2010

Young heterosexual women's negotiations of sexual consent within casual encounters and intimate relationships

Melissa Burkett
Edith Cowan University

Follow this and additional works at: https://ro.ecu.edu.au/theses_hons

Part of the Women's Studies Commons

Recommended Citation

This Thesis is posted at Research Online.
https://ro.ecu.edu.au/theses_hons/1237
Edith Cowan University

Copyright Warning

You may print or download ONE copy of this document for the purpose of your own research or study.

The University does not authorize you to copy, communicate or otherwise make available electronically to any other person any copyright material contained on this site.

You are reminded of the following:

- Copyright owners are entitled to take legal action against persons who infringe their copyright.

- A reproduction of material that is protected by copyright may be a copyright infringement. Where the reproduction of such material is done without attribution of authorship, with false attribution of authorship or the authorship is treated in a derogatory manner, this may be a breach of the author’s moral rights contained in Part IX of the Copyright Act 1968 (Cth).

- Courts have the power to impose a wide range of civil and criminal sanctions for infringement of copyright, infringement of moral rights and other offences under the Copyright Act 1968 (Cth). Higher penalties may apply, and higher damages may be awarded, for offences and infringements involving the conversion of material into digital or electronic form.
Young Heterosexual Women's Negotiations of Sexual Consent within Casual Encounters and Intimate Relationships

Melissa Burkett

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Honours in Criminology & Justice

October 2010

School of Law & Justice
Faculty of Business & Law
Edith Cowan University
USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank Dr Karine Hamilton, my research supervisor, for all her words of wisdom and for the considerable time and effort she directed towards helping me to put this thesis together, and of course all her advice throughout the research process. I want to also thank Dr Pamela Henry and Professor Caroline Taylor for their advice during the initial stages of planning my research project, and Dr Anastasia Powell for her review of my research proposal.

Thank you also to Nikki Isaacson for helping me conjure up ideas for my research project at the beginning of the year and for her support along the way, and also to Sharan Kraemer and Natalie Gately for advice and support along the way. Thanks to Jenny Fleming and Michelle Adams for their advice and feedback on the original interview schedule, and to all who attended my research proposal seminar and provided their suggestions regarding the research methodology. Much appreciation also goes to Edith Cowan University for awarding me a scholarship to help me with my studies.

It is also important to thank the eight young women who participated in this research project and offered their thoughts, feelings and experiences in order to help a fellow student achieve her goal of conducting her own research project. To my mum and dad for all their love and support along the way, and to Ralph for always being a friend and cheering me up when times got tough. And finally, thank you to Phill and Milly for their ongoing support and encouragement.
This thesis examines young heterosexual women’s negotiations of sexual consent in their casual sexual encounters and intimate sexual relationships with men, and their perceptions and understandings of consent and sexual violence with regard to these different sexual contexts. It explores the nature of young women’s negotiations of sexual consent with the intention of facilitating a deeper understanding of the issue of women’s consensual engagement in unwanted, pressured and coerced sexual activity. This thesis fills a void in the qualitative research literature on how consent is actually negotiated in everyday (hetero) sexual encounters through analysing the interviews of eight young women aged between 18 and 24 within a postmodern feminist theoretical framework incorporating some aspects of the sociological theory of Pierre Bourdieu. It argues that negotiating consent is a complex process highly influenced by the implicit presence of gendered norms that often constrain young women’s ability to freely negotiate their sexual choices without their conscious awareness. It therefore draws attention to the limitations of legal and sexual violence prevention discourses that promote a woman’s sexual autonomy and responsibility for explicitly conveying her willingness or unwillingness to engage in sexual relations.
DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

(i) incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;
(ii) contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; or
(iii) contain any defamatory material

Signed:

Dated: 09-12-2010
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

IMPLICIT CONSTRAINTS ON YOUNG WOMEN'S SEXUAL NEGOTIATIONS IN CASUAL SEXUAL ENCOUNTERS AND INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS

Risk Avoidance and Sexual Miscommunication: A Woman's Responsibility .......................... 42
Casual Sex and the 'Purely Sexual Currency of Exchange' ................................................. 47
Relationships, Pleasing Women and the 'Economy of Sex' ................................................ 52

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS ............................................................................................................. 63

REFERENCES ..................................................................................................................................... 68

APPENDICES ..................................................................................................................................... 80
APPENDIX I: IN-DEPTH SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE ..................................... 80
APPENDIX II: PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT FLYER ............................................................... 83
APPENDIX III: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET ............................................................ 84
APPENDIX IV: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM ........................................................................ 85
CHAPTER 1:

POSITIONING THE RESEARCH
INTRODUCTION

Young women may have access to more sexual information than any generation in the past, are probably more sexually experienced and are more likely to espouse sexually egalitarian ideas, but the vast majority are still trapped within the confines of heterosexual relations which privilege men’s desires and pleasures at their expense.

Jackson (1999, p. 31).

Young women today are told by a variety of social mediums that they are free to assert themselves sexually and are therefore in control of their sexuality and the sexual activities they wish to engage in (Levy, 2005). The young females of Generation Y, who were born after 1982, are more likely than their female counterparts in previous generations to consider themselves as sexually liberated and as free to express their sexual desires (Levy, 2005; Powell, 2010). Indeed, in the sexual revolution of the 1960s and 1970s feminists fought for sexual equality and for female sexual desires to be recognised as just as natural and important as men’s (Jeffreys, 1990). In contemporary sexual relationships and casual sexual encounters it is generally now assumed that both men and women are sexual equals capable of experiencing mutual sexual desire and pleasure (Jeffreys, 1990). Research has highlighted however that the new sexual freedoms and equalities that have been bestowed upon young women today are in fact inherently difficult to embody and enact in practice (e.g. Gavey, 2005; Holland, Ramazanoglu, Sharpe & Thomson, 1998; Jackson, 1999; Jackson & Cram, 2003; McPhillips, Braun & Gavey, 2001; Phillips, 2000; Powell, 2010; Tolman, 2002).

Prominent gender and sexuality scholar Stevi Jackson, quoted above, has demonstrated that female sexuality remains a complex issue and traditionally has been strongly defined within masculine-constructed parameters that have proven highly resistant to change (Jackson, 1999; Jackson & Scott, 2004). Whilst mainstream society promotes the view of young women today
as living without the sexual restraints that previous generations of women were subjected to, sexual negotiations remain defined by male-privileging sexual ideals (Gavey, 2005; Jackson, 1999; Jackson & Scott, 2004; Jeffreys, 1990; Powell, 2010). Media depictions of ‘sexually liberated’ young women hide the realities of the so-called ‘new’ sexual revolution of the 1990s and new millennium as statistics show that young women aged between 16 and 25 remain the most at risk of sexual violence (Mouzas & Makkai, 2004; Powell, 2010). Further, popular perceptions of over-sexualised and assertive young women, such as celebrities Britney Spears and Paris Hilton, hide the ongoing realities of unwanted, pressured and coerced sexual activity experienced by some young women in their sexual encounters and relationships (e.g. Allen, 2003; de Visser, Smith, Rissel, Richters & Grulich, 2003; Gavey, 2005; Holland et al 1998; Powell, 2007; Smith, Agius, Dyson, Mitchell & Pitts, 2003; Smith, Agius, Mitchell, Barrett & Pitts, 2009; Tolman, 2002; Xenos & Smith, 2001).

This thesis examines the nature of sexual empowerment and coercion in the context of young women’s negotiations of consent and sexual intimacy within their casual encounters and intimate relationships with men. It was guided by the following key questions:

- What do young heterosexual women perceive to be indicative of sexual consent and what do they believe constitutes sexual violence in both casual and intimate sexual contexts?
- How do young heterosexual women actually negotiate their consent in their casual sexual encounters and intimate sexual relationships with men?
- To what extent are young heterosexual women able to freely consent to sexual activity and to ‘just say no’ to unwanted sexual contact, as they are commonly urged?

Sexual negotiations encompass ‘deciding whether sex is wanted, what practices will be engaged in, communicating these desires verbally and non-verbally with a partner and ascertaining what
they want as well' (Powell, 2010, p. 66). Thus, in adopting this definition, this thesis examines more than simply how young women offer or deny their consent to a man: it explores how various facets of a sexual encounter are determined by the people involved. Further, this thesis explores not only how consent is negotiated in intimate relationships (i.e. after dating for at least three months as indicated by the research participants) but also how young women negotiate their consent in casual sexual encounters (i.e. ‘one-night stands’ and random ‘hook-ups’ as part of a casual arrangement). This is important as young women and their negotiations of consent within casual sexual encounters is an under-researched area, and in light of recent research indicating some problematic aspects of casual sex for young women (e.g. Beres, 2010; Carmody, 2009b; Carmody & Willis, 2006; Gavey, 2005), this area deserves further attention.

In doing so, this study answers the call for research on the nature of sexual consent with regard to the specific context within which such negotiations take place (Beres, 2007; Humphreys & Herold, 2007). There is a paucity of research on how heterosexuals negotiate sexual consent despite its importance in the fields of law and sexual violence prevention (Beres, 2007). Research on the issue of sexual consent in heterosexual men and women’s everyday lives and how it is negotiated has only been explored in a few studies in the international arena (e.g. Beres, 2010; Hickman & Muehlenhard, 1999; Humphreys & Herold, 2007). Recently, sexual consent has been a topic of interest in two Australian studies (Carmody & Willis, 2006; Powell, 2007). This thesis contributes to this body of work and aims to shed light on the issue of sexual violence as it relates to young women and dominant legal models of sexual consent as well as common sexual violence prevention policy.

According to sexual miscommunication theory, a woman’s experience of unwanted sex results from her inability to effectively communicate her sexual intentions resulting in a man misinterpreting or over-perceiving her willingness to engage in sexual relations (Beres, 2010; Crawford, 1995; Frith & Kitzinger, 1997). This theory has been incorporated into legal discourses of consent and sexual violence prevention discourses that place responsibility on
young women to properly communicate their willingness or unwillingness to engage in sexual relations with men (Carmody, 2009a; Carmody & Carrington, 2000; Kitzinger & Frith, 1999; Neame, 2003). Thus, it is commonly believed instilling a sense of personal responsibility and encouraging sexual assertiveness in a young woman will prevent incidents of unwanted, pressured and coerced sex (Carmody, 2006; Carmody & Carrington, 2000; Neame, 2003; Phillips, 2000). This approach, however, assumes that women and men reside within a 'social and cultural vacuum' (Powell, 2010, p. 23), unaffected by implicit pressures and expectations embedded within (hetero) sexual interactions.

As this thesis demonstrates, (hetero) sexual encounters are deeply influenced by particular gendered discourses and norms resulting in implicit pressures and expectations disrupting young women's negotiations of their sexual consent. There is clearly a marked discrepancy between young women's perceptions of their natural rights to sexual autonomy and their constrained experiences of asserting themselves in their everyday sexual encounters with men. The main significance of these findings is with regard to judicial models of sexual consent and common sexual violence prevention policy that assume young women are innately free and autonomous beings. In reality however, as this thesis shows, their sexual choices are subject to particular implicit constraints in the form of gendered discourses and norms that reproduce dominant gendered power relations within their sexual interactions with men thereby complicating negotiations of consent.
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: POSTMODERN FEMINISM AND THE SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY OF PIERRE BOURDIEU

Women are not simply passive objects adhering to patriarchal demands, nor are they duped by culture. There is an entire system of social rewards (and punishments) that reinforces appropriate gender behaviour...women collude in their own oppression.


This thesis uses postmodern feminist theory to contextualise young women’s negotiations of consent and sexual intimacy in their sexual encounters with men. Broadly speaking, postmodern feminist theory aims to expose the hidden nature of gendered power relations that are inherent within the social structure of contemporary Western society and which permeate everyday heterosexual relations (Gavey, 1989; Jackson, 2006). Usefully, aspects of the sociological work of Pierre Bourdieu (1990, 1992, 2001), in particular his theorising on the persistence of masculine domination, can further contextualise the nature of these power relations and how they are implicitly reproduced at the individual level. The application of Bourdieuvian theory to feminist understandings of consent and sexual violence was first carried out by Australian sociologist Anastasia Powell (2008, 2010) whose research has contributed significantly to the development of a unique feminist-sociological theory of consent. As Powell’s work demonstrated, Bourdieu’s concepts of ‘fields’, ‘habitus’ and ‘symbolic violence’ offer a useful framework for analysing implicit influences on sexual negotiations that may help to further explain the pervasiveness and hidden nature of more subtle forms of sexual violence, such as consensual unwanted sex. By adopting a postmodern feminist-Bourdieuian framework this thesis contributes to a more complex understanding of consent and sexual violence with explicit reference to the nature of (hetero) sexual relations and the hidden dynamics of gendered power relations that govern them. It explores how young women conform, consciously and unconsciously, to socially proscribed norms about sexuality and (hetero) sexual relations in a manner that reproduces the status quo of male power.
In doing so, the discussion in this thesis makes ongoing reference to the 'field of heterosexual encounters' (McNay, 1999; Powell, 2010). In Bourdieu’s (1990) writings, there exist various fields (e.g. education and law), which are particular contexts within the social world that are governed by certain discourses, norms, rules and values. According to postmodern French philosopher Michel Foucault (1990), discourse encompasses language as well as the social practices that we take for granted and implicitly permeates our social realities. Discourses convey socially constructed ‘truths’ and knowledges that are unique to a particular social, cultural and historical context (Foucault, 1990). Embedded within discourses are norms which represent a set of socially constructed assumptions or beliefs that, when reproduced, assign meaning to particular behaviours and practices (Butler, 2004; Jackson, 2006). Norms permeate not only the fields in which we interact but also become embodied in our everyday practices and interactions, thereby contributing to their subtle yet powerful reproduction at an individual, as well as social level (Butler, 2004; Jackson, 2006). By extension, commonly held and taken-for-granted assumptions, beliefs and practices are called ‘normative’ and in this thesis the term ‘heteronormative’ refers to normative assumptions, practices and behaviours associated with heterosexuality (Jackson, 2006).

Heterosexuality, Ingraham (1996) highlighted, represents an institutionalised or powerful ‘organising structure’ of society. It reproduces gender differences and a gendered hierarchy at an institutional level (e.g. law and the State) through its ordering of, for example, social, sexual and economic divisions of power (Ingraham, 1996; Jackson, 2006). Institutionalised, normative heterosexuality, a term that is used throughout this thesis, refers to particular social rules and structures, ideologies, gender socialisation processes and the regulation of gender and sexuality within contemporary Western society (Jackson, 2006). Bourdieu (2001), in his theorising on the persistence of masculine domination, also highlighted the hierarchical social ordering in patriarchal society of individuals based on gender differences. He noted how such differences are made clearly visible in patriarchy’s naturalisation of innate biological differences between
males and females that reinforce particular 'truths' such as a man's 'natural' physical and sexual prowess and a woman's 'natural' caretaking abilities (Bourdieu, 2001; Chambers, 2005). The normalising and regulatory effects of institutionalised, normative heterosexuality have traditionally been examined with regard to homosexual behaviour by 'queer theorists' (Seidman, 2005). However, over the last decade, the regulatory effects of normative heterosexuality have been applied more so to heterosexual behaviours and interactions (e.g. see Jackson, 1999). In the context of this thesis, the concept of normative heterosexuality and the regulatory effects of particular gendered norms show why some young women in heterosexual encounters consent to unwanted sex in the absence of overt pressure or force.

Normative conceptualisations of female sexuality are important to a discussion of the influence of gendered norms on young women's sexual negotiations. Postmodern theorists adopt the view that normative female sexuality is 'discursively constituted through normative discourse and social practices' (Gavey, 2005, p. 80). Sexuality, Holland et al (1998, p. 21) posited, 'is always both material and social, since what is embodied and experienced is made meaningful through language, culture and values'. In the field of heterosexual encounters, our sexuality is influenced by particular gendered discourses and norms, produced and regulated through institutionalised, normative heterosexuality, that shape our everyday lived reality and give our practices and interactions meaning (Gavey, 2005; Jackson, 2006). Bourdieu's (1990) concept of 'habitus' is valuable for understanding how gendered norms are reproduced at the individual level. For Bourdieu (1990), habitus is constructed through the unconscious embodiment of rules, discourses and norms that are associated with various fields that we encounter in our everyday lives. The term 'gendered habitus', employed in this thesis, refers to the internalisation of gendered norms that reinforce appropriate and inappropriate male and female social and sexual behaviours (Bourdieu, 1990 and 2001). The embodiment and production of particular gendered norms in habitus influences an individual's thoughts, feelings, behaviours and choices without their explicit awareness (Bourdieu, 1990; Butler, 1993; Jackson, 2006). Moreover, without realising it, individuals who regulate their own behaviour in accordance to particular rules that
are naturalised in discourses and gendered norms, unknowingly reinforce dominant power
relations (Butler, 2004; Jackson, 2006). By examining the extent to which young women
demonstrate conformity to dominant gendered discourses and norms, this research considers
how young women’s gendered habitus influences their negotiations of consent and sexual
intimacy within the field of heterosexual encounters.

Usefully, Bourdieu’s (2001) concept of ‘symbolic violence’ further contextualises the role of
normative heterosexuality in ordering the everyday social and sexual lives of women. As
demonstrated by Powell (2008, 2010), symbolic violence is particularly valuable to
understanding the persistence and implicit nature of subtle forms of sexual violence, such as
pressured and consensual but unwanted sex. For Bourdieu (1992, p. 167) symbolic violence
constitutes the ‘violence which is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity’. It is
the corporeal or ‘subtle inculcation of power relations upon the bodies and dispositions of
individuals’ – through gendered habitus - that makes symbolic violence so powerful (McNay,
1999, p. 99). In postmodern feminist theory, dominant power relations are viewed as being
maintained through the regulatory effects of discourses and norms, which is similar to how
Bourdieu envisaged the persistence of masculine domination through the implicit effects of
symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 2001; Chambers, 2005; Gavey, 2005). Symbolic violence is
powerful in this respect for it implicitly constraints a woman’s choices and encourages her to
feel that particular inequalities are a normal fact of life (Bourdieu, 2001; Chambers, 2005;
Powell, 2010). Thus, as suggested by Powell (2010), the implicit yet powerful nature of
symbolic violence can help to explain a woman’s decision to consent to unwanted sex: in her
gendered habitus she is simply acting within the limits of the discursively-formed choices that
she feels are available to her at the time.

In summary, applying postmodern feminist theory and aspects of Bourdieuan sociological
theory to the eight young women’s interviews in this thesis, a deeper understanding of the
nature of gendered power relations embedded within the field of heterosexual encounters and
their influence on negotiations of sexual consent is facilitated. Thus, this framework offers a more contextualised analysis of sexual consent and the more subtle forms of sexual violence as they apply to young heterosexual women's everyday sexual experiences within both casual encounters and intimate relationships with men.
CHAPTER 2:

LITERATURE REVIEW
LITERATURE REVIEW: FEMINIST ACCOUNTS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND
CONSENT AND THE REALITIES OF NORMATIVE (HETERO) SEXUAL
NEGOTIATIONS

... under the male gaze of patriarchy and arguments of legal dialect where
concepts of truth, morality, ethics and justice are foreign entities, the
experience, the evidence of survivors is oftentimes rendered useless, or at best
fragmented, diluted, sanitised, modified.


This literature review outlines how the issues of consent, sexual violence and normative
heterosexuality have been addressed by researchers and feminists. The first section discusses
how feminist writers and researchers have exposed the realities of sexual violence against
women and offered a critique on traditional models of sexual consent. Following this is a
discussion of the small body of research that has focused attention on how sexual consent is
typically negotiated in (hetero) sexual encounters. The third section of this literature review
briefly discusses research addressing the ‘sexual miscommunication’ model of sexual violence
and its implications for sexual violence prevention policy. And finally, some of the most
influential discourses and normative assumptions regarding (hetero) sexual relations that have
been identified in feminist social research are outlined.

Sexual Violence and Consent: The Feminist Turn

In the 1970s, ‘second-wave’ feminists began to critique the way in which Western society dealt
with the issue of male-perpetrated sexual violence against women (Carmody, 2009; Gavey,
2005). Second-wave feminist writers including Susan Brownmiller, Kate Millett and Susan
Griffin drew attention to what they perceived to be patriarchal society’s tacit endorsement of
sexual violence against women at the hands of men (Brownmiller, 1975; Gavey, 2005; Griffin,
1977; Millett, 1970). In their writings, sexual violence was viewed not simply as a sexual act
perpetrated against a woman's will, but rather an act of violence and power committed by men for the purposes of ensuring the continued domination of women and the reinforcement of patriarchal rule (Brownmiller, 1975; Gavey, 2005; Griffin, 1977; Millett, 1970). This analysis, however, caused some concern even within feminist camps: radical feminist Catharine MacKinnon in particular argued that calling rape an act of violence and ignoring its sexual element would result in the silencing of victims who did not perceive their experiences to be facilitated by a man's violent intentions (MacKinnon, 1987; Phillips, 2000). Nonetheless, important work from the likes of Brownmiller, Millett and Griffin laid the foundations of an emerging anti-rape movement in the United States which involved women's engagement in feminist 'consciousness-raising' groups and the establishment of the first rape crisis centres (Gavey, 2005).

The work of feminists during the 1970s also drew attention to spousal immunity laws, for example, which contributed to the normalisation and legitimisation of sexual violence within marital relations (Bergen, 1996; Brownmiller, 1975; Heenan, 2004; Scutt, 1977). Within these laws, married women were considered to be the property of their husbands and their consent to sexual acts was implied through the marriage contract (Heenan, 2004; Kirkwood & Cecil, 2001). The field of law has therefore been steeped in the tradition of protecting male sexual 'rights' as opposed to ensuring equality within heterosexual relations (Heenan, 2004). By the 1980s these laws were eventually abolished in Australia; however their effects remain with research revealing the silencing of some women's experiences within the criminal justice system due to their sexual victimisation having occurred at the hands of men that they know (e.g. Department for Women, 1996; Easteal, 1998, 2001; Kennedy, Easteal & Taylor, 2009; Lievore, 2003, 2004; Morrison, 2008; Taylor, 2007; Taylor & Gassner, 2010).

The work of feminist activists and writers throughout the 1970s also stimulated important social science research examining the nature and extent of women’s experiences of male-perpetrated sexual violence (Anderson & Doherty, 2008; Carmody, 1992; Gavey, 2005). In pioneering
research conducted by Martha Burt in the beginning of the 1980s, the prevalence of dominant assumptions pertaining to 'real rape' was identified (Burt, 1980; Estrich, 1987). Burt labelled these assumptions as 'rape myths' which she defined as 'prejudicial, stereotyped, or false beliefs' about what constitutes a 'legitimate' rape, who is a 'legitimate victim' and what types of men typically commit such acts (Burt, 1980; Estrich, 1987). These myths, still influential today, centre on a stereotypical depiction of a 'real' rape which involves the violent, forceful vaginal penetration of a woman by an unknown man during which the woman offers physical resistance culminating in significant injury to her person (Burt, 1980; Burt & Estep, 1981; Cook, David & Grant, 2001; Easteal, 2001; Estrich, 1987). Rape myths essentially generate an image of a perpetrator of rape as a psychologically disturbed individual who preys on strangers thereby failing to acknowledge any other forms of sexual violence against women, particularly sexual violence occurring within acquaintance and intimate relationships (Anderson & Doherty, 1998; Burt, 1980; Cook, David & Grant, 2001).

Burt’s research also uncovered particular factors that were commonly implicated in perceptions of a rape being less serious, which have been consistently verified in subsequent research and include: a woman’s provocative attire, her previous intimate dealings with an alleged perpetrator, her intoxicated state at the time of the incident, and her sexually assertive nature or active sexual history (Phillips, 2000; Pineau, 1989; Pollard, 1992; Schult & Schneider, 1991; Sleath & Bull, 2009; Whatley, 2005). Women alleging sexual victimisation have also been blamed for provoking a man’s unruly sexuality, for not effectively controlling it or for over-reacting to ‘normal’ masculine sexual behaviour (Burt, 1980; Burt & Estep, 1981; Gavey, 2005; Phillips, 2000). Through social research on the persistence of rape myths, it has been revealed that dominant social definitions of rape are considerably more specific and restrictive than legal definitions of rape which has repercussions for the reporting of particular forms of sexual violence that do not fit the ‘real rape' stereotype (Breckenridge, 1999; Estrich, 1987; Gavey, 2005; Koss, 1985, 1988; Lievore, 2003; Taylor & Gassner, 2010). Further, feminist social research identifying the entrenchment of rape myths within the criminal justice system has led
to law reform of evidentiary procedures during sexual assault trials, in particular with regard to the admissibility of a victim's sexual history as this has been found to cause unfair discrimination (Heath, 2005; Heenan, 2004).

Also emerging in the new wave of social science research, in particular through research conducted by Mary Koss and in Diana Russell's pioneering qualitative research with marital rape victims, was the realisation that many women's experiences of sexual victimisation were inflicted by acquaintances, lovers, boyfriends and husbands (Koss, 1985, 1988; Russell, 1982). However, these revelations were not well-received by some social critics and writers who accused feminist social researchers of unnecessarily labelling women as victims when they had merely experienced 'rough' sex (e.g. Paglia, 1992; Roiphe, 1993). Nonetheless, feminist-driven social science research expanded the concept of sexual violence to a dimensional view highlighted in Liz Kelly's influential work in which she described women's sexual experiences as occurring on a continuum from 'choice to pressure to coercion to force' (Kelly, 1987, p. 54). Feminist social science research, continuing into its third decade, continues to remain committed to exposing the hidden 'grey area' of sexual violence, in particular the issue of women's engagement in unwanted, pressured and coerced sexual relations with men (e.g. Basile, 1999; Gavey, 1992, 2005; Holland et al, 1998; Powell, 2007; Phillips, 2000; Tolman, 2002).

For example, in a recent study conducted by Basile (1999), the nature of 'interpersonal coercion' and its association with female sexual compliance within intimate and marital relationships was exposed. This form of coercion, identified in Finkelhor and Yllo's seminal research a decade earlier, involves a man's use of tactics including arguments, 'guilt trips', intimidation, bullying, and threats to compel a woman into submitting to unwanted sexual relations (Basile, 1999; Bergen, 1996; Finkelhor & Yllo, 1985). Basile used the concept of 'rape by acquiescence' to refer to a woman's sexual compliance as a result of interpersonal coercion (Basile, 1999, p. 1048). In these instances, she found that women often submitted to unwanted
sex as a 'route to peace' so as to escape from hearing a partner 'complain, pout, or, in some cases, become angry or unpleasant for extended periods of time as a form of punishment' (Basile, 1999, p. 1047 & 1048). Thus, the nature of female sexual compliance has been importantly examined in order to facilitate understandings of the 'grey area' of sexual violence. Understandings of sexual violence today therefore include a range of behaviours such as unwanted touching, kissing and sexual acts, sexual harassment and sexual coercion, through to more physically violent sexual assaults and forcible rape (Dean, Hardiman & Draper, 1998). However, despite attention being drawn to the lesser known forms of sexual violence, research has shown that sexually exploitative heterosexual relations and the use of coercive behaviour by males to obtain sexual contact remain, to an extent, normalised and less understood within the wider community (Davis & Lee, 1996; Department of Youth Training & Affairs and National Crime Prevention, 2001; Xenos & Smith, 2001).

The complexity of sexual violence and the normalisation of male sexual aggression, feminist research has illustrated, means that it is often difficult for a woman's sexual encounter to be categorised into a strict binary of consensual/non-consensual and wanted/unwanted. For this reason, feminist critique has extended to dominant legal definitions of sexual consent. For example, Carole Pateman (1980) argued that within traditional legal models of sexual consent women are positioned as 'gatekeepers' of male sexuality and therefore held responsible for either granting or refusing a man sexual access. Similarly, feminist philosopher Lois Pineau (1989) argued that normative models of consent place accountability on a victim of sexual violence to demonstrate how she offered her non-consent to an alleged perpetrator which results in her actions (or inactions) being heavily scrutinised within a court of law. Pineau (1989, p. 233) highlighted that this 'sets up sexual encounters as contractual events in which sexual aggression is presumed to be consented to unless there is some vigorous act of refusal'. To challenge standard legal models that placed the burden on a woman to demonstrate her non-consent, Pineau (1989) offered an alternative 'communicative sexuality' model that places the onus on a defendant to demonstrate how he obtained consent during a sexual encounter. Thus,
in this model a woman’s consent is not to be assumed; rather the defendant must prove how he knew that a woman was consenting throughout the sexual interaction (Pineau, 1989). This model has been incorporated into legislation in various jurisdictions throughout the United States, United Kingdom, New Zealand and Australia (Heath, 2005; Powell, 2010). In Western Australia, however, allegations of sexual assault remain focused on a victim’s demonstration of her non-consent (Heath, 2005).

Significantly, legislative reform over the past 30 years within Australia has resulted in sexual consent being defined as ‘freely and voluntarily given’ in an attempt to preserve sexual autonomy (Heenan, 2004). The concept of consent being a ‘free agreement’, however, has been subject to criticism amongst feminist theorists, in particular Pateman (1980) and MacKinnon (1983, 1989, 2003) who have argued that women cannot freely consent to sex because the insidious nature of gendered power relations precludes their freedom to consciously negotiate sex on their own terms. Indeed, whilst feminist-inspired legislative reforms in national and international contexts have improved consent laws and definitions of sexual violence in order to recognise the complexities inherent in (hetero) sexual relations, research has shown that changes to law alone cannot safeguard women, particularly from the more subtle forms of sexual violence that remain normalised within heterosexual relations (e.g. Carmody, 2003, 2006, 2009a; Heenan, 2004; Powell, 2010). Rather, consent laws are inherently difficult to enforce without disrupting the deeply embedded gendered discourses and norms that complicate mutual and equitable negotiations of consent and sexual intimacy within the field of heterosexual encounters (Carmody, 2003, 2006, 2009a; Heenan, 2004; Powell, 2010).

*Normative Negotiations of (Hetero) Sexual Consent*

Whilst the research literature on how consent is actually negotiated in heterosexual encounters is minimal, consistent findings have been identified. In Hickman and Muehlenhard’s (1999) research using a survey approach and focusing specifically on negotiations of consent to sexual
intercourse, it was found that direct verbal consent was not the most commonly used method; rather a range of indirect, non-verbal methods were used to indicate sexual consent. Other quantitative research has focused on examining people's attitudes to consent. For example, Humphreys and Herold (2007) developed two attitude scales to measure men and women's attitudes and behaviours regarding consent. Based on their findings of 'weak attitude-behaviour consistency' they suggested that people who believe that consent is important are more likely to talk about it and are therefore also more likely to adopt behaviours that reflect their attitudes (Humphreys & Herold, 2007).

Whilst these quantitative studies have contributed to understandings of how consent is communicated in heterosexual encounters, they are limited by their adoption of a traditional survey approach. As Anderson and Doherty (2008) argued, survey and questionnaire research is often only able to categorise the frequency of certain responses, thereby neglecting the exploration of why people responded the way they did and how they rationalise or justify their responses which is more likely to uncover implicit attitudes (Anderson & Doherty, 2008; Lea, 2007). Moreover, where traditional social psychology views attitudes as 'enduring psychological constructs that exercise a guiding function on thought and behaviour' (Bassili & Brown, 2005, p. 545), it has been argued that they are more contextually dependent and unstable (e.g. Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005; Potter, 1998).

Qualitative studies concerning sexual consent, although fewer in number than quantitative research, have yielded deeper insight into how young people negotiate their sexual encounters. Australian researchers Carmody and Willis (2006) found that some young women encountered difficulties with actively negotiating their consent during casual sexual encounters. The researchers also found that consent to sexual activity was often expressed in the form of non-verbal behaviours such as kissing, touching, the removal of clothing, introducing a condom, and body proximity highlighting the minimal use of verbal indications of consent (Carmody & Willis, 2006). A recent study by Canadian researcher Melanie Beres (2010) found the use of
‘tacit knowing’ was common within casual sexual encounters, in which people claimed to ‘just know’ if a partner wanted to have sex. This was identified as problematic in some instances however as women felt unable to say ‘no’ to unwanted sex due to the apparent unnaturalness of using verbal communication in these encounters (Beres, 2010).

Likewise, Australian researcher Anastasia Powell identified the use of tacit knowing in young people’s negotiations of sexual consent (2008, 2010). According to Powell (2010) young people negotiate consent through unconscious bodily practices that are influenced by particular discourses, norms and rules embedded within the field of heterosexual encounters. In her feminist appropriation of Bourdieuan theory applied to heterosexual negotiations of consent, Powell conceptualised negotiations of sexual consent as involving ‘a complex interplay of individual agency and embodied gendered practice’ (Powell, 2008, p. 170). By this she means that consent is a ‘lived gendered practice, largely occurring at the bodily level in the very ways we feel and respond in the moment’ (Powell, 2010, p. 75). Thus, negotiations of consent, according to Powell (2008, 2010), are enacted through our gendered habitus and are implicitly influenced by gendered norms that inform us of what are appropriate and inappropriate responses to specific circumstances that we are presented with within our sexual encounters. Our responses are consequently limited by the ‘range of possible actions [that are] already suggested by [our] habitus’ (Chambers, 2005, p. 331) which leads to us enacting particular behaviours in accordance with the rules that are implicitly embedded within the field of heterosexual encounters. Overall, these qualitative studies are important as they have allowed for a more contextualised approach to understanding sexual consent by placing negotiations of consent within a framework that acknowledges socio-cultural influences.

**Issues of Risk Avoidance and Sexual Miscommunication**

One of the main significances of sexual consent research relates to its critique of sexual violence prevention initiatives. Promoting more effective ways of communicating consent or non-consent
constitutes a main tenet of risk-avoidance discourses, commonly promoted in education and prevention policy (Carmody & Carrington, 2000; Carmody, 2009a). These discourses advocate that instilling in young women a strong sense of personal responsibility will effectively prevent them falling victim to sexual exploitation (Carmody, 2006; Carmody & Carrington, 2000; Hall, 2004; Kitzinger & Frith, 1999; Neame, 2003). However as feminist research continually shows, normative practices of (hetero) sexual negotiations are mostly non-verbal, which means that making women responsible for properly conveying their intentions fails to acknowledge that speaking out during sex is not constitutive of normative (hetero) sexual practice (e.g. Beres, 2010; Carmody, 2009b; Kitzinger & Frith, 1999; Powell, 2008).

Rather, researchers have found that simply saying ‘no’ violates normative communication patterns and refusals are often indirect and incorporate apologies, compliments, justifications and alternative offers to soften the impact of rejection (e.g. Kitzinger & Frith, 1999). The lack of direct verbal refusals is not due to a lack of assertiveness; rather it is due to the normalisation of female sexual passivity and acquiescence, and fears that rejecting advances outright may be construed as inappropriate and cause offence (Kitzinger & Frith, 1999). Kitzinger and Frith’s (1999) research has been supported by that of O’Byrne, Rapley and Hansen (2008) who found that young men are able to adequately interpret women’s sexual refusals without them explicitly verbalising the word ‘no’. Despite this knowledge, however, young men in their study feigned ignorance in discussions regarding male accountability instead placing blame on women for not effectively communicating their refusals (O’Byrne, Rapley & Hansen, 2008).

Assumptions pertaining to a woman’s absence of explicit verbal refusals in an unwanted sexual encounter form the basis of a sexual miscommunication model of sexual violence (Frith & Kitzinger, 1997). According to this model, it is believed that ‘men’s preoccupation with sex means that they are liable to interpret any behaviour as sexual, whether women intend them that way or not’ (Frith & Kitzinger, 1997, p. 518). Frith and Kitzinger’s (1997) research with young women and the influence of sexual miscommunication theory found that placing responsibility
on women to say ‘no’ encourages self-blame in situations in which women have been pressured or coerced into unwanted sex (Frith & Kitzinger, 1997).

Indeed, Phillips (2000, p. 156) also found that reinforcing the notion of individual responsibility and agency led to young women blaming themselves when ‘things went badly’. In situations in which women believed that being an ‘autonomous agent’ capable of simply saying no to unwanted sexual advances failed, young women were left with only themselves to blame for not properly preventing their victimisation (Phillips, 2000). Thus, sexual miscommunication theory, which underpins popular risk-avoidance approaches to sexual violence education and prevention policy, hides young women’s experiences of unwanted, pressured and coerced sex under a cloud of self-doubt (Frith & Kitzinger, 1997; Powell, 2007; Phillips, 2000).

Implicit Influences on (Hetero) Sexual Negotiations

A central area of interest within post-modern inspired feminist research on sexuality relates to its identification of implicit influences, discourses and norms governing heterosexual relations that complicate negotiations of consent. One of the most pervasive discourses governing (hetero) sexual relations is the ‘male sex drive’ discourse (Hollway, 1984; Phillips, 2000). This discourse promotes an active and naturally aggressive male sexuality distinct from a passive female sexuality (Gavey, McPhillips & Braun, 1999; Hollway, 1984; Phillips, 2000). It is the ‘uncontrollable’ nature of male sexuality that promotes the implicit heteronormative rule aimed at women informing them ‘don’t start what you’re not willing to finish’ (Phillips, 2000, p. 58). This sexual imperative has been implicated in young women’s engagement in unwanted sexual activity due to their feelings of being unable to withdraw from an encounter after consent has been offered (Beres, 2010; Carmody, 2009b; Carmody & Willis, 2006; Gavey, 2005; Holland et al, 1998; Kitzinger & Frith, 1999).
Associated with the male sex drive discourse is the 'coital imperative' (Jackson, 1984). In their research conducted with young men and women, Holland et al (1998) and Gavey, McPhillips and Braun (1999) identified the strong influence of this imperative which promotes the assumption that sex is equated with intercourse thus the goal of most sexual encounters is the act of coitus typically culminating in male orgasm (Gavey, McPhillips & Braun, 1999; McPhillips, Braun & Gavey, 2001). McPhillips, Gavey and Braun (2001, p. 239) surmised that 'part of the power of the coital imperative lies in our acceptance of it as a fait accompli'. Holland et al (1998) found that this expectation consequently led to some women engaging in unwanted sex because they did not want to prevent an already-aroused partner from achieving climax through intercourse. Indeed, males, or more specifically their bodies and its needs, tend to define and control sexual contact within heterosexual encounters (Gavey, McPhillips & Braun, 1999; Holland et al, 1998). For both men and women, male sexual arousal places particular pressures and expectations on an encounter. For a male there is pressure for him to maintain his arousal and seek the goal of sexual fulfilment through intercourse culminating in orgasm, whilst for a woman there exists the expectation that she will attend to his aroused state and not disrupt or reject it (Gavey, McPhillips & Braun, 1999; Holland et al, 1998). It is the normalisation or naturalisation of sexual intercourse (and male orgasm) that affords it an imperative status in the field of heterosexual encounters in which it is considered 'just the way things are' (Gavey, McPhillips & Braun, 1999, p. 40). The 'eroticisation of inequality' (Gavey, McPhillips & Braun, 2001, p. 62) within heterosexual encounters therefore results in sex that focuses on male sexual desires and pleasure being constitutive of normative (hetero) sexual relations.

The unconscious negotiation of sexual intimacy, governed by implicit yet powerful gendered norms, makes McPhillips, Gavey and Braun's (2001, p. 239) suggestion of 'promoting the idea that intercourse is a choice' in order to 'undermine the imperativeness of the coital imperative' a rather difficult goal. As Powell (2010) has argued, the promotion of increased access to sexual choices for young women in the 'new' sexual revolution has not been accompanied by their
ability to access and enact these choices in their lived everyday experiences. Further, the assumptions regarding their newfound sexual assertiveness have still not led to their ability to say no to unwanted sex or change their minds during a non-pleasurable or unsafe encounter (Gavey, 2005; Powell, 2007, 2010). Thus, promoting female sexual empowerment through facilitating assertiveness fails to acknowledge the implicit and pervasive nature of gendered power relations and the influence of deeply embedded gendered norms that restrict a woman’s sexual choices (Holland et al, 1992; Powell, 2008, 2010).

Feminist researchers maintain that the critical problem of sexual inequality and the normalisation of women’s participation in unwanted sex remains because young women do not have a legitimate discourse of female sexual desire to draw upon which would privilege their own sexual desires and needs as well as a man’s (Fine, 1988; Gavey, McPhillips & Braun, 1999; Holland et al, 1994; Tolman, 1994, 2002). For example, Gavey (1992, 2005) discovered that young women engaged in casual sexual encounters in a ‘purely sexual currency of exchange’ whereby both partners are expected to focus purely on releasing sexual tension and taking as much (sexually) from the other person as possible (Gavey, 2005, p. 143). Yet, the equality of this exchange is compromised because in practice young women privilege male sexuality and pleasure over their own, which was also identified as a significant issue in Tolman’s (1994, 2002) research. The one-sided nature of (hetero) sex identified in their research, Holland et al (1998) argued, was in part due to dominant sex education discourses that focus on the biological mechanics of ‘proper sex’ for heterossexuals. They argued that this stringent focus fails to educate young people about other sexual acts as well as failing to explore what may be more pleasurable for a woman. Indeed, other research on the failures of dominant discourses of sex education have similarly identified a focus on ‘phallocentric’ notions of sex thereby silencing female sexual desires and pleasure (e.g. Allen, 2004, 2005, 2007; Carmody, 2003, 2005, 2009b; Carmody & Carrington, 2000; Fine, 1988; Harris, 2005; Harrison & Hillier, 1999).
In addition to the interference of the male sex drive discourse and the coital imperative, within postmodern feminist critiques, conventional notions of femininity are understood as encouraging young women to 'to let sex happen, to trust to love and to make men happy', further complicating (hetero) sexual relations (Holland et al, 1998, p. 6). In striving to embody the ideals of 'emphasised femininity', the dominant form of femininity within institutionalised, normative heterosexuality, a woman becomes complicit in her own subordination (Connell, 1987). Essentially, women seek to embody what men perceive as sexually attractive and acceptable behaviour for a woman (Connell, 1987). Emphasised femininity is therefore facilitated by the presence of symbolic violence in a woman's gendered habitus which encourages her to monitor her conformity to male-defined standards without the need for overt pressure or force (Bourdieu, 2001). Indeed, whilst femininity is constructed on 'male territory' within the institution of heterosexuality, Holland et al (1998, p. 10) maintained that 'this territory can only exist with female consent and collusion'. Thus, feminist literature suggests that it is through a woman's unconscious embodiment and enactment of feminine ideals that the institution of heterosexuality and its male-privileging practices remains powerful (e.g. Gavey, 1992, 2005; Holland et al, 1998; Phillips, 2000; Powell, 2010).

The ideals associated with emphasised femininity are embedded and normalised within what Phillips (2000, p. 38) referred to as the 'pleasing woman' discourse. This discourse is promoted in formal sex education (in the silencing of female sexual desire and privileging of male sexuality), mainstream media, literature, film and television (Phillips, 2000). It essentially reinforces dominant gendered roles and norms that position women as subservient to men and needing to silence their own desires and needs in the process (Phillips, 2000). In their research with young heterosexuals, Holland et al (1998, p. 22) concluded that, more often than not, 'the female sexual subject is absent – except as the feminine object of men’s desire'. Essentially, in their efforts to fulfil male sexual desires and needs, young women were silencing and subordinating their own desires and needs resulting in their (consensual) sexual objectification (Holland et al, 1992, 1998).
Holland et al (1998) used the concept of the ‘male in the head’ to refer to a woman’s unconscious embodiment of the ideals associated with emphasised femininity which leads to the implicit governance of their sexual behaviour with men. This concept is similar to Gavey’s (1992) ‘technologies of heterosexual coercion’ which encourage women to become ‘disciplined bodies’ striving to please men through embodying male-defined sexual ideals. The unconscious privileging of male sexual desires and fantasies, Gavey (1992) and Holland et al (1998) found, is implicated in most incidents involving a woman’s consensual participation in unwanted sex. In this sense, the ‘male in the head’ and ‘technologies of heterosexual coercion’ are akin to Bourdieu’s (2001) concept of symbolic violence in that they facilitate a woman’s unknowing complicity in her own sexual domination through the normalisation of one-sided, male-privileging sexual relations.

Through discourses of emphasised femininity and romance women learn to associate sex with love and commitment, and love with acquiescence (Gavey, 1992, 2005; Phillips, 2000; Powell, 2008, 2010). In this sense, frequent sex within a relationship is often interpreted as a sign that the relationship is ‘healthy’ and stable whilst a lack of sex facilitates feelings of doubt about the intimate status of a relationship (Gavey, McPhillips & Braun, 1999; Holland et al, 1998). Thus, regular sex forms a part of relationship maintenance and failing to achieve frequency can facilitate guilt in a woman for abandoning her duties as a ‘pleasing’ woman; feelings of guilt have been found to be implicated in young women’s participation in unwanted sexual encounters in a number of studies (e.g. Allen, 2003; Carmody & Willis, 2006; Carmody, 2009; Gavey, 1992 and 2005; Holland et al, 1998; Kitzinger & Frith, 1999; Powell, 2010; Phillips, 2000; Tolman, 2002). Powell (2010) also found that young women who associated the giving of sex with love and commitment perceived its absence as potentially damaging to a relationship. Concerns about the dissipation of a relationship and its intimate status therefore lead to women engaging in undesired sex for pragmatic reasons with the aim of restoring the intimacy in a relationship and strengthening the bond between both partners (Gavey, 1992, 2005).
A woman's sexual availability and capacity for pleasing a partner, therefore, are considered virtuous and are touted as important for a relationship to be successful. To possess these virtues a woman learns the art of giving which has particular benefits and repercussions associated with it (Gavey, 1992, 2005; Gavey, McPhillips & Braun, 1999; Holland et al, 1998; Phillips, 2000). Gavey (2005, p. 105) noted that women's engagement in sexual relations within an intimate relationship is not typically for sexual gains but rather for 'secondary gains'. In this sense, an 'economy of sex' governs normative heterosexual relations in which women learn that engaging in sex with a partner can facilitate certain positive outcomes within a relationship (Gavey, 2005, p. 151). Thus, sex can often be used as a 'strategic means to an end' (Gavey, 2005, p. 151).

Indeed, research has found that women engage in unwanted sex in order to make a partner happy, to not hurt his feelings, keep him sexually fulfilled, keep a relationship intact, to be treated more nicely, to prevent infidelity, or to dissipate tension within a relationship (Basile, 1999; Carmody & Willis, 2006; Gavey, 1992, 2005; Holland et al, 1992, 1998; Phillips, 2000; Powell, 2007, 2008, 2010; Tolman, 2002).

The convergence of the male sex drive discourse with discourses of femininity and romance, Gavey (2005, p. 152) surmised, means that 'it is not surprising that some women may experience it as easier to let sex happen, than to keep resisting when they don't want it'. Thus, the convergence of these discourses encourages women to believe that sex is 'no big deal' therefore her 'gift of sex [is] something that is too small not to give' (Gavey, 2005, p. 152). This shows the implicit power of symbolic violence in a woman's gendered habitus and how masculine domination persists due to women's complicity in their own domination. Consequently, a woman continues to consent to unwanted sex through her acceptance of the limitations and effects of her choices and her belief that not giving in would be far worse.

This literature shows how discourses, norms and sexual imperatives produce implicit pressures and expectations on young women within their sexual encounters and relationships. The analysis of the eight young women's interviews in this thesis draws from and adds to these
studies to explore young women's negotiations of consent and sexual intimacy and the implicit constraints upon them that may render the notion of sexual consent as 'freely and voluntarily given' problematic.
CHAPTER 3:

CONDUCTING THE RESEARCH
METHODOLOGY

This research involved interviewing eight young women about their perceptions and experiences of negotiating sexual consent in casual and intimate heterosexual relationships, and their understandings of sexual violence against women. The interviews were transcribed and then analysed using discourse analysis: an approach grounded in a social constructionist framework that relies on examining how ‘social reality is produced and made real through discourses’ (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). The key methodological aspects of this research’s methodology are outlined below.

Participants

In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight female university students aged between 18 and 24. All were students of either of the following disciplines: criminology, justice, psychology, law and policing. Four of the women were involved in intimate relationships at the time of their interview, one of whom was recently married. The remaining four women were not involved in an intimate relationship and were either happily single, searching for a partner, or casually dating. All were of Australian nationality except for one Singaporean young woman and one who described herself as Australian/Macedonian. Further, whilst most of the young women were not religious, others described themselves as affiliated with Macedonian Orthodox, Christian and Muslim faiths.

With regard to the sample size, traditionally, scientists have conducted research using a representative sample obtained with large numbers of participants (O’Byrne, Hansen & Rapley, 2008). However, other researchers maintain that ‘a fragment of the moral-social-cultural world can reveal important properties of the whole tapestry: social-cultural-moral phenomena will be visible, in regular ways, regardless of sampling, distribution [and] aggregation’ (O’Byrne, Hansen & Rapley, 2008). In research that examines a social and cultural phenomenon, such as
women's engagement in consensual, unwanted sex smaller sample sizes offer legitimate representations of the wider social world (O'Byrne, Hansen & Rapley, 2008).

Moreover, as feminist researchers have shown, all knowledge is gendered and female experiences have often been silenced in traditional positivist research (Thompson, 1992). Feminist theory and research is therefore steeped in the tradition of exposing the lived realities of women through positioning their experiences within the wider sociocultural context (Lea, 2007). In turn, a feminist approach places value on women's subjective meanings and interpretations rather than labelling their experiences according to pre-defined criteria (Lea, 2007). Interviews are especially useful for allowing for the expression of subjective meanings and interpretations and thereby value the uniqueness of an individual’s experiences and understandings (Thompson, 1992; Wengraf, 2001). In this way, interviews with smaller samples of participants 'are unique in their ability to more powerfully represent what statistics often struggle to meaningfully convey' (Heenan, 2004, p. 14).

Procedure

This research employed a semi-structured interview format (see Appendix I) which allowed for the researcher to seek particular information whilst also permitting the introduction of new information from the research participants and affording them a sense of agency during the research process (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005; Seidman, 1991). Some questions were adapted from other studies conducted with young women regarding their sexuality and sexual encounters (e.g. Gavey, 1992; Phillips, 2000; Powell, 2007; Tolman, 2002) as they were beneficial in adding context to the overall interviews. For example, asking the participants how they learnt about sexuality, sex and relationships growing up served to provide a good background to examining the implicit influences on how they in turn engaged in sexual relations with men in their young adult lives.
The participants were recruited through email student lists. A flyer (see Appendix II) was disseminated and students contacted the researcher on the details provided to obtain further information regarding the study. Information sheets (see Appendix III) were then distributed to interested participants outlining the nature of the research project. The information sheet made reference to the sensitive nature of the topic area so that only those who felt comfortable with the topic registered their interest. Participants then contacted the researcher to schedule a time and place for the interview to be conducted. All interviews were conducted on university grounds in quiet, private booths in the campus library.

Written consent (see Appendix IV) was obtained prior to the commencement of the interview and participants were again informed that they could refuse to answer any questions and/or withdraw from the interview at any stage. All interviews began with general conversation to allow participants time to become comfortable with the researcher prior to beginning their interview. A digital voice recorder was used during the interviews to allow for the full transcription of dialogue. Interviews lasted between 30 and 90 minutes, and following their completion the participants had the opportunity to ask any questions or talk further about anything regarding the research. All interviews were transcribed verbatim and discourse analysis was used to examine the transcripts in detail. Participant anonymity was preserved by using pseudonyms in the transcription process and throughout this thesis. Further, in the extracts presented in this thesis, three full stops ( . . . ) were used to represent text that had been omitted from the participant’s responses that were not perceived as critical to the overall response.

*Data Analysis*

Discourse analysis relies on studying text and talk with the understanding that language actively constructs, accepts or challenges social realities (Potter, 1996). Thus, the role of discourse analysis is to examine how knowledge is created and sustained in our social realities through the
use of particular rhetorical characteristics (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). In this study, young women’s talk was examined and the discursive resources that they employed in their talk about sexual violence, (hetero) sexual relations, and negotiating consent were identified. In employing discourse analysis within a postmodern framework, this thesis adopted the view that a limited array of discursive resources exist at any one time within the sociocultural context and that these resources are consequently implicated in either enhancing or constraining the choices that we make in our everyday lives (Gavey, 1989; McPhillips, Braun & Gavey, 2001).

This study employed critical discourse analysis, a specific strand of discourse analysis, which involves the examination of discursive practices and how they produce, reproduce or resist dominant power relations embedded within the wider sociocultural context (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). Critical discourse analysis adopts the view that dominant discourses are not inherently powerful but rather gather power through their reproduction in everyday talk (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). The analysis of the interview transcripts involved distinguishing discursive practices in the participant’s talk. This process involved identifying common themes in the participants' thoughts and experiences of negotiating sexual consent in both casual sexual encounters and intimate sexual relationships. Their perceptions and understandings of sexual violence were also examined for recurring themes.

These themes were further analysed in an inter-textual analysis in which previous research on the nature of particular discourses were drawn upon to identify how each participant applied meaning to their perceptions and experiences by either appealing to or resisting dominant discourses (van Dijk, 1993). Lastly, the construction and reception of these discourses was situated within the wider sociocultural context to foster an understanding of why these young women negotiated consent the way they did and why some young women engaged in consensual, unwanted sex (Fairclough, 1995). This last step involved examining how dominant gendered power relations were legitimised or challenged within the discursive practices employed and what consequences this had for the young women responding in such a way and
for women’s sexual relations with men in general (Fairclough, 1995). Extracts presented in this thesis were chosen based on their direct representation of particular discourses and normative assumptions pertaining to the research questions. Other quotes were chosen based on their distinctiveness and to draw attention to some women’s attempts at offering resistance to particular sexual imperatives.
CHAPTER 4:
FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS
Despite their sexual liberation and unrestrained access to new choices and freedoms, this study found that young women's sexual choices are still often constrained due to the persistence of implicit dominant discourses and gendered norms. As a result, young women's negotiations of consent and sexual intimacy with men are likewise significantly constrained by socially-regulated expectations for young women to behave in particular ways within various sexual circumstances.

In the analysis which follows, the discussion of the constraints evident in young women's abilities to consent to sex is divided into three sections. The first section draws attention to the impact of dominant assumptions pertaining to 'legitimate' sexual violence on young women's perceptions of how consent should be expressed. Following this is a discussion of the findings regarding the implicit rules governing casual sexual encounters which restrict a young woman's ability to actively negotiate her consent. The final section examines the pressures on young women's negotiations of consent in the context of intimate sexual relationships.

Risk-Avoidance and Sexual Communication: A Woman's Responsibility

All of the young women in this study had been exposed to dominant risk-avoidance discourses in their experiences of school sex education and sexual violence prevention, and the tenets underpinning these discourses were reinforced in their everyday lives through advice from family and friends to be sexually responsible. Risk-avoidance discourses, as outlined in the literature review, aim to instil in young women a strong sense of personal responsibility to facilitate self-protection from sexual victimisation (Carmody, 2009a; Carmody & Carrington, 2000; Neame, 2003). One of the main tenets of risk-avoidance discourses is the need for young women to 'just say no' and verbalise their refusals of sex (Carmody & Carrington, 2000;
Kitzinger & Frith, 1999). This is necessary otherwise according to a miscommunication model of sexual violence a man may misinterpret a woman's intentions and over-perceive her willingness to engage in sexual relations (Frith & Kitzinger, 1997).

Some of the young women interviewed adhered to the assumptions embedded within risk-avoidance discourses and sexual miscommunication theory. For example, Ashley commented that men often assume consent and so a woman needs to make it clear if she wants a man to stop. For Ashley, therefore, only a situation involving direct verbal refusals and a man's reluctance to stop can be classified as sexual assault:

Most men [assume that] if they can do one thing they can do everything else . . .
[but] if she told him no and said stop and he continued I'd say that's sexual assault.

Ashley

Ashley's comments highlight the notion of implied consent: men believe that 'if they can do one thing they can do everything else'. In turn, it is a woman's responsibility to ensure that she says 'no' and 'stop' if she does not wish to continue, otherwise it is not the man's fault if he continues (Frith & Kitzinger, 1997; O'Byrne, Hansen & Rapley, 2008). Similarly, Lisa reiterated the need for women to verbally refuse unwanted sexual contact because:

. . . it's a blurry line I think if you try to physically show you weren't interested. There's always the risk that they just won't get the idea . . . physically you can say you want to but it's pretty hard to physically say you don't want to . . . you have to verbalise it and if you don't it's not the guy's fault . . .

Lisa

The onus on women to regulate sexual contact through their verbal communication is however problematic. Even though many of the women adhered to risk-avoidance discourses, at the same time they also described how their sexual negotiations mostly involved non-verbal
Verbal communication during sexual relations was considered not natural: the unnaturalness of active, verbal communication during sexual encounters has also been found by other researchers (e.g. Beres, 2010; Carmody & Willis, 2006; Kitzinger & Frith, 1999; Powell, 2008). Indeed, Beres (2010, p. 5) found that consent is typically negotiated through ‘tacit knowing’ in which recognising whether someone is interested in engaging in sexual relations is something that ‘you just know’.

As well as claiming that young women are responsible for verbalising refusals to sex, some of the young women interviewed also stated that women must physically resist unwanted sexual contact otherwise claims of victimisation may not be legitimate. For example, Tracey suggested the need for a woman to verbally protest her refusals as well as struggle for a situation to fall under the definition of rape:

> ... if she was like no no stop stop and she was struggling and he kept going that’s definitely rape for sure that’s just wrong

Tracey

Similarly, Jessica asserted that a woman must verbally refuse unwanted sexual advances in addition to there being evidence of a man using his ‘physical force’ for her predicament to be recognised as a legitimate assault:

> You need to have the female saying no and the male overriding that [and] using physical force to do it ...

Jessica

Despite physical resistance not being necessary for an unwanted sexual experience to be considered non-consensual, these responses suggest that ‘rape myths’ persist in cases in which there is an absence of direct physical violence from a perpetrator and of physical resistance from the victim (Heath, 2005; Kennedy, Easteal & Taylor, 2009; Lievore, 2003, 2004; Morrison,
These responses further show that young women have internalised feminist discourses that have maintained that sexual violence is not always about sex, but rather about violence (Gavey, 2005; Phillips, 2000). It is commonly believed that rape is an act of violence against a woman, which indeed it is, however common assumptions of violence tend to encompass its physical nature. Thus, the young women’s responses in this study reflected the assumption that sexual violence involves explicit violence such as a man’s physical force to subdue a woman.

The stress on the physical side of sexual violence amongst most of the young women in this study was coupled with their absence of an understanding of more subtle forms of sexual violence. In this study, pressured sex was not constitutive of ‘legitimate’ sexual violence as it was argued that a woman is capable of resisting such pressure. For example, Jessica acknowledged that women can indeed be pressured; however she believes that if a woman is ‘talked down’ or ‘worn down’ and submits to sexual contact then she has freely consented:

I know you can be pressured into having sex [but] I don’t think that’s an assault. If you get talked down, you’re consenting even though you have pressure on you to consent because if you really don’t want it you go ‘fuck off I said no’. So if you get worn down you’re still consenting.

Jessica

If a woman is being pressured, according to Jessica, she should simply tell a man to ‘fuck off’. It is clear to see in her comments how dominant risk-avoidance discourses and the focus on a woman’s need to say no permeate a woman’s consciousness and influence how she perceives sexual interactions. Through the influence of symbolic violence in her gendered habitus, Jessica perceives pressured and coerced sex as synonymous with consensual sexual relations thereby unknowingly reinforcing dominant gendered power relations that normalise coercive male sexual behaviour towards women (Gavey, 2005).
Like Jessica, Lisa also adopted a strong viewpoint regarding women who submit to unwanted sex. For Lisa, such women are perceived as having ‘a weakness’ and are simply ‘too gutless’ to be more assertive in refusing unwanted sexual advances:

If you go home with someone you don’t know you’re putting yourself in that position. Even though you might think differently, everyone knows that gives him the idea that you’re going to have sex, so if they threaten or force you then [that’s] sexual assault but if it’s just normal advances and you’re too gutless to say ‘I don’t want to do this’ [then] I wouldn’t class that as sexual assault. I would class that as a weakness on your part...

Lisa

Similarly, Tracey asserted that women who ‘go back to someone’s house’ know that sex will occur therefore to ‘cry rape’ due to feelings of regret is ‘unfair’ to a man as ‘she made the choice to go’:

...you’re not going to go back to someone’s house [without knowing] what you’re going there for so to cry rape... is maybe a bit unfair [because] she made the choice to go there [therefore] that has to carry some responsibility.

Tracey

These responses demonstrate how the influence of risk-avoidance discourses and the dominant assumptions embedded within them influence young women’s perceptions of ‘legitimate’ forms of male-perpetrated sexual violence against women. Significantly, ambivalence about pressured and coercive sex, and blindness to non-physical forms of coercion, results in their continued normalisation in heterosexual relations (Gavey, 2005; Heenan, 2004; Phillips, 2000; Powell, 2007). This unconscious normalisation of pressured and coercive sexual encounters, and of dominant assumptions pertaining to ‘real’ sexual violence demonstrate the normalising effects of symbolic violence: these young women accepted these ‘truths’ as simply ‘the way things are’ within the field of heterosexual encounters (Bourdieu, 2001; Powell, 2008 and 2010).
Casual Sex and the ‘Purely Sexual Currency of Exchange’

In addition to discussing their perceptions of how consent should be expressed in order for a woman to properly convey her intentions and avoid sexual victimisation, the young women in this study also spoke about their actual experiences of negotiating consent in their casual sexual encounters. These types of encounters are distinct from intimate sexual encounters which occur within the context of an intimate relationship. Whilst casual sexual encounters can occur in a relationship-type arrangement (meaning both parties have an understanding that they will meet for sex on a casual basis), they were always described in this study as being focused on sex rather than the love and intimacy that is more commonly associated with intimate relationships. In this sense, casual encounters are typically focused on what Gavey (2005, p. 143) referred to as the ‘purely sexual currency of exchange’. This relates to encounters that are focused purely on an exchange of sexual favours and on ‘taking as much as you can get’ from the other person sexually (Gavey, McPhillips & Braun, 1999, p. 54).

The young women’s descriptions of their casual sexual encounters, however, showed that women find it difficult to change their minds once they commit to ‘the purely sexual currency of exchange’. For example, Lisa spoke about engaging in undesired sex in order to make a man ‘happy’ in an encounter because she did not want to disappoint him:

... if I have changed my mind and the person respects that, I usually do it anyway ... otherwise I feel guilty [because] we’ve caught up and you haven’t gotten what you wanted ... it’s not like I did it because I really didn’t want to it’s just that I did it because it would make the other person happy. Selfless act . . . they’ve never been forceful or scary or anything so I’ve never felt like there was nothing I couldn’t get out of if I actually wanted to.

Lisa
Lisa, who had assertively stated that a woman must make her refusals explicit otherwise submitting under pressure is a sign of weakness, still offered her body for a man’s sexual pleasure not ‘because [she] really didn’t want to’ but rather as a ‘selfless act’, which ‘would make the other person happy’. This dissonance between her perceptions of consent (staunch advocate of ‘just say no’) and her actual experiences of it (ready to please men in the absence of her own enjoyment), is similar to findings obtained by Gavey (2005) who noted similar inconsistencies in her participant’s interviews. Lisa’s predicament is characteristic of the presence of symbolic violence in gendered habitus in which the internalisation of gendered norms reinforce the ideals of emphasised femininity and facilitate feelings of guilt if a woman fails to fulfil a man’s sexual needs. The role of guilt in women’s sexuality represents a common finding in the literature (e.g. Allen, 2003; Carmody, 2009b; Carmody & Willis, 2006; Gavey, 1992, 2005; Gavey, McPhillips & Braun, 1999; Holland et al, 1998; Kitzinger & Frith, 1999; McPhillips, Gavey & Braun, 2001; Powell, 2007; Phillips, 2000; Tolman, 1994, 2002).

Aside from never letting a man down, the field of casual sexual encounters contains other implicit rules governing (hetero) sexual negotiations of consent. For example, Tracey highlighted the necessity for a woman to follow through with intercourse if she has been ‘sending certain signals all night’ and ‘go[es] off with a guy’:

... if you’ve been sending certain signals all night and you go off with a guy you can’t just pull out at the last minute ... you both know things will happen.

... with guy’s I’ve met, when you know they expect to get laid you know you have to keep your word...  

Tracey

In these situations, a woman’s engagement in sexual intercourse is an acceptable and normal way of ‘paying [her] dues’ for her flirtatious behaviour (Gavey 2005, p. 142). This sexual imperative (i.e. flirting naturally leads to sex) is assumed rather than verbalised because ‘both [people] know
things will happen'. In turn, Tracey would never reconsider her initial interest or consent because it is more important 'to keep your word'.

The implicit rules governing casual sexual encounters were also identifiable in the young women's descriptions of starting sexual encounters on the internet rather than in person. This study found that engaging in flirtatious and heated sex talk over the internet implies that a woman is extremely keen to follow through with sex when both persons meet in reality. As Tracey described:

"... in the case of the internet I suppose you talk about stuff you want to do and then when you meet up it's like ... you know stuff is going to happen otherwise why meet up ... you can't just change your mind when you meet them."

Tracey

Like other experiences of casual sex she had that eventuated after meeting a man on a night out, when Tracey meets a man after talking with him on the internet about sex she described it as similarly inappropriate to change her mind. These beliefs are internalised within a woman's gendered habitus and are facilitated by the convergence of the pleasing woman discourse and the male sex drive discourse (Phillips, 2000). This convergence results in women learning never to 'start what [they're] not willing to finish' (Phillips, 2000, p. 58) and that a 'good' woman is sexually accommodating, especially when she has been sexually suggestive (Gavey, 1992, 2005; Holland et al, 1998; Phillips, 2000).

The implicit sexual contract governing these casual encounters represents a form of symbolic violence in the way young women willingly engage in unwanted sex in order to fulfil a man's expectations. One of the participants, Tracey, recounted her acquiescence to sex with a much older, married man she regularly met for casual rendezvous:
... he wanted me to get him hard so I gave him head [oral sex] ... it's not my favourite thing because when they get excited they can get forceful I suppose ... like choking you almost ... it was pretty bad [but] I didn't want to disappoint him ... I couldn't back out [because] it would seem pretty stupid.

Tracey

Tracey's mere presence in this encounter signified her consent to the sex acts her partner initiated and left her feeling obligated to comply. Women in the role of 'mistress', Gavey (2005) surmised, feel obligated to engage in sex every time a meeting is arranged otherwise they experience guilt, much like in other casual sexual encounters. Clearly, women’s consent to casual sex is tempered by internalised beliefs about being unable to ‘back out’, which demonstrates an unconscious complicity with the ‘rules’ of the encounter and reinforces their sexual domination (Bourdieu, 2001; Powell, 2010).

Further, Tracey's description of her partner choking her as ‘pretty bad’, rather than as coercive, reflects the eroticisation of male sexual aggression and female sexual objectification in normative heterosexual relations (Phillips, 2000; Pineau, 1989). When discourses of femininity and romance converge with the male sex drive discourse, male sexual aggression is normalised and is instead indicative of a man’s overwhelming sexual attraction to a woman (Phillips, 2000). Women are consequently responsible for controlling a man's unruly sexual urges if feelings are not mutual (Gavey, 2005; Phillips, 2000; Pineau, 1989). Consequently, the normalisation of male sexual pressure and coercion contributes to the ‘cultural scaffolding of rape’ in which such behaviours, like those exhibited by Tracey’s partner, are labelled as ‘just sex’ (Gavey, 2005).

The inability of some women to name or identify particular sex acts as coercive represents a form of symbolic violence (in that such encounters are perceived as ‘normal’) that was identifiable in many of the young women’s discussions of casual sex. In another example of an experience of negotiating a casual sex encounter, Holly described how she accompanied a man to his house after meeting him for the first time that night at a bar:
we went back to his place and things started happening... he walked me to a bedroom and I didn't know at the time obviously because he never told me but his brother lived with him and he took me into the brother's bedroom... I was thinking this isn't good what have I done. I didn't know what to do... I just wanted to get through it all so I could go home. It wasn't bad or anything. I wasn't raped... it was a bit stupid of me to go back with him. I mean, I didn't know him at all...

Holly

Again, consent to sex was implied in this situation through a woman's return to a man's house. But even as she describes the one-night-stand she agreed to transforming into a threesome without her knowledge, Holly calls her experience as not 'bad or anything' because she 'wasn't raped' in the true sense of the word. Dominant assumptions regarding rape suggest that it involves physical and forceful penetration which leaves women without a way of articulating other coercive forms of sex (Burt, 1980; Burt & Estep, 1981; Estrich, 1987; Heath, 2005; Lievore, 2003). Indeed, sex tends to be judged according to a binary system of consensual ('normal') versus non-consensual ('rape') which results in the silencing of women's experiences that are more complex (Gavey, 2005; Phillips, 2000; Pineau, 1989). In Holly's view, the unwanted threesome with two brothers must be have been her fault as 'it was a bit stupid' of her 'to go back with him' when she 'didn't know him at all'. Like Tracey's situation with being a mistress, Holly had 'tacitly accept[ed] the limits imposed' by the implicit rule that consent to sex is taken-for-granted once a women goes home with a man, thereby 'contributing to [her] own domination' and reflecting the implicit nature of symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 38).

The findings in this section highlight that the implicit rules governing the 'purely sexual currency of exchange' in casual sexual encounters essentially constrain a woman's ability to offer her free consent to sex. Instead, women feel that they implicitly consent to sex through particular actions (such as going home with a man or engaging in heated sexual talk) then they have no choice but to follow through with intercourse as it would be inappropriate to simply say
no. Even during non-pleasurable or unpleasant encounters women's abilities to change their minds are constrained due to the existence of gendered norms which facilitate feelings of guilt resulting in their sexual compliance.

*Relationships, Pleasing Women and the 'Economy of Sex'*

The young women in this study also discussed their consent to sex within their intimate heterosexual relationships. In contrast to casual sexual encounters which are focused on the mutual exchange of sexual favours, sexual encounters within intimate relationships are not always about sex per se. Rather, in an intimate relationship, women associate sex with intimacy, love and commitment (e.g. Gavey, 1992, 2005; Phillips, 2000; Powell, 2007, 2008, 2010). Normative heterosexual relationships, Gavey (2005) surmised, therefore involve an 'economy of sex' in which women exchange sex for the intimacy, love and commitment that are essential components of a successful relationship. Consequently, the issue of sex (and its frequency) is at the forefront of a woman's concerns within an intimate relationship because a lack of sex, women learn, symbolises an unhealthy relationship not likely to last (Gavey, 2005; Gavey, McPhillips & Braun, 1999; Holland et al, 1998).

In this study, most of the women interviewed had felt pressure at some point in their young adult lives to engage in sex with the aim of maintaining a successful relationship. Consequently, a number of the interview participants described subordinating their own needs in their relationships by actively regulating their behaviours in order to prioritise their partner's well-being and to avoid disappointing him. For example, Tracey is constantly aware of a partner's needs in order to be a 'good girlfriend' which results in her monitoring her verbal and non-verbal behaviour:
You have to be aware of their needs all the time... always having to make sure they're happy... just that pressure of being a good girlfriend. I just feel like I have to watch what I say and do...

Tracey

These findings are similar to those identified in other research with young women (e.g. Gavey, 1992, 2005; Holland et al, 1992, 1998; Powell, 2007, 2010; Tolman, 2002) and reflect the pleasing woman discourse which reinforces the ideals of emphasised femininity and advocates for young women to be 'pleasant, feminine, and subordinate to men' (Phillips, 2000, p. 39). Ultimately, women’s self-regulation of their behaviours and their unconscious acceptance of the gender inequalities that are embedded within the ‘economy of sex’ governing normative heterosexual relationships constitutes symbolic violence in its most basic form (Bourdieu, 2001; Chambers, 2005).

Dominant heteronormative discourses further complicate women’s negotiation of consent in intimate relationships because of the ways in which women embody or internalise social ideals which encourage sexual compliance. Dominant discourses of romance and femininity promote female sexual obedience as virtuous, thereby facilitating the ‘giving of sex’ (Gavey, 2005, p. 151) for nurturing and pragmatic reasons. In these situations, women relinquish lust and passion for a partner by conforming to the ‘rules’ embedded within the field of heterosexual encounters that appear normal and common sense (Gavey, 2005; Powell, 2010). For example, Holly does ‘not necessarily sexually desire a partner yet engages in sexual activity out of feelings of love because, she rationalises, ‘it’s just what you do’ in a relationship:

... you can love the person and do something with them ‘cause you love them but in that particular moment you may not necessarily desire them... but you can still fool around because it’s just what you do...

Holly
Similarly, Tracey has given sex out of love and in return for a partner’s happiness even when she does not feel ‘desperate to have sex’ or is not ‘gagging for it’:

... in a relationship you’re not going to be like head over heels gagging for it all the time, you know? ... Sometimes you give to make them happy and because you love them not ‘cause you’re desperate to have sex

Tracey

Female sexual compliance, Powell (2010, p. 64) illustrated, is normalised ‘in the name of love’. Thus, being accommodating to unwanted sex is ‘normal’ behaviour for a woman who loves her partner and would do anything to make him happy and keep a relationship intact. Both responses highlight the normalising and regulatory effects of symbolic violence in gendered habitus in that Holly and Tracey’s sexual compliance was not reinforced through a partner’s efforts. Rather, ‘it’s just what you do’ within a relationship, highlighting the influence of symbolic violence in constraining young women’s choices. Thus, feelings of sexual obligation which lead to sexual self-objectification complicate notions of ‘free choice’ and voluntary sexual consent in an intimate relationship. Other research conducted with young women identified a parallel process of sexual self-objectification (e.g. Phillips, 2000; Tolman, 2002). Most recently, Gavey (2005, p. 141) found in her interviews with women who were sexually compliant out of feelings of obligation in their intimate relationships, how ‘their bodies/their selves became objectified’. Indeed, both Holly and Tracey, throughout their interviews, often did not refer to themselves in the first person but rather dissociated themselves from their talk and experiences.

In addition to discourses of emphasised femininity and romance, the male sex drive discourse disciplines women into compliance during a sexual encounter (Gavey, 2005; Holland et al, 1998; Hollway, 1984; McPhillips, Braun & Gavey, 2001). A man’s sense of masculinity, Hollway (1984, p. 39) surmised, is dependent on a woman’s sexuality: for a man to achieve masculinity a woman must be sexually receptive otherwise feelings of rejection risk
emasculating him. Indeed, as Holly asserted, sexually refusing a man when he is in a state of arousal ‘is really personal’ and can be construed as a ‘massive rejection’:

... Rejecting someone purely on the basis of sex is really personal ... especially when it’s a guy. It’s like a massive rejection ... you’re not going to tell the poor guy when he’s inside you that he sucks ...

Holly

This response illustrates how the male sex drive discourse teaches women that disrupting a man’s sexual arousal violates sexual protocol (Gavey, 1992, 2005; Gavey, McPhillips & Braun, 1999; McPhillips, Braun & Gavey, 2001; Phillips, 2000). The rationalisation of engaging in sex to avoid causing offence likewise reflects discourses of emphasised femininity which encourage women to sexually accommodate their partners because that is what a ‘good girlfriend’ does (Phillips, 2000). The unconscious embodiment of gendered norms pertaining to these discourses, encompassed by the concept of a gendered habitus, point to the implicit rules that govern the field of heterosexual encounters and constrain a woman’s ability to (re) negotiate consent.

The ‘coital imperative’, another dominant heteronormative discourse, reinforces sexual intercourse as the pivotal and expected event in (hetero) sexual relations (Gavey, McPhillips & Braun, 1999; Holland et al, 1998; McPhillips, Braun & Gavey, 2001). The coital imperative discursively constructs intercourse (typically culminating in male orgasm) as ‘proper sex’ that follows on from sexual play or ‘foreplay’ (Gavey, 2005; Holland et al, 1998; McPhillips, Braun & Gavey, 2001; Jackson, 1984). In this study, Candice highlighted the implicit yet powerful nature of this sexual imperative:
... if you start at foreplay you definitely know where you're going ... it would be very unusual to go head over heels into foreplay and then just go 'okay yep that's it' ...

Candice

By saying that both persons 'know where [they're] going' when they consent to sexual play, Candice highlights the 'fait accompli' (McPhillips, Braun & Gavey, 2001) of intercourse associated with (hetero) sexual relations. In this sense, the indirect nature of symbolic violence has the effect of implicitly restricting certain choices for women in their sexual negotiations by making them appear to simply be a part of the natural state of things (Bourdieu, 2001; Powell, 2008, 2010).

Some young women in this study often spoke of their sexual rights within intimate relationships in such a way that contradicted their lived realities. For example, Melanie initially offered resistance to the coital imperative:

... I think that it may be a pressure for some girls, that if they're [engaging in] prior sexual foreplay then they think that [they] have to have sex. I think that's sort of the general thing these days ... but for me it's definitely not a prerequisite to having sex ...

Melanie

Despite her apparent awareness of the coital imperative, however, Melanie still reported finding it difficult to renegotiate her sexual consent with her partner when he was sexually stimulated and keen to proceed to intercourse. For Melanie, the pressure to 'please him' remained even without him explicitly asking her to be sexually accommodating to his aroused state:

I think the pressures are there to please him ... you think oh no he's seriously aroused so I've got to please him in some sort of way I can't just leave him like
this . . . in some situations I feel bad because I might not be really into it but he might be sexually aroused [so] I’m just like okay I guess I can just do it . . .

Melanie

This discrepancy between Melanie’s critical knowledge of the coital imperative and its continued influence in her relationship reflects the implicit nature of gendered norms that are embedded within individuals through habitus and which are enacted without an individual’s conscious awareness (Bourdieu, 1990; Chambers, 2005). Without realising it, females sexually acquiesce to the apparently relentless sexuality of their male partners because they see it as their responsibility to attend to his needs as well as seeing it as offensive if they fail to do so (Allen, 2003; Basile, 1999; Connell, 1987; Holland et al, 1998; Hollway, 1984; Gavey, 2005; McPhillips, Gavey & Braun, 2001; Phillips, 2000; Powell, 2010; Tolman, 2002). This compliance represents a type of symbolic violence because women consent out of feelings of guilt and fears of failing to embody the ideals of a good feminine woman who is sexually available (Basile, 1999; Gavey, 1992 and 2005; McPhillips, Braun & Gavey, 2001; Phillips, 2000). Thus, the effects of symbolic violence in her gendered habitus resulted in Melanie feeling ‘bad’ that she did not reciprocate her partner’s sexual willingness and encouraged her to feel that she ‘can’t leave him like this’.

As mentioned, dominant heteronormative discourses and norms also promote the expectation of regular sex within intimate relationships otherwise the irregularity or absence of sex will result in a relationship’s potential demise (Gavey, 2005; Gavey, McPhillips & Braun, 1999; Holland et al, 1998; Hollway, 1984). As found by other researchers, once a sexual precedent is established, regular sexual contact is expected within an intimate relationship and this is often in the form of intercourse (Gavey, 2005; Gavey, McPhillips & Braun, 1999; Holland et al, 1998; McPhillips, Gavey & Braun, 2001).
In this study, a number of the young women interviewed described experiencing an implicit pressure to engage in frequent sex within an intimate relationship. For example, Jessica felt pressure to have sex ‘for the sake of the relationship’:

... in the past I felt pressured to have sex purely for the sake of the relationship... it wasn't pressure against my will but it was a pressure for me to do the right thing... Even now I'm aware of it... that conscious sort of expectation that sex should be regular

Jessica

Jessica’s description that ‘it wasn’t pressure against my will but it was a pressure for me to do the right thing’ highlights the influence of symbolic violence in her gendered habitus, which displaces the need for overt force as women become disciplined bodies responding unconsciously to male needs (Bourdieu, 2001; Powell, 2010). Further, Jessica’s description of regular sex as a ‘conscious sort of expectation’ reflects a conscious awareness of the expectation that is not coupled with a conscious awareness of why it exists and why she feels compelled to conform. This half-awareness highlights the implicit constraints on a woman’s offering of consent to sex within an intimate relationship and the enactment of gendered norms through habitus without an individual’s conscious awareness (Chambers, 2005; Powell, 2010).

Other young women in this study described being subjected to explicit types of verbal pressure and emotional manipulation from a partner in an attempt to facilitate their sexual compliance. Male sexuality, Holland et al (1998) maintained, determines the parameters of sexual activity and its frequency within intimate relationships. The direct reinforcement of sexual servitude to a male partner is facilitated through an ongoing sense of sexual self-surveillance, leading to some women engaging in regular unwanted sexual activity for the sake of keeping a partner happy and a relationship intact. For example, Tracey disciplines herself into ensuring that she regularly attends to her partner’s sexual needs in order to prevent arguments and her partner ‘freaking out’:
... in my last relationship it came up a lot that we weren’t having sex enough... we argued a lot... I’d feel really bad and try not to let it go too long again... if we hung out a few times a week I’d be thinking yep we have to at least do it once otherwise he’s going to start freaking out...

Tracey

In an ‘economy of sex’ women often exchange sexual access to their bodies to re-establish peace within the relationship (Gavey, 2005). The conscious self-monitoring of how often a woman grants sexual access to a partner has also been identified in other research (Allen, 2003; Gavey, 1992, 2005; Holland et al, 1998). The use of arguments, verbal pressure and emotional manipulation through the use of ‘guilt trips’ was also identified in research conducted by Basile (1999) who found that these aspects of a relationship facilitate a woman’s engagement in unwanted sex. Allen (2003) and Gavey (2005) suggested a woman’s ‘active’ participation in frequent sex in order to maintain a relationship as indicative of a form of agency. However, this agency is enacted within a rigid set of boundaries thereby precluding a woman’s full access to a range of sexual choices, including her ability to simply refuse unwanted sex (Allen, 2003; Gavey, 2005). Indeed, Tracey’s choices are constrained in her knowledge of her partner’s tendency to argue with her and make her feel guilty if she does not engage in regular sex with him.

Similar to Tracey’s experiences, Holly’s partner often becomes annoyed with her when she refuses his sexual requests leading her to grant him sexual access to her body in order ‘to make him happy and shut him up’:

... sometimes he gets pissed at me as though I’m playing games by saying no and he’ll make me feel bad so I’ll just do it to make him happy and shut him up. I suppose I let him take charge... and I go along for the ride so to speak.

Holly
Through the reinforcement of Holly’s sexual subservience, her partner effectively reinstated his dominant position in the negotiation process. Holly therefore is rendered passive in her subordinated role within the relationship in which she tends to ‘go along for the ride’. Correspondingly, Jodie described experiencing verbal pressure which led to her sexual compliance:

... when a guy says c’mon, c’mon I’m like no but later I’ll probably just say alright even if I don’t really like want to... if they keep persisting I kind of just break...

Jodie

Holly and Jodie’s responses are examples of Holland et al’s (1998) notion of a ‘war of attrition’ within normative negotiations of consent. In a war of attrition, Holland et al (1998) surmised, men often attempt to ‘wear a woman down’ to the point at which she cedes defeat and begrudgingly grants sexual access. This dynamic suggests that men do not accept a woman’s initial refusals as the end of the negotiation process; rather they see it as being malleable through the use of persuasion, or in Holly and Jodie’s experiences, verbal pressure and emotional manipulation (Holland et al, 1998). These responses show the effects of implicit gendered norms within a woman’s habitus and the existence of particular rules governing the field of heterosexual encounters which encourage women to make decisions about consent from a limited number of options (Gavey, 2005; Powell, 2010). In Holly and Jodie’s experiences, the ‘better’ option is to give in and make a partner happy and restore peace in the relationship than to continue resisting and being subjected to a partner’s coercive tactics.

Another key feature of heternormative sex within intimate relationships is the assumption that men are granted unrestricted sexual access to their female partner through the notion of an implicit sexual contract (Gavey, 2005). This was the case for Holly who returned home with her current partner after a social evening and passed out drunk. However, she later awoke to find
her partner attempting to use her body for his sexual pleasure without her consent or her willing participation:

... I was like what is he doing? Can't he see I’m drunk ... that really upset me that he didn’t like really give a shit about what I wanted ...

Holly

The male sex drive discourse reduces women to mere objects of an active male sexuality and sexual acts are committed upon women as opposed to with them (Gavey, 2005; Phillips, 2000). Female sexuality is therefore positioned as always in waiting (and in receipt) of male sexual advances, and seldom in the presence of an embodied sense of desire (Gavey, 2005). Thus, it is often not women per se that men desire, but women’s bodies, which is evidenced in Holly’s experience in which her partner was willing to have sex with her despite her lack of positive bodily response.

This sexually exploitative behaviour is normalised by gendered discourses and norms such as the male sex drive discourse which conveys the idea of men’s relentless and thus not readily extinguishable sexual needs (Hollway, 1984; Phillips, 2000). The normalising effects of this discourse in the field of heterosexual encounters allowed Holly’s partner to ridicule her when she raised concerns about his exploitative behaviour:

... he makes jokes about it like ‘so you[re] saying I raped you?’ kind of thing and I’m like no of course not ...

Holly

Similar to the men in O’Byrne, Rapley and Hansen’s (2008) research, Holly’s partner feigns ignorance and draws attention to her lack of resistance and assertive verbal refusals. Female experiences of sexual objectification in intimate relationships are typically minimised and perceived to be a normal part of (hetero) sexual relations rendering such experiences as nothing
more than the result of an insatiable male sexual appetite and a woman's lack of communication (Anderson & Doherty, 2008; Frith & Kitzinger, 1997; Gavey, 2005; Phillips, 2000; Pineau, 1989). Ultimately, the normalisation of masculine sexual aggression contributes to a 'rape-supportive culture' (Doherty & Anderson, 1998), or as Gavey (2005) argued, forms the 'cultural scaffolding of rape' in which male sexual aggression is considered natural and acceptable.
CHAPTER 5:
CONCLUSIONS
CONCLUSIONS

To begin to see differently requires . . . that people come together and explore what the culture continually presents to them as their individual choices . . . as instead culturally situated and culturally shared.


This thesis examined why, in a time of apparent sexual equality and liberation, some young women engage in consensual, unwanted sex with men. In exploring this conundrum, eight young women were interviewed about their experiences of negotiating consent in both casual sexual encounters and intimate sexual relationships. Further, their views towards sexual violence and consent, in particular what they perceive to be constitutive of valid consent and inappropriate sexual behaviour, were analysed. Whilst all of the women interviewed were university students studying in the disciplines of psychology, criminology, justice and law, some of their misunderstandings of consent and sexual violence were concerning. Further, against the backdrop of women’s gender and social empowerment, many of these women’s everyday sexual experiences with men were still clearly constrained by the persistence of traditional gendered discourses and norms.

Young women in this study spoke about the need to ‘just say no’ to unwanted sexual advances from a man, or from his pressured or coercive tactics to obtain sexual access. However in the context of their actual experiences, most of these women experienced occasions in which they did not simply say ‘no’ despite feeling disinterested, pressured and/or in some cases outright distressed. Indeed, as it was discovered, saying anything, let alone ‘no’, during a sexual encounter was not considered normal. Rather, most sexual encounters relied on tacit knowing, as also identified in other sexuality research (e.g. Beres, 2010; Carmody & Willis, 2006; Powell, 2007). And, contrary to Carmody and Willis’ (2006) findings that intimate sexual relationships tend to involve more discussion before, during and after sexual activity, this thesis found
negotiations of consent in intimate relationships to be equally problematic as in casual sexual encounters. Significantly though, not all of the young women encountered difficulties all of the time: three women described current relationships in which they were at times able to engage in equitable sexual negotiations. Each of these experiences of active and mutual consent giving were not addressed in this thesis out of considerations of space and due to the number of other issues that were deemed critical to draw further attention to. Thus, the focus of this thesis has been on the more problematic experiences of sexual negotiations, particularly in causal sexual encounters, as this issue has not been afforded much consideration in the research literature on sexual consent. However, it is acknowledged that the issue of young women's sexual agency in relation to negotiations of sexual consent certainly warrants further investigation of both the constraining and the enabling features of contemporary sexual relations.

The findings of the constraints on women's free consent to sex casts doubt on the utility of traditional risk-avoidance approaches to sexual violence prevention, which portrays women as 'autonomous agents' capable of transcending gendered power relations and exerting complete control over their surroundings and other people (Phillips, 2000, p. 51). Clearly, most of the young women interviewed in this study encountered difficulties in actively and autonomously negotiating their sexual consent. This does not mean, however, as sexual miscommunication theory suggests, that these women lack assertiveness and therefore need to be educated in the art of communication. Rather, as Powell has also shown, men and women's sexual negotiations involve a 'complex interplay of individual agency and embodied gendered practice' (Powell, 2008, p. 170). As a result, when men and women come together, unwanted sex can occur without the presence of overt pressure or force. In these instances, there was evidence of symbolic violence in some young women's gendered habitus, which resulted in implicit constraints being placed on their sexual choices directing them towards male-privileging alternatives without their conscious awareness. In these situations, they were willingly, though unknowingly, participating in their own sexual objectification, demonstrating how symbolic
violence makes oppressive choices appear ‘natural, normal or the way things are’ (Powell, 2008, p. 173).

Encouraging young women to ‘just say no’ and ‘fight back’ or ‘just leave’ sends the wrong message and encourages females to be solely responsible for factors that are interlinked with complex sociocultural and gender processes well beyond individual control. This study suggests that the deeply embedded gendered norms within the field of heterosexual encounters and within gendered habitus are not being addressed by traditional judicial models of consent and in common sexual violence prevention policies. And, since these norms are reproduced and enacted at the level of everyday practice, it is necessary to begin to deconstruct and critique these norms and the discourses in which they are embedded (Powell, 2010). This is of course a momentous task, as Powell (2010) has highlighted, since change must occur across various fields otherwise dominant gendered discourses and norms will not be sufficiently challenged and new ways of negotiating sexual intimacy will not become part of normative everyday practice.

However, there is certainly a need to begin promoting a new ethic of (hetero) sexual relations, as Australian feminist criminologist Moira Carmody has been achieving with her new ‘sexual ethics’ program (Carmody, 2009b). This program centres on facilitating more dynamic and reciprocal negotiations of sexual intimacy through having individual’s recognise their own needs and desires as well as a partner’s, and to reflect on their sexual practices in order to understand what feels right to them (Carmody, 2009b). As Bourdieu has suggested, and as Powell has reiterated in her research, the field of education holds potential for change, more so than the field of law as it is more adept as sculpting individuals’ habituses than the law is after the fact (Bourdieu, 1990, 2001; Powell, 2010). Facilitating change within the field of heterosexual encounters, through Carmody’s program, is subject to constraints however, as noted by Powell (2010) in that to engage in self-reflection we must be aware of our behaviours,
thoughts and feelings, which is indeed difficult when these are often enacted outside the realm of conscious awareness.

In conclusion, this thesis has argued that contrary to popular assumptions, in reality, it appears that a woman's sexual choices are never completely her own: they are made according to the rules that are embedded within the field of heterosexual encounters and the gendered norms that are internalised and enacted through habitus (Powell, 2010). The findings obtained in this study contribute to the small body of research that has focused on examining normative (hetero) sexual negotiations of consent. Further research in this area is needed to examine women and men's sexual negotiations in various contexts of sexual encounters. For example, in casual sexual encounters initially negotiated over the internet, and in other non-conventional sexual relations including those incorporating aspects of BDSM culture.

This thesis has shown how negotiations of sexual consent are more than one word responses to a straight-forward question. Rather, sexual negotiations are 'embodied gendered practices', complex processes which make certain choices more difficult than others (Powell, 2008, 2010). We therefore need to understand the complexities of sexual consent and the more subtle forms of sexual violence and work towards facilitating social change in a variety of ways that enable women to consciously reflect on gender and implicit forms of coercion as opposed to subscribing to the superficial empowerment offered in the so-called 'new' sexual revolution.
REFERENCES
REFERENCES


Koss, M. Hidden rape: Sexual aggression and victimisation in a national sample of students in higher education. In A. W. Burgess (Ed.), *Rape and Sexual Assault II* (pp. 3-25). New York: Garland.


APPENDICES
APPENDIX I
IN-DEPTH SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Background Information

In order for me to get to know a little bit more about you, can you tell me how you would
describe yourself? How would people who know you describe you?

Can you describe your early education about sexuality and sexual relations? What were
your sources of information (school sex education, family, friends, peers, partners, books,
magazines, television, movies, pornography). Information regarding how a woman should
act/look, acceptable/unacceptable behaviour with the opposite sex, information about sexual
encounters.

Sex, Dating and Relationships

What is your definition of sex?

Can you tell me about your first intimate interaction with the opposite sex? How did you
feel? What happened? Did it affect subsequent encounters?

When is a relationship serious to you? Have you had any serious relationships? What were
some good and bad or complicated aspects of them?

Do you think that young women today have any pressures or expectations on them in a
relationship or in their intimate interactions with men in general?

Do you often desire sexual contact prior to it occurring?

How important is sex in a relationship? What meaning does it have for you?

How entitled do you feel to making your needs and desires known in a relationship?

Have you ever had casual or uncommitted sex with a man? How does sexual activity occur
in these encounters (is it talked about? Implied?) Is verbal consent given/necessary? Is
consent asked for and given for each sexual act? Have you gotten pleasure out of these
encounters? How did they make you feel?
When you are getting to know someone on a more committed level, how is it decided that sexual activity will occur and what will happen? How does a couple negotiate sexual activity in a relationship on an ongoing basis? Is verbal consent given/necessary? Is consent asked for a given for each sexual act?

Have you ever had a sexual experience that you thought would give you pleasure but didn’t? What did you do? What did you want to do? Did you tell the person? Why/why not?

Have you ever entered into an encounter or relationship with someone you weren’t really interested in? What led you to do this?

Have you ever felt pressured into doing something that you didn’t want to do after just meeting someone or after getting to know them?

Have you ever felt that you did not have control or lost control of a situation?

Have you ever felt that you could not tell a man that you did not want to engage in sexual activity with him?

Have you ever felt like you had to follow through if you have aroused someone? Why/why not? Have others ever compelled you to do so? How? What did you do? How did this make you feel?

Do you think that there may be any problems for the relationship if a woman does not regularly engage in sexual activity with her partner? Have you ever experienced issues with regard to this?

**Consent and Sexual Violence**

What is your definition of sexual consent?

What is your definition of sexual violence/assault/rape?

Do you think sexual assault can occur on a ‘one night stand’? How may this happen? How might this be prevented?
Do you think sexual assault can occur when two people are newly dating? How might this occur? How might this be prevented?

Do you think sexual assault can occur in an intimate relationship? How might this occur? How might this be prevented?

Prompts: Do you think it may be sexual assault if a woman initially consents to a specific sexual activity and the male pressures her into going all the way when she doesn't want to? What if she consents to sex but changes her mind during sex yet the male continues? What if a woman goes home with a man she does not know?

Final questions – reflection:

If you could go back in time to before you first began dating or entered into a sexual relationship, what advice would you give to yourself?

How did you find the interview? Is there anything you would like to clarify or add? Do you have any questions?
APPENDIX II
PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT FLYER

I NEED YOUR ASSISTANCE!!

ARE YOU FEMALE AND AGED BETWEEN 18 AND 25?

I am a female student at ECU completing my Honours in Criminology and would like to speak to young heterosexual women about their experiences and perceptions of sex and consent in casual sexual encounters and intimate sexual relationships.

ALL THAT IS REQUIRED OF YOU IS TO ATTEND A CONFIDENTIAL INTERVIEW OF APPROXIMATELY 30-45 MINUTES AT A LOCATION THAT IS CONVENIENT TO YOU.

~ IF YOU WOULD LIKE FURTHER INFORMATION OR WOULD LIKE TO PARTICIPATE PLEASE CONTACT MELISSA ASAP ~

Ph:   Email: mburkett@our.ecu.edu.au
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LETTER

Thank you for your interest in this study. The proposed research is part of the requirements for an Honours degree in Criminology and Justice requiring the student to undertake a small research project. This project has been approved by the ECU Human Research Ethics Committee. The aim of the proposed research is to explore how young women aged between 18 and 25 discuss female sexuality, sex and relationships in the context of heterosexuality. This research is important as it will examine how young women negotiate their sexual encounters and what they feel is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour regarding sexual relations and intimate relationships with men. The findings will contribute to the body of knowledge regarding particular pressures or expectations young women feel they are exposed to today.

If you choose to participate in the study you will be required to attend an interview either at the Joondalup or Mt Lawley Campus or at a convenient location at your request. The session should last between 30 and 45 minutes and discussions will be audio recorded so that the researcher can later accurately transcribe the contributions for analysis. Your responses will be kept confidential and the audio recordings will later be destroyed. The transcribed data will not reveal your identity and will be kept in a secure place within the School of Law and Justice. The researcher will provide you with an Informed Consent Form prior to the commencement of the interview that you will need to read and sign to show that you understand what your participation requires.

It is possible that you may feel uncomfortable with talking about some aspects of female sexuality and sexual relationships. However, please be reassured that your participation IS entirely voluntary. You can withdraw at any time without any disadvantage to yourself.

The results of this study will be presented in a thesis that will be submitted for evaluation in November. Copies will be available at the end of the year.

If you have any questions or require any further information about the research project, please contact either:

Melissa Burkett  
Project Researcher  
School of Law & Justice  
Ph: 6304 2254  
Email: mburkett@our.ecu.edu.au

Dr Karine Hamilton  
Project Supervisor  
School of Law & Justice  
Ph: 6304 5418  
Email: k.hamilton@ecu.edu.au
Declaration:

I have received an Information Letter and I understand its content. I am aware of the aim of this research and I have had the opportunity to have my questions about the research answered adequately. I know that if I have further questions I can contact the researcher or project supervisor and I know that I am free to withdraw my consent to participate at any stage and for any reason. I realise that my participation in this research involves the discussion of issues with the researcher that are of a personal and sensitive nature. I freely give my permission for the information that I provide to be recorded electronically, transcribed, and used to complete the research project as long as I am not identified in any way. I know that all audio materials will be stored in a secure location and then destroyed following completion of the project. I understand that all data collected will remain strictly confidential and will only be used for the purposes of this research. In the event that this research is published I understand that no identifiable information will be released.

Participant Signature: __________________________________________

Researcher Signature: __________________________________________

Date: ______________________

Melissa Burkett
Project Researcher
School of Law & Justice
Ph: [redacted]
Email: mburkett@ecu.edu.au

Dr Karine Hamilton
Project Supervisor
School of Law & Justice
Ph: 6304 5418
Email: k.hamilton@ecu.edu.au