship context:

“I have a long term boyfriend and we have very good sex, just sometimes I have sex when I don't particularly feel like it to make him happy.” (R157)

---

“I don't enjoy it that much but am somewhat obliged to do it by my long term boyfriend.” (R165)

“Other times it feels like a chore- particularly if I haven't felt like sex for a while and so feel bad to say I don't want to again.” (R118)

Here male pleasure is prioritised and lack of female pleasure and desire ignored, reflecting the embeddedness of conceptions of male desire needing to be satisfied or released, and female bodies as in service of that purpose. Ironically, this kind of private space engagement appears similar to that where men access sex in public sexual spaces such as brothels. Such an association is one young women wanted to avoid (see for example their aversion to the slut label), and yet was one they sometimes performed within the discrete sexual spaces of relationship sex. The gendered notion of this heterosex-role was evident in their being no examples of male partners similarly ‘servicing’ female participants, despite a number of participants stating they had stronger “libidos” than their male partners and that they wanted more sex.

### *A Good Place to Start ...*

As positive spaces for sexual subjectivity, long-term relationships appeared to provide some participants with opportunities to engage in communication, discussion and exploration of desires. As Kaestle and Halpern (2007, pp. 134-137) suggest in their study, loving relationships benefit women by providing them access to sex, and increase the likelihood of reciprocal sexual activities other than PVI being engaged in, for example oral sex. However, this can be complicated not only by the constraints already discussed but also partner and own expectations about how free they are and how positive an experience it is meant to be. For many young women this situation often arose because such an exploratory environment presented new opportunities that hadn't been experienced before, with respect to sexual self-knowledge and comfort with self.

“I think I should be more confident in trying new things, experimenting. It's not so much that I'm not okay with certain things, that's my right. but I feel like I don't even know whether or not i like things, cause I don't try.” (Nicole)

Older and/or more experienced partners such as Monica's can provide safe environments for positive self-engagement however:

“[I] would never have the confidence to ask for certain things before that [entering into a relationship with a more experienced partner] or engage in anything kinky” (Monica)



The long-term nature of relationships that come with these kinds of explicit expectations, and that are free from judgement, permit exploration that can have positive effects on sexual subjectivity and agency.

Me: do you think you've grown in terms of confidence and agency with your current bf?

Kim: yeah for sure

i guess it's [just] expectations

and with my bf expecting me to know what i want and like - or if not, to be ready to find out - means it [just] happens

i do think that confidence and agency for me are things that only really come with feeling pretty comfortable with someone

.... as far as agency goes (I'm guessing you just mean taking control?) I think that for me that just came when i realised how mcuh [sic] better it can be when you make things happen.

Partner expectations about participant's subjective engagement in sex was not always positive however. Nicole's partner was older and more experienced, and although she described her sex life as "pretty great" she also felt like "a beginner" with respect to sex, commenting that she sometimes felt confronted by his 'less normative' wants and requests. Megan noted that sex with her older and more experienced boyfriend made her feel "a little insecure about how and when I should be asking for what I like", whilst another participant noted that she felt "awkward" with her more experienced partner. A caring, safe and private space/context for non-normative sexual engagement thus may not be enough for some young women to overcome internalised femininity, performance anxieties, or other ideologies that inhibit the kind of full engagement they may knowingly want.

For other participants, sexpert partners helped create spaces in which they could engage in exploration of their own desires that were not necessarily predicted on male partner performance and variety-seeing. For example, Bex described her partner as very sexually experienced, with expectations around her own self-discovery:

"my partner's like if you don't know what you like then how am I meant to help you. So he's very keen on the sort of the exploring yourself as well as exploring the other person so yeah"

Again partner expectations are determinate with respect to requiring a particular level of subjective sexual engagement, but as Bex presented herself as someone who expressed her teen-age rebellion through being sexually engaged and experimental, her current role was not one of being ‘taught’ but rather as a participant in an active sex life. She described her partner as not requiring ego-protection with respect to his expertise, so although he expressed his preferences and desires, so too did she, signalling that they were both in a position of power with respect to driving the direction of their sexual interactions.

“I ’m kind of adventurous [laugh] my partner and I kind of have this list of places where ... [laugh].... I think it’s that I feel quite happy exploring things and I’ve been quite happy sort of not fitting in and ... because not fitting in hasn’t been a big ... thing to me I can do my own thing and I can learn about men and i can learn about my sexuality and I can find what works” (Bex)

Bex’s comments suggest that resistance to social dialogues such as femininity were important for her development of a strong sexual subjectivity, and remain so for her orientation towards her sex life. Gemma commented similarly:

“Another reason it took me until I was nearly 24 to lose my virginity is that it took me a while to stop feeling pressured by broader societal expectations, like the perception that being openly sexual is a stupid thing for a girl to do.”

Gemma also presented herself as having consciously engaged with the development of her sexual subjectivity, of which resistance to femininity and normative heterosexuality were significant elements. Masturbation and self-exploration from her early teens, reading books and websites with feminist and pro-sex slants, and talking openly about sex with a friend, were also important. As she noted with respect to building a sexual subjectivity:

Gemma: It [a sexual self] needed to be part of my identity as well.  
Something that felt truthful and comfortable.

So that I could then feel more sure of myself when I eventually went out and tried to use it in a more sexual situation.

Me: so part of your identity construction?

Gemma: very much so  
I was (as a feminist, mainly) aware of a need to be true to myself in a sexual situation.  
So I needed a sexual self to be true to  
.... Whereas if you can find a safe situation (like a showing of Rocky Horror) in which to be sexual without having sex  
then you can lay groundwork for an identity that will stand in more difficult

---

situations like sex.

A lot of it was necessary build-up, *before* I could have casual sex.  
(Or, perhaps, any sex).

Gemma suggests the power of picking permissive public spaces (like the Rocky Horror Picture Show) to perform sexual selves as part of the identity development process. She also had casual sex before relationship sex as a way to retain power over her sexual identity, and to experience sex and feel “comfort[able] with the whole idea” before she wanted or was ready for a relationship. Non-relationship spaces as presenting uncomplicated opportunities for young women to experiment were thus also presented as useful activities for self-knowledge:

“it is a good way to discover new things about yourself and the opposite sex” (R90 on CS)

“It provides a good opportunity to explore my personal desires and likes” (R88 on non-relationship sex)

Gemma’s narrative suggests that having at least some idea of what kinds of sexual engagements are preferred, and an ability to communicate them in explicit ways that present the agent as expressing their desires efficaciously with respect to them being fulfilled, were aspects that participant comments highlighted as important. In this way they were able to take advantage of opportunities particular spaces provided, as well as be influential in the co-creation of social relations within various spaces.

In general, relationship spaces appeared to be no more or less ideal with respect to providing opportunities in which sexual subjectivity and agentic empowered behaviour could be enacted. They were constrained by factors similar to those that impact young women in permissive spaces, namely their own lack of understanding and restricted learning opportunities with respect to female sexuality and their own desires in particular, and the constraining forces of masculinity and heterosexuality which can limit agentic behaviour in all spaces. Although relationships may present opportunities for negotiation with respect to moving beyond experiences delimited by male partner preferences, a sense of entitlement may be necessary if young women are to move beyond benevolent sexual experiences, where the content is determined by their partner. These negotiations are ones that will take place in both public and private spaces of socio-sexual relations, and speak more to the gendered nature of space in general, one that appears to follow western socio-sexual rules.

---

## Chapter Eight: Common Threads and Ubiquitous Themes

### Talking about Desire

Many young women noted that they would like to be better able to articulate their sexual desires. The number of comments signalled the ubiquity of communication as an issue for young women. Communication was, however, framed as complicated, constrained by fears of judgement and stigma, lack of knowledge around one's own desires, difficulties asserting oneself in verbally expressive ways due to partner dynamics, and general difficulties in accessing a language of desire.

Although McClelland and Fine (2008) note that the discourse of desire is not missing for young women *per se*, what was evident in my research is that a language with which to communicate desire was either absent for some participants, or difficult to access for others. Many did not use language to communicate their desires, and/or were reduced instead to gestures and affirming and disapproving behaviours with respect to the sex they were participating in. This indicated a paucity of language that young women were comfortable utilising, as well as constraints around utilising any language to express desire (Gomez & Marin, 1996).

“with a casual partner i feel uncomfortable verbally expressing my needs” (R171)

The discomfort that came with communication about sex was not contained to any particular space of sexual engagement in ways that reference the proprietary rule that good women do not discuss matters of sex (Greene & Faulkner, 2005).

“sometimes it can definitely be awkward trying to explain what you want in sex or during sex. I find that guys get way less stick if they were to say something like "I wanna do that girl tonight" but if a girl said it she'd been seen as way forward and slutty.” (R51)

Despite understanding how communication could improve the quality of their sex lives many felt too shy or embarrassed to do so. In some ways, this reflected participants' management of hidden desires by keeping them unknown (Tolman, 2002, p. 134).

The ability to vocalise desire with a partner or peers was considered by many to be a significant factor in successful sexual engagements where desires were fulfilled and sexual subjectivity experienced (as Smith, 2007, p. 72 also notes). One aspect of wanting to talk

---

was that it could normalise desires for participants. Some noted that they wanted to know that their peers were doing the same things or had the same wants, or that their partners would accept them if they expressed what they wanted.

“I think talking about sex with my friends while becoming sexually active was particularly important for me, we gave each other tips and worked out that everything going on was normal, which perhaps helped us to enjoy it more than someone who had to work it all out on their lonesome.” (Liz)

Lacking language and/or the space to talk had impacts on the way young women experienced their sex lives. Without the ability to communicate specific desires the palette of sexual choices available to young women can be constrained to what a partner can and does perform, and what he can be physically manipulated into performing (for example changing position or moving a partner’s hand). In this respect what an agent considers they are entitled to is restricted to what their partner considers they are entitled to (Potts, 2002, p.43). What is not verbally expressed is likely left unexperienced, particularly in non-relationship interactions.

“I believe casual sex can take the meaning of or sex because you partner will be unaware of what satisfies you.” (R102)

Remedying this ‘not-knowing-the-body’ aspect of casual sex could not be done by communication for some participants because they wanted to avoid being judged for their desires and preferences, reflecting a tension between “sexual desire and perceived sexual norms” (Pick, Givaudan, & Flom Kline, 2005). Thus, desires remained hidden and the power to negotiate sexual content is truncated.

“Most of my sexual partners are not people I am in a relationship with, so I do not particularly want to discuss my wants with them prior to sex.” (R141)

That unsatisfying casual sex experience is not surprising when young women are unable or unwilling to communicate their wants to someone who has no knowledge of their preferences.

Despite participant assurances that relationship partners knew their bodies and desires regardless of a lack of language-based communication, the ability of a partner to ‘learn-the-language-of-the-body’ was restricted to just that, responses (some genuine, others not) of the body and their own male-embodied interpretations of that. This reduced female sexual subjectivity not to active participation but at best to reactive participation and at worst to

---

“docile bodies” (Bartky, 1999; Foucault, 1995), without a place from which “to assert their own desires”(Holland, et al., 1992). Desire and pleasure, however, are not only physical reactions or responses. Psychological engagement, imagination and fantasy are a notable part of sexual encounters, particularly when it comes to learning one’s own desires and preferences<sup>48</sup>, and are elements that often require communication before they can be negotiated and engaged in, particularly if the agent is not in control of the sex act (at least to some degree). Sexual subjectivity and entitlement also require more than reactive responses to sexual engagement. Although participants noted that they were both active and happy within their sexual experiences, reactive sexual experiences are reminiscent of sexual passivity, a gendered division of sexual labour (he as acting, she as acted upon (Potts, 2002, p. 43)), and dominant masculinity (Holland, et al., 1992, p. 256).

A related issue in the inability to communicate desire was the problem of lack of self-knowledge with respect to what participants wanted sexually from their partners. Although some participants were aware that they desired something particular from/during sex, they did not know what this was and so could only engage in what was being offered. There was a notable sense of frustration among the participants who mentioned this, indicating self-awareness despite a lack of self-knowledge. This issue reflected the impact of a lack of pleasure and desire-based education for women, as well as restrictions for women on discussing sex and desire (Harvey & Shalom, 1997), described as a taboo by some participants. Although resources outside of formal education were available, for example web pages and books, some participants noted that they had no idea where to look or how to be discerning with respect to deciding if material would address their questions about desires and bodies. Others noted that they were too shy to engage in active investigation of possible resources. Several noted that peers had escorted them to sex shops or bought them vibrators, helping facilitate self knowledge and experimentation, exemplifying the power of communication to enhance participant sex lives once barriers were breached.

Despite communication not necessarily guaranteeing changes in male behaviour (see Greene & Faulkner, 2005), young women who engaged in an open dialogue about their desires appeared to have a greater sense of entitlement and related agency (Holland et al., 1998, p. 45). Some participants noted that having a partner who listened to them with respect to their

---

<sup>48</sup> Problematically, body behaviour as the mode by which consent to sex acts is communicated is an unreliable indicator, as it is often misread by men who can see desire where in fact there may only be a want for less (namely non-PVI) sexual expressions of intimacy (Pineau, 1989, pp. 239-240). Lack of language therefore problematises consent issues for young women, leaving them vulnerable to unwanted sex.

sexual wants was a determining factor in either the continuation of the sexual relationship or their active participation in it. Not being listened to may not change male behaviour but could change female behaviour with respect to endorsing constraining behaviour.

The majority of comments about communication came from participants who were in long-term relationships. They noted that they knew each other well, were comfortable together, and that it was a safe context, suggesting that for women active communication about their desires was possible within certain environments—namely ones that reduced stigma risk with respect to expressed desires (Holland, et al., 1998, p. 54). The large number of opinions positively supporting relationships as good communicative environments helped to bolster relationships as a preferable context when compared to more casual arrangements. This is understandable as relationships may allow sex to be expressed as a more socially acceptable (for women) ‘language of love’ which may in turn allow for sexual exploration (p. 86). This framing by participants can, however, overlook the constrained nature of female communication around sex in general, masking it in a pro-relationship dialogue that fails to address structural constraints around female sexual subjectivity and language use. Regardless of how positively relationships were framed, communication was still difficult for many, and was constrained by rules that often served to protect male egos and expertise (Jackson & Scott, 2007, p. 106), especially by participants who didn’t ask for what they wanted for fear of upsetting their partners.

Despite this constraint, indicators suggested that communication within the relationship context was rich for some participants, allowing them to actively engage in experimentation and pleasure-seeking. Several participants suggested that they had come to understand that sex was simply part of a relationship, that it had been demystified or deromanticised, and so they were able to engage in it more confidently. This again reflected the lack of pleasure and desire discourse (not couched in romance) available for young women, and suggested that although self-determined learning and development could often lead to satisfying sex for many participants, the development of a sexual subjectivity and a related sense of entitlement could be a “slow” or challenging process. How effective this kind of self-education was appeared to greatly depend on sexual partners.

Although a sense of entitlement to sexual pleasure was not always actively expressed, many appeared to be aware of it, expressing criticisms about their partners that indicated they wanted to be able to experience (more) pleasure, to engage more in discovering what their

---

desires were, and to communicate them freely without stigma and judgement. Many appeared to understand that this would not only improve their sex lives but also how they felt about themselves as sexual agents.

Thus a sense of entitlement appeared to include not only what they should be able to do and experience, but also what they should be able to freely communicate. This included the right to be heard, not only by partners, but also by society in general, such that their sexual subjectivities were part of a public dialogue rather than being restricted to the private sphere, as in the relationship context. Many participants appeared to be attempting to create spaces to actively engage in this kind of communication.

### **Orgasms and Embodied Tensions**

Participants expressed views about sex and sexual behaviours that referenced a number of social discourses including the male sex drive as biological imperative and therefore non-negotiable, a coital imperative that expanded into an orgasm imperative based on performance, and a sexual division of labour that deprioritised female sexual pleasure and orgasm. These have been touched on throughout the thesis, but as these discourses are noted as being part of western cultures (McPhillips, Braun, & Gavey, 2001, p. 229), they are worth closer examination. (This section particularly references New Zealand research, highlighting the salience of these imperatives in the narratives of young New Zealand women.)

#### ***The Little Train that Could: The Orgasm Imperative at Work***

The scientific master narrative of sex as natural and biological appeared in some participant comments about sex:

“[I would like] For sex to be easy and natural” (R124)

“... sex is a very natural thing” (Bex)

“it's part of human nature and happens all the time” (R87)

Tiefer (1995; 2006, para 3) argues that framing sex and pleasure-seeking as universal qualities that all individuals are able to engage in because they are innate and unlearned troubles women's performances, as their bodies can 'fail' to conform as science would tell them they should. Orgasm has been established as this benchmark of success or failure

---



(Lavie-Ajayi & Joffe, 2009, p. 99). As many women fail to experience orgasm consistently and/or at all from penetration their experiences of 'successful' or normal 'real' sex can be lacking (Cacchioni, 2007, p. 306; Maines, 2001, p. 5). Consequently many women express concerns around their sexual functioning as their bodies fail to accord with the scientific narrative and they are positioned as dysfunctional. Despite the common understanding of the uneven experience of orgasm as a measure of successful sexual engagement for women (Jackson & Scott, 2007, p. 96), for example Bex noted that she was aware that many women do not orgasm, it was nonetheless consistently referred to by participants as a way of signalling the success or failure of sexual activity (Potts, 2002, p. 34). This indicated the embeddedness of this scientific narrative in popular conceptions of sex (Allen, 2003, p. 218). The variability in achieving orgasm suggests (some) women have limited capacity to consider themselves experts in their own pleasure and/or satisfaction.

Orgasm as a marker was referenced in a number of ways. For some achieving orgasm was a mark of having come to understand their body sufficiently as a factor in 'accomplished womanhood' (Lavie-Ajayi & Joffe, 2009, p. 104):

"I've had enough sexual partners to know what I want, and I [orgasm] very very easily." (R186)

"Because I reach orgasm, I feel that I have mastered the act of sex." (R107)

This dialogue of knowing the body was common, with participants expecting the quality of their sexual experiences to improve as they got to know their bodies, the sign of which would be more, faster and/or easier orgasms. Sex that did not result in orgasm was therefore troubling for some young women and failure to orgasm could leave them feeling inadequate (Lavie-Ajayi & Joffe, 2009, p. 104).

"I have never had an orgasm and am wondering if it's my fault....I wish it was as easy for girls as it is for guys" (R121)

This reflects not only the privileging of orgasm as an indicator of normative sexual functioning but also male sexual response as the ideal with respect to ease and frequency of orgasm (Jackson & Scott, 2002). Failure to perform did not equate to a problem with the sexual performance model but with the body. Despite recognising gendered body differences, differences in body performance were not acceptable. Frustrations over non-

---

conforming female bodies were frequent. Several participants noted that it seemed unfair that their male partners could orgasm more easily than them.

“I don't find it easy to come or get sexual pleasure and so sometimes I can be left feeling annoyed, frustrated and angry that I don't have the same kind of power and understanding over my body as my boyfriend does” (R215)

R215's frustration reflects the power of the body to disrupt the dominant model with respect to normative sexual functioning, but also the model's gendered nature with respect to boyfriends setting the standard for a sense of embodiment and embodied engagement (Jackson & Scott, 2002). R215's reference to 'power over' applied not to a gendered body, but to one that does not necessarily belong to her, namely a universalised body predicated on male sexual responsiveness (Tiefer, 1995, pp. 55-57). Her wish for 'power over' this body may be periodically successful but in contrast to her male partner's ease her failure to perform results in self-criticism. Making the body conform to a model that does not necessarily reflect her embodiment, and her lack of recognition with respect to this disjunction, signalled a certain kind of disembodied experience (Holland et al., 1995, p. 8)—the sexual body which she thinks she has is not the one she sexually inhabits.

Problematic bodies were not just women's problem, but men's problem too and therefore required benevolence from male partners (Braun, Gavey, & McPhillips, 2003, p. 240).

“... now that I'm in my twenties I understand a lot more about my body and my sexuality and have managed to orgasm. My partner is wonderful and understanding and any problems I may be having, I can see them getting better.” (R215)

Benevolent partners situate the body as pathological and in need of sympathy, problem-solving and work, because it is her body that fails, rather than his performance being inadequate, particularly if his ego is to be protected (Jackson & Scott, 2007; Potts, 2000, p. 106). Because he orgasms and she does not (despite his work) her failures are her body's alone, rather than being a result of their partnered interaction or a reliance on a fragmented idea of sex as a genitals-only practice that may suit his body better than hers (Tiefer, 1995, p. 51). Under this dominant model, he can be understanding whilst she deals with her own issues.

Failure to take the 'blame' for a lack of orgasm can throw the sex roles of heterosexuality askew. In this model where he acts and she is acted upon, he is positioned as sexpert (Potts,

2002, pp. 153-173). Thus sexual pleasure becomes not only about the variability of female bodily experiences but also about avoiding male performance anxieties that can destabilise male expertise (Potts, 2000, p. 66). Supporting this extends from not complaining about a lack of orgasm, to faking/performing orgasms to support his ego (Jackson & Scott, 2007, p. 104):

“i have been sexually active for less than a year and have never had an orgasm from sexual intercourse alone (although my partner thinks i do). (R90)

Her performance validates his performance (Roberts, Kippax, Waldby & Crawford, 1995, p. 526), and feeds his ego (Jackson & Scott, 2007, p. 106), but ignores her pleasure.

“I dont like telling the guy what I want, cos i don't want him to feel he's bad at it. But I know somethings that work well for me, and i lead him to do that, or encourage him when he's doing it right.” (R196)

Positive reinforcement where participants “cheered on” their sexual partners by performing sex and orgasms reinforced expertise and further reduced the need for female agency and pleasure-seeking by teaching a partner what was pleasurable within his performed repertoire. Again female pleasure/desire were performed in ways that did not destabilise expertise, but deprioritised female pleasure/desire as something that came only when his performances were adequate or could be manipulated in non-threatening ways.

Not orgasming at all or during PVI was a reason why some participants’ sex lives were not as good as they would like them to be:

“I find it very hard to reach orgasm without using a vibrator and have never achieved an orgasm during 'real sex'” (R118)

This primacy of penetration devalued and reduced the legitimacy of women’s ways of finding sexual pleasure, here through vibrator use that reflects female embodiment (Gavey, McPhillips, & Braun, 1999; McPhillips, et al., 2001). Despite pleasurable experiences that signalled a knowing of the body on her own terms, these experiences were not recognised as valuable in and of themselves (Cacchioni, 2007, p. 304), or as ways to subjectively experience desires and their related pleasures which could then be translated into or included in partnered interactions.

---

The requirement to achieve orgasm, and the difficulties of this as a goal for young women and their partners, prompted some participants to deprioritise their pleasure and desires altogether.

“sometimes i feel bad about taking longer to climax so i just don't bother” (R241)

Concerns over the impact of not being able to orgasm quickly enough were notable. Ironically R241 expressed an engaged and subjective sex life, but her comment above reflects the body's potential to disrupt the dominant dialogue with respect to normative sexual functioning, and what that failure could mean for women, namely the requirement to deprioritise this aspect of sex because it is not happening quickly enough—namely following the roadmap of a linear sexual arousal process (Tiefer, 2000). Relying on the benevolence of a sexual partner to either facilitate orgasm or be patient until it happens can be risky for some participants, evident in the number of young women who preferred to give up on achieving orgasm rather than continue to pursue it at the risk of boring/upsetting a partner (Roberts, et al., 1995, p. 529).

Benevolence, male sexpertise and women's bodies as problematic with respect to the dominant model presented as complicated and limiting with respect to sexual subjectivity.

“I think we are brought up in a society that says if a female gets an orgasm or pleasure from sex that its lucky rather than the norm which is unfortunate because I think this influences womens confidence trying to find out about their own sexuality and sexual responsiveness.” (R215)

Some participants talked about orgasm as important, but neither necessary nor central to enjoyable sex:

“Most sexual activity is stimulating enough to lead to orgasm, or very close to, if I am close but know that a change of pace, position or whatever will lead to orgasm then I would usually take the lead in changing what we're doing so I can be satisfied.... But equally to this, there are many times I wont reach orgasm but will be satisfied enough by the sex that has ocured and won't feel the need to reach orgasm - so would communicate somehow (usually non verbally) that I was happy with the activity that had taken place and wasn't looking for something more.” (R135)

R135 disrupts the primacy of orgasm by being satisfied without one. This was reflected in her broad definition of sex and her satisfaction with the variety of physical activities she engaged in with her partner. Gemma noted similar experiences, where the want for penetrative sex that did not result in orgasm was described as more satisfying than activities

---

that would ensure orgasm but would not necessarily include penetration. Such experiences destabilise not only the necessity of orgasm as a marker for successful sex, but also the primacy of penetration with respect to satisfaction where orgasm is the ultimate outcome (Gavey, et al., 1999, pp. 46-48).

This ‘reading’ went largely unchallenged by most participants, however. In this regard sex was framed as a skill that needed to be acquired and adequately performed, the mark of which was orgasm.

“I have finally learnt how to orgasm during sex after a few years of I don't know what stopping me. I attribute this largely to the purchase of my first vibrator, as I think that it helped me to go with the flow rather than stressing out too much. Now its easy!”  
(Liz)

This focus on the orgasm is reminiscent of the “tyranny of the orgasm” (Loulan, 1989, p. 228) where fragmented and genital-oriented models of sex as process can subvert engagement with sex as a larger sensual project. Regardless of how sex is conceptualised, whether it be spiritual, loving, or physical, orgasm as an imperative, particularly one predicated on heterosexual penetrative sex, can act as a constraining force for women’s sexual enjoyment and self-discovery by dictating prescribed normative paths for accomplishment that may fail to accommodate female bodies and psyches. In addition, penetrative heterosex as legitimate potentially positions women within a sexual hierarchy where failure to perform equates to dysfunction and therefore subordination to a superior male body. In searching for ways to make orgasms happen more easily, more frequently or at all, via helpful and “generous” male partners, participants may be missing points of access to subjective desires that are not available under the heterosex model. This is particularly so if male partners are equally restricting in their sexual behaviours, and constrain the sex act through their own internalised notions of heterosexual practice (including a reliance on orgasm as a sign of successful performance).

### **Stigma—It’s a Tough World out There**

“Slut is just a girl with a libido, whereas a boy with a libido is just a boy.” (Richards, interviewed by Straus, 2000 para 15)

---

Stigma was often mentioned as a disciplinary force for many participants with respect to their sex lives and their evaluations of female sexual behaviour in general. Many framed non-normative behaviours as deleterious to reputations, and noted that deviancy outside of acceptable limits as stipulated in the conditional statements around permissible behaviour (see SRS) threatened to present individuals as promiscuous, irresponsible and of low self-esteem (as reflected in Milnes, 2010; Paul, McManus & Hayes, 2000; Sanchez, Crocker & Boike, 2005).

Participants discussed negative feelings and the impact of being stigmatised by men and women in general, and male partners and peers, as well as engaging in these dialogues themselves. Judging whilst complaining about being judged may appear contradictory, particularly when the behaviours being criticised were often ones that participants had themselves engaged in.

“although i have engaged in such behaviour, in retrospect i know i must have looked trashy.” (R90 on PSB)

“I would've thought before answering this survey and typing out what I've done that girls who do the above activites were a bit slutty...but now I realise I've done most of them.” (R10 on PSB)

However, this contradiction appeared to represent the performance of a moral character that was not only socially reinforcing with respect to constrained behaviours (Fischer, 1996, pp 54-56), but also internally disciplining and morally distancing. Criticisms situated the individual as moral by distancing them from the kinds of people who engage in bad girl behaviours (ibid). In this way policing of other women not only acted to reinforce individual morality, but to also position the critiquing individual as normatively moral (ibid). This kind of moralising dialogue was visible in the conditional statements offered in the SRS with respect to women's participation in masculine/non-relationship sexual spaces, and signalled a tension for many participants—the want to behave in sexual ways whilst attempting to control their presentation as a feminine and moral individual.

Making moralising comments about other women can be tricky however, as many participants framed themselves as not wanting to appear judgmental or critical. Jess commented about her interview, looking back over her transcript:

“it was definitely an eye opener though .... with how i saw things and how bitchy i [sounded].... i kinda sounded judgey judgey” (Jess)

Being moral can be a double-bind: appearing judgmental of others was framed as unattractive, yet not to do so may fail to adequately distance the self from individuals and their behaviours and thus by association cast doubt on their own moral character. Judging others may thus be the lesser of two evils. The contradiction in R228’s comment below illustrated the tension between wanting to appear moral but also not wanting to appear moralising:

“Its not a thing that should be encouraged but people shouldnt judge when it comes to personal decisions.” (R228 on CS)

Not wanting to be judged, not wanting to judge, but also wanting to be seen as moral suggested a single direction for behaviour for women, namely acting as morally as possible. In this respect the emergence of the SRS in participant comments is understandable, as it provides the rules for moral behaviour. As long as young women were prioritising safety over hedonistic pleasure-seeking and were being discreet and restrained in non-relationship interactions, then the risk of judgment was reduced. Performances could be sexy within feminine proscriptions but not too obviously sexual, avoiding the potential for judgements that may frame a young woman’s *identity* as promiscuous or slutty (Tolman & Higgins, 1996, p. 208). Good girls can be a little naughty, but they should not be bad.

However, even the appearance of deviation from the norm can affect the moral position of an individual. For example, Bex described an incident where peer judgment framed her as promiscuous for being *suspected* of multiple hook ups:

“I [was part of a group] and that [group had] probably 200 or 300 [members] and I knew half of them, probably... and I think [I hooked up with].... something like 10 guys in 15 days but like it was .. I was associated with 10 guys in 15 days, a lot of people assumed that I’d slept with all of them” (Bex)

Being imagined to be so sexually active positioned Bex as promiscuous, for which she was called a slut, despite most of her hook ups being non-coital. This suggested the danger of the ambiguity of hook ups. Just as content can be hidden within ambiguity, it can also be added by others and can be difficult to refute. Slut-shaming had notable power with respect to curtailing behaviour for many participants because of the ease with which behaviours could be judged negatively regardless of the reality of the event.

---

***What Did You Call Me? Please Explain.***

An examination of the terms used to describe behaviour that can be viewed as bad girl behaviour was illuminating. Although some terms were disciplinary with respect to their moral tone (unacceptable, not very respectful), most terms referenced ideas of the women's diminished value and/or associations with filth or dirt (Fischer, 2006, pp. 53-4):

- tacky
- easy
- demeaning
- degrading
- desperate
- cheap
- crude
- disgraceful
- embarrassing
- trashy
- make bitches of themselves
- sleazy
- sickening
- gross
- skanky
- disgusting
- belongs in porn

'Promiscuous' and 'slut' were two of the most common terms used to describe 'unfeminine' women, particularly in association with casual sex.

"Only more promiscuous girls engage in casual sex" (R125)

The web discussion group discussed promiscuity and what it meant to them, and suggested that it was not so much the number of sexual partners but how young women engaged in sex. For example promiscuity referenced behaviour that could be considered immoral, such as cheating on a partner, and suggested promiscuous women behaved in particular ways, although participants were not clear on what they might be. The group also considered promiscuity to be somewhat different from 'slut' labelling, which referenced a character type rather than a particular behaviour, reflecting an understanding that morality and sexuality is about who you are (character) rather than what you do (act) (Fischer, 2006, pp. 51-2).

---



“My best friend called me promiscuous the other day, and I was left wondering whether that was just a fact or a judgement call. If she had used slut, I definitely would have been a bit gutted!” (Liz)

In this respect young women are navigating a moral framework when engaging in casual sex, where engagement beyond constraints, such as number of partners, frequency, and discretion, positioned them as both unfeminine and immoral in relation to who they are as people. As one respondent noted:

“I’m sexually safe, and know when [and] where my limits are. I can have casual sex, while still having morals.” (R196)

Other participants made similar qualifications with respect to their behaviour (“I’m not a slut by the way” (Rachel)). Although women and men are vulnerable to not being ‘just right’ with respect to sexual activity and performance, the gendered nature of sexual morality and its punitive nature is a common risk for women with respect to traditional femininity. For example, the need to keep the number of sexual partners small was common theme:

“Casual sex to me means more that you’re being promiscuous, and that I don’t think is ok, [especially] if the number of sexual partners is huge.” (Liz)

Being positioned as desiring can place women in the bad girl rather than the ‘good girl’ category (Tolman & Higgins, 1996, pp. 205-222), making being a desiring agent in any space challenging. For example Laura noted, in relation to comments a past boyfriend had made about her sexual history:

“he used to make me feel like a slut for having slept with two people before him, I remember thinking that’s really odd, I remember you telling me you’ve slept with more people than me and you’re making me feel like a whore for having slept with two people” (Laura)

“i know that some guys treat girls like shit after theyve slept with them and think its ridiculous im not sure why but all it does is make the girl feel like a slut... in this day and age a girl [isn’t] a slut just because of one one night stand” (Amber)

Laura’s ‘double-take’ and Amber’s frustration suggested that although young women feel as though they ought to be able to be desiring subjects, the judgmental attitudes of sexual partners represented a different reality, one characterised by ideologies that expect feminine script following and equate non-normative behaviours with being morally undesirable (Fischer, 2006). This double standard of moralising judgement reflected institutionalised

---

heterosexuality and the degree of control it and the traditional femininity script can have with respect to positioning women as subordinate/desirable objects in sexual interactions.

Slut as an historical term describes women of low class and women's bodies as sites of disease and pollution (Attwood, 2007, p. 235). Promiscuity carries analogous content. Not wanting to be associated with this kind of social category is understandable. In her research into stigma and HPV<sup>49</sup>, Nack (2002) notes that her participants displayed varying degrees of concern over the potential for their health status to negatively impact on their social status and displace them from the moral category she calls the good girl tribe, and into its less desirable opposite, the bad girl tribe<sup>50</sup>. STIs mark bodies as dirty and dirty bodies are considered to be the product of promiscuous and therefore immoral behaviour (Fischer, 2006). Thus, being framed as promiscuous situates women as potentially dirty and infected and therefore morally bad (p. 465), even if the young woman is a good neo-liberal subject—namely self-responsible and self-caring (Nack, 2002). A recent new story in New Zealand referenced this association, and its support in the public consciousness, when the mother of high school student accused her daughter's 'rival' of having an STI as a way to sully her reputation during a high-status school recruitment (New Zealand Herald (Online), 2011).

In describing her casual sex encounter R185 comments how transmittable these concepts are with respect to not only infecting the body, but also her sense of self:

“I'm not [condemning] all casual sex but my one experience has put me off entirely, not just for the bad sex and STI and all that, but because I felt desperate and skanky afterwards and totally *dirty*.” (emphasis added)

Her comment also highlighted the distance between what Holland et al., (1998) call intellectual and experiential empowerment. Intellectually she recognised that casual sex can be a legitimate experience but in practice the consequences she incurred negated this and stopped it being a viable space for empowered sexual engagement. Her comment captured the power of the association between casual sex, STIs and dirtiness, and how strongly it can impact on and reposition young women.

---

<sup>49</sup> Human Papilloma Virus. HPV is the most commonly transmitted STI, according to the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (2011). With over 40 varieties of HPV, the virus family is responsible for a number of conditions, including genital warts and cervical cancer, and its contraction can easily go undetected (ibid). Nack's research therefore covers a large number of STIs and their related stigma.

<sup>50</sup> Tribes reference Goffman's work, and suggest that the two predominant stereotypes used to define women as sexual – good girls and bad girls – are two definite groups into which women are polarised.

---

“Casual sex being sex with random people: They're more likely to have STI's.”  
(R151)

Casual sex partners are by default a risky group: potentially infected, and morally questionable. Association with this group therefore has the potential to ‘taint’ (Bogle, 2008, p. 180), and active engagement in tainting behaviours can frame the individual not only as deviant but also undesirable (Tolman & Higgins, 1996, p. 221). Language around some behaviours suggest their riskiness for those who performed them:

“Everyone dances *dirty* at bars. That's why you go to town. I've danced *dirty* and not felt comfortable about it.” (R10, emphasis added)

The ease with which young women can be labelled slutty may partially account for why the spectrum of acceptable behaviours was so narrow (Armstrong, Hamilton & England, 2010), and the criticisms of those who went outside of that spectrum (even marginally) at times so severe.

“in the case of one particular girl ....boys started to call her a slut and stuff... Even tho I don't think she actually had sex with anyone, but still the number of ... people that she had ... I don't know, encountered...” (Kelly)

Although the fear of being perceived as dirty may appear to be outdated in a culture that condones premarital sex and expects women to not only have sexual experience but also sexual skill, concerns over STIs suggest otherwise:

“But I reckon [the first guy I sleep with] should just be glad that I am clean.” (Angela)

This double standard in sexual morality references the double standard of “STD morality: good men can be infected, but any woman with an STD is a bad woman” (Nack, 2002, p. 472). Thus, keeping ‘clean’ is a moral priority.

In the context of a risk-focus in sex education, it is to be expected that participants would hold moral views around sex where negative outcomes are associated with dirty and infected bodies:

“Also, at my high school they used scare tactics about STDs, and yeah, it worked”  
(Kelly)

“My high school scared me about STIs as well, they told us all sorts of horrible things about oozing sores and the like. I am super cautious now! I'm on the pill, and I mostly use condoms” (Beth)

---

In this respect young women were taught not only about disease as dirty bodies, but also as irresponsibility and foolhardiness. In a neoliberal social context where individuals are to be self-responsible and self-policing, STIs and unplanned pregnancies signal not only promiscuity but poor self-management and lack of self-care (Nack, 2002, p. 470).

“I personally think it is extremely irresponsible. There are so many consequences that can arise after one night of fun.” (R142 on CS)

Poor self-care and lack of forethought were also implicit in some judgemental comments.

“It is highly dangerous both to physical and emotional health. This is seen the morning after when one is often left with regrets, shame and/or the impregnated/having to take the ECP/with an STI” (R124 on CS)

R124's comment made it clear that there are multiple fronts upon which to encounter risk beyond dirt and disease: irresponsibility over non-use of contraceptives; poor judgement over partners who carry disease and/or fail to also be responsible with respect to sexual health; and regret over making poor decisions and engaging in risky behaviours. Irresponsibility and poor judgement suggested lack of intellectual engagement or ignorance, both undesirable judgements (p. 470). As Gemma noted, there is a “societal expectation” around female sexuality, that “being openly sexual is a stupid thing for a girl to do.” Intelligent women should ‘know better’:

“Its quite stupid in hindsight” (R207 on PSB)

“There is a time and a place. But at times we are all young and stupid (and drunk).” (R223 on PSB)

Youth and alcohol can protect individuals from some of these judgements, but as some participants suggested in their comments, its efficacy can be limited, especially when reviewed in hindsight.

“I sometimes felt quite good, but afterwards, i sometimes felt dumb .... you look back and are like "why on earth did i think that was a good idea" (Beth)

Keeping self-judgement to yourself is however, part of the dynamic of making mistakes that lead to being stigmatised. It is important to keep discrete not only about behaviour, but also about failures in performances of appropriate femininity:

---

“I think girls are kind of scared to say they regret something coz other people will just ... judge them for it .... there’s been a few times when I’ve regretted doing something but I don’t really don’t wanna ... I don’t speak out about it coz I am worried that other people will say I told you so” (Kelly)

Talk and communication that could normalise experiences or challenge the need for internal disciplining for young women are therefore absent due to fears of stigma and judgement around being seen as a slut or stupid.

“I believe that hooking up with one or more person on a night is not 'right' as it conveys the woman as easy.” (R91 on HU)

### ***Keeping Secrets***

Staying silent, reframing behaviours and incidents, and being discreet were all ways in which women managed the threat of shaming language to which they were vulnerable if desires became visible:

“in some ways it is alot more acceptable for women to engage in casual sex if it is kept discreet, there are still stigmas if the behaviours of casual sex are overt” (R8)

“I think a lot of young women use [hooking up] as a safe blanket term to cover up things they may be embarrassed about/ashamed of” (R11)

Shame and discretion placed significant demands on women with respect to their sex lives (Hamilton & Armstrong, 2009, p. 597). Behaviours were closely disciplined by language that instructed individuals on what behaviours were safe to perform, and in what ways. Erotic dancing may be engaged in, but it must not be too “dirty”. When thinking about women, participants drew strong lines around acceptable behaviour:

“I think kissing in public is fine but everything else is wrong and gross, it's the sort of behaviour that belongs in porn.” (R138)

“kissing and subtle touching is ok, so is erotically dancing, but anything more is not attractive and very slutty” (R171)

The allusion to porn and promiscuity frame unacceptable behaviours as too sexual to be enacted by women unless they are already morally suspect (Lunceford, 2008). Resisting public engagement in behaviours that are either sexual or suggest that the individual can/wants to be sexual presented the agent as self-controlled and controlling of male desires, and therefore appropriately feminine. In being discreet about their own wants, young women

---

hide their desires away, and are able to maintain the illusion of goodness needed to distance them from shaming judgements (Lunceford, 2008, p. 324), and the pull of the bad girl tribe.

Discretion was an understandable strategy when judgement could come from any source:

“These numbers may seem trivial, but when your friends are shocked every time you have a sexual encounter, it certainly serves to make me feel easy and cheap.” (Liz on the number of sexual partners had)

And within relationship contexts:

“The [inability] to act out things that may be considered 'devious' is sometimes inhibiting.” (R11)

No space was unanimously described as safe for young women to express their desires with respect to avoiding judgement. Although many participants commented that their long term partners were trustworthy and open communication was possible, others noted their fears and embarrassment around communicating their desires, their concerns of non-acceptance and judgement, and their want for their desires not to be judged.

### ***Resistance—I'll Do What I Want***

As Wade and Heldman (in press) note with respect to hook up culture, as the ‘only game in town’, young people have few options with respect to non-participation and so opting out of these cultural performances may not be possible or desirable. Although the transition from dating to hook up culture does not seem quite as complete for my participants as it does on US campuses, the cultural script for young women’s behaviour does, however, appear to require a certain level of sexual engagement, or at least the convincing appearance of engagement, by a certain age.

The adoption of various identities appeared to be a way by which some participants managed occupation of various social spaces, where transgression was both being overly sexual and not sufficiently sexual. Religious commitment presented a way for young women to justify their non-engagement, as did being bookish, geeky, or career-focused. The cost of these identities however, could be marginalisation, suggesting that opting out can have far-reaching social ramifications beyond an individual’s sex life (p. 10).

---

“i guess that fact if you don't want to conform to the 'norm' of having hook-ups and casual sex people look at you differently often in a negative way of thinking eg whats wrong with her, almost feeling sorry for them, not 'good' enough” (Sahra)

“being sexually active (in whatever form) or at least appearing to be is key to being socially valid[,] not a geek/freak whatever[,] its a coolness factor” (Monica)

Although the dominant strategy for participants appeared to be capitulation to cultural script elements such as discretion and restricted behaviours, some participants attempted to challenge these boundaries. Although subjectively successful for some, the reading of resistance threw up the often limited nature of these successes.

Monica discussed engaging in PSB and hooking up activities when she was younger as part of her ‘rite of passage’ with respect to growing up. Her behaviour also referenced resistance to stigma:

“it became more of that show of freedom thing, I'm confident and free and nothing I do will embarrass me kind of thing.” (Monica)

On a personal level Monica’s behaviour was successful in that she felt more confident in herself and more subjectively engaged, and as part of a developmental process her resistant performances can be seen as part of the process of becoming self-aware and embodied.

However, many behaviours that were once considered to be challenging and markers of bad girl behaviour have now been co-opted by sexualised representations of femininity and related pressures to perform them (Bailey, 20017, p. 90). What once set young women apart and acted to exclude now appears to be a way to belong, to be seen as cool, and to gain status and social credibility. These behaviours can now be read as a way of opting *in* and as reinforcing an objectifying mainstream. This is not to diminish the value of these experiences at the subjective level, as the difference between Monica’s narratives of where she started from and where she was at the time of her interview with respect to her sexuality were vastly different.

Reading behaviour can be troubled by social groups, however. Monica commented that her behaviour was an expected aspect of her clique and in this regard was normal. Group and sub-culture group membership may then provide space for young women to engage in behaviours not sanctioned in other more mainstream social spaces. For example Wilkins (2004) discussed the sexuality and sexual behaviours of women within the Goth scene.

---

Despite the constraining forces of masculinity and heterosexuality Wilkins (p. 346) remarks that

“The sexual haven created by the Goths in my study allows Goth women to engage in proactive sexual behavior without the “slut” label. Goth women experience their sexuality as personally empowering: It provides them with a sense of control over their bodies, with the right to feel and act on desire and with external validation of their expressions of sexiness.”

It also provides them with space to resist masculine behaviours, resistance not as available within mainstream space where masculinity comes with a number of entitlements (p. 337). To the mainstream, Goth behaviour can appear subversive and resistant in ways that are not always co-optable.

Opting out of mainstream cultural scripts by opting in to fringe sub-cultural scripts may present alternative opportunities. As Monica noted, her group was expected to “make a bit of ruckus and show everyone how 'free' they are”, suggesting license to push boundaries and go off-script in ways not usually permitted. What was unclear is whether sub-group membership was ultimately disruptive. Although behaviour was resistant to dominant scripts, that resistance can be classified as atypical and described as ‘other’ in ways that disempower its ability to be socially transformative of mainstream sexual culture (Waite, 2011, p. 270). It can simply be judged as aberrant.

A second example of resistance came from Bex, the self-confessed rebel. If Monica was able to opt out as a way of resisting dominant scripts, then Bex’s resistance was to openly defy it. Rather than altering her behaviour after being labelled a slut within her peer circles, she embraced the associated derogatory nickname and claimed it in much the same way as Riot Grrrls have attempted to reclaim slut-shaming language (Attwood, 2007, p. 236). Regardless of whether language can be reclaimed on a cultural script level, Bex’s approach resulted in the subjective disempowerment of the term slut, to the effect that she reported it now had no impact on her behaviour or demeanour.

How effective active resistance was appeared to be related to how strongly the individual relied on peer group approval, and if they were able to overcome their own internalised stigmatising voice. As Seig (2007, p. 62) notes, girls are socialised to regret sex, and this internalised voice can be a difficult one to negotiate, particularly when in concert with

---



external stigmatising forces. Resisting stigma then is not just about resisting society but also the socialised self, a voice that can be persistent and pre-emptive.

### **Losing Your 'V' Plates for Love vs Throwing Them Away**

Determining the best way to lose their virginity was a complicated decision-making process for participants. Some spoke of the tension between wanting to wait for the right moment (usually associated with boyfriends and relationships) and needing to get it over with in any context. The right moment was often complicated by a romance script that required first sex to be "special", but choosing casual sex or non-romantic relationship partners presented young women as perhaps not valuing sex or herself.

“sometimes its embarassing to admit you're the only virgin in the room... id say its more acceptable to be sleeping around than [to] be a virgin” (Amanda)

Discomfort is not restricted to the virgin-young woman as those around her can feel uncomfortable about her wanting to wait, positioning her as somehow abnormal, deviant or damaged:

“my ...sister thinks im totally strange and even my mum has started worrying theres something wrong with me .... my sis keeps asking if im a lesbian.... and my mum asks if im scared of men.... she cant understand y a girl my age isnt out sleeping with guys” (Amanda)

To manage her age and virginity status Amanda engaged in the career woman script (Hamilton & Armstrong, 2009, p. 604), where her academic commitments and a focus on her future made her too busy to have a serious relationship or to seek one out.

“i dont really have time for serious relationships, barely spend enough time with my friends plus, it feels kinda pointless unless u see a future together” (Amanda)

The romance dialogue of long-lasting commitment and a partner she can respect legitimatised her position and helped offset her age, and the fact that her virginity status set her apart from many of her peers. Her performance of deferring romantic engagement also reflected the self-improvement dialogue where education opportunities are of primary importance, causing a deprioritising of relational engagements (Hamilton & Armstrong, 2009, p. 602). She had some limited participation in hooking up which provided some additional protection from

---

judgement about not being sexual enough. This limited performance reinforced hooking up as a legitimate way to stay career-focused whilst being sexually active (p.604), and therefore blurred the trouble her virginity status presented for those around her.

Amber's discussion of her virginity and how she conceptualised losing it illustrates some of the cultural dialogues about sex and how young women should approach it:

Amber: Sure. I could have done it. A few times. ... But every time I think that I deserve more than what they are offering, and I just get them to leave. ...

Me: what are you looking for then? in terms of 'conditions to lose it in'?

Amber: Romance, a real relationship, someone who sees me for more than just a vagina, feeling worthy of being loved, someone who knows what they're doing, an orgasm. I figure you only get one shot, so why not make it as painless as possible? My conditions mean that I am nearing my 19th Birthday and still a virgin. But I think that's something to be proud of, even if it is a little frustrating.

Me: why proud?

Amber: Because I didn't lose it at a party when I was 15 and drunk from RTD's<sup>51</sup>. Also it demonstrates a respect for myself. My only worry is what the guy who I sleep with first will think...

Me: ok, what is the concern over his thinking?

Amber: Would he think, what is wrong with this woman? Is she undesirable? (...Is she frigid or something.) Or he'll feel pressure to be good.

Amber describes a complex matrix of requirements. Her expectations are high. Her first 'real' sex should be romantic *and* be good sex, and should also allow her to feel "worthy of being loved". It thus illustrates femininity script elements about sex and virginity: great sex and the romance, male sexual skills and responsibility for female pleasure, and femininity in the form of self-constraint. Her current age and virginity status also framed her as frigid (her term), reflecting a medicalised and pathologising understanding of sex for women, and the subsequent categorisation of her decisions as potentially dysfunctional (Impett & Tolman, 2006, pp. 639-640). Despite her investment in these script elements, Amber was also aware of her desires and presented herself as sexually self-aware:

---

<sup>51</sup> RTD: acronym for 'ready-to-drink' alcoholic beverage

“In the summer holidays I thought to myself, I'll either fuck a random or get a vibrator. Very, very glad I bought one instead.” (Amber)

Ironically, although her vibrator allowed her to explore her subjective desires, it problematised potential ‘real’ sex with future partners:

“If a guy's penis can't vibrate at three speeds how good is it going to be?” (Amber)

Monica also described her first time sex expectations, reflecting on the romance script she had invested in with some cynicism:

“The whole 'the first time should be with someone you love' was really important to me. ... I was really into the whole 'first love' schtick ... I dunno I think I was ready 'to loose it' before i did but I wanted to wait for the right person and the right time as cliché as it sounds” (Monica)

Deciding how to lose their virginity appeared to be a complex negotiation of script elements. As Gemma noted “[b]eing a virgin past a certain age has its own peculiarities of experience: patience, shame, sexual frustration.” It was understandable therefore, with young women being situated as needing to be desiring agents through the medicalisation of sexuality and cultural requirements regarding sexual engagement and social visibility, that losing one’s virginity for desiring reasons would be challenging when conflicting script elements of romance and sex as biological are operational (Holland, et al., 2008, p. 186). Social pressure to get first sex over with can undermine wanting to have sex for desiring reasons and/or wanting to adhere to the femininity/romance script. Thus, losing one’s virginity via casual sex was no less complicated than waiting for the right romantic moment:

“I enjoyed my first time and it wasn't painful like most people say it was, but I regret to the person I lost it too as they only wanted one thing, but I felt pressure from people and myself to lose my vignity, 19 is pretty old these days ... [my friends] would like to play it up and stuff which made me feel very low ... i guess at that point i was prepared to just get it over and done with, and no the consequences of getting hurt or used and deal with it .... [I ]was so glad to have it over and done with, [I ] was like yah now i don't have to worry about sex anymore ... the stigma of being a virgin was awesome to have over if anything, plus at that time I thought I wouldn't be able to get a boyfriend unless I had been sexually active at some point.” (Sahra)

As Sahra had prepared herself for being used as a “bonk” she was able to negotiate her way out of an instrumental situation, and her feelings of regret reflected what she thought was poor partner choice rather than losing her virginity through casual sex. Others expressed regret around losing their virginity to casual sex, but again not because this was the method,

---

but rather the circumstance, for example when drunk and not agentic, suggesting that factors such as masculinity and femininity can be trouble pragmatic approaches.

Gemma described the process by which she determined how and when she would lose her virginity, reflecting a very engaged approach. Despite her age (24 years at the time), social pressure was, for her, less of a motivational factor than the want to be having partnered sex, but she was still aware that her virginity status could prove problematic with respect to finding a sexual relationship partner. In this respect virginity was a barrier to be negotiated around.

“if I hadn't been willing to have sex in a casual situation, I'd have gone my whole life without experiencing sex. Casual sex was an important factor in my own personal development: it was easier to get past the embarrassing 'virginity barrier' with someone whose opinion I really didn't care about.” (Gemma)

Choosing an anonymous partner allowed her to disengage from a process of social commentary about her sexuality, and to retain control and power over the meaning of the event, rather than having it possibly co-opted by a dominating masculinity.

“I didn't want some guy influencing the way I experienced it by making assumptions about what I would feel. I also didn't want to be pitied. I had felt helpless, at times, thinking that I might never lose my virginity, but I didn't want to explain that to the man I was about to lose it with. That would have been humiliating.”

Casual sex provided a way for Gemma to disengage from cultural scripts about virginity loss and healthy sexuality and development which can be subjectively inappropriate (Tolman, 2002). Her pragmatic approach to creating the right space and context signals how difficult negotiating virginity loss on one's own terms can be for young women.

Casual sex, and to some extent hooking up, approach Hollway's (1998, pp. 234-237) permissive discourse—as women become more promiscuous the more sexually experienced they become, and are in a better position to negotiate sex and their own subjective desires. As Hollway notes, this does not assume engaging in the male sex drive discourse, or engaging in masculine modes of sex, but rather as being an equal subject in the sex act and being able to pursue own desires in an equal space (ibid). Casual sex, on the surface appears to present this opportunity, but negotiating with male partners and avoiding stigma appeared to be beyond many participants and therefore undermine access to this positionality. Finding voice in casual sex situations was often not possible, whether through the context of the

---

situation or because of a participant's own internal constraints. Many participants failed to challenge the hegemonic occupation of casual sex space by traditionally masculine men who behave in non-egalitarian ways with respect to their sexual behaviour.

In view of the lengths Gemma went to to lose her virginity within a casual sex context—control of space, non-networked anonymous partner, geographically remote from her social network—in order to remain emotionally and reputationally safe, it is no wonder that young women like Amber would chose the more 'traditional' route of romance and 'sex as special'.

### **Women, Sex and Empowerment**

Much of the analysis thus far has presented participant sexual agency as heavily constrained by disciplinary discourses of femininity, masculinity and normative heterosexuality. Despite this the language of empowerment, agency, autonomy, resistance and subjectivity was visible in many of the comments and narratives provided by participants. Feeling entitled to sexual pleasure was a consistent theme many respondents articulated. Some reflected a need to resist and/or reframe normative gender roles within the sexual context. Others recognised that some capitulation to recalcitrant gender roles could limit their sexual expression and sexual subjectivity to within narrow confines or spaces, but that this did not necessarily result in disembodied sexual experiences (as Tolman, 2002, p. 121 also notes).

Feeling empowered is a subjective experience, and analysing experiences in objective terms such as objectification or 'being duped' can be potentially disempowering and can displace individual subjectivity and the potential for those feelings to have progressive impacts in other areas of an individual's life. This understanding privileges subjective experiences. The problem, however, is that although behaviours may be resistant and empowering at the individual level they can reinforce constraining social structures at the societal level (Whitehead & Kurz, 2009, p. 241). But then, asking young women to engage with their sexuality politically when few adult women do, is an unfair requirement (Lamb, 2010a, p. 299). When opting out of, for example, hooking up culture is costly in terms of opportunities to exercise entitlements to sexual enjoyment (Wade, *in pres*, p. 10), opting in and feeling empowered within the narrow spaces available may be the only recourse for some young women. The power of individual subjectivity may however be rescued from ineffectuality in visible ways.

---

### *Sex for Empowerment, Empowerment for Sex*

Early in the research I was challenged by Gemma about the issue of sex and empowerment. My initial premise had been that sexual behaviours could empower young women to behave more agentially and subjectively not only in their sex lives but also in other areas of their lives. In her initial email to me Gemma disputed this idea:

“Some of the questions in your survey asked if sexual behaviour was empowering. Seriously, wrong question. I don't want to be sexual in order to be empowered. I want to be empowered in order to be sexual. Priorities! Honestly.” (Gemma)

This challenged me because I considered the potential for sex to be empowering for young women to be quite powerful. Activist Cesnabmihilo Dorothy Aken’ova remarks that “if a Nigerian woman dares to ask for an orgasm, who knows, maybe next, she’ll demand clean water” (cited in McClelland & Fine, 2008, p. 244). Her comment suggests the power of sexual subjectivity to impact on other areas of women’s lives including their feelings of entitlement in other life spheres. Transformative sexual experiences can open up the possibility of being a different person (Bryant & Schofield, 2007, p. 354), regardless of whether a woman is Nigerian or a New Zealander.

Gemma’s and my initial positions represent two ends of a spectrum of positions that could be occupied with respect to sex and empowerment that is more complex than either I or Gemma framed it. This spectrum of impacts with respect to empowerment and sex varied and depended as much upon how young women experienced sex as it did on how they experienced other aspects of their lives, and to some extent their awareness of gendered New Zealand culture. For those claiming a feminist identity such as Gemma and Bex, their sense of entitlement to satisfying and agentic sex was strong, and both exhibited deliberate approaches to their sex lives as a result. With respect to their desires, both were aware of what many of them were, were agentic in getting them met, and were unafraid to communicate them.

In contrast, other young women in the sample were not able to access that sense of entitlement as clearly, easily, or at all. For some, the SRS prevented them from accessing the sex they understood they were due. For others, normative femininity was a hurdle to self-expression. Others lacked a language for communicating their desires, and what those desires were was also a mystery for some. Despite this, empowered experiences were still

---

discussed and agency was still visible. Normative regulation did not necessarily equate to or result in a lack of subjectivity (Evans, Riley & Shanker, 2010).

Feelings of sexual empowerment did not present as a ‘have or have not’ characteristic, something that could only be had by an already empowered individual. Empowerment in some areas of life appeared to feed into the potential to be empowered in others. This is to be expected if sexual subjectivity is an integral aspect of identity and performance in general (Tolman, 2002, pp. 5-6).

### ***Yeah, Not So Good...***

Sex that was described as disempowering highlighted four primary elements:

- feeling judged by society and partners—over what sex was had (for example casual sex, what constituted a hook up), and what kinds of sexual desires were being expressed
- feeling used for sex—instrumental sex in all sexual spaces
- feelings of inadequacy—connected to self-criticisms over not being assertive, communicative or self-knowing enough; sexual performance anxieties (for example, not orgasming, not performing knowingly)
- lack of emotional connection to a partner—making sex meaningless, and uncaring.

The likelihood of many of these elements being present within non-relationship/permissive sexual contexts may account for why some young women preferred to pursue relationships as a way of avoiding these potentially disempowering factors. Permissive space sexual encounters were more often described as disempowering than relationship encounters, due to factors such as verbal and physical abuse, coercion and manipulation into sex, alcohol-related lack of control and vulnerability, and instrumental masculinities (as noted in the literature, see for example Eshbaugh & Gute, 2008; Fielder & Carey, 2010a; 2010b; Kalish & Kimmel, 2011; Milnes, 2010; Paul & Hayes, 2002; Wade & Heldman, in press).

Relationship sex was often depicted as at least satisfactory with respect to pleasure, desire and feelings of agency. Criticisms about the quality of sex and what space was available for young women’s empowered behaviour were concessional—‘things’ could be better but he cares for me/is safe/is trustworthy, all of which diminish grounds for complaint when viewed as reflections of gendered sex roles. Reasons for bad sex were likely to be owned by the participant, at least partially, than to be attributed to a partner—failures reflected personal

---

inadequacies, and so empowerment within relationships was both fragile and predicated on partner attitudes.

The romance discourse of sex as emotional was noteworthy with respect to sex not only being disempowering (no emotional connection) but to it also being empowering (an expression of love). Sex as requiring or entailing orgasm as a marker of successful performance was a visible route to empowerment as skill/achievement.

***Sometimes It's Great, Sometimes I Don't Know Why I Bother***

Respondents noted that a sense of empowerment could vary with partners and contexts and the spaces these factors can create for empowered/empowering behaviours:

“Sometimes it can be empowering, sometimes it can be demeaning and make you feel like shit.... Sometimes I would ask, and sometimes I would just stay quiet, depends on the guy and if I feel comfortable enough with him to tell him what to do.” (R71)

Feeling able to, and free to express hidden desires was important for participants with respect to expressing and experiencing their sexual entitlements. R71 recognised that relationships were more likely to provide safe spaces for women to actively engage in sexual subjectivity because when she was with a safe relationship partner, her desires were hidden away from larger social scrutiny. Feeling comfortable enough to express desires, and feeling as though it is acceptable to express those desires, was a common want for participants. This suggests that expressing desire can be validating (Smith, 2007, p. 72), and therefore empowering if desires are accepted and not judged.

Experiences, both positive and negative, provided some participants with transformative opportunities that alerted them to various social institutions and disciplinary forces that determine women's behaviour. Transformative moments/experiences contributed to participants' opinions that referenced resistance to traditional/appropriate femininity, the sexual double standard, and a critical position on traditional masculinity.

“my very first sexual [partner] cheated very soon after I lost my virginity to him and the relationship quickly ended. Several months later I became involved with someone else and I was bombarded with insults from my first partner like, slut, nympho etc. even though this was only the second person I had slept with. The first guy had certainly had more sexual experiences than I had, and it was his behaviour that had ended the [relationship] in the first place. This was one of the moments that defined me and made me realise even more so how unfair women are treated in regards to their sexual behaviour.” (Kelly)

---



Just as transformative experiences have the potential to impel young women back towards self-restraint and capitulating behaviour in line with the SRS, Kelly's comment above suggests negative experiences can empower young women to move away from elements of femininity into more subjectively agentic and/or politically aware positionalities (Hart in Carr, 2003, p. 14). For example, R10's fuck buddy experience shifted her performance from passive and receptive to agentic and active.

“My fuck buddy was a good experience in that they taught me a lot about what I wanted from any of my relationships- they did this by treating me like shit.... It was bullshit and I'll never get into that kind of situation again.” (R10)

Some forms of masculinity were challenging barriers and many participants suggested that negotiating its performance was more easily done within relationship spaces (Terry & Braun, 2009). Permissive spaces facilitated traditionally masculine behaviours such as instrumentalist sexual behaviour and status-conferring sexual engagements including boasting about sexual engagements that revealed women's sexual desires and could result in slut-shaming and other stigmas (Backus & Mahalik, 2011). Relationships were perceived to close some of these behaviours down due to male investment in partner well-being and the private nature of sexual behaviours (Tolman, 2002, p. 81).

Interestingly, many young women described negative events where masculinity was a problematic and constraining factor that instead of closing down their behaviour prompted them to be resistant. Amber related a story of a peer who had had casual sex with a young man at a party, highlighting the power of the sexual double standard, immature masculine performance, and stigma. These factors can generate disempowering criteria for women within permissive spaces:

“after a party at my house [a friend] slept with this guy [in a room]....[a week later] one of the guys friends walked past and called out to my mate "i heard you fucked 'John' in the bushes!" it was terrible everyone around heard and all his mates laughed. I got so angry .... the damage was done my mate was really embarrassed, .... no one cared that John had had sex but everyone hassled my friend about it. It really pissed me off because if anything i thought that his mates should be hassling HIM about it because he was really good looking and ... she should have been proud of pulling such a good looking guy!”

Even for those who were agentic in their sexual behaviours, some masculinities could undermine empowered behaviours and resistance to femininity as relationship-needing with respect to sex.

---

“I don't like one night stands much ... as they generally tend to be dissatisfying, as you cannot get your needs across.... If I enjoy the sex and made a decision that this was the person I wanted to have sex with (usually the only times I have sex) then I find sexual activity empowering. However some sexual[1] partners tend to only focus on their own needs ...which is not empowering.” (R141)

This suggests a limit to the power young women have to resist femininity and occupy permissive sexual spaces due to their masculine framing. Masculinity as instrumental and dominant can not only disempower, but also block agent access to empowerment altogether (Backus & Mahalik, 2011; Milnes, 2010).

Although there were critical statements made about men as a category and individual men, there was little indication that New Zealand masculinity was conceptualised as other than a monolithic social institution that was unchangeable. Negotiating masculinity was instead talked about with respect to finding a “good” partner, someone who was safe and trustworthy—a “good” man. In other words, traditional masculinity was navigated around or avoided rather than directly challenged.

For a few, masculinity represented a means to empowered behaviour, where adopting masculine behaviours was seen as a valid choice with respect to resisting femininity. However, opinions on this kind of behaviour varied. Most of those who commented on men and women being equal with respect to accessing sexual spaces mentioned freedom from judgement rather than the adoption of traditional masculine behaviours that confer privilege (Bey-Cheng & Zucker, 2007, p.158).

“While society claims it is empowering for women to engage in sex more in a way that she enjoys, there are still restrictions on what those ways can be. I.e. women are still meant to be a little bit innocent, and slightly prudish. For a woman to express a desire for a particular fetish or role or non-standard activity is much more likely to be seen as "wrong" than if a man does so.” (R88)

Most participants who commented on engaging in masculine behaviours felt that generally women were not successful at this kind of engagement anyway due to the propensity to get emotionally engaged, or their general lack of enjoyment.

“I think it's very difficult for women to have casual sex and not suffer some negative consequences. I know very, very empowered women who went through phases of trying to prove to themselves they could have sex like men, only to discover that actually they didn't enjoy it, and didn't really want to go down that path. Having said that, if women do enjoy it and can handle the lack of emotion, then all power to them!” (R186 on CS)

---

In this regard what was attractive was not masculine behaviour was but rather the space it occupies. Empowerment for some therefore appeared to equate to accessing masculine space but negotiating away from masculine behaviour as enacted or experienced, which is contrary to conceptualisations of women as attempting to ‘have sex like a man’ (Kalish & Kimmel, 2011).

### ***Girls Can Do Anything!***

Sex that was empowering was most often contextualised to relationship space where disempowering elements were perceived to be reduced, or at least negotiable. Empowering or empowered sex in this space referenced factors listed in the sexual subjectivity index (Horne & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2006).

The most often mentioned aspect of feeling empowered in sex was the feeling of confidence sex and sexual behaviour could facilitate for respondents (Horne & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2005). Many comments were general, but more specific comments were made about body image, feeling desired and/or desirable, sexual performance and feelings of emotional intimacy.

Monica indicated that feeling accepted physically could have notable impacts on how young women viewed themselves and their bodies. Comments about body confidence referenced two themes: performing sexiness or femininity; and sex as a confirmation of the body as desirable despite feelings of physical inadequacy or imperfection.

Me: so the sexy thing is about being 'wanted' - self esteem based?

Sahra : definitely you want to be 'wanted', it gives you more confidence [in] knowing that i think

Me : ok. kind of like social validation?

Sahra : yea defintely!!

“Sex can be empowering as it can help you feel more feminine and sexy, which helps you to become happier with your body image and therefore happier with yourself.” (R126)

Here empowerment is bounded by normative femininity, where success and confidence comes from capitulation to an idealised standard (Ussher, 2005, p. 29). Performing sexy in the appropriate way generated the anticipated results and the participant felt empowered because their performance was successful in this respect.

“For example if I wear sexy underwear and it has the desired effect then I feel [empowered] and good.” (R140)

Whether empowerment as successful normative performance as positive is debateable due to its power to reinforce norms that penalise young women with respect to encouraging self-objectification and resultant body-conformity issues (Liss, Erchull & Ramsey. 2011).

However, this kind of performance was viewed as common (for example PSB was often characterised as for an audience), and in some ways understandable:

“I understand wearing sort of short skirts and tight tops coz they kind of make you feel good about [yourself] and make you feel like you sort of fit the stereotypic cool hot female thing” (Bex)

Fitting in as a performance was noted as important by other interviewees. Peer approval and peer group inclusion were important but also demanded adherence to group norms with respect to performances that framed individuals as “cool”, “fashionable”, “popular” and importantly, “normal”. Once fitting in was achieved, other pressures around sex could be dealt with, suggesting that one act of conformity need not commit an agent to being positioned as a complete cultural dupe:

“with a strong groups of friends I [don’t have] to worry about fitting in so much i loosened up about the whole thing quite a bit” (Monica)

Several participants described instances where their behaviours were normatively reinforcing with respect to femininity and/or objectification but these performances proved to be developmentally valuable with respect to sexual subjectivity and resisting normative femininity overall.

For other participants, body acceptance/confidence appeared to be less about conforming to or performing femininity than to experiencing self-acceptance through validating experiences. Some participants expressed sentiments similar to Monica’s, where a relationship partner’s acceptance of their bodies and desires enabled more positive self-conceptions. Others cited positive sexual engagements that helped them transcend body issues. Being able to succeed in sex may present a way for young women to combat body insecurities as being desiring may challenge self-perceptions.

“I find that when I have a very positive and successful sexual experience, it really heightens my self-confidence and makes me feel less worried about my body "hang ups"” (R142)

Recognising the self as desirable may also help reinforce positive body image, an important element in sexual subjectivity:

---

“Sexual activity has given me a more positive body-image as I find that my effect on males when naked can be quite strong.” (R56)

Validating experiences may enable some young women to move passed issues of body insecurity to more subjective sexual engagements, where they can act with confidence in pursuing pleasure and exploring/fulfilling desires.

Body confidence also extended to sexual performance, suggesting the neo-liberal requirement of skill and adequacy as a part of the sex act for some young women (Cacchioni, 2007, p. 308):

“even with someone you love, i guess everyone still wants to be 'good in bed' or at least for a couple to be a good match in bed” (Kim)

Concerns about inexperience suggested the need to be at least competent at sex (Katz & Farrow, 2000, p. 801). Orgasm as the standard for competency not only framed women as normally functional and sexually competent but could also confer some (subjectively experienced) status for some:

“Because I reach orgasm, I feel that I have mastered the act of sex. That makes me feel like a strong, modern young woman. I also feel that I am setting a standard. If my current relationship ended, and he found another who didn't come during sex ... he would surely compare her to me and I would come off tops! .... Also, because it took me til my mid twenties to achieve orgasm with a man ... I just feel that I have passed a milestone and that its a result of partially my own maturity and confidence, and success in finding a good boyfriend.” (R107)

Here, sexual competitiveness framed sex as a skill to be used in acquiring and keeping partners (Bryant & Schofield, 2007; Cacchioni, 2007), rather than as a subjective experience predicated on the pursuit of embodied enjoyment. Although R107 was the only participant to explicitly reference this degree of skill focus, performance anxiety was a concern for a number of other participants, suggesting competency was an issue in respect to performing for partners:

“I want to know more clearly which things my partner enjoys. I never know if I am pleasing him ...” (R121)

Fear of being stigmatised with respect to not being sexually proficient enough, particularly within permissive spaces where opportunities to redeem themselves were often absent, presented as another motivating factor for women to seek relationships:

---

“i guess almost you want to ['perform'] well because you want to make an impression or just don't want backtalk from them saying you were hopeless or something, where in a relationship for my that pressure isn't there as much and because you can work out things in time” (Sahra)

Sexual skill also extended to sexual repertoire, where sexual experiences were something to be achieved and crossed off a sexual bucket list. For example casual sex was an “achievement”:

“one-off/rare occasions can be something to cross off the list” (R107 on PSB)

“it is still seen as an achievement of sorts to have casual sex” (R118)

The claim by several respondents of being multiply orgasmic suggested the attainment of a skill or refining of an ability that marked a woman as particularly successful at sex due to being able to accomplish something considered less common among women in general (Cacchioni, 2007, p. 306). Skill as status-conferring was again implied. Although sex as skill could be empowering because it was attached to status or accomplishment, how it empowered appeared to have little to do with sexual subjectivity and pleasure-seeking, and served to categorise young women as traditionally feminine, where sexual skills are in service of male desires (Phillips, 2000).

“its empowering to know you can satisfy someone by using my own body and sexual techniques, everybody wants to be good at sex and when you again achieve [orgasm] for your partner then it makes you more confident in your-self and abilities” (R180)

Satisfying a partner was not always reinforcing however, and other participants noted feeling empowered by satisfying their partner's desires that seemed more subjectively motivated:

“it is great to be able to bring your partner and/or self such pleasure and to explore new techniques, which if they work can be very empowering.” (R2)

Active engagement and the prioritisation of the self suggests a greater degree of agency and empowerment related more to subjective experiences than normative capitulation.

The importance of being successful at sex was described as one more skill acquisition that contributed to an overall successful life:

“its always a good feeling to be getting laid. and its just another part of your life that you're succeeding at. thats always empowering” (R172)

This highlighted the importance of feeling sexually competent for some young women, where

---

failure in this area of life was commensurate with failure in other areas, signalling the shift of sex not only from procreation to recreation, but to a more accountable category with respect to identity and overall life progress.

Agency as the power to choose, to be in control, and to act autonomously were common themes in comments about sex and empowerment:

“I'm currently in a reciprocal relationship where sex is on my terms, though at certain times my partner wants sex and I don't- and he can get a bit grumpy and annoying really, but that never influences me if I don't feel like having sex” (R197)

Although controlling sexual access is an integral part of normative femininity (sexual gate-keeping), comments like that above highlight autonomy not as gate-keeping but as participants prioritising their pleasure/desires in ways that negate sexual obligation and femininity as facilitating male pleasure (Sanchez, Crocker & Boike, 2005). Such prioritisation also included ensuring getting their desires met:

“I'm being sexually satisfied even though I am not in a relationship. Casually been seeing someone for the last 2 months and the sex is amazing. It's fun and exciting .....being able to provide pleasure to a guy and receive it is empowering. Knowing what you want and acting on it.” (R97)

Jess noted that “if a woman wants to have casual sex [it's] sexually empowering ... because she's doing it under her terms”, highlighting the power of autonomous decision making to position young women as sexual subjects.

“When I was single, I also found sex empowering at times when I got what I set out to get without degrading myself.” (R62)

Nicole discussed empowerment with respect to the sense of self that can come from exercising autonomy and control in sexual decision-making and engagement.

“I think being in control of my decisions [sic] and actions is really important to how i feel about my choices” (Nicole)

Although Nicole commented that she self-regulated she nonetheless felt confident about her sex life because it was on her terms. When discussing how she felt about having flashed her breasts for a group of young men she remarked that “It felt like more for me [than pleasing an audience], [it felt like] letting go.” Thus, agency can not only be about pushing social regulation of appropriate feminine behaviour, but was also about challenging internal constraints.

---

Choice was often discussed within the context of non-relationship sex where being able to choose a partner and whether or not to have sex was seen as an empowering act.

“In a way I think it felt liberating because I knew that it was my choice, that I was in control and sexy and could have him (or not) if I wanted.” (Kim on CS)

“I feel that because I am able to choose my sexual partner, I am more empowered than women in the past.” (R132)

Rather than performing ‘femininity as gatekeeper’, choice and agency may provide access to privileged masculinised permissive spaces. Where in the past feminine passivity required waiting to be approached, agency and choice can position some young women as active instigators in for example partner seeking.

Agency and sexual subjectivity were most often discussed within relationship contexts:

“I am attracted to and love my partner so it is exciting and pleasurable to have sex with him. I feel happy and satisfied when I have an orgasm and I feel comfortable with myself and I feel in control of my sexuality.” (R12)

Agency and the active pursuit of pleasure were common themes within participants’ comments relating to satisfying sex lives. R77 noted that “when I initiate it I find it empowering”, signalling the difference agency can make.

“I find MY sexual activity empowering, not only within myself but with my relationship with my boyfriend.” (R185)

Resisting socialising and inhibiting peer and social dialogue was empowering for some. With respect to her first relationship and the guidance she received from friends, R167 noted that she felt empowered when she decided to be self-determining:

“For me it was just great to be able to just say "fuck this, I can make my own decisions" (R167)

“It was important to me for a while there that I could be strong and independent and not worry about what anyone else thought I should feel” (Gemma on resisting discourses about virginity)

Within her relationship, Rachel noted that her partner’s discomfort with her sexual history and current sexual behaviour was something she actively ignored, reframing him as repressed rather than being constrained by his judgement. His judgement of her failed to discipline her

---



towards what he considered to be a more appropriate feminine performance. Resistance thus appeared to be not only a way to feel empowered but also as evidence of feeling empowered.

Being able to ensure their own sexual satisfaction and a partner's was a notable source of empowerment for some participants, within all sexual spaces.

“When a guy brings me to orgasm, I am often just filled with amazement at the female body. It just makes me incredibly happy. I prefer it when they really like it too, but even if they don't seem too super enthusiastic, my own joy is enough for me. If I am really turned on by someone, it really excites me to get them off. I want to work hard for it, and I feel pleased when they enjoy it.” (R10)

Comments in this theme placed participants on a continuum from appropriate feminine performance to subjective engagements. Most participants discussed pleasing their relationship partners within a mutual-enjoyment context, with varying degrees of subjective prioritisation:

“My partner and I are always talking and discovering together. We make love very openly and ensure both of us are having a wonderful time.... Sex can be very empowering - having a man trembling with pleasure between your thighs makes one feel very powerful and sexy.” (R223)

Pleasuring partners also referenced requiring confidence not only to be able to perform well but to ensure their own needs were met:

“not much point in casual sex unless you're confident in being able to give someone else pleasure and get what you want!” (Kim)

For others it referenced not only skill and confidence, but also the ability to choose ‘good’ ethical partners, and the importance of being self-aware with respect to their own desires:

“I have good sex. With good people. I know what I like. I know how to get myself off. I know what guys like, and I feel empowered pleasuring them, rather than used, as I've felt in the past.” (R10)

Communicating openly was a significant factor in empowered behaviour (Horne & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2005, p. 29), satisfying partner desires and efficaciously pursuing their own desires and pleasure:

“I find it empowering to give pleasure to others and to offer myself to someone to pleasure me.... depending on who i'm with and how often i've been with them. The first time I test the waters and see what they do without prompting. From then I talk

---

about it or guide them non verbally to what I like. I ask what they like/want as well. I try to encourage an environment conducive to open communication.” (R32)

Focus on empowered mutual satisfaction suggested that women as desiring subjects inhabiting permissive spaces and initiating roles in relationship space did not need to equate to ‘doing’ masculinity. No participant described their sexual activity as objectifying and/or instrumental. Rather, sex was experienced as empowering if both partners enjoyed the activity, where everyone’s desires were met, suggesting a more ethical approach to sex (for example, Carmody, 2009b).

Having a loving/caring partner/relationship was noted as providing a context in which empowered sexual behaviours could be enacted, as feeling comfortable with a partner, liking or caring for a partner, trusting a partner, and feeling safe within relationship space, were experienced as freeing:

“Being with [my boyfriend] is empowering. I feel more free to go after my own desires without worrying too much.” (Gemma)

“i do think that confidence and agency for me are things that only really come with feeling pretty comfortable with someone” (Kim)

“If I’m in a healthy [relationship] where I feel safe, Sex is very empowering because we make the decisions on making each other feel good.” (R240)

Sex was also described as empowering as it strengthened or communicated an emotional connection with a partner:

“Sometimes, particularly if I love or feel strongly about the person I’m having sex with, it feels like I am doing the ultimate thing to express my feelings and also make myself happy.” (R118)

Sex as an expression of caring by/for a male partner presented itself as a validating experience not only of sex but its representational power within the relationship context.

“With a boyfriend yes, because i am happy with how we both feel about each other and it makes us that much closer.” (R121)

This kind of empowerment may also reflect the discourse of romanticisation of sex whereby sex as emotional, intimate, and loving makes sex accessible for women without challenging femininity because under the romance script ‘sex as love is safe’ (Rosenthal, Gifford, & Moore, 1998, p. 45). Romanticising sex may serve to legitimate female engagement where

---

non-emotional sex is seen as masculine and accordant with a male sex drive script (Rosenthal, 1998). As this dialogue is not available to young women without accruing stigma and ostracism, romanticising sex may serve to camouflage some of the negative constructs around sex-seeking for women (ibid). Hedonistic sex within relationships may retain its morality and femininity as it is the exemplification of feminine sexuality as emotional and love-seeking rather than simply physically desiring (ibid).

Some participants noted that feelings of empowerment and sexual subjectivity came with age, experience, and maturity, suggesting the developmental nature of sexual subjectivity (Horne & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2005). For some this was related to coming to understand the self as a desiring subject:

“I think if you know that you want it and with the person you like, it is empowering and special.” (R26)

Many participants noted that they expected that their sex lives would improve once they came to understand this aspect of themselves better, suggesting a general awareness among the group of the need to be subjectively engaged with respect to sex and the developmental nature of this aspect of their identities.

“The more I learn about my own desires, the better my sex life becomes as I am able to articulate myself well and am not embarrassed to communicate these desires.” (R102)

Several interviewees suggested age and life/relationship/sexual experiences were contributing factors to their developing empowerment as sexual subjects, which in turn enabled them to resist constraining discourses such as normative femininity and heterosexuality:

“ maybe jt [sic] because i've grown up a bit and i feel more confident about my body and myself in general.... i dunno, i just feel like i wouldn't have the same need to be well-behaved anymore” (Kim)

Laura's sexual history included hook ups, casual sex, a fuck buddy and a number of relationships, casual and serious. She described many of these as satisfying aspects of her sexual needs and desires and considered them to be valuable with respect to her current sexual subjectivity. Her presentation as self-aware and sexually subjective referenced the importance of a developed/developing sexual subjectivity with respect to an engaged sex life. Reflecting on her sexual history she noted that her experiences had shaped her in positive ways despite the sometimes negative content during some periods of her life:

---

“I feel like I would never have gotten married without having slept around enough that I know what I was getting myself into.... I suppose, you never want to look back and think god I really missed out on doing that ?? and I cannot say that about my life. There’s nothing I missed out on doing. I think. So yeah. Yeah that’s the positive. And also getting to know what you want with your relationship. Like I have a very clear sense of who I am, what my boundaries are, what I will take and what I won’t. So yeah, like I think if I hadn’t gone through what I’ve been through before then I wouldn’t have been strong enough to leave X and say I ‘m not actually taking this from you ....“I wouldn’t have liked to have met my partner my partner before I had lived.” (Laura)

Although Laura exemplified sexual subjectivity and agency, her sexual history may not serve to challenge social discourses around heterosexuality, save to reinforce the relatively new framing of monogamy as serial, and pre-marital sex as permissible as long as it is within a love-relationship (the conditional double standard). On a subjective level however, Laura’s experiences were positive and referenced the benefits of an engaged sex life where discovering and pursuing desires and engaging in communication with peers and lovers about those desires positively affected not only her sex life but her overall sense of self.

Bex presented similarly. Having been sexually experimental and engaged from her mid-teens, sex was not something she felt constrained over:

Bex: I’ve never really been lost and stuff, about who I was. I’ve always kind of been me, and I’ve always known what me is which I think is more than most women can say

Me: Do you think that has to do with being sexually active from a young age

Bex: I think so ... I think it’s that I feel quite happy exploring things and I’ve been quite happy sort of not fitting in and ... because not fitting in hasn’t been a big ... thing to me I can do my own thing and I can learn about men and I can learn about my sexuality and I can find what works... so yeah

Bex noted that a feminist identity and/or awareness was part of her developmental process:

“I think part of my women’s studies probably helps me coz its like you’ve got to feel comfortable with who you are, you’ve got to feel empowered as a woman and that sort of thing and so getting to know me has been a very important part in my sort of learning as well...” (Bex)

Her sexual history narrative and non-conformity referenced resistance to femininity and normative heterosexuality. Whether her representation served as an example to others is unknown, but as she was often positioned within her peer group as a source of knowledge

---

and information it is possible to assume that her dialogues had positive impacts on other young women with respect to encouraging their development.

*Chicken or the Egg ...*

Although Gemma's comment—that if you are empowered in your life generally you can be empowered in your sex life, which would result in a better experiences—may have described the positions of some young women, many participants did not fit this description. Being empowered prior to sexual engagement did not always equate to or result in empowered experiences either, particularly when male partners presented themselves as resistant. However, Gemma's attitude to her sexuality and sexual engagement was well-considered and premeditated, and highlighted the benefits of being consciously and subjectively engaged.

Gemma's position is one on a spectrum of positions that can be taken with respect to empowerment. At one end are young women who have a clear understanding of the social context in which their sex lives are embedded, and who are aware that their entitlements range through a variety of social aspects but also include a right to non-stratified access to sex regardless of gender. These young women may understand that empowerment in one area of their lives can be transferred to, or exploited in, other areas of their lives. This position echoes the power of sex-positive positions, where embodied expression and sexuality can have real-world impacts for women with respect to other aspects of their lives (McClelland & Fine, 2008)). At the other end of this spectrum are young women who are unaware of their entitlements, or the social context they are embedded in. If they are aware they may not know how to access these entitlements, or be resistant to socialising forces so as to apply the empowerment they experience in other aspects of their lives. Between these two end-points sit most young women in my research. Many displayed varying degrees of awareness with respect to their sex lives and gendered situatedness. As participants occupied multiple points along this spectrum they negate the possibility of simplistic readings of behaviour as socially reinforcing or duped, and highlight the importance of taking into account the voices of young women who claim empowerment.

What was most common among participants, however, was the difficulty young women appeared to have with respect to translating intellectual empowerment into experiential empowerment (Holland, et al., 1998, p. 9). Although intellectual empowerment is an important and fundamental aspect of developing sexual subjectivity and empowered behaviour it must however transcend institutionalised gender roles in order to translate into

---

empowered and efficacious behaviour. Thus, understanding entitlements in subjective ways can be of limited use to young women if they are not able to translate this into their embodied, lived experiences.

---

## Chapter Nine: When All is Said and Done

My original intent for this research was to examine whether or not young New Zealand women engaged in sexualised behaviours, and experienced the kinds of consequences described in the international literature. I also wanted to address whether these kinds of behaviours were empowering as some claimed. What emerged instead was a picture of young women's sexual behaviour, their motivations and feelings about participation in sometimes maligned socio-sexual contexts, and their opinions about those contexts. Looking for empowerment rather than risk allowed young women's attempts at negotiating space in which to perform sexually desiring subjectivities to become visible. This brought to light not only negative outcomes and factors, but also positive experiences and impacts, and how experiences contributed to a sense of self as a sexual agent. Patterns in their narratives also brought into focus social institutions such as the stigmatising sexual double standard, and socialising scripts such as good/appropriate femininity and normative heterosexuality, the impacts of which were notable.

Young women's attempts to occupy what can be classed as masculine sexual spaces can be read not only as a method of co-opting available spaces, or creating new spaces in which to attempt to explore and experience their subjective desires, but also as a way of attempting to resist or deviate away from cultural and intrapsychic scripts that bound performances and confine young women to conceptual frameworks that do not allow subjective sexual engagement. The challenges young women discussed in their attempts reflect the apparent intractability of the above mentioned social institutions.

This broad-stroke picture presented as more complex than some critical readings of young women's sexual behaviour may suggest. Rather than particular moments/behaviours being indicative of overarching positionalities, young women presented their stories as developmental and historically relevant where performances were part of a larger process.

### **What Women Had to Say, and What Went Unsaid**

Young New Zealand women's behaviour presented as similar to that discussed in the international literature. Although perhaps not as far progressed in moving away from dating culture towards hook up culture as young women in the United States, young New Zealand

---

women presented as regular (if often short-term) participants. Many offered similar positive reasons for participating in it and for performing a number of non-relationship sexual behaviours as were discussed in the international literature. They wanted to have fun (for example, Jackson & Cram, 2003; Wade & Heldman, in press ), experience sex without the work of relationships (for example, Armstrong & Hamilton, 2010; Bogle, 2008; ), to discover their sexual desires and tastes (for example, Armstrong, Hamilton & England, 2010; ), and to find potential partners (for example, Bogle, 2008; ). They also made similar complaints about the nature of male behaviour (for example, Fielder & Carey, 2010; ), the unemotionality of casual sex (for example, Paul, McManus & Hays, 2000; ), and various elements of physical risk such as STIs and the possibility of assault (for example, Owen, et al., 2010).

These patterns suggest that the current socio-sexual culture in New Zealand is another instantiation of a western cultural pattern of relational interactions. Despite national variations in social messaging about sex, and the kind of sexual spaces available to emerging adults (for example, schoolies weeks in Australia (Maticka-Tyndale, Herold & Opperman, 2003) or abstinence educational impacts in the USA), there appear to be some overarching themes that are incumbent with this transition away from a dominant dating culture. Common elements in femininity scripts such as the conflation of love with sex (Rosenthal, Gifford, & Moore, 1998), female sexual passivity, and female sexuality as in service of male pleasure (Hollway, 1998; Phillips, 2000), appear to be transnational and present common barriers that many young women struggle to negotiate.

The particular nature of feminine performance within socio-sexual contexts in New Zealand was evident in the combinations of factors that constituted the Sexual Risk Script. The Script highlighted the all-encompassing nature of risk-oriented thinking for participants, and presented sex as a constant negotiation of risk, where it is a woman's responsibility to identify risks and manage and mitigate them. When combined with social structures such as the sexual double standard, traditional masculinity, normative heterosexuality, and the cultural licensing of the stigmatising of (non-conforming) sexually active women, the Script presented as a complicated set of conditions that seemed to either constrain agentic and autonomous sexual behaviour or set participants up for negative consequences from failing to closely follow the Script. The overall impression participants left me with was that rather than feeling equipped with knowledge by which to negotiate sexual interactions in ways that

---



were respectful and safe, many were overly cautious in ways that were out of proportion to the actual dangers present in the various sexual spaces they occupied. Fear of rape, sexual coercion, STIs, unplanned pregnancies, and being judged for inappropriate sexual conduct impacted young women, causing a contraction of performances and space occupation away from subject-idealised behaviours back towards normative femininity. Regardless of how much some young women wanted to break the rules, the proscriptive nature of the SRS and its associated penalties motivated some to move into relationships, which they considered to be safer spaces for sexual engagement, performance and exploration. Some recognised this as a compromise they had to make to access the sex and development opportunities they wanted to experience. Others participated in non-relationship behaviours in cautious and restricted ways (when compared to prospective male partners). Their remarks suggested that they understood what they could 'get away with' (in so far as finding a safe 'just right' space was possible), and how to manage the risks that were bundled with riskier performances and behaviours.

Although permissive spaces suggested opportunities for participants to perform non-traditional feminine/bad girl behaviours and to populate masculine spaces so as to access the perceived privileges inherent therein, successful occupation was often temporary and/or short-term. A number of strategies, for example the ambiguity of hooking up and alcohol's disinhibiting effects, undermined the social transformative power of transgressive performances. Although these strategies allowed young women to protect themselves to some degree from stigma that may result, they also undermined claims of agency and subjectivity. Attempts to engage with sexual subjectivity development, to resist appropriate femininity and to challenge normative heterosexuality, were invisible to audiences or were often restricted by male partners (Peralta, 2008). Experiences did, however, appear to be individually valuable and potentially transformative with respect to facilitating intellectual empowerment (Holland et al., 1998, p. 105), and engaging in the sexual subjectivity development process.

Relationship spaces were often described as preferable because here partners were perceived to be benevolent with respect to allowing space for sexual subjectivity development and sexual experimentation, but also entertaining sexual desires in ways that were less likely in non-relationships spaces. This benevolence was appreciated but signalled the construction of relationship space as male-dominated through for example, masculinity as expertise, and the

---

male sex drive discourse as dominant. Negotiating pleasure and desires within this space relied on accommodating partners—what a participant could express depended on a permission, something not guaranteed to be found in every prospective relationship.

The lack of social space for a “discourse of desire” for women was evident in self-described ‘inadequate’ self-knowledge (Fine, 1988), and the often absent communication between sexual partners about pleasure and desire. There appeared to be few opportunities for women to talk about sex and sexuality in a subjective and constructive way, thus many young women represented as engaging in a ‘learning whilst doing’ process that again relied on permissive masculinity and a reactive positionality. Problematically many young women did not appear equipped to analyse and assess their sexual environments and learning opportunities with respect to addressing their embodied sexuality and desires. Communication and associated agency was therefore often less than participants ideally wanted. Being vocal about known desires was hampered by the recognition that some desires are best kept hidden until safe and trustworthy partners are found. The potential of stigma could therefore close down many opportunities for productive communication despite a general recognition that being able to communicate their desires would likely lead to more satisfactory sex lives.

Relational, relationship, coital and orgasm imperatives were prominent elements of participant narratives. The relationship imperative was evident in the frequency of comments describing sex as inherently emotional, and of emotional connection being a primary element in sexual interactions for women. ‘Real’ sex was described as primarily penetrative (with a conflation of coitus with male orgasm (Braun, Gavey & McPhillips, 2003, p. 243), and male sexual performance at the expense of female desire, were commonly alluded to or discussed. ‘Orgasm as goal’ illustrated a performance-orientation to sex that challenged many participants as their bodies often destabilised this requirement. The gendered notion of sex was visible in many young women’s stories, even those who displayed some critical engagement with their sexuality and socio-sexual positions.

I would describe young New Zealand women in this research as attempting to access or perform Hollway’s (1998) permissive discourse by engaging in non-relationship sexual behaviours, as a way to break free from and/or refashion traditional femininity from a passive sexual object position towards a more active sexual subjectivity. Many participants expressed or exemplified an understanding of their entitlement to not only sexual pleasure and access to sexual spaces and partners, but also other related social entitlements such as

---

freedom from stigma and the sexual double standard, which suggested attempts to move away from more traditional forms of femininity. The internalised male subjectivity that Holland et al., (1998) describe as ‘male-in-the-head’ thinking was less evident in how many participants positioned themselves as sexual partners. ‘Male-in-the-bed’ power dynamics, however, were evident in the deprioritisation of female pleasure and desires and an acquiescence and reliance on masculine expertise as a way to sexual satisfaction. Despite these challenges many young women presented as both optimistic and frustrated by their sexual opportunities, in one way or another. The large number of barriers to the kind of less inhibited sexuality that young women suggested they wanted appeared to be difficult to negotiate around without incurring some kind of social penalty. However, awareness of entitlement was common and pointed to a level of intellectual empowerment that could potentially prove transformative (and did) for some young women.

### **Coming to Conclusions**

Young New Zealand women appear to display many of the traits and impacts discussed in the international literature with respect to their sexual experiences—both negative and positive. Permissive sexual spaces present numerous challenges that require either careful consideration in order to avoid risk, or a cavalier attitude to health and safety. Despite Dr Makary’s (and many of the general public’s) assertions that young New Zealand women are promiscuous and irresponsible I found little evidence of this cavalierness. Instead I encountered a risk-averse group engaged in making the best of their socio-sexual situation. They did so with a complex script (the SRS) which they used to help mitigate the perceived hazards of non-relationship sexual engagement, and a few skills that enabled some engagement with the sexual subjectivity development process. Thus, even though hook up culture appears to offer opportunities for young women to gain sexual experience and engage in pleasure-seeking for its own sake, what young women appear to be able to participate in without risk to their health, safety, well-being and reputation was a far shorter list than perhaps would be suspected given the moral panic over New Zealand’s supposedly promiscuous youth.

The SRS throws into contention the value of risk-orientated/risk-focus-only sex education and social messages about, and orientations to, young women’s sexual behaviour. Research has shown the negative impacts risk-focus and the requirement of traditional femininity performance on young women’s sexual agency and related safe sex practices (see for

---

example Holland et al., 1998; Tolman, 2002). An amount of research (see the Literature Review, Chapter 2) also discusses psychological harms for women whose actions contravene internalised scripts of appropriate sexual behaviour, resulting in post-event guilt and shame. If the aim of messaging about sex and sexuality is to promote overall health and wellbeing, then revision of the cultural position on young women's sexuality is required to offset the negative impacts of the SRS.

In light of this largely negative script, many participants' attempts to go 'off-script' were carefully considered, and were restricted to a variety of spaces that do not compare with the boarder range available to many New Zealand masculinities. That young women do decide to have casual sex despite male partners, peers, parents and a society which in general chastises and stigmatises them for their behaviour, is a reflection of young women's frustrations about the constraints an appropriate feminine performance burdens them with. Their narratives and opinions also suggested an intellectual empowerment and a developing sense of entitlement to the kinds of sexual behaviours that some masculinities are able to engage in without penalty. That this sometimes fails to translate into resistant behaviour is testament to the punitive nature of the socio-sexual environment, and the difficulty of finding alternative ways of performing in these spaces that are both safe and enjoyable.

Kalish and Kimmel (2011) describe this current trend/change in young women's sexual behaviour (namely active participation in hook up culture) as the masculinisation of sex, but I think this issue is more complex. Kamen's (2000, p. 5) view, that young women are not attempting to 'do' male sexuality, but just want sexual freedom (whatever that amounts to) is, I think, a preferable starting point from which to examine what is happening. Very few of my participants suggested that they wanted to occupy positionalities of male sexuality that characterise the non-relationship socio-sexual environment. Many were, in fact, critical of much of this. What they appeared to want is to access the same privileges that being a heterosexual male in New Zealand society confers—access to non-relationship and non-relationship-wanting sexual partners, sex without the requirement to be emotionally engaged and/or relationship seeking, pleasurable sexual experiences and the variety-seeking that permissive spaces allow, the lack of judgement for engaging in sexual behaviours with casual partners, and the chance to learn about themselves as sexual subjectivities without having to retreat into relationships to do so. Appropriate femininity presents few to none of these opportunities, and instead appears to close down access to sexual entitlements.

---

Despite this being a normative position for a dominant masculinity, I do not consider the space occupation to be inherently masculine. No space is inherently any particular characteristic, and spaces are continually open to being changed with respect to their spatial relations characteristics. Categorising a kind of sexual performance within social spaces as gendered only serves to reify the dichotomies and hierarchies currently attached to them when there is no reason other than social practice as a justification. This closes down the possibility for different kinds of behaviour by suggesting that there are instead a set of predefined rules that must be followed if a space is to be occupied. Such an assertion leaves no space for change, and suggests spaces are static, which they are not.

Rather than saying that women are moving into a masculine performance, it might be more appropriate to describe the change as a kind of degendering of a practice. When reflecting on the kinds of behaviours young women described themselves engaging in, and their references for the kinds of interactions they want (for example, not to have issues of emotional risk due to traditionally masculine partners, to not have the threat of stigma in the background, to be able to manage the issues of sexual health and physical safety more easily, then the overall objectives of young women who wish to occupy permissive sexual spaces look different than the stereotypical masculine space occupation that Kalish and Kimmel refer to. Although occupation may appear to be a masculine performance, what may be in process is young women's attempts (at least for some) to make this space more habitable for them under a formula of their *own* making. Whether this is the case is difficult to determine as hook up culture and the swing away from dating as a central cultural paradigm is still relatively new. Although young women may be trying to adapt, it appears some masculinities, and cultural institutions, are slower to change, making it difficult to get a clear picture of women's process, and the direction spatial occupation is moving in—namely either towards masculinised sexual performance as Kalish and Kimmel suggest, or towards something different, as I suggest.

What was described as problematic with respect to this change in space occupation, both in New Zealand and overseas, is the entrenched nature of both a privileged and instrumental/traditional masculinity, and a socio-sexual context structured by gendered stigmatising occupation rules. Without these factors, some young women noted they would be more likely to engage in more permissive activities such as hooking up and casual sex with different partners than they have done or do at present. Notably many of those with this position already displayed a degree of reflexivity about their position within the socio-sexual

---

context that suggested they were already challenging or resisting scripts of appropriate femininity, at least in some contexts (generally their relationships). Those who were most successfully resistant to the disciplinary forces of normative femininity were those who displayed a feminist standpoint/positionality. Their success in moving away from traditional femininity was supported by male partners who were similarly moving away from traditional masculinities. Although it is understandable that feminist-identifying women would prefer men with more egalitarian views (Backus & Mahalik, 2011), the capacity for change in this kind of relationship also suggests that change to the structure of socio-sexual relations would be easier for women if men were similarly invested in refashioning masculinities away from traditional forms.

The differences in experiences between those who more closely followed the SRS and appropriate femininity scripts and those who did not suggest the value for young women of trying move away from these scripts, particularly within the context of their sex lives. As international research suggests (see for example Fine, 1988; Fine & McClelland, 2006; Holland et al., 1992, 1996; Hollway, 1995; Horne, 2005; Horne & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2006; Peterson, 2006; Schalet, 2009, 2010; Tolman, 2002; Tolman & Higgins, 1996), resistant and off-script performances have positive impacts on the embodied and subjective sexual experiences of young women, resulting in better self-care and a more enjoyable sex life. Social resistance to young women's attempted engagement with sexual subjectivity development across all socio-sexual spaces reflects an old-fashioned gendered morality that no longer benefits young women, or society in general.

## **Reflections and Recommendations**

This study references the importance of taking both a qualitative and gender approach to the study of young women's sexual behaviour and attitudes to that behaviour. Listening to young women's talk enables researchers to move beyond descriptive and/or quantifying studies to identify some of the underlying motives and disciplinary forces that can sometimes be invisible or not properly accounted for in analysis. There are, however, limits to this form of study.

This study highlights the experiences of a predominantly Pakeha group of educated young women who are open in some way to discussing their sex lives in an open forum. The

---

sample size and its narrow demographic representation provide only a partial picture of the sexual landscape in New Zealand. As participants were enrolled in higher education it is also likely that their motivations for engaging in non-relational sexual behaviours differ from those not similarly situated, due to their professional and future-goal orientations (Caruthers, 2005, p. 155).

A second limitation with respect to the sample lies with limiting stage two of the project to heterosexual participants. Running an analysis between data sets of those who identified as heterosexual and those who identified as non-heterosexual may have served to better clarify the impacts of heteronormativity on the participants, and to highlight areas of resistance.

A third limitation for this study is the period of time it was conducted across. As results suggest that attitudes to non-relational sexual behaviours change across time, it would have been beneficial to have conducted a more longitudinal study. A follow-up survey or interview to be conducted perhaps one year after the initial interview to establish changes in attitudes and behaviours in order to better assess the impact of participation in for example hook up culture would have added to the richness of the project. However, the constraints imposed by undertaking research for a doctorate mean this was not feasible.

### **Recommendations**

Further study canvassing young women's opinions on a range of topics touched upon in this thesis would be of value. Issues that have been touched upon such as the role of alcohol as a facilitator for sexual behaviour, the impact of risk-based sexual education and social messaging, and the power of stigma to determine sexual behaviour and self-concepts would benefit from further focused exploration as a holistic project. Although there continues to be research into each of these aspects, examining the intersection of multiple factors would better illuminate young women's orientation to and feelings about their current socio-sexual contexts.

A more comprehensive sample with respect to demographic and geographic (for example rural and urban, North Island and South Island) characteristics would also provide more illuminating results with respect to the impact of wider social factors. Looking across generations, ethnicities, sexual orientations, religious identities, class and economic boundaries would provide greater insight not only into how these sub-populations negotiate their sex lives as sub-cultures within a broader social context, but would also highlight social

---

contexts by throwing up commonalities that highlight persistent and/or transient issues that impact women as individuals who have some kind of sexual practice within a larger social framework. This is a major undertaking but I think its value cannot be underestimated with respect to producing a more explanatory picture of an important aspect of our national identity.

I also recommend the evaluation and implementation of progressive sex education programs in New Zealand. For example, Australian researcher Moira Carmody (2009b) has demonstrated successes of positive attitudinal and behaviour changes as a result of participation in her *Sex + Ethics Program* which has been rolled out within school and sporting environments in Australia and New Zealand (in trial). Carmody<sup>52</sup> notes the potential for her Program to be run across a variety of institutions, for adults, young adults and adolescents, and the positive impacts it can have with respect to the reduction of sexual violence, unethical sexual behaviour, and other unethical behaviours such as bullying. At the societal level this can signal a reframing of masculinities and femininities that better enable criticality with respect to an individual's situatedness, and subsequent behaviours.

In this regard, I recommend a more progressive approach to sex education, the scope of which should be expanded beyond biologicistic and health/risk paradigms to address elements such as pleasure, desire, self-awareness, body-awareness and body difference, sexual self-image, sexual identity and fluidity, ethical sexual practices, the development of communication skills and understanding, and an awareness of the contestability of heteronormative cultural messages about what sex is, how it should be performed and by whom. Young people would benefit from education being delivered across the span of their high school education, as programs can keep step with the changing needs of young people as they develop sexually and socially, and also work more effectively with respect to building deep knowledge for individuals.

Personally, my most important recommendation is that we as researchers find more effective ways to deliver information from the academy out into mainstream society. Many young women in the project talked about objectification and sexualisation, showing that eventually feminist critiques trickle down to the popular discourse, but the lack of critical engagement with heterosexuality, femininity, masculinity, sexual subjectivity and agency was surprising. I think my own history as a feminist researcher highlights this gap between academic richness

---

<sup>52</sup> in-person conversation



and cultural lack. Before my engagement with this topic I had very little critical understanding of heterosexuality and sex. I did not question that sex was about penetration and orgasm, or that gendered sex roles were so contestable. It took me three years of reading before I had a reasonable critical platform from which to challenge my own beliefs about these things. Who has the time to commit to this other than those of us with the luxury to occupy space in the academy? I remember recently reading a blog a friend shared on Facebook, critiquing the orgasm imperative. My friend commented that she wished she had known about what she had read decades earlier as it would have made her sex life so much less stressful. What a statement. Undertaking this research has had similar positive impacts on my own sex life. As a result, my commitment to products from my research is less towards journal articles and conferences than it is at blogging and talking about my research, investigating avenues to get information quickly into the public sphere, and compiling a book of ideas talked about in academy, presented in accessible language and targeted at emergent adult readers. In this regard I strongly advocate for more of us in the academy to find further ways to disseminate our knowledge quickly and effectively beyond our academic cohort. It is clear that many individuals would benefit by being more critically equipped and prepared to negotiate complicated social spaces in ways that would facilitate positive social change.

---

## Appendices

### Appendix 1 - Emerging Adulthood

Arnett's (2004; 2006a; 2006b; 2007a, 2007b) developmental category emerging adulthood<sup>53</sup> describes a period in the individual's lifespan from ages of 18-25 years primarily, and can persist through to the beginning of an individual's 30s. Arnett cites the invention of the birth control pill for the rise of this new developmental period (2004, p. 5). The sexual landscape has evolved since the contraceptive pill and the sexual revolution of the 60s and 70s when sex and marriage began to decouple, creating an ever-increasing time-gap between leaving home and getting married. Since 1970s the average age of marriage has increased for New Zealand women, from 20.8 years in 1971 to 28.2 years today, leaving a long period between beginning of sexual activity and marriage (Bascand, 2009, p. 3).

Social regulations on sexual behaviour have relaxed somewhat, with some premarital sex now permissible for women (as a conditional double standard). This period of sexual activity and (relative) societal freedom allows individuals to be sexually explorative. Arnett noted that "[e]mergent adults believe they should explore different love relationships..." (2004, p. 74), as part of their identity exploration (2004, p. 8).

Emerging adults have the greatest degree of freedom in which to explore their identities and their sexuality and incorporate their sexuality into their identity, which includes "...deciding ones sexual beliefs and attitudes related to premarital sex and contraception, and views on gender in relation to sex..." (Leftowitz & Gillen cited in 2006b, p. 318), as well as determining the kinds of people they are and are not attracted to (Arnett, 2004, p. 73). Hooking up, casual sex and other sexual practices "can be seen as part of the identity exploration" (Leftowitz & Gillen cited in 2006b, p. 318). Despite literature (see Literature Review for examples) citing the dangers of these kinds of activities for women Arnett sees them as less problematic, pointing out that "the developmental differences between adolescent and emerging adults, physically, cognitively, and emotionally, make sexual involvements less problematic and potentially more positive for emerging adults"(ibid). This is a period of experimentation and play, of gaining experience before committing to

---

<sup>53</sup> This developmental stage is found predominantly in first world nations where economic and education opportunities allow its emergence.

more stable and long-term life goals (Arnett, 2004, p. 10). It is also a period where individuals are learning self-regulation of their emotions, moods and behaviours, including sexual behaviour (2007a, p. 210).

---



Appendix 3 - Study Website

[Home](#)
[About the Project](#)
[Survey](#)
[Updates](#)
[Members Only Area](#)
[Contact Us](#)

## RE-INVENTING THE SQUEAL

The search for a sexual revolution in New Zealand

**TAKE THE SURVEY!**

Want to take part, but only a little? Then take the survey (it's anonymous) and have your say. But get in quick! The Survey closes 12pm Friday 26th March!

[Click here to take the survey](#)

**MEMBER LOGIN**

Username:

Password:

**SEARCH**

Keywords:

**Hi and welcome to the project!**

My name is Lesley Wright and I'm a Ph.D. student at Victoria University of Wellington. For my thesis I'm researching our 'modern sexual culture' and what young New Zealand women think about it. There's a lot of commentary about sexual behaviour in the media these days, and it got me thinking—the sex lives of young women today are a lot different from my younger years, which wasn't that long ago! The media and social commentators talk about promiscuity and hook-ups as though we have a new sexual culture—so I thought I'd look at what is going on, what it means for young women today, and if it is that different after all.

So, I'd love to find out what you think, what motivates you in your sex life, what you want, what you don't want, what you're getting and how it meets your expectations, and what you think about sexual culture for women in general. Let's be honest, sexually, it's been a man's world for a long time, but it seems like women are starting to level the playing field. Then again, it could all be just smoke and mirrors! The only people that can answer that question are young Kiwi women.

So, if you're a young New Zealand woman (aged between 18 and 30) and you'd like to take part in a discussion about sex in NZ with me and other young women, then I'd like to hear from you.

If you're interested in voicing your opinions but 'remaining nameless' then simply click on the 'survey tab' and take the survey.

If you'd like to go further and be part of the group discussion, then email me at [reinventing.the.squeal@gmail.com](mailto:reinventing.the.squeal@gmail.com) and we'll get the ball rolling.

I'd love to have you on the project – it promises to be incredibly interesting, and a ton of fun.

**Contact details**

Lesley Wright  
PhD Student  
Gender and Women's Studies  
Victoria University of Wellington  
New Zealand  
[reinventing.the.squeal@gmail.com](mailto:reinventing.the.squeal@gmail.com)

**UPDATE**

Due to an overwhelming response the survey will close 12pm Friday 26th March!

[Click here to read more](#)

**LATEST POLL**

How did you find out about this research project?

- Flyer (public place)
- Flyer (bathroom)
- Email (from a contact)
- Word of mouth

[See all poll results](#)

[Reinventing the Squeal's Facebook](#)

This research has been assessed and approved by  
[Victoria University Faculty of Education Ethics Committee](#).

Ethics Number RM16966

[admin](#) | [site map](#) | [privacy policy](#) | [contact us](#)

[Home](#)
[About the Project](#)
[Survey](#)
[Updates](#)
[Members Only Area](#)
[Contact Us](#)

## RE-INVENTING THE SQUEAL

The search for a sexual revolution in New Zealand

**MEMBER LOGIN**

Username:

Password:  ➔

**SEARCH**

Keywords:

### Welcome to the survey page

If you've made it here you are thinking about taking the survey. As you already know, the subject of this study is young women's sexual behaviour and sexual attitudes. Consequently, some of the questions in the survey could be regarded as 'sensitive', so if you decide to take the survey here are few things you need to consider:

1. Do you meet my demographic requirements - in other words, are you female, from New Zealand, and are you aged 18-30? If you replied yes to these questions, please read on. If not and you would still like to contribute, then please email me!
2. Doing this survey alone - because the questions are personal your answers are just about you, your sex life, and your thoughts on sex and sexuality. Consequently I recommend doing the survey by yourself so you are relaxed when answering the questions (no prying eyes and no "friends-pollution").
3. Allowing time - the survey can vary in length, taking between 20 and 45 minutes, depending on how much time you take to think about the questions. You are able to leave the survey midway through, and return to complete at a later time if you need to.
4. The questions - as the majority of questions in the survey are to do with your sexual experience, and your beliefs and thoughts about your sexuality and women's sexuality in general you may feel you do not want to answer some of the questions asked in the survey. If this is the case simply move on to the next question. You are not required to answer any of the questions in the body of the survey. If your answers for questions are the same, please repeat your answer in full (please for example do type 'same as above').
5. Consent - at the beginning of the survey is a consent page. You can't take the survey unless you hit the 'yes' button on the consent page, so here's what consent means, for taking the survey:
  - you understand that the information you provide will become part of a pool of information to be used in the completion of a Ph.D., and related publications.
  - you understand that all your answers will be confidential, and you will not be identified at any time.
  - you understand that because the survey is anonymous, your contribution cannot be withdrawn once you have submitted the survey.

You may have some questions with regards to the above that you want to get answered before you take the survey. If you do, then email me at [reinventing.the.squeal@gmail.com](mailto:reinventing.the.squeal@gmail.com) and I'll get back to you as soon as I can.

But if you're happy to proceed, then simply [click here](#). Or copy and paste the url into your internet browser:  
[http://vuw.qualtrics.com/SE?SID=SV\\_9yPZSNXZxkxBelK&SVID=Prod](http://vuw.qualtrics.com/SE?SID=SV_9yPZSNXZxkxBelK&SVID=Prod)  
 Have fun!

And most importantly, thank you very much for your time!

This research has been assessed and approved by  
 Victoria University Faculty of Education Ethics Committee.  
 Ethics Number RM16966

**UPDATE**

Due to an overwhelming response the survey will close 12pm Friday 26th March!

[Click here to read more](#)

**LATEST POLL**

How did you find out about this research project?

- Flyer (public place)
- Flyer (bathroom)
- Email (from a contact)
- Word of mouth

[See all poll results](#)

[Reinventing the Squeal's Facebook](#)

[admin](#) | [site map](#) | [privacy policy](#) | [contact us](#)

# RE-INVENTING THE SQUEAL

The search for a sexual revolution in New Zealand



**TAKE THE SURVEY!**

Want to take part, but only a little? Then take the survey (it's anonymous) and have your say. But get in quick! The Survey closes 12pm Friday 26th March!

[Click here to take the survey](#)

**MEMBER LOGIN**

Username:

Password:  

**SEARCH**

Keywords:  

## Contact Lesley Wright

Fill in the form below to send me an email:

Name:

Email Address:

Subject:

Comment:

If you require any further information, or have any problems concerning the project, please contact me at [lesley.wright@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:lesley.wright@vuw.ac.nz) or my supervisor, Lesley Hall of Gender and Women's Studies at Victoria University, PO Box 600, Wellington, at [Lesley.hall@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:Lesley.hall@vuw.ac.nz), or telephone (04) 4637467; or Jenny Neale of HSRC at Victoria University, PO Box 600, Wellington, at [Jenny.Neale@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:Jenny.Neale@vuw.ac.nz) or telephone (04) 4635827.

This research has been assessed and approved by [Victoria University Faculty of Education Ethics Committee](#).

Ethics Number RM16966

[admin](#) | [site map](#) | [privacy policy](#) | [contact us](#)

## Contact Details

**Lesley Wright**  
 PhD Student  
 Gender and Women's Studies  
 Victoria University of Wellington  
 New Zealand  
[reinventing.the.squeal@gmail.com](mailto:reinventing.the.squeal@gmail.com)

## Appendix 4 – Survey

### Survey – Screenshot of online survey (Qualtrics platform)

**Screening block - always first**

---

Hi, and welcome to the survey.

I'd like to thank you in advance for your honesty and frankness, and for taking the time to carefully consider the questions you answer. Your responses will greatly inform the research project.

As the content of this project can be a sensitive - we are discussing sex after all - you do not have to answer any questions you are not comfortable answering. Simply move on to the next question.

Let's get started!

Please tick your gender

---

Male

Female

Please indicate your age

---

Under 18 years

18-25 years

26-30 years

31 years and over

Please indicate your nationality

---

**Consent statement**

---

Consent:

Completion and submission of this survey is deemed as consent for this information to be included in the research project. Identifying details will be changed to ensure your anonymity. Please click "I consent" if you are happy for your anonymous information to be included.

---

I consent

I do not consent

**Definitions**

---

To make sure we are all talking about the same thing, in this section we are going to look at some terms and have you define what they mean for YOU. Take a moment to think about these terms - their meanings are often 'fuzzy', even to us!

When we talk about sex (the act) often we are not talking about the same thing. What is 'real sex' for some may be foreplay (or something else) for others, and vice versa. Look at the list below and check which activities are 'real sex' for you, and which are NOT 'real sex'.

For example, you may consider kissing to be part of 'real sex', but when done by itself it is NOT 'real sex' for you, so you would tick the NOT 'real sex' box. However, masturbation to orgasm by itself may be 'real sex' for you so you would tick the 'real sex' box.

(Some of these activities may be in both lists. Check as many boxes as you think apply.)

---

	'Real Sex'	NOT 'real sex'
Kissing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Non-genital touching (not including breasts)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Non-genital touching (including breasts)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Genital touching (not to orgasm)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Masturbation (not to orgasm - giving or receiving)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Masturbation (to orgasm - giving or receiving)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Oral sex (not to orgasm - giving or receiving)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Oral sex (to orgasm - giving or receiving)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sexual intercourse (penis in vagina - neither partner to orgasm)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sexual intercourse (penis in vagina - partner to orgasm only (not self))	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sexual intercourse (penis in vagina - self to orgasm only (not partner))	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sexual intercourse (penis in vagina - both to orgasm)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Anal sex (not to orgasm - giving or receiving)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Anal sex (to orgasm - giving or receiving)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other - please list and tick <input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other - please list and tick <input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other - please list and tick <input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Two terms that are frequently used in the media today are 'hooking up' and 'casual sex'. Often these are used interchangeably, but they may actually mean different things to YOU. Look at the list below and check which activities are part of hooking up and/or casual sex.

For example, you may consider kissing to be part of 'hooking up' when done by itself, but not 'casual sex' when done by itself, so you would tick the 'hooking up' box and not the 'casual sex' box. However, you may consider anal sex to be 'hooking up' and 'casual sex', so you would tick both boxes.

(Some of these activities may be in both lists. Check as many boxes as you think apply.)

	'Hooking up'	'Casual sex'
Kissing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Non-genital touching (not including breasts)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Non-genital touching (including breasts)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Genital touching (not to orgasm)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Masturbation (not to orgasm - giving or receiving)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Masturbation (to orgasm - giving or receiving)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Oral sex (not to orgasm - giving or receiving)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Oral sex (to orgasm - giving or receiving)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sexual intercourse (penis in vagina - neither partner to orgasm)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sexual intercourse (penis in vagina - partner to orgasm only (not self))	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sexual intercourse (penis in vagina - self to orgasm only (not partner))	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sexual intercourse (penis in vagina - both to orgasm)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Anal sex (not to orgasm - giving or receiving)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Anal sex (to orgasm - giving or receiving)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other - please list and tick <input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other - please list and tick

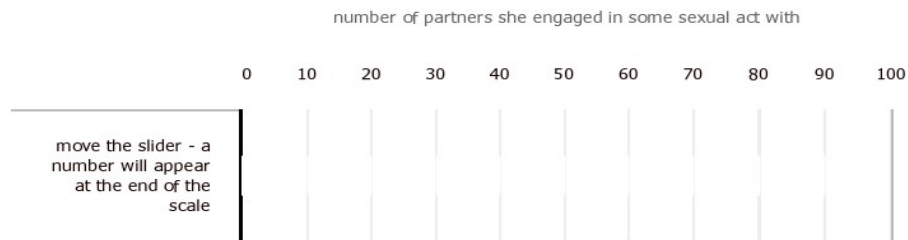



Other - please list and tick

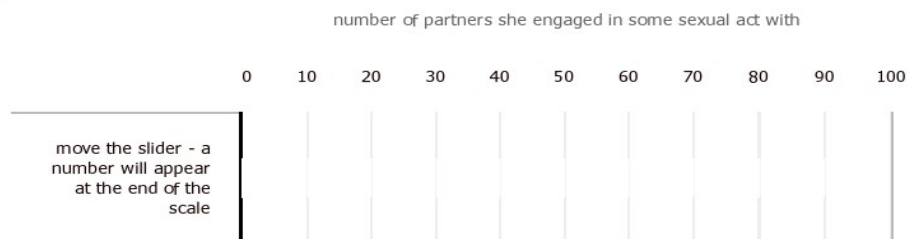



Promiscuity can mean different things to different people - our personal standards may differ, but the term may also change depending on whom we apply it to e.g. the standard for a promiscuous woman may differ from that for a promiscuous man.

Thinking about a woman, aged 18 years, you would call her promiscuous if she had some kind of sexual encounter (within your 'casual sex' picks) with how many partners?



Thinking about a woman, aged 25 years, you would call her promiscuous if she had some kind of sexual encounter (within your 'casual sex' picks) with how many partners?



Some sources say that sex can be empowering, but empowerment has become a social buzz word, and can actually mean many different things. What does it mean for you - tick as many as you feel apply, and add more below if you need to:

- a process that helps you gain power over your life
- being able to make your own decisions without coercion
- being able to access the information you need to make informed decisions
- being able to choose from a range of options when making decisions
- being able to act assertively in your own best interests
- knowing you have the power to make changes in your life
- having (or building) a positive self-image
- being able to learn new skills to improve your life outcomes

write below if 'empowerment' means anything else to you.

**learning about sex**

In this section we are going to look at where you got, and get, your information about sex, sexuality, and sexual desire.

Research suggests that we get different kinds of information about sex from different sources. Thinking about your past, and also about where you would get the information you need today, check the sources you got/get information from on each topic.

						Printed media: magazines, books, pamphlets	Electronic media - TV, Movies, Internet
Parent	School	Lover	Formal organisation				

	or guardian	sex ed class	Close friend	Peer group	(casual or relationship)	e.g Family Planning	Self-discovery	(including porn)	(including porn)
contraception and sexual health/hygiene	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
male sexuality	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
female sexuality	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
sexual safety	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
female desire	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
male pleasure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
female pleasure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Remembering the times when you became more informed (by one of the above sources) what feelings or impressions did the information sources give you?

	Parent or guardian	School sex ed class	Close friend	Peer group	Lover (casual or relationship)	Formal organisation e.g Family Planning	Self-discovery	Printed media: magazines, books, pamphlets (including porn)	Electronic media - TV, Movies, Internet (including porn)
sex is fun, you can have as much as you like without worrying	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
sex is fun, but be careful how much you have and with whom	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
sex is dangerous, to your health and your future	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
sex is something you only do if you are married, in a relationship etc	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
sex is really important for men	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
sex isn't that important for women	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Thinking about the information you received, and still receive, the tone of that messaging left you feeling (click on the scale below):

	positive and happy about sex and my sex life	mostly positive and happy, but with some concerns about sex and my sex life	ambivalent about sex and my sex life	mostly negative and concerned, but with some optimism about sex and my sex life	negative and concerned about sex and my sex life
contraception and sexual health/hygiene	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
male sexuality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
female sexuality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
sexual safety	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
female desire	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
male pleasure	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
female pleasure	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Behaviour**

The media is quick to report on a wide variety of different sexual activities that young people are engaging in at present, but those behaviours may not be happening in NZ, or if they are they may be rare. This section hopes to discover what kind of behaviour you see 'out there', what you 'get up to' yourself, and what you think about it.

Have you ever 'hooked up'?

- Yes
- No

On the scale below, describe how often you 'hook up':

Less than a Year	Once a Year	2-5 Times a Year	6-10 Times a Year	Once a Month	2-3 Times a Month	Weekly	More than Once a Week
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Thinking about young women (in general) what do you think about 'hooking up'?

Have you ever had casual sex?

- Yes
- No

On the scale below, describe how often you have 'casual sex':

Less than Once a Year	Once a Year	2-5 Times a Year	6-10 Times a Year	Once a Month	2-3 Times a Month	Weekly	More than Once a Week
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Thinking about young women (in general) what do you think about 'casual sex'?

Have you ever had a 'fuck buddy'?

- Yes
- No

Thinking about young women (in general) what do you think about 'fuck buddies'?

Some women prefer to date before having sex with someone, but others prefer to have sex with someone before dating them. Which usually happens for you?

	I always date someone before having sex with them	I usually date someone before having sex with them	I sometimes date someone before having sex with them	I rarely date someone before having sex with them	I never date someone before having sex with them
Which statement best describes you?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Have you ever seen other women do any of the following in a public setting (e.g. a bar, party, gig, or any other kind of social setting where other people are present)?

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 'Flash' their breasts</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 'Flash' their backside</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 'Flash' their underwear</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 'Flash' their genital area</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Give someone a lapdance</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Dance erotically</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Strip (partial or full)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Kiss a girl (erotically)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Kiss a guy (erotically)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Engage in sexual (non-genital) touching</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Give or receive oral sex</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Engage in 'real sex'</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Engage in sexual (including genitals) touching</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Other - please type below <input style="width: 100px;" type="text"/></li> </ul> |
|---|---|

Have you ever done any of the following in a public setting (e.g. a bar, party, gig, or any other kind of social setting where other people are present)?

- 'Flash' your breasts
- 'Flash' your backside
- 'Flash' your underwear
- 'Flash' your genital area
- Give someone a lapdance
- Dance erotically
- Strip (partial or full)
- Kiss a girl erotically (friend or stranger)
- Kiss a guy erotically (stranger)
- Engage in sexual (non-genital) touching
- Give or receive oral sex
- Engage in 'real sex'
- Engage in sexual (including genitals) touching
- Other - please type below

Thinking about young women (in general) what do you think about these types of behaviour?

The difference in public opinion that labels men 'studs' and women 'sluts' for similar kinds and amounts of sexual behaviour is called the Sexual Double Standard . Do you think this standard still exists today?

- yes
- No

What effect do you think the Sexual Double Standard has on young women's sex lives?

	a very strong effect on women's sex lives	a strong effect on women's sex lives	some effect on women's sex lives	little effect on women's sex lives	no effect on women's sex lives
The Sexual Double Standard has	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**women's sexual empowerment**

Some commentators on young women's sexual behaviour describe it as empowering, whilst others say it benefits men more than women. In this section we are going to look at your views about sex, empowerment, and your own sexual fulfillment.

Let's look at your sex life.

	Very Happy	Happy	Somewhat Happy	Neither Happy nor Unhappy	Somewhat Unhappy	Unhappy	Very Unhappy
How happy are you with your sex life?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Why do you feel this way?

We're going to look at your own sexual awareness.

	I always know what I want and like	I usually know what I want and like	I sometimes know what I want and like	I rarely know what I want and like	I don't know what I want and like
How sexually self-aware do you consider yourself to be?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Not every time is great, but generally do you get what you want (to ensure your sexual satisfaction) in sexual activities?

- Yes
- Sometimes
- No

Even if you answered 'no' above answering the next question will tell me what strategies you use during sexual activities

SEXUAL ACTIVITIES.

How do you get what you want and/or like sexually?

- I discuss my sexual desires with my partner before sex
- I ask for what I know I like and want during sex
- I know what I like and want and am (non-verbally) proactive in getting it without asking
- I work it out as I go along, and ask for what I like/want and don't like/want during sex
- I work it out as I go along, and am (non-verbally) proactive in getting more of it as I go along without asking
- I just go along and hope that my needs will be met
- I meet my own needs once we are 'done'
- My needs don't get met, and I am unable to communicate my dissatisfactions

Please explain your answer above.

Do you find sexual activity empowering?

- Yes
- Sometimes
- No

Please explain your answer.

Do you think that men's and women's sexual appetites are the same?

- Yes
- No

Please explain your answer.

What would make your sex life better?

- Knowing more about my own sexuality and desire
- Being able to better articulate my desires
- Feeling as though it is acceptable to express my desires
- Feeling free to express my desires
- Having a more considerate partner
- Knowing there are no bad social consequences for acting out my desires
- Add you own
- Add your own

Please explain your answers.

**Demographic information**

What year were you born?

What is your ethnicity?

- Pakeha/Caucasian
  - Asian
  - Maori
  - Pacific Islander
  - Other
- 

What is your religious affiliation?

- Christian
- Muslim
- Buddhist
- Agnostic
- Atheist/none
- Other

On the scale below, how strongly does your religious affiliation influence your behaviour?

	Strongly	Significantly	Insignificantly	Not at all	Neither significant not insignificant
My religious affiliation influences my behaviour	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

What is your current level of education?

- High School to year 10
  - High School Graduate
  - University Student (current undergraduate)
  - University Student (undergraduate degree completed)
  - University Student (current postgraduate)
  - University Student (postgraduate degree complete)
  - Polytechnic Student (current)
  - Polytechnic Student (graduated)
  - Other (please list)
- 

Please indicate your occupation.

Which best describes your sexuality at present?

- Heterosexual
  - Bisexual
  - Lesbian/gay
  - Queer
  - Fluid
  - Other
- 
- I don't ascribe to sexual identities

## Appendix 5 - Information and Consent Form

### Information Sheet

**Project Title:** *Reinventing the Squeal - sexual exploration and the search for sexual autonomy in a hyper-sexual socio-historical climate* (provisional title).

Researcher: Lesley A Wright (PhD Candidate)

I am Lesley Wright, a PhD student in Gender and Women's Studies at Victoria University of Wellington. As part of my degree I am undertaking a research project leading to a thesis. The project I am undertaking is to explore the sexual behaviour of young women in New Zealand, and to see if some kinds of sexual activity are empowering for the women who perform them. The University has given ethics approval for this research as it involves human participants. (A copy of the Human Ethics Policy can be obtained from me should you wish to review it.)

Some international research and commentary on young women's sexual behaviour discusses the possible harm that public displays of sexuality may do to the young women involved. Some young women disagree with these findings, stating that they are doing nothing different to men in western culture, and that the kinds of sexual activities they engage in are actually empowering. The purpose of this research is to examine how young women feel about participating in these kinds of sexual behaviour, whether personally, or as an audience to another woman's display, and how this behaviour affects their sexuality and confidence. During the interview and focus group process, participants will be encouraged to reflect on issues such as their own behaviour, that of the other participants, that of other women, some of the recent research and social commentaries, and the view of society at large.

You are invited to participate in this research project because your unique opinion as a young woman in the target age group is highly valuable. Participation in this project will involve one or more of the following:

- the completion of a survey (approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour)
- an online interview with the researcher of approximately 1.5 hours (no longer),
- participation in an on-line forum, where research participants can discuss topics of their own choosing, as well as those outlined by the researcher (at the participants' discretion),
- email correspondence (informing of website participation, and some intermittent individual correspondence).

The topics that will be discussed include:

---



- sex education,
- society's view on sexuality and sexual activity,
- your own sexual behaviour and opinions
- sexual behaviour such as 'hooking up', 'one-night-stands', flashing and other kinds of exhibitionism (in public and on the internet), sex first/dating later, expressing sexual desire and getting those desires met, what counts as 'real sex', performing 'porn-sex' and so on
- how you feel when you see/do/hear about these behaviours,
- if such behaviours can be empowering, in both the short and long terms.

The online interview will be recorded with your permission, and be available to you for comment should you want them.

The information gathered during this research project is confidential. It will be available only to me, and my PhD supervisors (Lesley Hall (Senior Lecturer) and Jenny Neale (Assoc. Professor), Victoria University of Wellington. As an online forum member all participants are asked to respect the privacy and confidentiality of other participants, in line with the overall confidentiality of the project. The analysis will be done in a way that prevents the identification of the participants in the publication of findings. Coded data will be securely stored for five years after final publication of the collected data (as prescribed by University regulations) and then destroyed.

Your emailed Consent allows me to include the results of this project in my PhD Thesis, academic journals and possible mainstream publications, but again your identity will remain confidential.

Participation in this project is voluntary. If you change your mind at a later date, you can withdraw from the project. However, because you are participating in group interactions (internet discussions) I cannot withdraw your contribution from these sections of the project. However, where possible your participation will not be referred to directly and your anonymity will be preserved. If you decide to withdraw from this project, please notify me as soon as possible.

Before you make your decision, I am happy to answer any questions you might have about the research project. Return the Consent Email *only* after you have received satisfactory answers to any/all questions you have.

Please let me know if you wish to be informed when the results of the research become available. An executive summary of findings will be provided, and updates will be posted on the project website [<http://reinventingthesqueal.org>].

If you require any further information please contact me at [lesley.wright@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:lesley.wright@vuw.ac.nz) or [reinventing.the.squeal@gmail.com](mailto:reinventing.the.squeal@gmail.com); or my lead supervisor, Lesley Hall of Gender and Women's Studies at Victoria University, PO Box 600, Wellington, at [Lesley.hall@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:Lesley.hall@vuw.ac.nz), or telephone (04) 4637467. Should you have any concerns with regards to the project, please contact the Chair of the VUW Human Ethics Committee Dr Allison Kirkman of Social Policy/Sociology at Victoria University, PO Box

---

600, Wellington, at [allison.kirkman@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:allison.kirkman@vuw.ac.nz)  
or telephone (04) 463 5676.

This research has been assessed and approved by Victoria University Faculty of Education Ethics Committee.

## Consent Form

**Project:** Reinventing the Squeal - sexual exploration and the search for sexual autonomy in a hyper-sexual socio-historical climate (provisional title).

**Researcher:** Lesley Wright, PhD Candidate, Gender and Women's Studies, Victoria University of Wellington

**Email:** [reinventing.the.squeal@gmail.com](mailto:reinventing.the.squeal@gmail.com)

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research project. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction. I understand that any information I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and the supervisors, the published results will not use my name, and that no opinions will be attributed to me in any way that will identify me. I understand that data collected from this project will be stored for a period of 5 years (secure online storage, and secure filing cabinet with researcher-only access) and then destroyed.

Please read the following below carefully. Your reply to this email signals your consent to the items below:

- I understand that I may withdraw from this research project at any time before the final analysis of data without providing a reason.
  - I understand that if I withdraw from this research project any individual interview data I have provided will be returned to me or destroyed.
  - I understand that if I withdraw from this research project any data I have provided within the website online discussions cannot be destroyed or removed.
  - I understand that I may request a copy of the interview notes and/or a digital copy of the interview session.
  - I understand that I will be given a summary of the completed research should I want it, and have electronic access to the complete research project should I request it.
  - I request a copy of the executive summary, and electronic access to the completed research project
-

- I agree to take part in this research.

This research has been assessed and approved by Victoria University Faculty of Education Ethics Committee.

**If you consent to the above, please hit reply, and type “I consent” in the body of the email.**

---

## Appendix 6 - Reinventing the Squeal Web Discussion Group

The screenshot shows the Google Groups interface for the 'Reinventing the Squeal' group. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links to Gmail, Calendar, Documents, Photos, Reader, and Web. The group name 'Reinventing the Squeal' is prominently displayed with a search bar. Below the group name, there's a 'Home' section with a notification: 'New since last time: 21 messages'. A red banner below this states: 'Zipped versions of the pages and files associated with this group will be available for download until August 31, 2011. After this date, this feature and the zip file downloads will be turned off permanently. Download pages | Download Files'. The main content area is titled 'Discussions' and shows a list of 8 of 106 messages. The first message is 'The power of the V-plates...' by 'XXX' from Oct 19 2010. Other messages include 'sex, power, and control...', 'View this page: "Resources"', 'Keep it safe people', 'Room for improvement...', 'Command performances', and 'Let's talk about sex...'. On the right side, there's a sidebar with 'Home', 'Discussions', 'About this group', 'Edit my membership', and 'Group info' (Members: 13, Language: Not categorized). At the bottom, there are links for 'Report this group', 'Send email to this group', and 'Create a group'.

The following is text from the *Google Groups* Welcome Page, which was updated and deleted by Google (unfortunately I did not have a screen capture on file)

### Website discussion group introduction page

Hi everyone, and welcome to the project discussion site!

Thanks for taking the time to voice your opinions. So far discussions with you all are proving to be very interesting! I'm sure once you all start interacting here, you'll feel the same.

This page functions like a focus group: here you'll find questions and discussion topics I've posted, but this is *your* forum. So if you have something you want to discuss, then post away. I may not cover everything so feel free to fill in the gaps, talk about what is most important to you, ask questions of me and other posters.

#### **Netiquette:** *Yes, it must be mentioned!*

This can be a sensitive topic as women talking about sex is not that common, and if we were anywhere else, it may be frowned upon. *This* space, however, has none of those social pressures or limits - here you get to talk about your wants, desires, fears, behaviour, values, beliefs ... whatever sex triggers for you, this is your place to chat.

Bearing all this in mind, there are some things we need to remember:

- This space is sealed - its not visible to the public, only members can access the content. And to add to this, the list of participants is not visible, so you will only know people by their screen names. But you as participants are the last gatekeepers. I would therefore ask you to follow the following rule: what is said on the 'Squeal, stays on the 'Squeal! Keep it confidential.
- No doubt someone will post something you disagree with, and/or perhaps find offensive. Voice your opinions, engage in discussion, but please remember to respect fellow posters. Posts are unmoderated because I want you to feel free to have your say, but with that comes the responsibility of respectful interaction. Remember this is a discussion, and we are all finding our way through the sexual landscape.

As a last reminder, this discussion forum is part of my PhD project. As such:

Entering into discussions with this web group confirms that you have read the Project Information Sheet and have signed the Consent Forms provided to you by the researcher. You confirm that your consent extends to participation in discussions on this website and that you understand that the information you provide here will be used as outlined in those Consent forms and the Information Sheet.


If you require any further information, or have any problems concerning the project, please contact me at [lesley.wright@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:lesley.wright@vuw.ac.nz) or my supervisor, Lesley Hall of Gender and Women's Studies at Victoria University, PO Box 600, Wellington, at [Lesley.hall@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:Lesley.hall@vuw.ac.nz), or telephone (04) 4637467; or Jenny Neale of HSRC at Victoria University, PO Box 600, Wellington, at [Jenny.Neale@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:Jenny.Neale@vuw.ac.nz) or telephone (04) 4635827.

This research has been assessed and approved by Victoria University Faculty of Education Ethics Committee: Ethics Number RM16966

---

### Appendix 7 - Facebook Page for Project

facebook
Home Profile Find Friends Account



- Wall
- Info**
- Friend Activity
- Polls
- Discussions
- Notes
- Photos
- Events
- Edit

## Reinventing the Squeal Research Project

Arts/Humanities · Wellington, New Zealand · [Edit Info](#)

[Edit Page](#)

---

**About** [Edit](#)

Hi and welcome to the project! I'm Lesley Wright, a Ph.D. student at Vic, and I'm researching sex and what young New Zealand women think about it. Become a fan and be part of the discussion! And visit the site <http://reinventingthesqueal.org/>

**1** check-in

**68** people like this

[Subscribe via RSS](#)

[Unlike](#)


[Share](#)

**Information**

**Description** A PhD research project into the sex lives of young New Zealand women.

**Address** Kelburn Parade, Wellington, New Zealand · [Get Directions](#)

**Website** <http://www.reinventingthesqueal.org>



**Affiliation** Victoria University of Wellington

**About** Hi and welcome to the project! I'm Lesley Wright, a Ph.D. student at Vic, and I'm researching sex and what young New Zealand women think about it. Become a fan and be part of the discussion! And visit the site <http://reinventingthesqueal.org/>

**Biography** Born in April of 2008, enjoyed an exciting but difficult childhood learning a foreign language (feminist theory) and how to walk (feminist methodology). Hit tumultuous teens and was dragged through a messy divorce between the department and the university that lasted well into adulthood. But thankfully adolescent petulance gave way to the maturity of adulthood and the realisation that there was sweet BA that could be done to salvage the relationship. Now attempting to divorce parent institution by reaching 21 (ie thesis completion).


**Awards** Beyond family issues, which has been learning, this project's start life rewarding, and many pre-conceptions have been adjusted.

**Awards** Doctoral Assist Scholarship

**Personal Information** Lesley Wright  
PhD Candidate  
Gender and Women's Studies  
Victoria University  
Wellington  
...See More


**Email** reinventing.the.squeal@gmail.com

**Admins (1)** [See All](#)



- [Use Facebook as Reinventing the Squeal Research Project](#)
- [Notifications](#)
- [Promote with an Ad](#)
- [View Insights](#)
- [Suggest to Friends](#)

**You and Reinventing the Squeal Research Project**




[31](#) friends like this.

**Quick Tips**

Get more people to like your Page with Facebook Ads today!

**Sample Ad: Reinventing the Squeal**




[Like](#) · Lesley Writes likes this.

**Get More Fans**

**Sponsored** [Create an Ad](#)

**Love Sydney?**  
jumpont.com

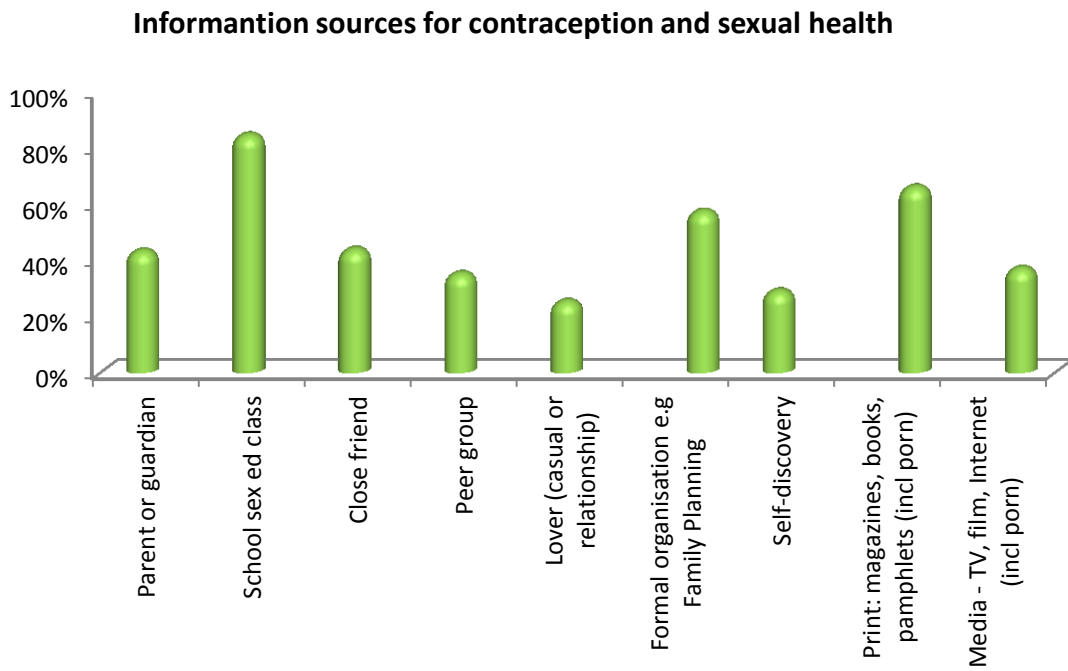


Get access to a huge discount in Sydney every day - sign up and Jump

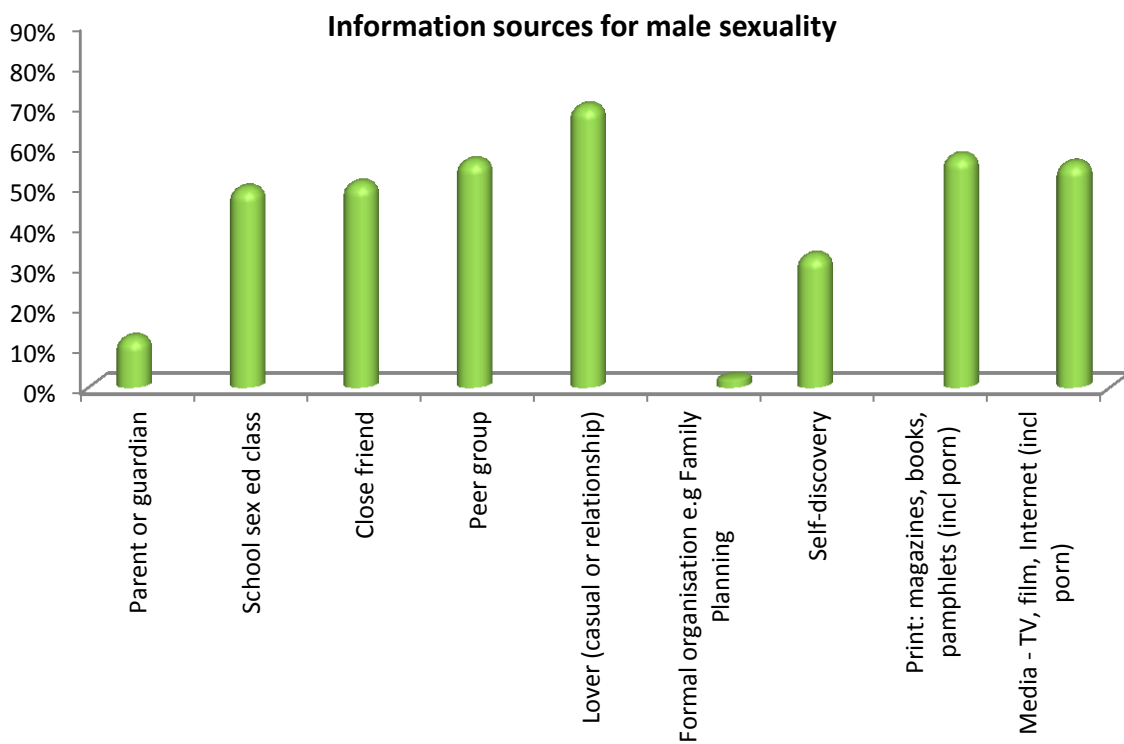
**Appendix 8 - Interview Guide**

- Q1 In the survey we looked at things you may have seen and/or done in public – flashing, kissing, dancing and so on. Let’s start there. What things have you seen and done, and what do you think do you think about it?
- Q2 Hooking up—what does this mean for you? Tell me about your experience of hooking up
- Casual sex—what does this mean for you? Tell me about your experiences with casual sex
- Q3 Tell me about your sex life? Start where you feel comfortable – maybe your sexual history, or a sexual event that was important to you, or what your sex life is like at the moment, or ‘issues’ you might have? Chat about whatever you’re most comfortable with, whatever’s important to you.
-

**Appendix 9 – Survey Results Graphs**



*Figure 25 Information sources for sexual health issues*



*Figure 26 Information sources for male sexuality*



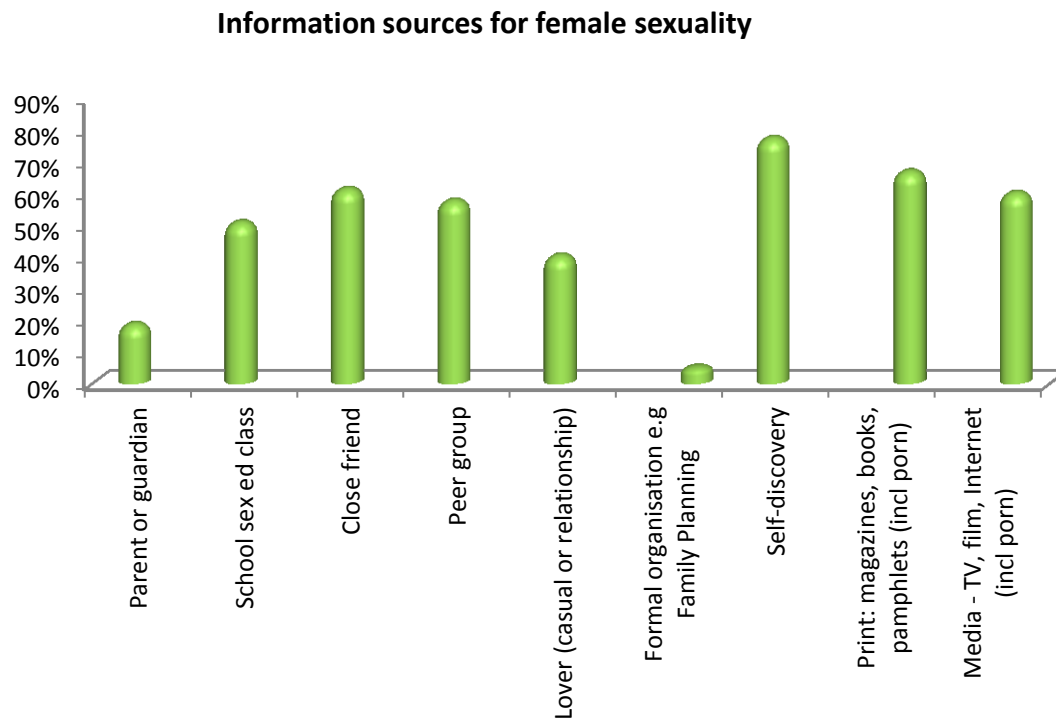


Figure 27: Information sources for female sexuality

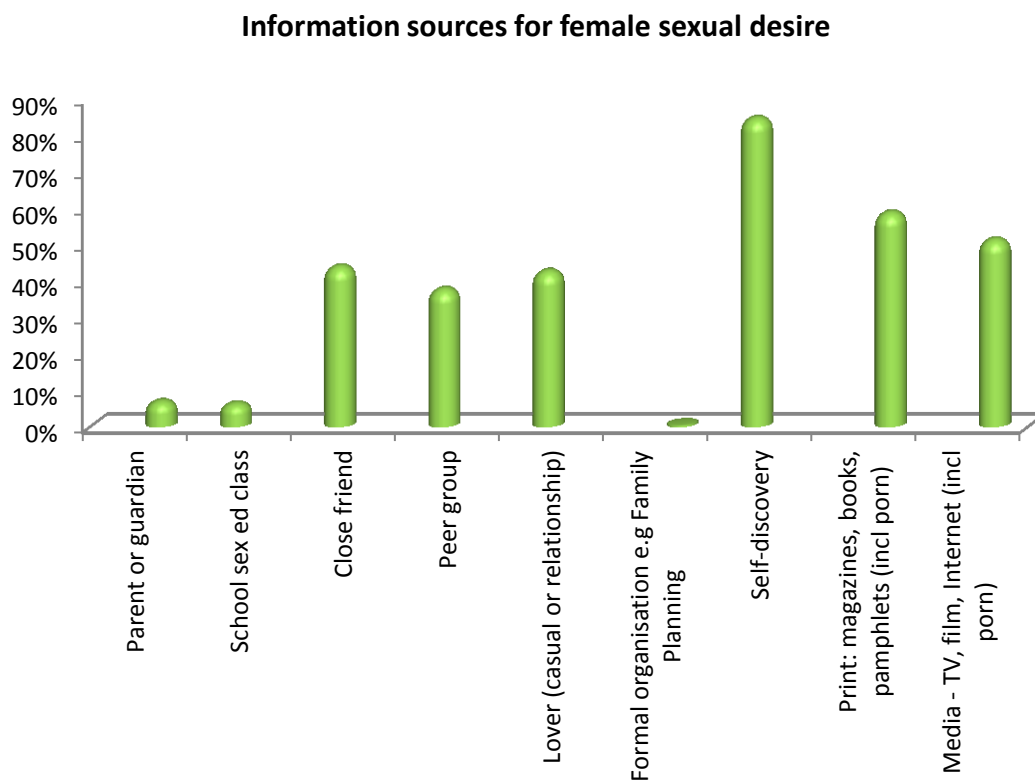


Figure 28: Information sources for female sexual desire



Figure 29: Information sources for male sexual pleasure

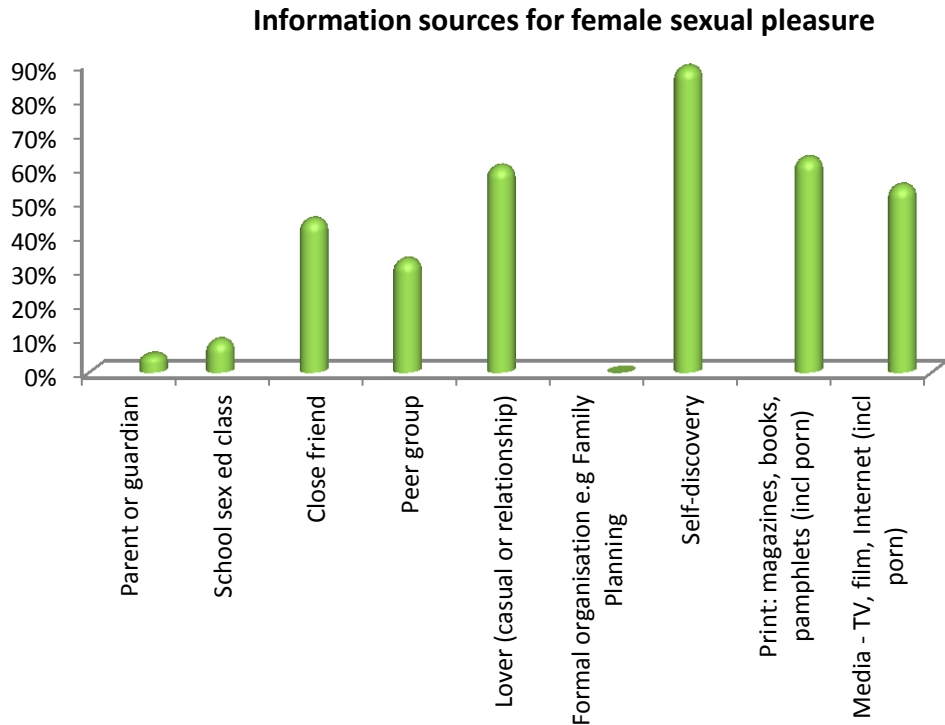


Figure 30: Information sources for female sexual pleasure

Impressions from information sources

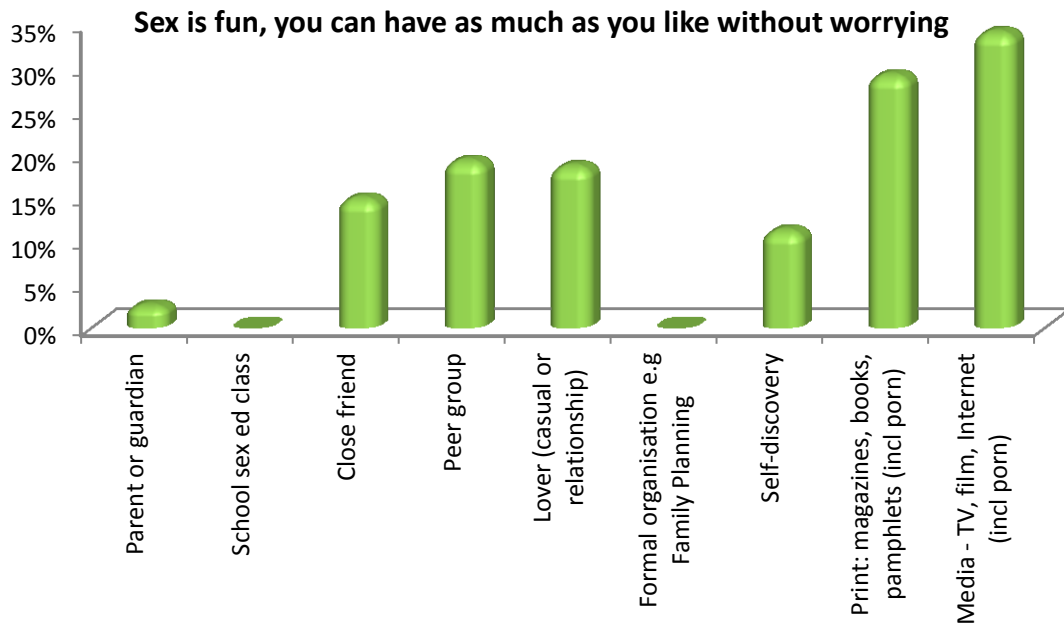


Figure 31: Information message: sex is fun, have as much as you like...

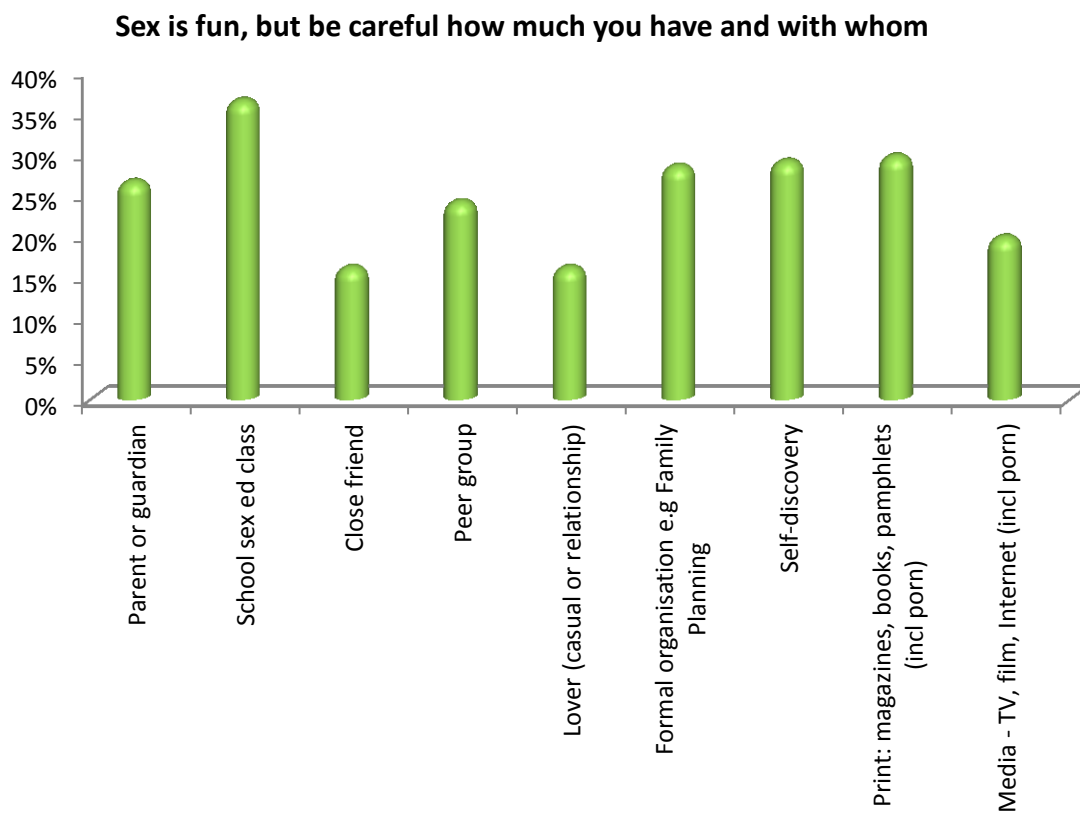


Figure 32: Information message: sex is fun but be careful



Figure 33: Information message: sex is dangerous ...

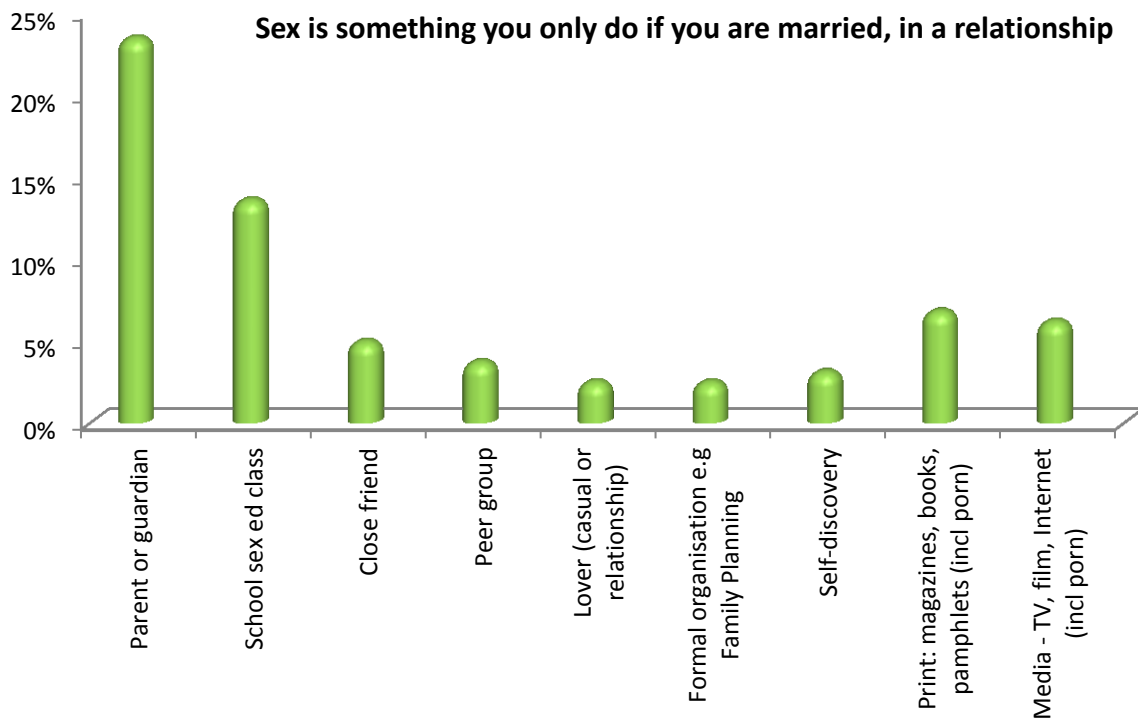


Figure 34: Information message: sex is for marriage or relationships

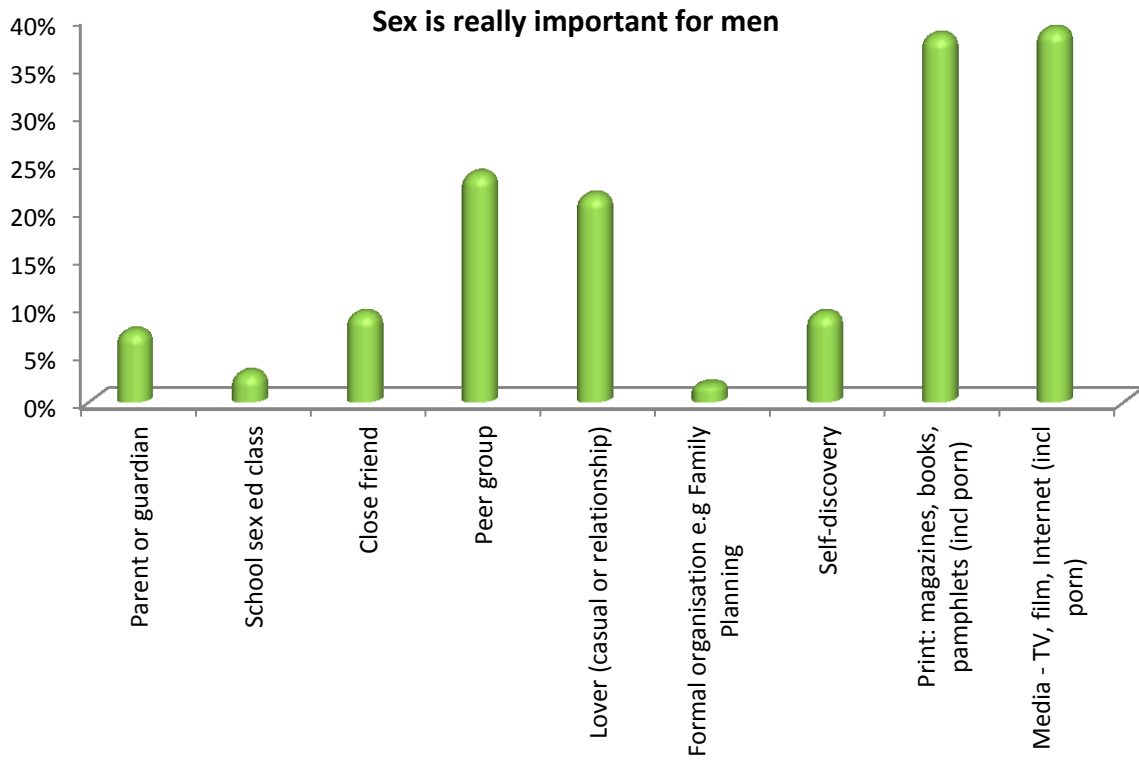


Figure 35: Information message: sex is important for men

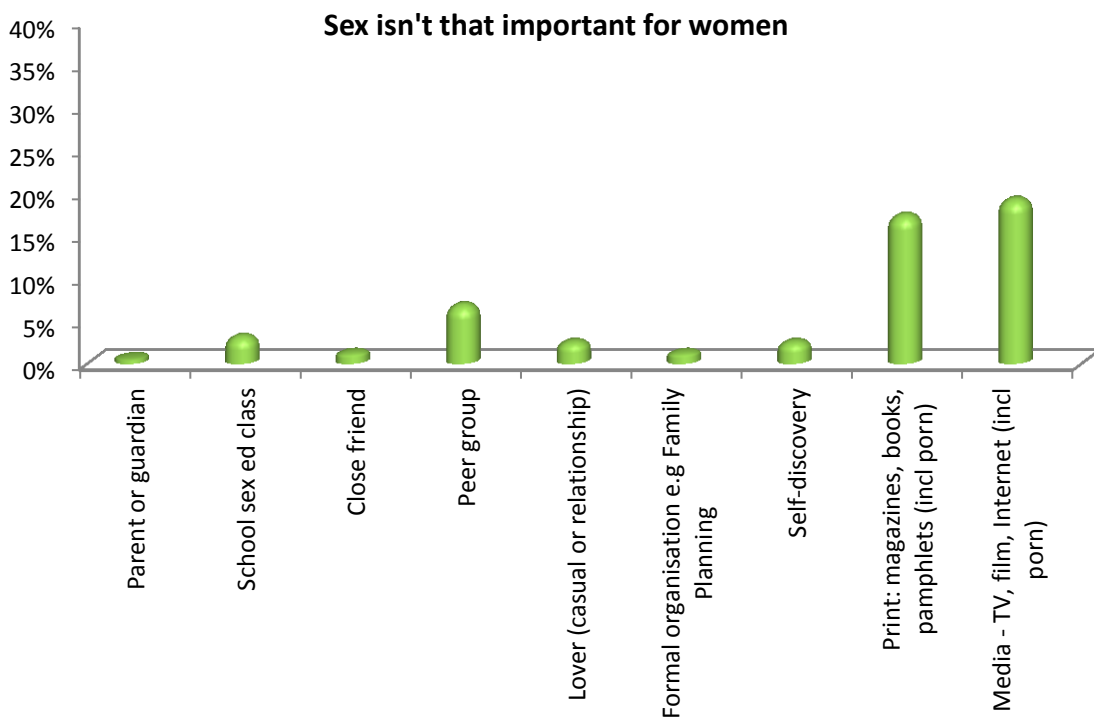


Figure 36: Information message: sex is not that important for women

How participants felt about elements of their sex lives

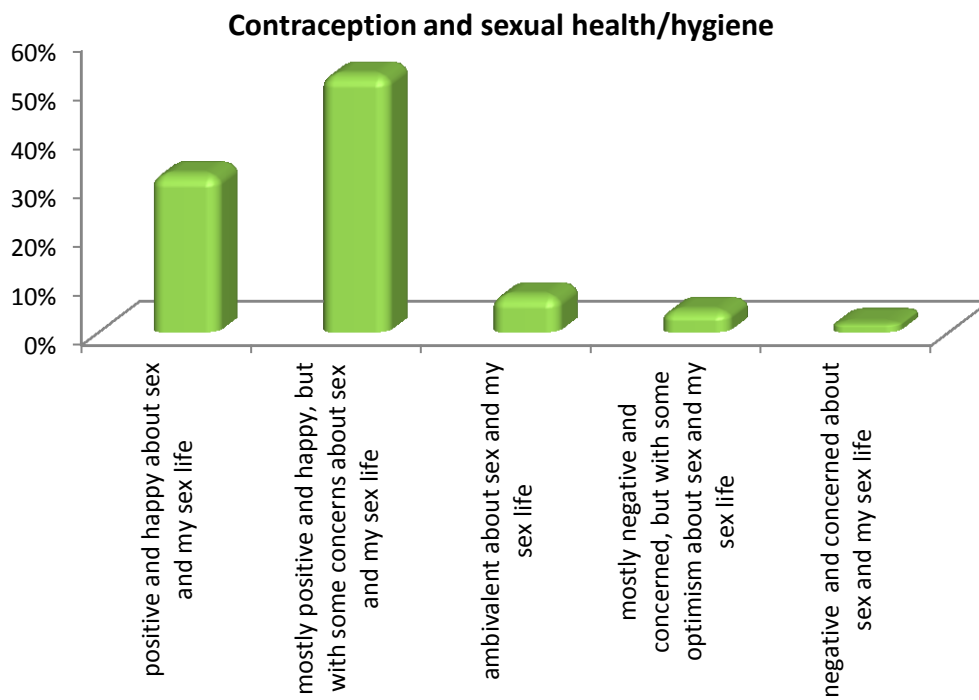


Figure 37: How I feel about my sex life with respect to contraception and sexual health

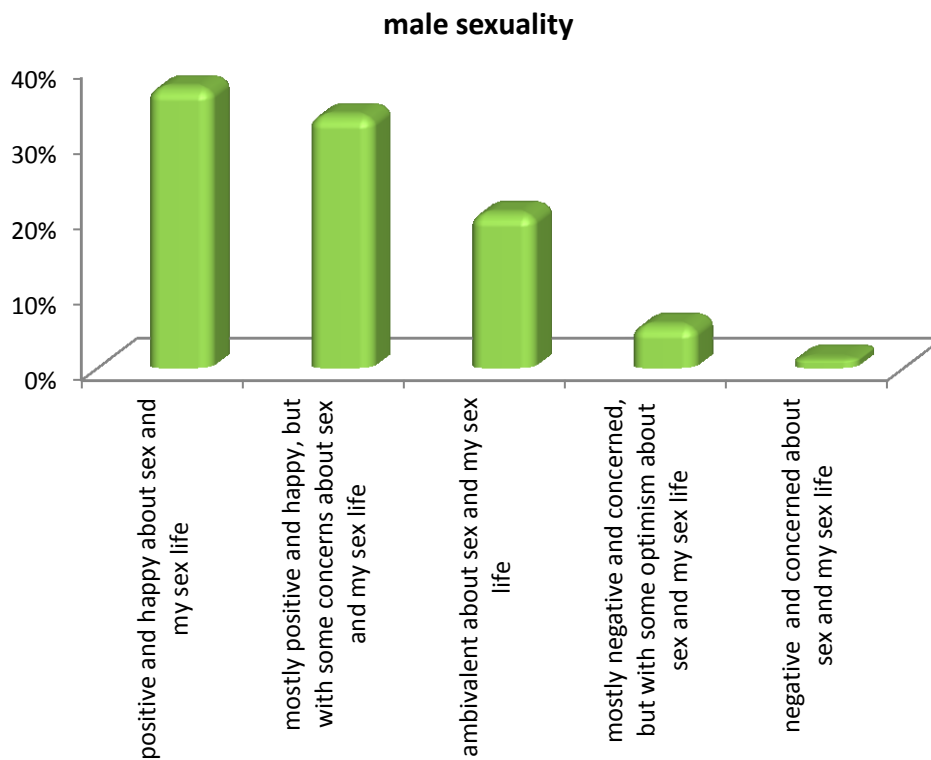


Figure 38: How I feel about my sex life with respect to male sexuality

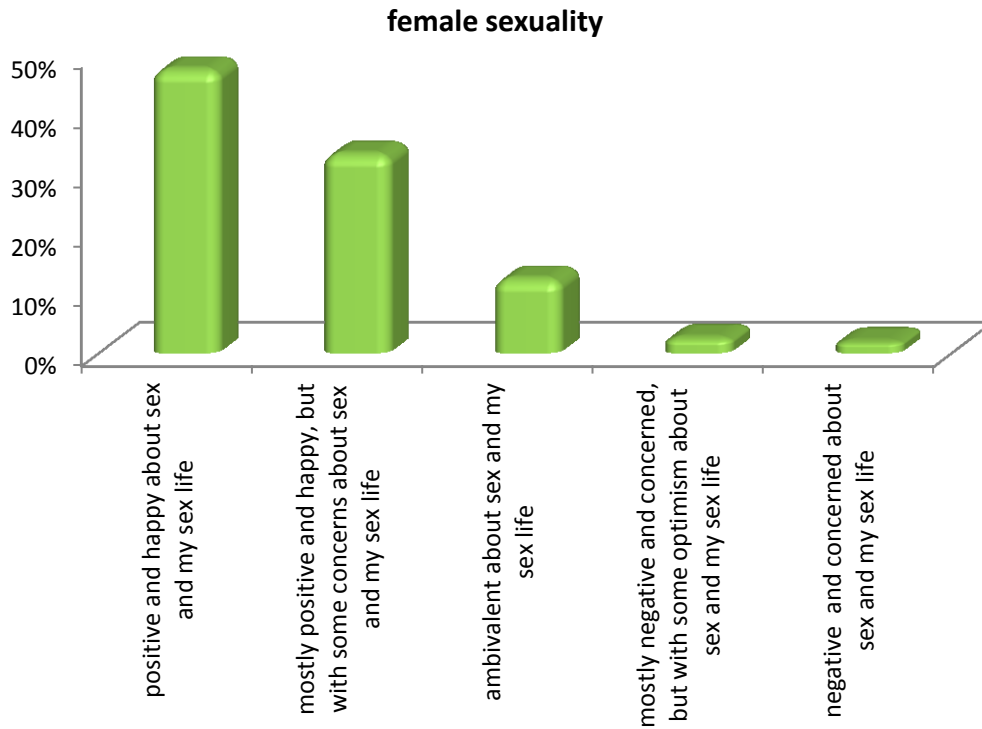


Figure 39: How I feel about my sex life with respect to female sexuality



Figure 40: How I feel about my sex life with respect to male sexual pleasure



Figure 41: How I feel about my sex life with respect to female sexual pleasure

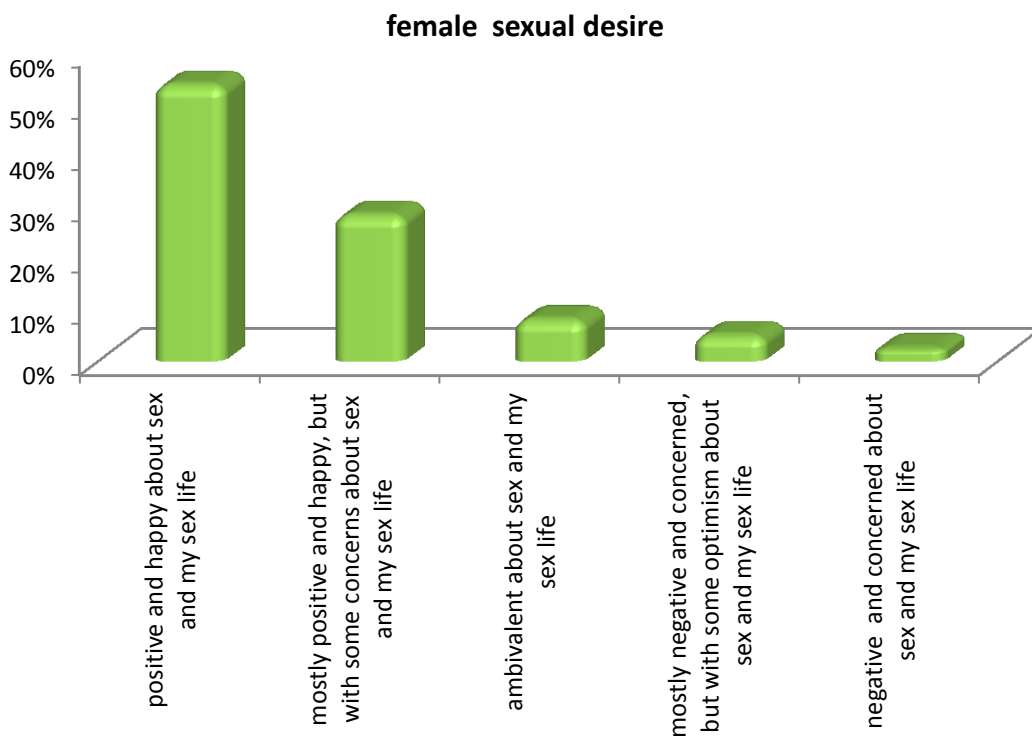


Figure 42: How I feel about my sex life with respect to female sexual desire



## References

- Akman, D. E., Toner, B. B., Stuckless, A. A., Emmott, S. D., & Downie, F. P. (2001). Feminist issues in research methodology: The development of a cognitive scale. *Feminism & Psychology, 11*(2), 209-227.
- Albury, K. (2009). Reading porn reparatively. *Sexualities, 12*(5), 647-653.
- Alexander, B. (2011). Brace yourself for the summer of 'sluts'. *Today Health (Online)*.
- Allen, A. (1992). Foucault on power: A theory for feminists. In S. Hekman (Ed.), *Feminist Interpretations of Michel Foucault*. University Park, Pennsylvania The Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Allen, A. (2009). Gender and power In S. R. Clegg & M. Haugaard (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of power* (pp. 294-309). Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore, Washington DC: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Allen, L. (2001). Closing sex education's knowledge/practice gap: The reconceptualisation of young people's sexual knowledge. *Sex Education, 1*(2), 109-122.
- Allen, L. (2003). Power talk: Young people negotiating (hetero)sex. *Women's Studies International Forum, 26*(3), 235-244.
- anarkaytie (2010). Gang-rape cartoon in Orientation-week Salient Retrieved 24 February, 2010, from <http://greenvoices.wordpress.com/2010/02/24/gang-rape-cartoon-in-orientation-week-salient/>
- Anderson, B. (2008). For space (2005): Doreen Massey. In P. Hubbard, R. Kitchin & G. Valentine (Eds.), *Key texts in human geography*. London: Sage.
- Anderson, M. J. (2005). Negotiating Sex. *Southern California Law Review 78*(6), 100-138.
- Andersen, M. L. (2008). Thinking about women some more: A new century's view. *Gender & Society, 22*(1), 120-126.
- Andrews, D., Nonnecke, B., & Preece, J. (2003). Electronic survey methodology: A case study in reaching hard to involve internet users (Conducting research on the internet: Online
-

survey design, development and implementation guidelines) (Draft) *International Journal of Human-Computer Interaction*, 16(2), 185-210.

Armstrong, E. A. (2008). Review: [untitled]. *Contemporary Sociology*, 37(6), 552-553.

Armstrong, E. A., Hamilton, L., & England, P. (2010). Is hooking up bad for young women? *Contexts*, 9(6). Retrieved from <http://contexts.org/articles/summer-2010/is-hooking-up-bad-for-young-women/>

Armstrong, E. A., Hamilton, L., & Sweeney, B. (2006). Sexual assault on campus: A multilevel, integrative approach to party rape. *Social Problems*, 53(4), 483-499.

Arnett, J. J. (2004). *Emerging adulthood: The winding road from the late teens through the twenties*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.

Arnett, J. J. (2006a). Emergent adulthood: Understanding the new way of coming of age. In J. Jensen Arnett & J. L. Tanner (Eds.), *Emerging adults in America: Coming of age in the 21st century* (pp. 3-19). Washington DC: American Psychological Association (APA).

Arnett, J. J. (2006b). The psychology of emerging adulthood: What is known, and what remains to be known. In J. Jensen Arnett & J. L. Tanner (Eds.), *Emerging adults in America: Coming of age in the 21st century* (pp. 303-330). Washington DC: American Psychological Association (APA).

Arnett, J. J. (2007a). Socialization in emerging adulthood: From the family to the wider world, from socialization to self-socialization. In J. E. Grusec & P. D. Hastings (Eds.), *Handbook of Socialization: Theory and Research*. New York The Guildford Press

Arnett, J. J. (2007b). Suffering, selfish, slackers? Myths and reality about emerging adults. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 36(1), 23-29.

Attwood, F. (2007). Sluts and riot grrrls: Female identity and sexual agency. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 16(3), 233-247.

Attwood, F. (2009). Introduction: The sexualization of culture In F. Attwood (Ed.), *Mainstreaming sex: The sexualization of western culture*. London and New York: I B Tauris & Co. Ltd.

---

Aubrey, J. S. (2004). Sex and punishment: An examination of sexual consequences and the sexual double standard in teen programming. *Sex Roles, 50*(7/8), 505-514.

Aubrey, J. S. (2007). The impact of sexually objectifying media exposure on negative body emotions and sexual self-perceptions: Investigating the mediating role of body self-consciousness. *Mass Communication & Society, 10*(1), 1-23.

Back, M. D., Stopfer, J. M., Vazire, S., Gaddis, S., Schmukle, S. C., Egloff, B., et al. (2010). Facebook profiles reflect actual personality, not self-idealization. *Psychological Science, 21*(3), 372-374.

Backus, F. R., & Mahalik, J. R. (2011). The masculinity of Mr. Right: Feminist identity and heterosexual women's ideal romantic partners. *Psychology of Women Quarterly.*

Baez, B. (2002). Confidentiality in qualitative research: Reflections on secrets, power and agency *Qualitative Research, 2*(1), 35-58.

Bailey, C. (2002). Unpacking the mother/daughter baggage: Reassessing second- and third-wave tensions. *Women's Studies Quarterly, 30*(3/4), 138-154.

Bailey, C. (2007). When girls just wanna have fun: Third-wave cultural engagement as political activism In D. Orr, D. Taylor, E. Kahl, K. Earle & C. Rainwater (Eds.), *Feminist Politics : Identity, Difference, and Agency* (pp. 81-97). Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Baker, J. (2010). Claiming volition and evading victimhood: Post-feminist obligations for young women. *Feminism & Psychology, 20*(2), 186-204.

Barak, A., & Gluck-Ofri, O. (2007). Degree and reciprocity of self-disclosure in online forums. *CyberPsychology & Behavior, 10*(2), 407-417.

Barnard, M. (2009). 'You could take this topic and get a fistfight going': Communicating about feminism in interviews. *Discourse & Communication, 3*(4), 427-447.

Bartky, S. L. (1990). *Femininity and Domination - Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression*. New York, London: Routledge.

---

Bartky, S. L. (1998). Pitfalls and politics of "world-traveling". *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition*, 89(2/3), 387-393.

Bartky, S. L. (1999). Foucault, femininity and the modernization of patriarchal power. In M. Pearsall (Ed.), *Women and values: Readings in recent feminist philosophy* (3 ed.). Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company.

Barton, B. (2002). Dancing on the Mobius strip. *Gender & Society*, 16(5), 585-602.

Bascand, G. (2009). *Hot off the press: Marriages, civil unions and divorces: Year ended December 2008*. Retrieved 2 August 2011. from  
<<http://www.stats.govt.nz/~media/Statistics/Browse%20for%20stats/MarriagesCivilUnionsandDivorces/HOTPYeDec08/marriagescivilunionsanddivorcesyrendeddec08hotp.ashx>>

Baumgardner, J., & Richards, A. (2000). *Manifesta: Young women, feminism and the future*. New York: Farrar, Staus and Griox.

Baumgardner, J., & Richards, A. (2003). The number one question about feminism. *Feminist Studies*, 29(2), 448-452.

Beasley, C. (2005). *Gender & sexuality: critical theories, critical thinkers*. London: Sage Publications.

Beasley, C. (2008). The challenge of pleasure: Re-imagining sexuality and sexual health. *Health Sociology Review*, 17(2), 151(113).

Bell, D. (1995). Perverse dynamics, sexual citizenship and the transformation of intimacy. In D. Bell & G. Valentine (Eds.), *Mapping desire: Geographies of sexualities* (pp. 304-317). London: Routledge.

Bell, D. (2009). Surveillance is sexy. *Surveillance & Society*, 6(3), 203-212.

Bell, D., & Valentine, G. (1995). Wherever I lay my girlfriend, that's my home: The performance and surveillance of lesbian identities in domestic environments In D. Bell & G. Valentine (Eds.), *Mapping desire: Geographies of sexualities* (pp. 88-103). London: Routledge.

---

Bellis, M., Hughes, K., Calafat, A., Juan, M., Ramon, A., Rodriguez, J., et al. (2008). Sexual uses of alcohol and drugs and the associated health risks: A cross sectional study of young people in nine European cities. *BMC Public Health*, 8(155).

Beres, M. A., & Farvid, P. (2010). Sexual ethics and young women's accounts of heterosexual casual sex. *Sexualities*, 13(3), 377-393.

Bersamin, M. M., Paschall, M. J., Saltz, R. F., & Zamboanga, B. L. (2011). Young adults and casual sex: The relevance of college drinking settings. *Journal of Sex Research*.

Bay-Cheng, L. Y., & Zucker, A. N. (2007). Feminism between the Sheets: Sexual Attitudes among Feminists, Nonfeminists, and Egalitarians. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 31(2), 157-163.

Binning, E. (2011). Girls sleep around 'to keep up with the boys' - therapist. *The New Zealand Herald (online)* from [http://www.stats.govt.nz/browse\\_for\\_stats/population/estimates\\_and\\_projections/demographic-trends-2011.aspx](http://www.stats.govt.nz/browse_for_stats/population/estimates_and_projections/demographic-trends-2011.aspx)

Blogando, A. (2011, 6 June). SlutWalk: A stroll through white supremacy. <http://tothecurb.wordpress.com/2011/05/13/slutwalk-a-stroll-through-white-supremacy/>.

Bloor, M., Frankland, J., Thomas, M., & Robson, K. (2001). *Focus groups in social research*. London: Sage Publications.

Bogle, K. A. (2008). *Hooking up: Sex, dating, and relationships on campus*. New York and London: New York University Press

Bondi, L. (2005). Troubling space, making space, doing space. *Group Analysis*, 38(1), 137-149.

Bordo, S. (2003). *Unbearable Weight: feminism, western culture, and the body* (10th Anniversary ed.). Berkeley: University of California Press.

Borland, K. (1991). "That's not what I said": Interpretive conflict in oral narrative research. In S. B. Gluck & D. Patai (Eds.), *Women's words: The feminist practice of oral history* (pp. 63-76). New York and London: Routledge, Chapman and Hall.

---

- Bradshaw, C., Kahn, A., & Saville, B. (2010). To hook up or date: Which gender benefits? *Sex Roles, 62*(9), 661-669.
- Bragg, S., & Buckingham, D. (2009). Too much too young?: Young people, sexual media and learning. In F. Attwood (Ed.), *Mainstreaming sex: The sexualization of western culture*. New York, London: I.B. Tauris.
- Branaman, A. (1997). Goffman's social theory. In E. Goffman, C. C. Lemert & A. Branaman (Eds.), *The Goffman reader*. Malden: Blackwell.
- Braun, V. (2004). A sheath for a sword? Culture, shaping bodies, shaping sex. In A. Potts, N. Gavey & A. Weatherall (Eds.), *Sex and the body*. Palmerston North: Dunmore Press.
- Braun, V., & Gavey, N. (1999). "Bad girls" and "good girls"? Sexuality and cervical cancer. *Women's Studies International Forum, 22*(2), 203-213.
- Braun, V., Gavey, N., & McPhillips, K. (2003). The 'fair deal'? Unpacking accounts of reciprocity in heterosex. *Sexualities, 6*(2), 237-261.
- Brickell, C. (2005). Masculinities, performativity, and subversion: A sociological reappraisal. *Men and Masculinities, 8*(1), 24-43.
- Brown, J. D., Halpern, C. T., & L'Engle, K. L. (2005). Mass media as a sexual super peer for early maturing girls. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 23*, 420-427.
- Bryant, J., & Schofield, T. (2007). Feminine sexual subjectivities: Bodies, agency and life history. *Sexualities, 321-340*.
- Buist, G. (Artist). (2010). *The first-year's progress*.
- Bussel, R. K. (2008). Beyond yes or no: Consent as a sexual process. In J. Friedman & J. Valenti (Eds.), *Yes means yes! Visions of female sexual power & a world without rape* (pp. 43-52). Berkeley: Seal Press.
- Butler, J. (2006). *Gender trouble*. New York and London: Routledge.
- Cacchioni, T. (2007). Heterosexuality and 'the labour of love': A contribution to recent debates on female sexual dysfunction. *Sexualities, 10*(3), 299-320.
-

Calogero, R. M. (2004). A test of objectification theory: The effect of the male gaze on appearance concerns in college women. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 28(1), 16-21.

Califa, P. (1994). *Public sex: The culture of radical sex*: Cleis Press.

Campbell, A. (2008). The Morning after the night before: Affective reactions to one-night stands among mated and unmated women and men. *Human Nature*, 19(2), 157-173.

Campbell, H. (2000). The glass phallus: Pub(lic) masculinity and drinking in rural New Zealand\*. *Rural Sociology*, 65(4), 562-581.

Carmalt, J. H., Cawley, J., Joyner, K., & Sobal, J. (2008). Body weight and matching with a physically attractive romantic partner. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 70(5), 1287-1296.

Carmody, M. (2009a). *Conceptualising the prevention of sexual assault and the role of education*. Melbourne: Australian Centre of the Study of Sexual Assault.

Carmody, M. (2009b). *Sex & ethics: Young people and ethical sex*. South Yarra: Palgrave MacMillan.

Carr, E. S. (2003). Rethinking empowerment theory using a feminist lens: The importance of process. *Affilia*, 18(1), 8-20.

Caruthers, A. (2005). *"Hookups" and "friends with benefits": Nonrelational sexual encounters as contexts of women's normative sexual development*. Unpublished PhD, University of Michigan.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2011, 7 November 2011). Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs): Genital HPV infection - Fact sheet. Retrieved 23 January 2012, from <http://www.cdc.gov/std/hpv/stdfact-hpv.htm>

Chafetz, J. S. (2004). Bridging feminist theory and research methodology. *Journal of Family Issues*, 25(7), 963-976.

Charlton, T. L., Myers, L. E., Sharpless, R., & Ballard, L. R. (2007). History of oral history: Foundations and methodology Available from <http://books.google.com.au/books?id=JBBWEn6mU0UC>

---

Chatterton, P., & Hollands, R. (2003). *Urban nightscapes: Youth cultures, pleasure spaces and corporate power*. Routledge.

Chung, D. (2005). Violence, control, romance and gender equality: Young women and heterosexual relationships. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 28, 445-455.

Cohen, C. J. (1997). Punks, bulldags, and welfare queens: The radical potential of queer politics? *GQL*, 3, 437-465.

Cohen, S. (2005). *Folk devils and moral panics: The creation of the Mods and Rockers* (3rd ed.). New York: Routledge.

Collins, P H. (2000). *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment* (2 ed.). London: Routledge.

Collins, S. (2011, 9 July 2011). NZ women promiscuous - Doctor. *New Zealand Herald*. from [http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c\\_id=1&objectid=10737380](http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10737380).

Conrad, L. (2001). *Third wave feminism: A case study of BUST Magazine*. Unpublished Electronic, California State University.

Coupland, J. (2000). Past the 'perfect kind of age'? Styling selves and relationships in over-50s dating advertisements. *Journal of Communication*, 50(3), 9-30.

Correll, S. (1995). The ethnography of an electronic bar: The lesbian cafe. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 24(3), 270-298.

Cubbins, L. A., & Tafner, K. (2000). The influence of gender on sex: A study of men's and women's self-reported high-risk. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 29(3), 229-257.

Davidson, J. O. C. (2008). If no means no, does yes mean yes? Consenting to research intimacies. *History of the Human Sciences*, 21(4), 49-67.

Day, K. (2010). Pro-anorexia and 'binge-drinking': Conformity to damaging ideals or 'new', resistant femininities? *Feminism & Psychology*, 20(2), 242-248.

Daly, M. (1993). *Outercourse: The be-dazzling journey*. North Melbourne: Spinifex Press.

---



De Vault, M. L., & Gross, G. (2007). Feminist interviewing: Experience, talk, and knowledge In S. N. Hesse-Biber (Ed.), *Handbook of feminist research: Theory and praxis* (pp. 173-196). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Deveaux, M. (1992). Feminism and empowerment: A critical reading of Foucault. In S. Hekman (Ed.), *Feminist Interpretations of Michel Foucault*. University Park, Pennsylvania The Pennsylvania State University Press.

Diamond, L. M. (2006). Careful what you ask for: Reconsidering feminist epistemology and autobiographical narrative in research on sexual identity development. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 31(2), 471-491.

Does 'hooking up' really hurt anyone? (2007). New York: The Associated Press via MSNBC.Com.

Douglas, O. (2004). Urban dictionary: Booty call Retrieved 5 May 2012, 2012, from <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Booty-Call&defid=28778>

Duits, L., & van Zoonen, L. (2006). Headscarves and porno-chic: Disciplining girls' bodies in the European multicultural society. *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 13(2), 103-117.

Duits, L., & van Zoonen, L. (2011). Who's afraid of female agency: A rejoinder to Gill. *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 14(2), 161-170.

Dux, M., & Simic, Z. (2008). *The great feminist denial*. Melbourne Melbourne University Press.

Dworkin, S. L., Beckford, S. T., & Ehrhardt, A. A. (2007). Sexual scripts of women: A longitudinal analysis of participants in a gender-specific HIV/STD prevention intervention. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 36(2), 269-279.

Dworkin, S. L., & O'Sullivan, L. (2005). Actual versus desired initiation patterns among a sample of college Men: Tapping disjunctures within traditional male sexual scripts. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 42(2), 15-158.

Edwards, S. (1993). Selling the body, keeping the soul. In S. Scott & D. Morgan (Eds.), *Body matters: Essays On the sociology of the body*. Falmer Press.

---

Eisenberg, M. E., Ackard, D. M., Resnick, M. D., & Neumark-Sztainer, D. (2009). Casual sex and psychological health among young adults: Is having "friends with benefits" emotionally damaging? *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health, 41*(4), 231-237.

Epstein, M., Calzo, J. P., Smiler, A. P., & Ward, L. M. (2009). "Anything from making out to having sex": Men's negotiations of hooking up and friends with benefits scripts. *Journal of Sex Research, 46*(5), 414-424.

Eshbaugh, E. M., & Gute, G. (2008). Hookups and sexual regret among college women. *The Journal of Social Psychology, 148*(1), 77-89.

Evans, A., Riley, S., & Shankar, A. (2010). Technologies of sexiness: Theorizing women's engagement in the sexualization of culture. *Feminism Psychology, 20*(1), 114-131.

Evans, M. A., & Bobel, C. (2007). I am a contradiction: Feminism and feminist identity in the third wave. *New England Journal of Public Policy, 22*(1/2), 207-222.

Fenigstein, A., & Preston, M. (2007). The desired number of sexual partners as a function of gender, sexual risks, and the meaning of "ideal". *The Journal of Sex Research, 44*(1), 89.

Fielder, R. L., & Carey, M. P. (2010a). Predictors and consequences of sexual "hookups" among college students: A short-term prospective study. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 39*(5), 1105-1119.

Fielder, R. L., & Carey, M. P. (2010b). Prevalence and characteristics of sexual hookups among first-semester female college students. *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy, 36*(4), 346 - 359.

Fine, M. (1988). Sexuality, schooling, and adolescent females: The missing discourse of desire. *Harvard Educational Review, 58*(1), 29-53.

Fine, M. (2005). X. Desire: The morning (and 15 years) after. *Feminism & Psychology, 15*(1), 54-60.

Fine, M., & McClelland, S. I. (2006). Sexuality education and desire: Still missing after all these years. *Harvard Educational Review, 76*(3), 297-338.

---

Fischer, N. L. (2006). Purity and Pollution: Sex as a Moral Discourse. In S. Seidman, N. Fischer & C. Meeks (Eds.), *Handbook of the new sexuality studies*. Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge.

Fisher, B. S., & Sloan, J. J. (2003). Unravelling the fear of victimization among college women: Is the "shadow of sexual assault hypothesis" supported? *Justice Quarterly*, 20(3), 633-659.

Fixmer, N., & Wood, J. T. (2005). The Personal is still political: Embodied politics in third wave feminism. *Women's Studies in Communication*, 28(2), 235-257.

Flack, W. F., Daubman, K. A., Caron, M. L., Asadorian, J. A., D'Aureli, N. R., Gigliotti, S. N., et al. (2007). Risk factors and consequences of unwanted sex among university students: Hooking up, alcohol, and stress response. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 22(2), 139-157.

Flynn, L. A. (2008). From hook-ups to headaches: Theorizing the emotional labor of university women's sexual decisions. *Thinking Gender Papers*.

Fraser, N. (1990). Rethinking the public sphere: A contribution to the critique of actually existing democracy. *Social Text*, 25/26, 56-80.

Foucault, M. (1980). Power/knowledge: selected interviews & other writings 1972-1977. from <http://www.scribd.com/doc/33638924/Michel-Foucault-Power-Knowledge-Selected-Interviews-and-Other-Writings>.

Foucault, M. (1995). Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison. From <http://www.scribd.com/doc/26150474/Foucault-M-Discipline-Punish-The-Birth-of-the-Prison-Tr-Sheridan-NY-Vintage-1977-1995>.

Frith, H., & Kitzinger, C. (2001). Reformulating sexual script theory: Developing a discursive psychology of sexual negotiation. *Theory & Psychology*, 11(2), 209-232.

Fugère, M. A., Escoto, C., Cousins, A. J., L, R. M., & Haerich, P. (2008). Sexual attitudes and double standards: A literature review focusing on participant gender and ethnic background. *Sexuality & Culture*, 12(3), 169-182.

Gaiser, T. J., & Schreiner, A. E. (2009). *A guide to conducting online research*. Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore, Washington DC: Sage Publications Ltd.

---

- Gaither, G. A., & Sellbom, M. (2003). The sexual sensation seeking scale: Reliability and validity within a heterosexual college student sample. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, *81*(2), 157 - 167.
- Gavey, N. (1993). Technologies and effects of heterosexual coercion. In S. Wilkinson & C. Kitzinger (Eds.), *Heterosexuality: A feminism & psychology reader* (pp. 93-119). Newbury Park: Sage Publications.
- Gavey, N. (2005). *Just sex? The cultural scaffolding of rape*: Routledge.
- Gavey, N., McPhillips, K., & Braun, V. (1999). Interruptus coitus: Heterosexuals accounting for intercourse. *Sexualities*, *2*(1), 35-68.
- George, W. H., Stoner, S. A., Davis, K. C., Lindgren, K. P., Norris, J., & Lopez, P. A. (2006). Postdrinking sexual perceptions and behaviors toward another person: Alcohol expectancy set and gender differences. *The Journal of Sex Research* *43*(3), 282-291.
- Giddens, A. (1993). *The transformation of intimacy: Sexuality, love and eroticism in modern societies*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Gibbs, A. (1997). Focus groups *Social Research Update* (19). Retrieved from <http://sru.soc.surrey.ac.uk/SRU19.html>
- Gilbert, L. A., Walker, S. J., McKinney, S., & Snell, J. L. (1999). Challenging discourse themes reproducing gender in heterosexual dating: An analog study. *Sex Roles*, *41*(9/10), 753-774.
- Gill, R. (2003). From sexual objectification to sexual subjectification: The resexualisation of women's bodies in the media Retrieved from <http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/genderInstitute/pdf/sexualObjectification.pdf>
- Gill, R. C. (2007). Critical Respect: The Difficulties and Dilemmas of Agency and 'Choice' for Feminism: A Reply to Duits and van Zoonen. *European Journal of Women's Studies*, *14*(1), 69-80.
- Gill, R. (2008a). Culture and subjectivity in neoliberal and postfeminist times. *Subjectivity*, *25*, 432-445.
-

- Gill, R. (2008b). Empowerment/sexism: Figuring female sexual agency in contemporary advertising. *Feminism & Psychology, 18*(1), 35-60.
- Gillis, S., & Munford, R. (2004). Genealogies and generations: The politics and praxis of third wave feminism. *Women's History Review, 13*(2), 165-182.
- Glenn, N. D., & Marquardt, E. (2001). *Hooking up, hanging out, and hoping for Mr. Right: College women on dating and mating today* (No. 9781931764001): Institute for American Values.
- Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. New York: Anchor Doubleday.
- Goffman, E. (1963). *Stigma*. London: Penguin.
- Goffman, E. (1969). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. London: Allen Lane, The Penguin Press.
- Goffman, E. (2001). The Presentation of self in everyday life. In A. Branaman (Ed.), *Self and society* (pp. 175-182): Blackwell Publishers.
- Gohler, G. (2009). 'Power to' and 'Power over'. In S. R. Clegg & M. Haugaard (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Power* (pp. 27-39). Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore, Washington DC: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Gomez, C. A., & Marin, B. V. (1996). Gender, Culture, and Power: Barriers to HIV-Prevention Strategies for Women. *The Journal of Sex Research, 33*(4), 355-362.
- Goodkind, S. (2009). "You can be anything you want, but you have to believe it": Commercialized feminism in gender-specific programs for girls. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 34*(2), 397-422.
- Green, A. (2004a). Oral history and history. In A. Green & M. Hutching (Eds.), *Remembering: Writing oral history* (pp. 1-8). Auckland: Auckland University Press
- Green, A. (2004b). 'Unpacking' the stories. In A. Green & M. Hutching (Eds.), *Remembering: Writing oral history* (pp. 9-24). Auckland: Auckland University Press
- Green, A. I., Follert, M., Osterlund, K., & Paquin, J. (2010). Space, place and sexual sociality: Towards an 'atmospheric analysis'. *Gender, Work & Organization, 17*(1), 7-27.
-

- Greene, K., & Faulkner, S. L. (2005). Gender, belief in the sexual double standard, and sexual talk in heterosexual dating relationships. *Sex Roles, 53*(3-4), 239-251.
- Grello, C. M., Welsh, D. P., & Harper, M. S. (2006). No strings attached: The nature of casual sex in college students. *The Journal of Sex Research, 43*(3), 255-267.
- Griffin, M. (2001, 13 May). Slutwalk may damage women's rights, Professor says. *The Age*, p. online. Retrieved 6 June 2011, from <http://www.theage.com.au/national/slutwalk-may-damage-womens-rights-cause-professor-says-20110513-1elo7.html>.
- Guenther, K. M. (2009). The politics of names: Rethinking the methodological and ethical significance of naming people, organizations, and places. *Qualitative Research, 9*(4), 411-421.
- Gute, G., Eshbaugh, E. M., & Wiersma, J. (2008). Sex for you, but not for me: Discontinuity in undergraduate emerging adults' definitions of "having sex". *The Journal of Sex Research, 45*(4), 329-337.
- Hamilton, L., & Armstrong, E. A. (2009). Gendered sexuality in young adulthood: Double binds and flawed options. *Gender Society, 23*(5), 589-616.
- Hamilton, M. (2008). *What's happening to our girls?* . London: Viking.
- Hammers, C. J. (2008). Making space for an agentic sexuality? The examination of a lesbian/queer bathhouse. *Sexualities, 11*(5), 547-572.
- Hansen, J. F. (1981). The anthropologist in the field: Scientist, friend, voyeur. In M. A. Rynkiewich & J. P. Spradley (Eds.), *Ethics and anthropology: dilemmas in fieldwork*. Malabar: R.E. Krieger Pub. Co.
- Hansson, M. O. (1998). Balancing the quality of consent. *Journal of Medical Ethics, 24*(3), 182-187.
- Harevelt, J. (2009, 26 January 2009). Young kiwis highly connected. *The Press*, p. web edition. Retrieved 26 January 2009, from <http://www.stuff.co.nz/4829134a11.html>.
- Harnois, C. (2008). Re-presenting feminisms: Past, present, and future. *NWSA Journal, 20*(1), 120-145.
-

Hartman, C. (2010). *It's not him, it's you: The truth you may not want - but need - to hear*. Adams Media Corporation.

Harvey, K., & Shalom, C. (1997). *Language and desire: Encoding sex, romance and intimacy*. Available from <http://books.google.com.au/books?id=hBGWw0HztCwC>

Halpern, C. T., Waller, M. W., Spriggs, A., & Hallfors, D. D. (2006). Adolescent Predictors of Emerging Adult Sexual Patterns. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 39*(6), e1-e10.

Hausmann, R., Tyson, L. D., & Zahidi, S. (2011). *The global gender gap report 2011*. Geneva: World Economic Forum.

Hemmings, C. (2009). Generational dilemmas: A response to Iris van der Tuin's "'jumping generations": On second- and third-wave feminist epistemology.'. *Australian Feminist Studies, 24*(59), 33.

Henry, A. (2004). *Not my mother's sister: Generational conflict and third-wave feminism*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Hesse-Biber, S. N., Leavy, P., & Yaiser, M. L. (2004). Feminist approaches to research as a process: reconceptualizing epistemology, methodology, and method. In S. N. Hesse-Biber & M. L. Yaiser (Eds.), *Feminist perspectives on social research*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hester, S., & Francis, D. (1994). Doing data: The local organization of a sociological interview. *The British Journal of Sociology, 45*(4), 675-695.

Hewson, C., Yule, P., Laurent, D., & Vogel, C. (2003). *Internet research methods: A practical guide for the social and behavioural sciences*. London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: Sage Publications

Heywood, L. L., & Drake, J. (1997). Introduction. In L. L. Heywood & J. Drake (Eds.), *Third wave agenda: being feminist, doing feminism* (pp. 1-20). Mineapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press.

Heywood, L. L. (2006). Pro-sex feminism. In L. L. Heywood (Ed.), *The women's movement today: An encyclopaedia of third-wave feminism* (Vol. 1). Westport: Greenwood Press.

---

Hillier, L., Harrison, L., & Bodwitch, K. (1999). 'Neverending love' and 'blowing your load': The meanings of sex to rural youth. *Sexualities*, 2(1), 69-88.

Holland, J., Ramazanoglu, C., Scott, S., Sharpe, S., & Thomson, R. (1992). Pressure, resistance, empowerment: Young women and the negotiation of safer sex. In P. Aggleton, P. Davies & G. Hart (Eds.), *AIDS: Rights, risk and reason* (pp. 142-162). London: Falmer Press.

Holland, J., Ramazanoglu, C., Sharpe, S., & Thomson, R. (1998). *The male in the head - Young people, heterosexuality and power*. London: The Tufnell Press.

Holland, J., Ramazanoglu, C., Sharpe, S., & Thomson, R. (2003). When Bodies Come Together: Power, Control and Desire In J. Weeks, J. Holland & M. Waites (Eds.), *Sexualities and Society: A Reader*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Hollway, W. (1984). Women's power in heterosexual sex. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 7(1), 63-68.

Hollway, W. (1998). Gender difference and the production of subjectivity. In J. Henriques, W. Hollway, C. Unwin, C. Venn & V. Walkerdine (Eds.), *Changing the subject* (pp. 227-262). London: Routledge.

Horn, S. (1998). *Cyberville: clicks, culture, and the creation of an online town*. New York: Warner Books.

Horne, S. (2005). *Female sexual health: The definition and development of sexual subjectivity, and linkages with sexual agency, sexual experiences and well-being in late adolescents and emerging adults* Unpublished PhD, Griffith University, Gold Coast.

Horne, S., & Zimmer-Gembeck, M. J. (2006). The female sexual subjectivity inventory: Development and validation of a multidimensional inventory for late adolescents and emerging adults. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 30(2), 125-138.

Howry, A. L., & Wood, J. T. (2001). Something old, something new, something borrowed: Themes in the voices of a new generation of feminists. *The Southern Communication Journal*, 66(4), 323-336.

---



- Hugh-Jones, S., Gough, B., & Littlewood, A. (2005). Sexual exhibitionism as 'sexuality and individuality': A critique of psycho-medical discourse of women who exhibit. *Sexualities*, 8(3), 259-281.
- Impett, E., Schooler, D., & Tolman, D. (2006). To be seen and not heard: Femininity ideology and adolescent girls' sexual health. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 35(2), 129-142.
- Impett, E. A., & Tolman, D. L. (2006). Late adolescent girls' sexual experiences and sexual satisfaction. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 21(6), 628-646.
- Jackson, S. (1995). Gender and heterosexuality: A materialist feminist analysis. In M. Maynard & J. Purvis (Eds.), *(Hetero)sexual politics* (pp. 11-26). London, Bristol: Taylor & Francis.
- Jackson, S. (1999). *Heterosexuality in question*. London: SAGE.
- Jackson, S. (2005a). 'Dear Girlfriend...': Constructions of sexual health problems and sexual identities in letters to a teenage magazine. *Sexualities*, 8(3), 282-305.
- Jackson, S. (2005b). 'I'm 15 and desperate for sex': 'doing' and 'undoing' desire in letters to a teenage magazine. *Feminism & Psychology*, 15(3), 295-313.
- Jackson, S. (2006). "Street Girl": "New" sexual subjectivity in a NZ soap. *Feminist Media Studies*, 6(4), 469-486.
- Jackson, S. (2008). Ordinary sex. *Sexualities*, 11, 33-37.
- Jackson, S., & Scott, S. (2002). Embodying orgasm. *Women & Therapy*, 24(1-2), 99-110.
- Jackson, S., & Scott, S. (2007). Faking like a woman? Towards an interpretive theorization of sexual pleasure. *Body & Society*, 13(2), 95-116.
- Jackson, S. M., & Cram, F. (2003). Disrupting the sexual double standard: Young women's talk about heterosexuality. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 42, 113-127.
- Jackson, S. M., Cram, F., & Seymour, F. W. (2000). Violence and sexual coercion in high school student's dating relationships. *Journal of Family Violence*, 15(1), 23-36.
-

- Jacob, K., & Licona, A. C. (2005). Writing the waves: A dialogue on the tools, tactics, and tensions of feminisms and feminist practices over time and place. *NWSA Journal*, 17(1), 197-205.
- James, N., & Busher, H. (2006). Credibility, authenticity and voice: Dilemmas in online interviewing. *Qualitative Research*, 6(3), 403-420.
- Jansen, G. G., & Davis, D.R. (1998). Honoring voice and visibility: Sensitive-topic research and feminist interpretive inquiry. *Affilia*, 13(3), 289-311.
- Jenkins, A. (2010, 13 February ). Raunch or romance - That's the choice women have been given. *The Independent*, p. 20. Retrieved 22 February 2010, from <http://proquest.umi.com/helicon.vuw.ac.nz/pqdlink?Ver=1&Exp=02-21-2015&FMT=7&DID=1961434701&RQT=309&cfc=1>.
- Jenkins, W. D., & Kruse, J. (2010). Chlamydia screening: How we can better serve patients *The Journal of Family Practice* 59(2), E10-12. Retrieved from <http://stg.jfponline.com/Pages.asp?AID=8366&issue=February%202010&UID=>
- Johnson (Ed), M. L. (2002). *Jane sexes it up: True confessions of feminist desire*. New York: Thunder's Mouth Press.
- Johnson, M. L. (2002). Jane hocus, Jane focus. In M. L. Johnson (Ed.), *Jane sexes it up: True confessions of feminist desire* (pp. 1-12). New York: Thunder's Mouth Press.
- Johnston, L., & Longhurst, R. (2010). *Space, place, and sex: geographies of sexualities* Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc.
- Jowett, M., & O'Toole, G. (2006). Focusing researchers' minds: Contrasting experiences of using focus groups in feminist qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*, 6(4), 453-472.
- Kadel, B. (2010). Pubs. In R. Black (Ed.), *Alcohol in popular culture: An encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara: Greenwood.
- Kaestle, C. E., & Halpern, C. T. (2007). What's love got to do with it? Sexual behaviors of opposite-sex couples through emerging adulthood. *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health*, 39(3), 134-140.
-

Kalish, R. (2007). *Sexual scripts and hook ups among college students: Evidence from the college social life survey*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association. Retrieved 18 April 2011, from [http://www.allacademic.com//meta/p\\_mla\\_apa\\_research\\_citation/1/8/3/2/7/pages183277/p183277-1.php](http://www.allacademic.com//meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/1/8/3/2/7/pages183277/p183277-1.php)

Kalish, R., & Kimmel, M. (2011). Hooking up - Hot hetero sex or the new numb normative? *Australian Feminist Studies*, 26(67), 137 - 151.

Katz, J., & Farrow, S. (2000). Discrepant self-views and young women's sexual and emotional adjustment. *Sex Roles*, 42(9/10), 781-805.

Kaufmann, J.C. (2008). *The single woman & the fairytale prince*. London: Polity Press.

Kazan, P. (1998). Sexual assault and the problem of consent. In S. G. French, W. Teays & L. M. Purdy (Eds.), *Violence against women: Philosophical perspectives* (pp. 27-42): Cornell University Press.

Keenan, E. K. (2009). "Who are you calling 'Lady'?: Femininity, sexuality, and third wave feminism. *Journal of Popular Music Studies*, 20(4), 378-401.

Kiene, S. M., Barta, W. D., Tennen, H., & Armeli, S. (2009). Alcohol, helping young adults to have unprotected sex with casual partners: Findings from a daily diary study of alcohol use and sexual behavior. (Clinical report). *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 44(1), 73(78).

Kim, J. L., Sorsoli, L., Collins, K., Zylbergold, B. A., Schooler, D., & Tolman, D. L. (2007). From sex to sexuality: Exposing the heterosexual script on primetime network television. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 44(2).

Kinser, A. (2004). Negotiating spaces for/through third-wave feminism. *NWSA Journal*, 16(3), 124-153.

Kirby, V. (2006). *Judith Butler: Live theory*. London and New York: Continuum.

Kippax, S., Crawford, J., Waldby, C., & Benton, P. (1990). Women negotiating heterosex: Implications for AIDS prevention. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 13(6), 533-542.

---

Kitzinger, C., & Wilkinson, S. (1994). Virgins and queers: Rehabilitating heterosexuality? *Gender & Society*, 8(3), 444-462.

Knopp, L. (1995). Sexuality and urban space: A Framework for analysis. In D. Bell & G. Valentine (Eds.), *Mapping desire: Geographies of sexualities* (pp. 149-160). London: Routledge.

Kozinets, R. V. (2010). *Netnography: Doing ethnographic reserach online* Los Angeles, London, New Delho, Singapore, Washington DC: Sage Publications Ltd.

Lamb, S. (2010a). Feminist ideals for a healthy female adolescent sexuality: A critique. *Sex Roles*, 62(5), 294-306.

Lamb, S. (2010b). Porn as a pathway to empowerment? A response to Peterson's commentary. *Sex Roles*, 62(5), 314-317.

Lambert, T. A., Kahn, A. S., & Apple, K. J. (2003). Pluralistic ignorance and hooking up. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 40(2), 129-133.

Lauman, E. O., Gagnon, J. H., Michael, R. T., & Michaels, S. (1994). The social organization of sexuality: Sexual practices in the United States Retrieved from Google Books database Available from <http://books.google.com/books?id=72AHO0rE2HoC&printsec=frontcover&dq=gagnon&lr=#PPA5,M1>

Laurie, A. (2004). Speaking the unspoken: Lesbian oral histories in Aotearo New Zealand In A. Green & M. Hutching (Eds.), *Remembering: Writing oral history* (pp. 60-76). Auckland: Auckland University Press

Lavie-Ajayi, M., & Joffe, H. (2009). Social representations of female orgasm. *Journal of Health Psychology*, 14(1), 98-107.

Lee, R. M., & Renzetti, C. (1990). The problems of researching sensitive topics: An overview and introduction. *The American Behavioral Scientist (1986-1994)*, 33(5), 510-128.

LeMoncheck, L. (1997). *Loose women, lecherous men: A feminist philosphy of sex*. New york, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

---

Letherby, G. (2003). *Feminist research in theory and practice*. Buckingham; Philadelphia: Open University Press.

Letherby, G. (2004). Quoting and counting: An autobiographical response to Oakley. *Sociology*, 38(1), 175-189.

Levy, A. (2005). *Female chauvinist pigs - Women and the rise of raunch culture*. Melbourne: Schwartz Publishing.

Liebau, C. P. (2007). *Prude: How the sex-obsessed culture damages girls (and America, too!)*. New York: Central Street.

Lindgren, K. P., Pantalone, D. W., Lewis, M. A., & George, W. H. (2009). College students' perceptions about alcohol and consensual sexual behavior: Alcohol leads to sex. *Journal of Drug Education*, 39(1), 1-21.

Liss, M., Erchull, M. J., & Ramsey, L. R. (2011). Empowering or Oppressing? Development and Exploration of the Enjoyment of Sexualization Scale. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 37(1), 55-68.

Littleton, H., Tabernik, H., Canales, E., & Backstrom, T. (2009). Risky situation or harmless fun? A qualitative examination of college women's bad hook-up and rape scripts. *Sex Roles*, 60(11), 793-804.

Lobe, B., & Vehovar, V. (2009). Towards a flexible online mixed method design with a feedback loop. *Quality and Quantity*, 43(4), 585-597.

Lorde, A. (2007). The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house\*. In A. Lorde (Ed.), *Sister outside: Essays and speeches* (pp. 111-113). Berkeley: Crossing Press.

Loulan, J. (1989). Research on the sex practices of 1566 lesbians. In E. Cole & E. D. Rothblum (Eds.), *Women and sex therapy: closing the circle of sexual knowledge*. New York: Haworth Press.

Lumby, C. (1997). *Bad girls: The media, sex and feminism in the 90s*. St Leonards: Allen and Unwin Pty Ltd.

---

- Lunceford, B. (2008). The walk of shame: A normative description. *ETC: A Review of General Semantics* 65(4).
- Lupton, D. (1995). *The imperative of health: public health and the regulated body*. London: Sage Publications.
- Lyons, A., & Willott, S. (2008). Alcohol consumption, gender identities and women's changing social positions. *Sex Roles*, 59(9-10), 694-712.
- Madge, C., & O'Connor, H. *Exploring the Internet as a medium for research: web-based questionnaires and online synchronous interviews (Working paper No.9)*. Manchester: ESCR Economic and Social Research Council.
- Maguire, E. (2008). *Princesses and porn stars: Power, sex, identity*. Melbourne: The Text Publishing Company.
- Mahalik, J. R., Locke, B., Ludlow, L., Diemer, M. A., Scott, R. P. J., Gottfried, M., et al. (2003). Development of the conformity to masculine norms inventory. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, 4(1), 3-25.
- Maines, R. P. (2001). *The technology of orgasm: "Hysteria," the vibrator, and women's sexual satisfaction*: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Mann, S. A., & Huffman, D. J. (2005). The decentering of second wave feminism and the rise of the third wave. *Science & Society*, 69(1), 56-91.
- Manning, W. D., Giordano, P. C., & Longmore, M. A. (2006). Hooking up: The relationship context of "nonrelationship" sex. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 21(5), 459-483.
- Mark, M. M., & Miller, M. L. (1986). The effects of sexual permissiveness, target gender, subject gender, and attitude toward women on social perception: In search of the double standard. *Sex Roles*, 15(5/6), 311-322.
- Marks, M. J., & Fraley, R. C. (2005). The sexual double standard: Fact or fiction? *Sex Roles*, 52(3/4).
- Martin, K. A. (1996). *Puberty, sexuality, and the self: boys and girls at adolescence*. New York: Routledge.
-

Mason, J. (2002). *Qualitative researching* (2nd ed.). London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications Ltd.

Massey, D. (1994). *Space, place and gender*: Polity Press.

Massey, D. (2005). *For space*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Maticka-Tyndale, E., & Herold, E. S. (1997). The scripting of sexual behaviour: Canadian university students on spring break in Florida. *The Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality*, 6(4), 317-328.

Maticka-Tyndale, E., Herold, E. S., & Opperman, M. (2003). Casual sex among Australian schoolies. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 40(2), 158-169.

McClelland, S. I., & Fine, M. (2008). Writing on cellophane: Studying teen women's sexual desires, inventing methodological release points. In K. Gallagher (Ed.), *The methodological dilemma: Creative, critical, and collaborative approaches to qualitative research*: Routledge.

McDowell, L. (1995). Body work: heterosexual gender performance in city workplaces. In D. Bell & G. Valentine (Eds.), *Mapping desire: Geographies of sexuality*. London and New York: Routledge.

McGraw, P. (2010, 13/6/2011). Loose girls? Or confused girls?  
<http://blog.drphil.com/2010/05/20/loose-girls-or-confused-girls-2/>.

McIlhaney, J.S., & Bush, F. M. K. (2008). *Hooked: New science on how casual sex is affecting our children*: Moody Publishers.

McPhillips, K., Braun, V., & Gavey, N. (2001). Defining (hetero)sex: How imperative is the "coital imperative"? *Women's Studies International Forum* 24(2), 229-240.

McRobbie, A. (2007). Top girls? *Cultural Studies*, 21(4), 718-737.

McRobbie, A. (2009). *The Aftermath of feminism*. Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore, Washington DC: Sage

Measham, F. (2002). "Doing gender" - "doing drugs": Conceptualizing the gendering of drugs cultures. *Contemporary Drug Problems*, 29(2), 335(340).

---

- Melamed, S. (2009). *Positive self-objectification? An investigation of women's experience in pole dance fitness classes*. Paper presented at the AWP Annual Conference. Retrieved 5 May 2011, from [http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p296756\\_index.html](http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p296756_index.html)
- Mertens, D. M. (2009). *Transformative research and evaluation*. Ne York, London: The Guildford Press.
- Miller, J. B. (1986). *Toward a new psychology of women*: Beacon Press.
- Milnes, K. (2010). III. Challenging the sexual double standard: Constructing sexual equality narratives as a strategy of resistance. *Feminism & Psychology*, 20(2), 255-259.
- Minister, K. (1991). A feminist frame for the oral history interview In S. Berger Gluck & D. Patai (Eds.), *Women's words: The feminist practice of oral history* (pp. 27-41). New York and London: Routledge
- Ministry of Justice (n.d.). Human Rights Act 1993 Retrieved 2 February 2012, from [http://www.courts.govt.nz/policy/constitutional-law-and-human-rights/human-rights/domestic-human-rights-protection/human-rights-act-1993/copy\\_of\\_human-rights-act-1993](http://www.courts.govt.nz/policy/constitutional-law-and-human-rights/human-rights/domestic-human-rights-protection/human-rights-act-1993/copy_of_human-rights-act-1993)
- Ministry of Social Development (2010). *2010 the social report: te purongo oranga tangata*. Wellington: The Ministry of Social Development, Government New Zealand.
- Modleski, T. (1991). *Feminism without women: culture and criticism in a "postfeminist" age*. New York: Routledge.
- Mongeau, P. A., Jacobsen, J., & Donnerstein, C. (2007). Defining dates and first date goals. *Communication Research*, 34(5), 526-547.
- Montell, F. (1999). Focus group interviews: A new feminist method. *NWSA Journal*, 11(1), 44-71.
- Montemurro, B., & McClure, B. (2005). Changing gender norms for alcohol consumption: Social drinking and lowered inhibitions at bachelorette parties. *Sex Roles*, 52(5), 279-288.
- Morgan, E. M., & Zurbriggen, E. L. (2007). Wanting sex and wanting to wait: Young adults' accounts of sexual messages from first significant dating partners. *Feminism & Psychology*, 17(4), 515-541.
-



Mum's STD slur against rival pupil (2011, 18 October). *New Zealand Herald (Online)*. from [http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c\\_id=1&objectid=10759864](http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10759864).

Murphy, M. (2007, 6 June). We're sluts, not feminists. Wherein my relationship with slutwalks gets rocky. <http://www.feminisms.org/2585/were-sluts-not-feminists-wherein-my-relationship-with-slutwalk-gets-rocky/>.

Murthy, D. (2008). Digital ethnography: An examination of the use of new technologies for social research. *Sociology*, 42(5), 837-855.

Nack, A. (2002). Bad girls and fallen women: Chronic STD diagnoses as gateways to tribal stigma. *Symbolic Interaction*, 25(4), 463-485.

Nelson, L. (1999). Bodies (and spaces) do matter: The limits of performativity. *Gender, Place and Culture*, 6(4), 331-353.

Nicolson, P., & Burr, J. (2003). What is 'normal' about women's (hetero)sexual desire and orgasm?: A report of an in-depth interview study. *Social Science & Medicine*, 57(9), 1735-1745.

Nussbaum, M. C. (1995). Objectification. *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 24(4), 249-292.

Nussbaum, M. (1999). *Sex & Social Justice*. New York: Oxford University Press.

[nzherald.co.nz](http://nzherald.co.nz). [nzherald.co.nz](https://www.facebook.com/nzherald.co.nz). (facebook) Retrieved 9 February 2012, from <https://www.facebook.com/nzherald.co.nz>

Oakley, A. (2000). *Experiments in knowing: Gender and method in the social sciences*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Orr, C. (1997). Charting the currents of the third wave. *Hypatia*, 12(3), 29-45.

Överlien, C. (2003). Innocent girls or active young women? Negotiating sexual agency at a detention home. *Feminism & Psychology*, 13(3), 345-367.

Owen, J. J., Rhoades, G. K., Stanley, S. M., & Fincham, F. D. (2010). "Hooking up" among college students: Demographic and psychosocial correlates. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 39(3), 653-663.

---

- Paul, E. L. (2006). Beer goggles, catching feelings, and the walk of shame. In D. C. Kirkpatrick, S. Duck & M. K. Foley (Eds.), *Relating difficulty: the processes of constructing and managing difficult interaction*. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Paul, E. L., & Hayes, K. A. (2002). The casualties of 'casual' sex: A qualitative exploration of the phenomenology of college students' hookups. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 19*(5), 639-661.
- Paul, E. L., McManus, B., & Hayes, A. (2000). "Hookups": Characteristics and correlates of college students' spontaneous and anonymous sexual experiences. *The Journal of Sex Research, 37*(1), 76-88.
- Paul, P. (2005). *Pornified: How pornography is damaging our lives, our relationships, and our families*. New York: Owl Books.
- Peralta, R. L. (2008). 'Alcohol allows you to not be yourself': Toward a structured understanding of alcohol use and gender difference among gay, lesbian, and heterosexual youth. *Journal of Drug Issues, 38*(2), 373-399.
- Petersen, J. L., & Hyde, J. S. (2011). Gender differences in sexual attitudes and behaviors: A review of meta-analytic results and large datasets. *Journal of Sex Research, 48*(2), 149 - 165.
- Peterson, Z. (2010). What is sexual empowerment? A multidimensional and process-oriented approach to adolescent girls' sexual empowerment. *Sex Roles, 62*(5), 307-313.
- Peterson, Z. D., & Muehlenhard, C. L. (2007). What is sex and why does it matter? A motivational approach to exploring individuals' definitions of sex. *The Journal of Sex Research, 44*(3), 256-268.
- Phillips, L. M. (2000). *Flirting with danger: Young women's reflections on sexuality and domination*. Retrieved from <http://www.amazon.com> database
- Pick, S., Givaudan, M., & Flom Kline, K. (2005). VIII. Sexual Pleasure as a Key Component of Integral Sexual Health. *Feminism & Psychology, 15*(1), 44-49.
- Pineau, L. (1989). Date rape: A feminist analysis. *Law and Philosophy, 8*(2), 217-243.
-

Pitcher, K. C. (2006). The staging of agency in girls gone wild. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 23(3), 200-218.

Plante, R. F. (2006). *Sexualities in Context: A Social Perspective*. Ithaca NY: Westview Press.

Portelli, A. A dialogical relationship. An approach to oral history. Retrieved from [http://www.swaraj.org/shikshantar/expressions\\_portelli.pdf](http://www.swaraj.org/shikshantar/expressions_portelli.pdf)

Potts, A. (2000). Coming, coming, gone: A feminist deconstruction of heterosexual orgasm. *Sexualities*, 3(1), 55-76.

Potts, A. (2002). *The science/fiction of sex: Feminist deconstruction and the vocabularies of heterosex* London, new York: Routledge.

Powell, A. (2010). *Sex, power and consent: Youth culture and the unwritten rules*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Powers, M. (1995). Women and public drinking, 1890-1920. *History Today*, 45(2). Retrieved from <http://www.historytoday.com/madelon-powers/women-and-public-drinking-1890-1920>

Powley, K. (2011, 10 July 2011). NZ women treat sex like 'paddock-mating'. *New Zealand Herald*. Retrieved 19 July 2011, from [http://www.nzherald.co.nz/lifestyle/news/article.cfm?c\\_id=6&objectid=10737523](http://www.nzherald.co.nz/lifestyle/news/article.cfm?c_id=6&objectid=10737523).

Pratt, G., & Hanson, S. (1994). Geography and the construction of difference. *Gender, place and culture* 1, 5-29.

Prescription for change (2010), *Sunday*. New Zealand TVOne.

Probyn, E. (2003). The spatial imperative of subjectivity. In K. Anderson, M. Domosh, S. Pile & N. Thrift (Eds.), *Handbook of cultural geography*. London: Sage.

Purvis, J. (2004). Grrrls and women together in the third wave: Embracing the challenges of intergenerational feminism(s). *NWSA Journal*, 16(3), 93-123.

Ramazanoglu, C., & Holland, J. (2002). *Feminist methodology: Challenges and choices*. Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore: Sage Publications Ltd.

---

Rape Prevention Education (n.d.). National Rape Crisis statistics 1999. Retrieved 2 August 2011, from <http://www.rapecrisis.org.nz/content.aspx?id=67>

Rapley, T. J. (2001). The art(fulness) of open-ended interviewing: Some considerations on analysing interviews. *Qualitative Research*, 1(3), 303-323.

Reinharz, S. (1992). *Feminist methods in social research*. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Reist, M. T. (2008). *Sexualisation of women: The sexualisation and objectification of girls in popular culture*. Paper presented at the Brisbane International Feminist Conference 2008. Retrieved 12 January 2010, from [http://brisfeministconference08.org.au/Melinda%20Reis\\_Sexualisation.pdf](http://brisfeministconference08.org.au/Melinda%20Reis_Sexualisation.pdf)

Renegar, V. R., & Sowards, S. K. (2009). Contradiction as agency: Self-determination, transcendence, and counter-imagination in third wave feminism. *Hypatia*, 24(2), 1-20.

Richmond, V. (2010, 10 March ). Is there really a backlash against casual sex? *Altnet*. Retrieved 11 March 2010, from [http://www.altnet.org/sex/145975/is\\_there\\_really\\_a\\_backlash\\_against\\_casual\\_sex](http://www.altnet.org/sex/145975/is_there_really_a_backlash_against_casual_sex).

Richters, J., & Song, A. (1999). Australian University Students Agree with Clinton's Definition of Sex (Letter to the Editor). *British Medical Journal*, 318(7189), 1011.

Roberts, C., Kippax, S., Waldby, C., & Crawford, J. (1995). Faking it: The story of "Ohh!". *Women's Studies International Forum*, 18(5/6), 523-532.

Robson, R. (2009). In M. Fineman, J. E. Jackson & A. P. Romero (Eds.), *Feminist and queer legal theory: Intimate encounters, uncomfortable conversations*. Farnham: Ashgate Pub.

Ronen, S. (2010). Grinding on the dance floor. *Gender & Society*, 24(3), 355-377.

Rose, D. (2001). *Revisiting feminist research methodologies: A working paper*. Research Division of Status of Women Canada.

Rose, G. (1996). As if the mirrors had bled: Masculine dwelling, masculinist theory and feminist masquerade. In N. Duncan (Ed.), *Bodyspace: Destabilizing geographies of gender and sexuality* (pp. 56-): Routledge.

---

- Rose, G. (1999). Performing space. In D. B. Massey, J. Allen & P. Sarre (Eds.), *Human Geography Today* (pp. 247-259): Polity Press.
- Rosenthal, D., Gifford, S., & Moore, S. (1998). Safe sex or safe love: Competing discourses? *AIDS Care, 10*(1), 35-47.
- Rubin, G. S. (1999). Thinking sex: Notes for a radical theory of the politics of sexuality. In R. Parker & P. Aggleton (Eds.), *Culture, Society and Sexuality* (2nd ed.). London, New York: Routledge.
- Rubin, G. S. (2011). *Deviations: A Gayle Rubin reader*. Durham, London: Duke University Press.
- Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (1995). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data*. Thousand Oaks, London, New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Rúðólfssdóttir, A. G., & Morgan, P. (2009). 'Alcohol is my friend': Young middle class women discuss their relationship with alcohol. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology, 19*(6), 492-505.
- Russell, N. (2010, 23 March 2010 ). Kiwi Women Most Promiscuous. *Sunday News*. Retrieved 26 March 2010, from <http://www.stuff.co.nz/life-style/3481882/Kiwi-women-most-promiscuous>.
- Ryan, A. (2001). Feminism and sexual freedom in an age of AIDS. *Sexualities, 4*(1), 91-107.
- Rye, B. J., & Meaney (2007). The pursuit of sexual pleasure. *Sexuality and Culture, 11*(1), 28-51.
- Sahil, S. (2007). On Judith Butler and performativity. In K. E. Lovaas & M. M. Jenkins (Eds.), *Sexualities and communication in everyday life: A reader*. London: Sage
- Salmons, J. (2010). *Online interviews in real time*. London, Los Angeles: Sage Publications.
- Sampson, H., Bloor, M., & Fincham, B. (2008). A price worth paying?: Considering the 'cost' of reflexive research methods and the influence of feminist ways of 'doing'. *Sociology, 42*(5), 919-933.
-

Sanchez, D. T., Crocker, J., & Boike, K. R. (2005). Doing gender in the bedroom: Investing in gender norms and the sexual experience. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 31(10), 1445-1455.

Sawicki, J. (1991). *Disciplining Foucault: Feminism, power, and the body*. New York, London: Routledge.

Sawicki, J. (1992). Feminism, Foucault, and "subjects" of power and freedom. In S. Hekman (Ed.), *Feminist interpretations of Michel Foucault*. University Park, Pennsylvania The Pennsylvania State University Press.

Schalet, A. (2009). Subjectivity, intimacy, and the empowerment paradigm of adolescent sexuality: The unexplored room. *Feminist Studies*, 35(1), 133-160.

Schalet, A. (2010). Sexual subjectivity revisited: The significance of relationships in Dutch and American girls' experience of sexuality. *Gender & Society*, 24(3), 304-329.

Schützwohl, A., Fuchs, A., McKibbin, W., & Shackelford, T. (2009). How willing are you to accept sexual requests from slightly unattractive to exceptionally attractive imagined requestors? *Human Nature*, 20(3), 282-293.

Schwarz, N., & Brand, J. F. (1983). Effects of salience of rape on sex role attitudes, trust, and self-esteem in non-raped women. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 13(1), 71-76.

Segal, L. (1994). *Straight sex: The politics of pleasure*. Reading: Virago Press.

Seymour, W. S. (2001). In the flesh or online? Exploring qualitative research methodologies. *Qualitative Research*, 1(2), 147-168.

Sexually transmitted infection in New Zealand (2007). *Best Practice Journal* (19), 44-47.

Shackelford, T., Goetz, A., LaMunyon, C., Quintus, B., & Weekes-Shackelford, V. (2004). Sex differences in sexual psychology produce sex-similar references for a short-term mate. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 33(4), 405-412.

Shapiro, M., Setterlund, D., & Cragg, C. (2003). Capturing the complexity of women's experiences: A mixed-method approach to studying incontinence in older Women. *Affilia*, 18(1), 21-33.

---

- Sheff, E. (2005). Polyamorous women, Sexual subjectivity and power. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 34(3), 251-283.
- Shields, C. M. (2003). 'Giving voice' to students: Using the Internet for data collection. *Qualitative Research*, 3(3), 397-414.
- Shoveller, J. A., Johnson, J. L., Langille, D. B., & Mitchell, T. (2004). Socio-cultural influences on young people's sexual development. *Social Science & Medicine*, 59(3), 473-487.
- Showden, C. R. (2009). What's political about the new feminisms? *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, 30(2), 166-198.
- Sieg, E. (2007). Empowered positions?: Listening to sexually experienced young women talking about sex, disappointments, and compromise. *Health Education*, 108(1), 54-71.
- Siegel, D. (2007). *Sisterhood interrupted - From radical women to grrls gone wild*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Simon, W., & Gagnon, J. H. (1984). Sexual scripts. *Society* (November/December), 53-60.
- Simon, W., & Gagnon, J. H. (1986). Sexual scripts: Permanence and change. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 15(2), 97-120.
- Simon, W., & Gagnon, J. H. (2003). Sexual scripts: Origins, influences and changes. *Qualitative Sociology*, 26(4), 491-497.
- Skrobot, S. L. (2010). *Dating and hooking up: An analysis of hooking up as a campus norm and the impact on women's self perception* Unpublished MA, f Ohio University.
- Slovic, P. (1999). Trust, emotion, sex, politics, and science: Surveying the risk-assessment battlefield. *Risk Analysis*, 19(4), 689-701.
- Smith, D. E. (1987). *The everyday world as problematic: a feminist sociology*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.
- Smith, V. C. (2007). In pursuit of 'good' sex: Self-determination and the sexual experience. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 24(1), 69-85.
-

Snyder-Hall, R. C. (2010). Third-wave feminism and the defense of "choice". *Perspectives on Politics*, 8(01), 255-261.

Snyder, C. R. (2008). What is third wave feminism? A new directions essay. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 34(1), 175-196.

Sprecher, S., McKinney, K., & Orbuch, T. L. (1987). Has the double standard disappeared?: An Experimental Test *Social Psychology Quarterly* 50(1), 24-31.

SSL International (2007). *The face of global sex 2007 - First sex: An opportunity of a lifetime*. Cambridge: Durex Network.

Stanley, E. (1990). Feminist praxis and the academic mode of production In L. Stanley (Ed.), *Feminist praxis: Research, theory and epistemology feminist sociology* (pp. 3-19). London: Routledge.

Statistics New Zealand (2010). *Quickstats about culture and identity: Ethnic groups in New Zealand*. Retrieved 27 January 2010

from <http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2006CensusHomePage/QuickStats/quickstats-about-a-subject/culture-and-identity/ethnic-groups-in-new-zealand.aspx>.

Statistics New Zealand (2011, 17 June 2011). *Marriages, civil unions, and divorces: Year ended December 2010* Retrieved 9 February 2012, 2012, from [http://www.stats.govt.nz/browse\\_for\\_stats/people\\_and\\_communities/marriages-civil-unions-and-divorces/MarriagesCivilUnionsandDivorces\\_HOTPYeDec10.aspx](http://www.stats.govt.nz/browse_for_stats/people_and_communities/marriages-civil-unions-and-divorces/MarriagesCivilUnionsandDivorces_HOTPYeDec10.aspx)

Statistics New Zealand (2012) (2011, 31 January 2012). *Demographic trends: 2011* Retrieved 1 February 2012, from [http://www.stats.govt.nz/browse\\_for\\_stats/population/estimates\\_and\\_projections/demographic-trends-2011.aspx](http://www.stats.govt.nz/browse_for_stats/population/estimates_and_projections/demographic-trends-2011.aspx)

Stern, S. T. (2007). *Instant Identity: Adolescent girls and the world of instant messaging*: Peter Lang.

Stewart, F. J. (1999). Femininities in flux? Young women, heterosexuality and (safe) sex. *Sexualities*, 2(3), 275-290.

---



- Stewart, K., & Williams, M. (2005). Researching online populations: The use of online focus groups for social research. *Qualitative Research*, 5(4), 395-416.
- Stieger, S., & Göritz, A. S. (2006). Using instant messaging for internet-based interviews. *CyberPsychology & Behavior*, 9(5), 552-559.
- Stinson, R. D. (2010). Hooking up in young adulthood: A review of factors influencing the sexual behavior of college students. *Journal of College Student Psychotherapy*, 24(2), 98 - 115.
- Straus, T. (2000). Lipstick feminists: Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards create a manifesto for third wave feminism. *Metro Santa Cruz*.
- Sweetman, D., Badiee, M., & Creswell, J. W. (2010). Use of the transformative framework in mixed methods studies. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 16(6), 441-454.
- Terry, G., & Braun, V. (2009). 'When I was a bastard': constructions of maturity in men's accounts of masculinity. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 18(2), 165-178.
- Testa, M., Van Zile-Tamsen, C., Livingston, J. A., & Buddie, A. M. (2006). The role of women's alcohol consumption in managing sexual intimacy and sexual safety motives. *The Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*, 67(5), 665-674.
- The Kaiser Family Foundation (2005). *Sex on TV 4: Executive summary*. Washington: The Kaiser Family Foundation.
- Tickner, J. A. (2005). What is your research program? Some feminist answers to international relations methodological questions. *International Studies Quarterly*, 49(1), 1-22.
- Tiefer, L. (1995). *Sex is not a natural act and other essays*. Boulder, San Francisco, Oxford: Westview Press.
- Tiefer, L. (2000). The social construction and social effects of sex research: The sexological model of sexuality. In C. Travis Brown & J. W. White (Eds.), *Sexuality, ociety, and feminism* (pp. 79-107 ). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Tiefer, L. (2006). Female sexual dysfunction: A case study of disease mongering and activist resistance. *PLoS Medicine*, 3(4), 436.
-

- Tiefer, L. (2010). The 'New View' Victoria University of Wellington.
- Tilley, S. A. (1998). Conducting respectful research: A critique of practice. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 23(3), 316-328.
- Tolman, D. L. (2000). Femininity as a barrier to positive sexual health for adolescent girls In J. M. Ussher (Ed.), *Women's Health: Contemporary International Perspectives* (pp. 96-113): British Psychological Society.
- Tolman, D. L. (2002). *Dilemmas of desire: Teenage girls talk about sexuality*: Harvard University Press.
- Tolman, D. L., & Higgins, T. E. (1996). How being a good girl can be bad for girls. In N. Bauer Maglin & D. Perry (Eds.), *"Bad girls" "good girls" - women, sex, and power in the nineties* New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press
- Tolman, D. L., Strieppe, M. I., & Harmon, T. (2003). Gender matters: Constructing a model of adolescent sexual health. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 40(1), 4-12.
- Tyler, M. (2008). Sex self-help books: Hot secrets for great sex or promoting the sex of prostitution? *Women's Studies International Quarterly*, 31(5), 363-372.
- United Nations Statistics Division (2010). *The world's women 2010: Trends and statistics*. New York: United Nations.
- Ussher, J. M. (2005). V. The meaning of sexual desire: Experiences of heterosexual and lesbian girls. *Feminism & Psychology*, 15(1), 27-.
- Valentine, G. (1993). (Hetero)sexing space: lesbian perceptions and experiences of everyday spaces. *Environment and Planning: Society and Space*, 11(4), 395-413.
- Velez-Blasini, C. J. (2008). Evidence against alcohol as a proximal cause of sexual risk taking among college students. *Journal of Sex Research*, 45(2), 118 - 128.
- Ven, T. V., & Beck, J. (2009). Getting drunk and hooking up: An exploratory study of the relationship between alcohol intoxication and casual coupling in a university sample. *Sociological Spectrum: Mid-South Sociological Association*, 29(5), 626 - 648.
-

- Vroman, K., & Kovacich, J. (2002). Computer-mediated interdisciplinary teams: theory and reality. *Journal of Interprofessional Care, 16*(2), 159-170.
- Wade, L. (2011). *The promise and perils of hook-up culture*. Paper presented at the Common Hour. Retrieved 22 June 2011, from <http://thesocietypages.org/socimages/2011/06/21/the-promise-and-perils-of-hook-up-culture/>
- Wade, L., & Heldman, C. (in press). Hooking up and opting out: Negotiating sex in the first year of college In J. DeLamater & L. Carpenter (Eds.), *Sexuality over the life course: Emerging perspectives*.
- Waitt, G., Jessop, L., & Gorman-Murray, A. (2011). The guys in there just expect to be laid': Embodied and gendered socio-spatial practices of a 'night out' in Wollongong, Australia. *Gender, Place & Culture, 18*(2), 255-275.
- Walker, D. F., Tokar, D. M., & Fischer, A. R. (2000). What are eight popular masculinity-related instruments measuring? Underlying dimensions and their relations to sociosexuality. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity, 1*(2), 98-108.
- Walker, R. (1995). Being real: An introduction In R. Walker (Ed.), *To be real: telling the truth and changing the face of feminism*: Anchor Books.
- Walsh, S. M. (2008). Kathleen A. Bogle, hooking up: Sex, dating, and relationships on campus. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 37*(6), 757-758.
- Walter, N. (2010). *Living dolls: The return to sexism*. London: Virago.
- Waters, M. (2007). Sexing it up? Women, pornography and third wave feminism. In S. Gillis, G. Howie & R. Munford (Eds.), *Third wave feminism: A critical exploration*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Weaver, S. J., & Herold, E. S. (2000). Casual sex and women. *Journal of Psychology & Human Sexuality 12*(3), 23-42.
- Wellington City Council Safety Unit (2008/9). Stick with the girls. *Safe in the City Campaign*. Wellington Wellington City Council.
-

Wellington City Council Safety Unit (2010/11). Stick with your friends. *Safe in the City Campaign*. Wellington Wellington City Council.

Westlake, E. J. (2008). Friend me if you Facebook: Generation Y and performative surveillance. *TDR: The Drama Review*, 52(4), 21-40.

Whelehan, I. (1995). *Modern feminist thought: From second wave to post-'feminism'*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

White, H. R., Fleming, C. B., Catalano, R. F., & Bailey, J. A. (2009). Prospective associations among alcohol use-related sexual enhancement expectancies, sex after alcohol use, and casual sex. *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*, 23(4), 702-707.

Whitehead, K., & Kurz, T. (2009). 'Empowerment' and the pole: A discursive investigation of the reinvention of pole dancing as a recreational activity. *Feminism & Psychology*, 19(2), 224-244.

Wiederman, M. W. (2005). The gendered nature of sexual scripts. *The Family Journal*, 13(4), 496-502.

Wiles, R., Charles, V., Crow, G., & Heath, S. (2006). Researching researchers: Lessons for research ethics. *Qualitative Research*, 6(3), 283-299.

Wilkins, A. C. (2004). "So full of myself as a chick": Goth women, sexual independence, and gender egalitarianism. *Gender & Society*, 18(3), 328-349

Wilkinson, S. (1998). Focus groups in feminist research: Power, interaction, and the co-construction of meaning. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 21(1), 111-125.

Williams, Z. (2006, August 11). Zoe Williams: Talks to author Zoe Margolis aka Abby Lee *The Guardian*, p. 6. Retrieved 4 November 2010, from <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2006/aug/11/gender.booksonhealth>.

Women & Geography Study Group of the IBG (1986). *Geography and gender: An introduction to femininst geography* London: Hutchinson

Woolnough, A. D. (2009). Fear of crime on campus: Gender differences in use of self-protective behaviours at an urban university. *Security Journal*, 22(1), 40-55.

---

Wouters, C. (2010). Sexualization: Have sexualization processes changed direction? *Sexualities, 13*(6), 723-741.

Yamamiya, Y., Cash, T. F., & Thompson, J. K. (2006). Sexual experiences among college women: The differential effects of general versus contextual body images on sexuality. *Sex Roles, 55*(5-6), 421-427.

Yost, M. R., & Zurbriggen, E. L. (2006). Gender differences in the enactment of sociosexuality: An examination of implicit social motives, sexual fantasies, coercive sexual attitudes, and aggressive sexual behavior. *The Journal of Sex Research, 43*(2), 163-173.

Young, A. M., McCabe, S. E., & Boyd, C. J. (2007). Adolescents' inferences about girls who consume alcohol. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 31*(3), 229-240.

---