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“Coming Ready or Not”: Women’s accounts of negotiating intersubjectivity within heterosex

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PREFACE

-action or behaviour that precedes an event

(Foreplay)



[Chorus:]

*Turn the lights down low
Lets go slow
Uhmmm
Lay your body down
And lets goo
(lets go babyyyy)
Baby before we get it started
A little foreplay
Right before we get to the lovin
A little foreplay
Baby we're just touching and rubbing
A little foreplay
Foreplay, foreplay, foreplay baby
Baby before we get it started
A little foreplay
Right before we get to the lovin
A little foreplay
Baby we're just touching and rubbing
A little foreplay
Foreplay, foreplay, foreplay baby*

(Case lyrics FOREPLAY- chorus) www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/case/foreplay.html

Sex and all things sexual appear to hold an extreme fascination and state of arousal in all those who have willingly encountered it or are waiting/yearning to, whenever the subject is broached in a private or public arena. Regardless of adulthood age or gender, when the topic arises in conversation there is an immediate reaction, peoples' ears pick up, they notice. All react it seems; sex is a wonderful, wondrous, enticing experience, and yet is shrouded in conflict and dissatisfaction.

What, where, how, has this amazing encounter become so dissatisfying, so far from its base action, so hidden from view that it is not always pleasurable, especially for women? How is it that in a room full of women, most of them lie back and think of England when engaging in sex? Even asking these questions opens space for a highly contested narrative to emerge.

Sexual conversation piques the interest of all; some people move closer with curiosity, some join in the discussion, some become excited, some show disgust and walk away leaving the topic instigator forever stained as inappropriate. Regardless, none are left unscathed by the broach of the topic; there is a lot at stake it seems, a lot of opinion (or even highly specific moral trajectories), many myths, much fascination. Can you think of any other subject matter that holds us in such awe? Any subject that only some of us (women) are “brave” enough to openly speak our desires of, and more contentiously, research?

Women who research sex and sexuality may well be marked, through dominant understandings of inappropriateness, as deviant, and more certainly it appears we might exceed the markers of a prudish femininity (or knowing our place). There is something of a tension here, between Madonna and Whore, but who might she be, that expert? So this journey begins, with the question, how sexually warmed up are we, today?

ABSTRACT

This research examined the discourses that women rely on when talking about heterosexual sex and how they position both themselves and their sexual partners. These positions are produced through dominant sexual discourses that function to maintain and reproduce a sexual double standard for women, and to reinforce existing patriarchal power structures. However, these subject/object positions also draw on multiple intersecting discourses. This research examines women's attempts at negotiating space within sexual encounters to enable the opening of spaces for resistance and for challenging the normative and oppressive discourses that produce them. Analysis of conversational interviews with eight women was conducted to interrogate the dominant discourses involved in the construction, maintenance and change of meaning within normative discourse over time. I identified where these discourses were integrated or worked in tandem to produce sexual subjectivities and areas of contradiction or inconsistencies which were accounted for as the women negotiated meaning. I explored points of resistance and repositioning within each discourse. A feminist poststructuralist epistemology was utilised with a focus on social power relations to enable the exploration of the patriarchal power structures that regulates women's subjectivity and the social function of the sexual double standard and heteronormativity in maintaining patriarchal dominance and the social status quo. It also enabled examination of the resistances exercised by the women towards the sexual double standard, the coital imperative and the absence of desire. Analysis included examination of the ways in which the women located themselves and their partners in relation to sexual encounters and orgasm. Key findings were; that women's sexuality is still represented as a response to men's sexuality with a clear double standard still in play; that sex for most of the women was very important to the overall relationship; that orgasm was a choice and faking had its uses; that pleasure did not mean orgasm; that having sex with multiple partners could enable pleasurable encounters; that sexual encounters did not necessarily involve penetration; and that women have very clear desires. My analysis suggests that regardless of social movements towards acknowledging women's sexuality, disciplinary power continues to regulate women's sexual encounters and an acknowledgment of women's sexual desire remains absent within the norms of heterosexuality. Without articulated desires, women struggle with burdens of masculine imposed sexuality, negative social sanctions and negative or unwanted sexual experiences. This research highlights the importance of talking openly about women's desire and to open up a space within sexual education for pleasure and relationship talk and within everyday social discussions that enables both a language and position from which women may assert their own independent desires. The points of resistance identified within women's talk along with the position of future focused desiring women may enable new counter narratives and therefore more pleasurable sexual experiences for women to occur.

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My husband has remained steadfast in his love for me and his respect for my work, even when I have berated him for the injustices I have read of and that the women in my research have spoken of. We have had many debates and I have, over that time, heard the male voice and the need for this research to be completed with men. Unwittingly my brother and all of my children's friends have been part of this research as they have walked past as I write and I stop them and read to them a piece of transcript or analysis or literature review and then engage them in discussion. Thanks to you all for your conversation and insight.

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CHAPTER ONE - Introduction

*"Let's talk about sex, baby
Let's talk about you and me
Let's talk about all the good things
And the bad things that may be
Let's talk about sex."*

www.metrolyrics.com/lets-talk-about-sex-lyrics-salt-n-pepa.html

They decked us out according to their desires for so long, and we adorned ourselves so often to please them, that we forgot the feel of our skin. Removed from our own skin, we remain distant.
(Irigaray, 1980, p. 79)

How can sex, orgasm and sexual dissatisfaction be broached as warranting serious review? I argue that it is possible for women to profess agency in their sexual desires and orgasmic ability without reversing power from patriarchal to matriarchal but rather through negotiating intersubjective space; a shared encounter whereby the sexual desires of between us are disclosed, heard and met. There remains in social relationships, a lack of satisfaction, an inability to find a comfortable acceptable realm (a safe place) to discuss women's sexual desire that is not construed as deviant or lacking.

If a woman "confesses" her sexual encounter through a lack of orgasm with a present partner she runs the risk of being positioned as emasculating him. So she fakes it. Does this communicative lack, this self-regulation performed to protect his masculine virility make us fearful of honest communication? Despite sexual engagement and sexual pleasure having been identified in previous research as resulting in many positive social and personal benefits, there has been little research that attends to women's experiences of sexual desire and pleasure. Research that has been completed identifies how desires are constituted in relation to the gendered identity of the subject (Davies, 1990; Dormer & Davies, 2001; Giles, 2006). Hetero normativity has situated women's desire as a lack in comparison to male desire (Irigaray, 1980; Cixous, 1981; Davies, 1990) and yet it is also claimed that women lack desire or drive (Baumeister, Catanese, & Vohs, 2001; Regan & Atkins, 2006) in relation to men, due to the organisation of desire as an assignment of gender. Tolman and Diamond (2012) suggest the normative assumption of women's lack is based on sexual difference and results in women learning to discount their desires. Women often take up a position within hetero normative discourse that silences their desires in order to maintain their feminine position in the gendered hierarchy.

Baumeister et al. (2001) explain how, as this pattern of normalising women's lack of desire develops in society, it in turn influences 'private' thoughts and expectations of the naturalisation of sex drive and desiring relationships as well as individual understandings of social relationships and interactions. Baumeister et al. (2001) suggest that discrepancies in sexual desire/drive between heterosexual partners may lead to pervasive patterns of conflict in both the personal relationship and culture and society.

This project is an attempt to understand the area of women's sexuality where desire and pleasure meet in context through making visible women's experiences. Jackson and Scott (2007)

argued that sexual encounters are social encounters and that many theorists have uprooted sexuality from its context when researching desire and pleasure. Tolman and Diamond (2012) have stated that there is no such thing as a culture or context free practice of sexual desire. Specifically, this research aims to interrogate how normalising discourse limits the meaning of women's desire, and how dominant discourses enable or constrain women's experiences of sexual pleasure. The research questions how women formulate their lives in relation to shared cultural meanings of heterosexual practices and expectations. This project therefore attends to women's own accounts of sexual subjectivities and how they negotiate their own experiences by analysing how heterosexual women position themselves within normative gendered narratives of what it is to be a good wife, lover, and partner; how heterosexual women negotiate socially constructed norms of heterosexual power relations and resistance and; how the notion of intersubjectivity gets to be negotiated in heterosexual relationships. A further aim of this study is to understand how women's sexual agency is constrained so that we can become emancipated from the bounds of normative heterosexuality to communicate our sexual desire(s).

CHAPTER TWO- Reviewing the Literature

Language / Discourse Power and Knowledge

Aristotle; a contemporary of Plato; once said "when the music of a society changes, so too the whole society will change

(Pop will eat itself: Lyric)

For as soon as we exist, we are born into language and language speaks (to) us, dictates its law,: it lays down its familial model, lays down its conjugal model, and even at the moment of uttering a sentence, admitting a notion of "being," a question of being, an ontology, we are already seized by a certain kind of masculine desire, the desire that mobilizes philosophical discourse.

(Cixous, 1981, p. 45)

Dominant discourses that people draw upon regularly become entrenched, incontestable and normalised (Gavey, 2011) given they are readily available, highly utilised, and seemingly sensible. Where sexuality is concerned, normalised dominant discourses inform and create heterosexual normality and produce a double standard between the genders. These discourses are produced through sexual difference where men's desires and pleasures are constituted as normal and correct, active, persistent and powerful and women's as lacking, passive, responsive and problematic (Gavey, 2011; Hird & Jackson, 2001; Hollway, 2001). This process of positioning women within discourse as undesiring, constrains women's sexuality through silencing or unfavourable labelling (Jackson & Cram, 2003). At the same time, men are positioned favourably for their active pursuit of sexual pleasure. Drawing on Foucault's notion of power that privileges hierarchies of sexuality, Tolman and Diamond (2012) argue that discourses of sexuality are gendered; constructed to privilege men and oppress women by restricting their freedom to act and to experience desire.

Discourse analytics became popular throughout the 1970s when post-structuralist/modern, feminist and social constructionist ideas challenged mainstream empirical psychology (Parker, 2005), changing the emphasis of knowledge of static individuals to dynamic systems of interaction. All discourse analyses recognise language as a subject of investigation rather than a neutral communicative resource (Willig, 2001). Discourses are not simple reflections of reality, as realist understandings would claim, but actively contribute to the construction of our knowledge and the social world. Therefore our personal experiences lack inherent meanings or understandings, and are instead constructed and recognised through language (Gavey, 1989). Billig (1997) argues that discursive approaches to understanding subjectivity succeed where empiricism fails, in that they account for contextual, interpretive, and meaning-making aspects of social life. As a private act, sex between couples is not readily available for observation but the language people use to talk about sex and the positions they take up or are positioned in and through discourse are; it is discursively meaningful.

As knowledge is never static (Foucault, 1977) new challenges and resistances can create new knowledge and thus change language itself out of necessity. Gavey (1989) suggests that language is the pivotal point of any change in knowledge. Language has evaluative qualities and as such, language is a foundation from which available materials can be used to construct numerous realities (Foucault, 1977). Recognising numerous realities reminds us there is no one true representation of

what truth and reality are (Foucault, 1977; Gergen, 1999; Warmoth, 2000). As Foucault posits that universal 'truths' do not exist, he instead suggests that it is through discursive constructs inundated with, and representative of, power that knowledge is produced and adhered to (McNay, 1994).

Warmoth (2000) further suggests that the authority of knowledge stems from the existence of a knowledge community, that is, a group of people who discuss and largely agree that certain explanations are true and real representations/constructions of reality. In Western society, this has primarily been a position held by men (Furumoto, 1998) and is evident in many arenas of social life including sexuality. Those in control of what exists as truth are able to maintain their power and advantage and in this way, knowledge is also closely linked to power. A feminist poststructuralist approach recognises the impact of patriarchal discourses on western society's knowledge systems, emphasising that dominant constructions of truth, knowledge and reality are masculine, linking closely to and reproducing relationships of domination and subordination (Gavey, 1989).

For Gavey (1989) and Gergen (1999), knowledge does not exist in isolation, it is not individually produced but is constructed when the ideas of an individual are made meaningful in social interactions. It is through our interactions with each other, and our positioning within normative discourse that we develop our understandings of how things are made meaningful (Crawford, Kippax, & Waldby, 1994). As Gavey (1989) further explains, experiences are devoid of meaning until spoken of, whereby meaning is constructed and imparted through the language, that carries knowledge/discourse and power, and between people. What makes sense and is deemed sensible is therefore created through shared intersubjective understandings of experience.

Both language and knowledge are always located in discourse and the discourses we draw upon construct our experiences and thus our social realities (Gavey, 1989). Davies (1990) suggests we are always in action, we speak ourselves into existence as we talk and by our choice of words. An intersubjective element is always present in how we make sense of our experiences. Through our interaction with others we produce shared meanings and common understandings of how to make sense of situations and of how to manage relationships with each other (Crawford et al., 1994). Sexuality and sexual experiences are therefore intersubjective in their performance.

Through the process of intersubjectivity, our pasts and therefore our presents are produced and reproduced in and through multiple, competing narrations (Hollway, 2001). Therefore, sexuality, desire and sexual pleasure only mean what they do because they are historically, culturally and politically located within relations of power and have become normalised (Gavey, 1989; Giles, 2006). Gavey (1989) reminds us that discourse can curb, regulate or set free our actions and behaviour through power relations that prioritise and normalise certain self-professing discourses.

It is this complexity of social power relations that provides us with a means to understand how the meanings of sexuality, desire and pleasure are constituted in and through our historical, cultural and political location (Foucault, 1982). Power/knowledge and discourse interact to form language, therefore, language is an articulation of social relationships. Arribas- Ayllon and Walkerdine (2008) explain that discourse incorporates any form of talk or text, as well as systems of statements that inform our world view and world positioning's, they authorise and deny certain dialogs, thoughts or actions and construct associations between things. Discourse therefore defines possibilities and proposes ways of interpreting and understanding the world and our experiences within it. Gavey (1989) suggests that discourse is action-oriented and can restrict, regulate or liberate our actions

and experiences. Cultural practices that emerge from discourse make available dominant cultural knowledge about sexuality; they do not determine sexual conduct or experience; however, they are the most recognised resources to make sense of our own embodied sexuality. In addition, personal scripting performances are formed in the intersubjective space of socialisation that is negotiated in and resulting from interaction with others (Jackson, 1984).

Gavey (1992) explains that discursive fields such as media, music, personal/group accounts, education, therapy, humour, law and other institutions are intersubjective places where discourses are created. For example, sex education in schools adhere to certain discourses that inform a sexual script (male erection= condom= penetration), interpretations and understandings of sexual encounters (no mention of pleasure or how to say no, or how to be ready, (Sieg, 2003), and the expected role each sexual partner will fulfil during these experiences (his erection means he is ready for sex, and assumes therefore, she is ready for sex).

Foucault's (1979) metaphor of the Panopticon prison explains how internalisation of dominant discourse constrains and enables behaviours that are performed largely through self-regulation. Bartky (1998) explains this as a process of disciplinary power that operates through people and consequently through society by the engagement of persistent self-surveillance resulting in docile bodies. In relation to the Panopticon we become likened to prisoners continually disciplining and regulating our actions and behaviours through the enforcement of invisible power that is both "everywhere and nowhere" (Bartky, 1998, p. 36). Disciplinary power spreads across society in highly mediated ways, including media representations of knowledge produced through institutional and social narratives and reframe them through dominant ideologies. These are repeated and reinforced by normalising discourses such as medical and scientific expertise that support media efforts (Bartky, 1998) that continually legitimise and reproduce meanings until they become naturalised. These norms can become culturally significant and be passed through generations, meaning that it is often parents, grandparents, teachers and peers that enforce these seemingly naturalised behaviours (Morgan & Zurbriggen, 2007). These constant cultural understandings become normalised in a continuous process and place enforcers 'everywhere and nowhere' (Bartky, 1998) and in the process of the internalisation of these messages we begin to engage in self-surveillance at which point disciplinary power and control become natural processes by which women begin to understand themselves.

Bartky (1998) suggests that it is disciplinary power that produces and maintains productions of masculinity and femininity that position women as subordinate to men. Through self-disciplinary actions perpetuated by dominant discourse, both the patriarchal system and the way it serves to perpetuate male dominance is rendered invisible (Bartky, 1998). Connell (2014) considers that male social power creates a social structure of relations of dominant masculinity and subordinate femininity. Although not all men subscribe to hegemonic masculinity, many men benefit from its ideology and are therefore complicit in its continuation in various contexts. Connell (2014) considers that the social power relationship is dominant masculinity and subordinate femininity and other masculinities. Taking up gendered positions becomes important in the confirmation of personal identity that, although private, becomes open to public scrutiny through social monitoring and social sanctions (Davies, 1990).

Although over time, the construction of women's sexuality has shifted, with the implication that contemporary women have greater sexual freedoms, and economic resources, the modern,

everywhere and nowhere power that disciplines women's bodily integrity in order to produce ideals of femininity has been imposed on every aspect of women's lived experience (Bartky, 1998, Gavey, 1992). Control in modern society means we are constantly self-evaluating and modifying ourselves, and attempts at resistance often remain futile by the seemingly natural and voluntary obedience to gendered power are ordinary in our everyday routines (Bartky, 1998).

Attempts at resistance against imposed patriarchy are repetitively reconfigured through the proliferation of the commodification of femininity. As Bartky (1998) describes, women have investment in practices and therefore become self-oppressors, enforcing these standards they evoke themselves. Women must continually negotiate this double bind to be a true woman: if she resists, she risks her natural properties of femininity, and reconfirms man's "natural" position of power (Guessan, 2011). If she complies with the regulation of femininity, she is reproduced a vulnerable to men's power. The double bind of femininity requires the constant negotiation of an unconscious self-surveillance and self-control that leads to her continued self-depreciation.

Being everywhere and nowhere, disciplinary power appears as something natural or voluntary, since there is no identifiable enforcer (Bartky, 1998). Power is everywhere because it exists in our institutions and our relationships, in how we act, and in the language we use. McNay (1999) suggests that Foucault encouraged us to avoid thinking of power as owned by individuals or that they exert power but rather, to look to where power acts, that is, the location of purpose and intent of its force. In addition, power is not acquired, grasped or shared, rather it is exercised from infinite points. Everything that we can recognise or conceive of is a product of power relations.

Foucault's (1988) theory explains that people engage in interactions with themselves and recognition of self as subjects. He labels these as 'technologies of the self'. He proposes two fundamental elements to these self-technologies: theory (the vision of self that one hopes to exercise and practice) and operations (usually concentrated towards the body, which alter and regulate the self along the trajectory of desired view). Through utilising these technologies, the person becomes an active participant in the production of self-discipline (McNay, 1999). Foucault (1988) argued that it is through thinking in certain ways about collections of culturally meaning practice that the self is shaped. He suggested that process is a constant re-evaluation of the self against culturally determined productions of subjectivity. McNay (1994) explains that in Foucault's understanding, 'to be a subject you have to have also been subjected; i.e. positioned in and through socially and culturally dominant discourse. Foucault (1988) further explains that these normalised discursive boundaries are not concrete; they hold potentiality for negotiation and resistance. This means that the subjectivity of one's self is always being re-evaluated and re-formulated according to available discourse.

The poststructuralist understanding of power is neither positive, negative nor repressive, but instead is a product of, and functions through, discourse (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008; Gavey, 1989; Hollway, 2001). In this way, power operates on what is seen as the truth of the moment, recognisable through the function of dominant discourses. A feminist poststructuralist approach, suggests the relationship between power, subjectivity and discourse positions women within dominant discourses. The subject in this way is not an informant of meaning but a "secondary effect" a by-product of discursive function (McNay, 1999). There are numerous subject positions available to women within any given discourse; however, these positions are never a totality as

women negotiate multiple competing discourses. Gavey (1992) reminds us of the fluidity of women's subjectivities as they negotiate various discourses, resulting in contradiction and uncertainty of experience. McNay (1994) reminds us that power underlies all social relations from the institutional to the intersubjective and is a fundamental enabling and constraining force.

Hollway (2001) asserts that the investment in certain subject and object positions for men within heterosexual relationships and sexual encounters, is power. She explains that as long as dominant discourses and subject positions reinforce men's dominance in the structure of society, men will continue to be invested in them. As Gavey (1989) attests, language, discourse, institutions and produced knowledge, subjectivity and practice are all interwoven to uphold power. However, Gavey (1989) also reminds us that these sites offer potential avenues for change. Power therefore constrains individuals but it also constitutes the condition of the possibilities of freedom and of different ways of being (McNay, 1994). In this way, McNay (1994) suggests that Foucault asks us to view power as a positive phenomenon by breaking down the fully self-reflective balanced and unified subject in order to open space for other possibilities of thought and being in the world. By offering resistance to power subordinated women are no longer positioned as a marginal subject of society but as an effect of the power relations that exist in society. The instances where the power is most persuasively revealed are the points where resistance can be applied most effectively. Therefore, distinct positions of powerlessness become political sites from which counter resistance can be formulated - for example women gaining the right to vote through the fight against silencing and oppression (McNay, 1994).

The binary and sexuality



Born with a vagina /positioned in femininity.

All things are defined by name. Change the name, and you change the thing.

Terry Pratchett- Pyramids (1989, p. 100)

We want a lady in the street but a freak in the bed.

www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/usher/yeah.html

A key that opens many doors is much better than a door that is opened by many keys.

A face book meme/ a male prerogative

As we socialise we formulate an understanding of categories and our positions within them that are constructed and reproduced in our society (Davies, 1990). One of the most persuasive categories we learn as humans is the binary of male /female, man/woman, masculine/feminine. Our sexed body, is biologically determined, whereas gender theorised as a social construction as Bartky (1998) explains, is a result of behavioural norms and disciplinary practices that inscribe meaning onto the sexed body. Sex is the term used to denote physical characteristics that categorise subjects

as belonging to a male or a female biological dichotomy. The primary determinant of this categorisation is normally the presence of male or female sex organs (Unger, 1979).

In historical terms, research on women's sexuality has been primarily focused on women's biological difference to men; their lack of a phallus. Kristeva (1981) describes sexual difference - which incorporates biological, physiological, and reproductive characteristics - as being explained by and in turn explaining a difference in the relationship of subjects (men and women) to the symbolic (phallic) contract which is the social (hierarchical) contract. It is such difference that she suggests is a relationship to power, language, and meaning. This has led to a cultural understanding of sexuality stemming from normative beliefs about maleness and femaleness (Regan & Atkins, 2006). Kristeva (1981) reminds us that the very dichotomy man/woman establishes a place for an opposition between two rival entities.

The body as a product of biology depends upon binary opposites, characterised within Cartesian dualism that distinguishes the mind and the body. Central to this mind/body split is how women are located as categorically different from men. In this duality mind and body are not only different and distinct, but opposing. A gold standard is held that privileges reasoning abilities, mind functioning, and logic and consigns the body to automated disobedient and mechanical process's (Price & Shildrick, 1999). The constraints of sexual difference reproduce social power relations of marginalisation, domination and subordination that are legitimised through naturalising the sexed body. The histories of women's bodies are intimately connected to the system of technologies of power that both constitute and discipline them (McNay, 1994). Because men's bodies have historically dominated institutions such as psychology and medicine, and therefore men's standpoints and language have become the norm (Furumoto, 1998); this has meant that women's sexuality and sexual bodies have become pathologised and considered in need of surveillance. Braun, Tricklebank and Clarke (2013) have argued that the practice of forced hair removal is an example of necessary femininity for a woman to produce a 'normal' body, as if the 'natural body' is not good enough. Women are subjected to social pressures to meet the requirements changing their bodies despite the natural state of hair on a female body.

Guessan (2011) explains that gendered differences reinforced through dominant norms based on sexual difference render the social world more arduous and restrictive to women than to men. In furthering this argument, processes of normalisation (Fausto-Sterling, 2000) and technologies of surveillance (McNay, 1994) inscribe bodies with social and cultural meaning (Bartky, 1990) and limit the possibilities for women's sexual experiences.

Coombes and Morgan (2001) explain that feminist involvements with psychology have confronted the way the discipline has produced and reproduced oppressive power relations in society by attending to the practices that inform how psychological knowledge is created. Feminist psychology has interrupted the way biological discourse has marked women's bodies, and contested the objectification of women's bodies through their sexual (reproductive) difference to men (Morgan, 2005). The mind/body binary is challenging to feminism as the mind has been paired with masculinity, and aligned with logic, reason, expertise and civilisation. Women positioned as other through their difference from men, and femininity through its difference from masculinity, become linked to the excessive, disordered and emotional body. Feminist critiques of the ordering of women's bodies and their psychologies as pathological, are created where the meaning of

womanhood is related directly to women's bodies (Nicolson, 1992; Ussher, 1991). Morgan (2005) raises the notion that the split between body and mind positions women as the polar opposite of rational thinking and reasoning. This means that binary opposites are hierarchical opposites, ordered through gendered relationships of superiority and inferiority where the labelling of one decides and applies definitions of what the other is not. The narrative of sexual difference thus engages biological difference, which becomes socially meaningful.

The notion of embodiment differs dramatically from the bio-medically defined object-body and asserts that rather than the object body, women's bodies are inscribed with meaning through disciplinary power, and therefore gender is embodied (Bartky, 1990). In the sense of embodiment, women can be considered to live sexuality in and through their bodies and in and through processes made available within particular historical, social and cultural possibilities (Butler, 1990). The ability to reconceive women's experiences of sexuality through actions by which gender is constituted and performed opens spaces for gendered possibilities and enables feminist inquiry to investigate how society acts to produce and structure women's bodies through gendered practices.

Sexual relations, understood as gendered social relations, entail thinking about the various ways that bodies and embodiment can feature in sexual encounters. Jackson and Scott (1997) suggest that without a body that can be recognised or desired or that can recognise sensuality in others, or that can experience awareness or erotic touch, there can be no intersubjective space in sexuality. In the first instance the body is a sexualised and often passive body, one that is gazed upon or acted on. In the second and third instances; a body that is sexual implies both activity and sensation. In all three senses, a body can never be a simple body isolated from mind, self and social context (Jackson & Scott, 1997).

Gender as a social construction, is sustained and becomes obligatory when incorporated into the customs and cultures of people. Guessan (2011) suggests that the imposition of gendered understanding means that gender relations are relations of power and domination where each gender attempts to gain power and subordinate the 'other'. The masculine/feminine hierarchy demonstrated by inference to masculine and feminine ideologies, saturates aspects of the social and private realms in and through cultural dynamics (Traynor, 2000). Cixous (1981) argues that the opposition to woman permeates all orderings within culture. It is the ultimate dualist and hierarchical binary; Man/Woman equate to strong/weak, superior/inferior. In this way, the undertaking of women especially in terms of gender relations is not seen as convincing or appropriate outside of masculinity. The production and sustaining of fastidious femininities and feminine bodies polices and disciplines female subjects.

Within the masculine/feminine hierarchy, not all masculine and feminine positions hold the same value. Gendered social power orders the gendered possibilities meaning that differences within masculinity or femininity also enable and constrain possibilities of being. Connell (2014) argues that hegemonic masculinity (evidenced through marriage and heterosexuality, power, influence, bread winners and physical prowess) is hierarchically dominant and as such positions femininity as other. Bartky (1998) explains that deviation from the expected feminine actions/behaviours ultimately results in desexualisation and consequent labels such as 'unfeminine', 'loose' or 'unattractive', as well as this labelling a subject position as subordinate, even to femininity

can occur. At the bottom of the gendered hierarchy are the subordinated femininities, including defiant femininities and those that resist the accentuated versions of femininity. Consequently, Connell (2014) argues that gender difference is really gender inequality.

Despite feminist inquiry as a counter narrative to patriarchy, the binaries are so entrenched and taken for granted as the norm that any deviation from it is considered abnormal. This normalisation process continues the oppression, exclusion and denial of other ways of being, and denies other forms of sexuality. Just as femininity is discursively constituted, sexuality too is embedded in complex operations of power. Post-structuralist feminists argue that not only does sex not exist outside of discourse, but that sex does not exist outside of gender (Weedon, 1999). When individuals decide to engage in sexual performances they draw on dominant discourses/scripts to inform their practice, and to inform the gendered roles and positions they are expected to take up within their sexual relations.

Hetero normative sexual scripts in which heterosexuality is contracted as the norm produces dominant understandings that the normal trajectory of sexuality is heterosexual sex – the organisation of sexuality that prioritises coitus and places greater value on male (biological) pleasure. These dominant discourses inform heteronormativity, in which a double standard between genders is produced. Jackson and Scott (1997) argue that the meaning of sexuality is constituted within the norms of gendered differences, producing men as active subjects of sexual activity and women as their receptors – objects of men's desire.

Gavey (1992) reminds us that what we perceive as sexuality is formed through socially constructed practices, identities and desires that are created and reproduced through what Foucault terms the 'deployment of sexuality' as a means of regulation and social control. Manning (2009) explains that although perceived as private, the sexual reproductive act is open to public inspection. Through regulation and control of women's sexual behaviours and expression, sexuality is structurally organised. Women's seeming collusion in their own sexual oppression is in fact an outcome of disciplinary power. Gavey (1992) explains that women are self-regulating subjects who comply with dominant heterosexual scripts, regardless of their individual desires.

Beres and Farvid (2010) argue that regardless of society's perceived acceptance of women's sexuality, in reality women are subjected to a sexual double standard that problematizes sexuality through gendered social power relations. Irigaray (1980) explains that women's sexual pleasure is trapped a male orientated system, where pure means that is yet to be stained by them, for them. In masculine discourse, a pure woman is not yet a woman as she carries no male imprint as she has yet to be penetrated. For example, normative discourse position men as highly sexual with ever present uncontrollable lust whereas women are non- sexual and require coaxing or coercion into arousal (Hird & Jackson, 2001; Hollway, 2001). The sexual double standards is predominant within hetero normativity, where women are represented as either the same as, different to or complementary to men (Grosz, 1987, 1995; Morgan, 2005). The double standard also operates to position women as the object of men's sexual desire rather than an equally desiring and pleasure-seeking partner (Daly, 2013).

Dun and Vik (2014) explain that within our culture, virginity or limited sexuality is still highly valued for women at least, and a history of punishment still operates through notions of shaming and negative labelling. Women continue to be subjected to the Madonna-Whore dichotomy wherein a category of social standing as either pure or promiscuous is produced (Crawford & Popp, 2003; Meah, Hockey & Robinson, 2011). For a man to have experienced several sexual partners makes him experienced or a stud (Hayfield & Clarke, 2012; Jackson & Cram, 2003) and yet a woman only has access to slut. Women are required to balance their sexual activity somewhere between men's bequest to resist negative labelling like prudish while at the same time having only the right amount of sex to avoid negative labelling (Jackson & Cram, 2003).

Derogatory labelling which has no male equivalent is one instrument of regulation of women's sexuality and is performed by both men in an attempt to exert power and by women in attempts to form and protect their own sexual identity (Allison & Risman, 2013). Cutter (1999) points out that the silencing of women's sexual desire is an integral part of patriarchal structures that render women as passive objects rather than active architects of their own destiny.

Although resistance to the double standard is possible, it is complicated by the multiple discourses that operate to maintain its effectiveness in society. A gate-keeping position is expected from women located in the interplay of gendered expectations of men's anticipated sexual expression and women's kered sexuality. Positioned as objects of male sexual enticement women are expected to excite men but also to maintain the position of purity. The effects of negotiating these conflicting positions is extremely difficult for women (Hird & Jackson, 2001). Dunn and Vik (2014) suggest that sexism operates through the socially programmed perception that women and their bodies belong to men. This effect transposes itself onto female subjects as constant pressure to remain sexually available to men, regardless of their desires or feelings (Gavey, 1992). The heteronormative belief that women's bodies are owned by men produces a social indifference for women's privacy; if a woman cannot call her body her own, then it is expected that women will submit to the inclinations and control of men. Costa, Nogueira and Lopez (2009) found woman's sexuality was something to be kept under control unless the correct situations or conditions (formed relations and as a response to male request) were available.

Schleicher and Gilbert (2005) explain that while women may appear to have more influence over their sexuality, any perception of agency is constrained by traditional discourses of desirability and sexuality that shape relationships for men and women. Within the male/female binary of normal sexuality and deviant sexuality within the double standard, casual sex is seen as a risk for women but not for men (Farvid & Braun, 2013). Hird and Jackson (2001) explain that heteronormative discourses remind us that sex is a man's affair and women hold the power only to refuse, although technologies of coercion render this choice difficult as women are also positioned as responsible for men's sexual desires.

Despite social changes and emergent discourses of sexual freedoms, women are still subjected to oppressive conditions under which their sexuality is enabled or constrained, and in this way the double standard has not been removed but has changed form (Crawford & Popp, 2003). Evidence of this is observable through media representations that construct women as sexually desiring and active whereas previously women were presented as being passive objects of the male gaze (Gill,

2008). However, Gill (2008) states this supposed sexual agency is in actuality a regulatory power mechanism that assumes sexual desire and limits choice to refuse unwanted sex. Women are expected to mould their femininity to suit current expectations of sexual availability and expression as well as maintaining normal feminine practices of beauty and submission. Furthermore, Crawford and Pop (2003) state that in considering long term relationship suitability there is a male preference for women with fewer sexual partners. Bernasconi (2010) explains that regulation and control over sexuality is a continuation of belief systems that rampant sexuality threatens the social order.

However, despite the continuation of the sexual double standard, theorists remind us of Foucault's notion that where ever there is power, there is also resistance (Jackson & Cram, 2003; McNay, 1994). Therefore, as discourses are multiple and often competing there is also room for resistance. Foucault's understanding of the possibilities of resistance through challenges to the social power relations that produce them enables us to speak of desire, and reposition oneself within alternative discourse (Jackson & Cram, 2003; McNay, 1994). The following chapter takes up the notion of discourse/knowledge and power to locate the possibilities for resistance through new and competing discourse.

CHAPTER THREE- Dominant Discourse

What we hear/ what we know- Common discourse

Several dominant discourses are evident in western society with regards to sex and sexuality. They tend to be patriarchally determined and directed towards coitus as the final outcome of a sex act. These dominant discourses encourage heteronormativity and a coital imperative. The discourses used in the production and maintenance of heteronormative sexuality enable and constrain the subject positions available for people to take up in heterosexual interactions and relationships, and the availability of these positions is not the same for men and women.

Vaginal Orgasms and Coital Imperatives

Puppo (2013) suggests that Freud developed his vaginal orgasm theory in 1905 with no scientific basis and yet the notion of vaginal orgasm has been a site of investigation since then. His rationale was that in shifting the biological meaning of women's pleasure away from the clitoris to the vagina as the cultural location of her pleasure, a mature woman could recognise the vagina as her tool of pleasure. Labelling women's sexuality through "the female reproductive system" is used to explain the internal sex organs (Rathus, Nevid, & Fichner-Rathus 2002, p. 106) and has become a site for reproductive politics created in the division of external /internal organs. Orgasmic pleasures through the clitoris was found to be inessential to reproduction, and in turn limited value was placed on continuing to recognise the importance of the clitoris as pleasurable, and it was reframed as an external unproductive node (Tuana, 2004). Coupled with the construction of women's rampant sexuality being the root of mankind's fall from grace, which was evidenced well into the nineteenth century, a clear path to the loss of clitoral pleasure is made. The reasoning follows: A) The study of sex should focus on reproductive elements only, so the clitoris is irrelevant and B) The clitoris allows for women's rampant sexuality. How better to produce and reproduce a limited understanding of women's sexuality and sexuality in general. How better to exclude and control women's sexual pleasure?

Puppo (2013) describes one effect of clitoral elimination for women was that they were required to shift their focus of pleasure to one that fulfils male expectations and prioritises penile penetration and orgasm through penetration. Terms such as frigidity and prude arose out of an insistence that women obtain orgasm through vaginal penetration (Angel, 2012; Jackson, 1984), despite biological knowledge that female orgasm can only ever be a function of clitoral stimulation (Wallen, & Lloyd, 2011).

Positioning women's sexuality as reproductive limits women's sexual pleasure and silences her ability to convey her own pleasure outside of coitus or orgasm. Kitinger (1985) reminds us through her statement "Asking whether orgasm is in the clitoris or in the vagina is really the wrong question" (p. 76), to question why sex is relegated to reproduction and bodily function and how orgasm becomes the marker of pleasure. Pleasure itself has also been removed from the experienced action in research attention, and posited in the realms of biological functioning (Tolman, & Diamond, 2012). Biological research on women's orgasms has contributed to the normalisation of coitus and penetration and male primacy by suggesting that it is in the male's interest to ensure she gains orgasmic pleasure from copulation (McKibbin, et al., 2010; Thornhill, Gangestad, & Comer, 1995). Jackson and Scott (2007)

argue that the naturalised (biological) sexual cycle developed by Masters and Johnson (1966) where sexual response is measured as arousal, plateau, orgasm, and resolution and where orgasm is prioritised is consistent with a penis-centered version of sex that ignores women's sexuality. In short, biological research naturalises male primacy in sexual relations.

Gavey (2012) argues that the biological reduction of sex is a gendered power relationship that naturalises heterosexual sex and produces the conditions to conform to its social power. Through its legitimacy, it reproduces sexual difference and the subordination of women and femininity. In their research, Baumeister et al. (2001) found that even women who can orgasm do not always find sex pleasurable. This resonates with Morgan's (2005) argument that naturalising the sexed physical body contributes to the reproduction of social power relations, thus constraining the meaning of sexual identity and desire and pleasure to arousal and orgasm.

McPhillips, Braun and Gavey (2001) state that penetrative activity is taken for granted as the most normal, natural, proper or 'real' form of heterosexual sex; more over intercourse has come to mean, heterosex (Hayfield & Clarke, 2012). Cultural understandings that limit the sex act also limit women's orgasm outside of coitus. Sexual expression or sexual acts outside of penetration are considered unessential or 'foreplay' for the full meaning of successful sex, and by labelling it as such, practices for women's pleasure become something that is done before the main or real act. As an exploration of what sex was, Peterson and Mulhlenhard (2007) sought to find a definitive definition of the sex act and found that (99.5%) of respondents explained penile-vaginal intercourse to be sex. This resounds with McPhillips et al. (2001) research with young women that found that a coital imperative makes it inconceivable that heterosex could be anything other than intercourse.

Many respondents in Peterson and Mulhlenhard (2007) study also identified the necessity of seminal fluid (e.g. male orgasm) regardless of penetration as qualifying, thus prioritising male orgasm. Additionally, a hierarchal organisation of sexuality that places greater value on male pleasure is noted in the normalised notion of heterosex where male orgasm is assured and a goal and lesser value is placed on women's pleasure (Hayfield & Clarke, 2012). Of particular interest, regardless of orgasm, if he "stuck it in" it was sex. In those who recognised both penetration and seminal fluid as essential there was a consistent theme of penetration+finish=sex. In this way, the coital imperative limits recognition of female pleasure by other means including lesbian encounters and masturbation (Hite, 2006) and offers a very restrained sense of sexual expression.

The discursive construction of the coital imperative emphasises and reproduces gendered differences, producing men as active subjects of sexual activity and women as receptive and responsive passive objects of male desire (Hird & Jackson, 2001). These social norms regulate the sexual act, stipulate intercourse and influence the frequency of sexual engagement. Gavey, McPhillips and Braun (1999) suggest there is a social imperative in play that makes it difficult for women to refuse participation in coitus. Social directives continue to coerce women into participating in sex because it is considered the thing to do when in a long-term relationship and as a committed partner. Jones (2002) explained that oftentimes women in long-term relationships consider that their body is not solely theirs, rather it is a commodity of their husbands/partners and is open to his scrutiny and control.

Formulated within heteronormative sexual scripts that construct heterosexuality as normal, the coital imperative further prioritises penis/vaginal intercourse and ignores other forms of sexual activity. A normalised trajectory of sexual engagement begins with the man's erect penis and culminates in male orgasmic experience. Braun, Gavey and McPhillips (2003) found that if a woman was to orgasm during sexual engagement, there were scripts to be followed and strict ordering of orgasms. Women are expected to orgasm first, then the man orgasms, then it's over. The male orgasm is considered the desired outcome of sexual intercourse and once the man has ejaculated sexual activity ceases (Jackson, 1984; McPhillips et al., 2001; Ramazanoglu, 1993). Jackson (1984) suggests the coital imperative represents institutional patriarchy through discourses that prioritise men's sexual satisfaction that focus on the penis as the locus of pleasure for both men and women.

Given that orgasm is recognised as the zenith of sexual experience (Potts, 2000), failure to attain an orgasm through his skill implies an imperfect or lacking sexual encounter. During heterosexual, male orgasm is an assumed inevitability, whereas orgasm for woman is an uncertainty. Braun et al. (2003) suggest that this shows a power imbalance in the status and relative importance placed on men and women's orgasms. It is unheard of for 'healthy' men not to orgasm during sex and it is an expectation that sex will not be over until he has finished. Such hegemony is deeply embedded in Masters and Johnson's theory of the sexual response cycle that naturalises the scripted trajectory of sexual encounters, culminating in masculine power and certainty operates through the success and failure of orgasm (Jackson & Scott, 2007). Jackson and Scott (2007) further posit that male ejaculation itself is not an indication of sensual pleasure but rather a consecration of male power.

Jackson and Scott (2007) suggest that a lack of visible markers in discourse for women's orgasmic pleasures, the successful performance of his sex coerces women to confirm and/or construct a fabulous and vocal performance (Potts, 2000; Roberts, Kippax, Waldby, & Crawford, 1995). Men and women derive knowledge of such performance of female orgasms from media and social representations, including pornography that mark the enactment through signifiers such as noise, closed eyes, open mouth and head tossed back. Jackson and Scott (2007) explain that these signifiers reproduced by women in their performances of 'faking it'. Research with men has found that while they are aware of the narrative that women fake it, it does not happen to them (Muehlenhard, & Shippee, 2010).

A narrative study by Roberts et al. (1995) investigating women faking orgasm found it occurred mostly to keep men happy coupled with being in love so not wanting to upset them by not orgasming, which resonates with Gavey's (2005) argument about sexual coercion within intimate relationships. Muehlenhard and Shippee (2010) further suggest, some women pretend orgasm to end a sexual encounter due to fatigue or tedium.

As scripting of sexual encounters happens, so too do women's orgasms conform to scripts and the signifiers become a part of both faked and real orgasms (Jackson & Scott, 2007). Women's orgasms, in the same ways as their bodies, become disciplined. Holland, Ramazanoglu, Sharpe, and Thomson (1994, p. 30) have argued that, "When women fake orgasm they are defining the sexual encounter as one which is defined by men's physical sexual needs". By conforming to these dominant scripts, women become self-oppressive and party to the male gaze within limiting other expressions of pleasure and orgasm. Identifying the gender social power relations and giving them a language,

enables space for other forms of resistance to emerge and change the embodied materiality of faking it (Gavey 2012).

The requirement of a bodily response to inequitable sex denotes heterosex as a site of economical exchange, where women's orgasm is the reward for the man's work (Jackson & Scott, 1997; Roberts et al., 1995). A women's failure to reach orgasm or even ecstasy might become injurious, suggesting his defective ability. She is therefore coerced into self-harm, either responsible for her own deficit, or responsible for providing evidence of her orgasm by faking it, denying her own pleasure. Orgasm therefore is a site of control in the performance of sexual pleasure that is embedded in heteronormativity that holds women responsible for the relationship through her conformity to her feminine position (Bartky, 1998).

Without shared, negotiated meaning and understanding or women's voice it is difficult to find the meaning of sex outside of biology. All meaning is negotiated through and within intersubjectivity (Crawford et al., 1994). Therefore, the hegemony of the orgasm is negotiated in an intersubjective space where there are possibilities for other notions of pleasure to be created. So if there is intersubjective space in sexual relationships how then are women still being coerced into their subjugation where women's pleasure and desire is excluded from meaning.

Hollway's discourses

Wendy Hollway (1984), through her research on women's sexuality, found that there were three dominant discourses that constitute heteronormative sexuality that function to reproduce the sexual double standard in particular ways: the male sexual drive discourse, the have/hold discourse, and the permissive discourse. The discourses are not separate but work together to reproduce women's sexuality in terms of its difference men's, through a relation of power that normalises dominant masculinity and submissive femininity.

The construction of the male sex drive discourse is embedded in an evolutionary history (Knight, 2002) and claims that men's sexuality is the result of a biological drive whose purpose is reproduction, to ensure continuation of the species. Reproductive success is assured through men's ability to procreate as a necessity for the success of the species, positioning men as subjects who possess a sexual drive that needs gratification, and women as objects upon which male sexuality is enacted, rather than as active sexual agents. The only position available for women in this discourse is that of gatekeeper to sexual intercourse, a responsibility for controlling male sexual drive by restricting their access to coitus. A double standard of heterosexuality endures whereby the expectation of men as active, determined, powerful and pursuant leaves only a space to fill for women as passive, receptive and responsive (Hird & Jackson, 2001). Connell and Hunt (2006) discuss how the male sex drive discourse assumes that males have a stronger biological sex drive than females, thus positioning men as natural initiators of sexual activity. The male sex drive discourse encourages male sexual activity, while female sexuality is positioned as problematic and defective. Hite (2004) offers an option for resistance that if the sex drive in men is purely physical then men could as easily masturbate as hound their sexual mate for sex. In this case, women have no reason to give in to the pressure of having sex. Counter to Hite's observation, Gavey et al. (1999) explain that because of the dominance of the male sex drive discourse, and the power and persuasiveness it holds then in the event of a man showing disinterest in intercourse suggests abnormality and is likely

to be interpreted as an observation on her lack of attractiveness to him. Hollway (1984) further explains that this suggests that part of a woman's identity is her desirability to men.

Hollway (1984) asserts that the male sex drive discourse is prevalent even within scientific and psychological communities whose experts maintain and legitimise biological difference as an explanation for social conduct. Adherence to the male sex drive produces male behaviour, actions, urges and pleasure as the norm and women's behaviour as other. Gavey et al. (1999) further argue that this instinct narrative of procreation for species survival implies a universal fact, which exists outside of language and culture. The male sex drive discourse is reflective of a patriarchal system reinforcing a gendered social hierarchy aimed at male supremacy and performances of masculinity, whilst female sexual agency and desire is constrained.

Hollway's discourse of have/hold complements the male sex drive discourse and is based on the notion that women's desire for sex is to establish and maintain monogamous relationships. The have/hold discourse resonates with Christian ideals, which place value on committed relationships, marriage and reproduction. Braun et al. (2003) explains the have/hold or romantic discourse assumes committed and stable relationships are directed towards the reproductive purposes within a stable relationship. This discourse constructs borders between available positions for women, for example the virgin/whore, the wife/mistress and clean/dirty. These divisions permit this discourse to coexist with the male sex drive discourse, with women being categorised or being expected to take up both positions. A clear example of this is where women are expected to portray to the public the respectable woman-hood they have been taught, yet in the bedroom they are expected to abandon this persona and become wanton, but only at the bequest of the man (Gill, 2008). The pervasiveness of this discourse operates through neoliberal ideologies where marriage, for example, has become increasingly commodified through individual choice. Gill argues that the resurgence and celebration of gender difference in postfeminist discourse constructs gendered power as simultaneously inevitable, and sexy.

The sexual double standard is made evident by this discourse- with very different standards constructed for men and women. These separations in positions situate women's sexuality as something that must be controlled by men and by each other. Sexuality outside of the restrictions of formed relationships, marriage or reproduction receives negative attention positioning sexually desiring women as promiscuous or slutty (uncontrollable and dangerous) whilst sexually desiring men are positively regarded and normalised (Farvid & Braun, 2013; Jackson & Cram, 2003).

The have/hold discourse further suggests that women maintain their relationship and social status as the 'other', the partner/wife is the reward in exchange for a loving relationship, financial security and social standing (Gavey, 2005). One way to do this is to invest time in being a good lover. Mailon (2012) reiterates that it is possible that while enacting sex both men and women may send deceptive signals about their true state of pleasure, suggesting that the choices people make in a relationship are consistent with the perceived payoff for the choice. In the instance of the have/hold discourse the payoff for consenting to sex is the perceived value of the relationship and the social standing that ensues from being in a relationship. Consequently, a lack of sexual activity may suggest an unstable or fragile relationship that is unlikely to continue (Burkett & Hamilton, 2012). Women are constructed as responsible for the management of balancing frequency and quantity of sex to

satisfy the other's needs and maintain a strong relationship. In this way, gender is discursively produced with women nurturing the relationship and taking care of men's sex drive for the good of the family unit. He will stray according to the assumptions of the have/hold discourse unless his preferred mate can keep him invested. Gavey (2005) provides a clear argument for the link between the male sex drive discourse and the have/hold discourse by evidencing the extremes men will go through to have sex (including paying for it). For Gavey (2005) this is a form of sexual coercion where women are required to give in to his demand for sex under the threat of infidelity which in turn can act as a threat to one's social standing.

Emerging in the sexual liberation of the 1960s where equal rights for men and women to seek their own sexual pleasure, the permissive discourse challenged the concept of monogamy (Hollway, 1984). Sexuality in the permissive discourse is not formed in the relational space but is viewed as inherent to individuals, both men and women. While the permissive discourse views women as active agents of sexual activity and appears to construct sexual equality between men and women, Hollway (1984) explains that despite the promise that non-relationship sex might enable for women's sexual pleasure, it extended rather than challenged the male-sex drive discourse.

The permissive discourse enables women to enjoy and respond to sex but limits her agency to express desire outside of the coital imperative. Gavey et al. (1999) explain that women's desires are not taken for granted like men's and that sexual freedom for women is confined to male dominated ideals. Continued reliance on intercourse as the pinnacle of sexual encounters is evident in the socially accepted availability of contraception. Despite claims to equality and autonomy the permissive discourse fundamentally denies agency in female sexual pleasure and sexual desire and adopts intercourse as the primary marker of sexual freedom. Jackson and Cram (2003) remind us that it is male needs and urges that are normally reflected in the construction of sexual desire so although the permissive discourse constructs women as empowered and having active agency women remain the object of male desire. By drawing on permissiveness women are produced as desirable to men and sexually available to men, therefore women's agency stems from an ability to attract a man and she is held responsible for any negative outcomes (Gill, 2008).

In the same way the male sex drive discourse enables derogatory labelling of women so does refusal of sex within the permissive discourse. The permissive discourse, although it appears at face value to allow freedom and sexual agency, in fact further oppresses women by disempowering the rejection of sexual advances. Within this discourse technologies of coercion discipline women into docile bodies that serve the interests of men's sexualities. Together, Hollway's discourses provide the conditions for technologies of heterosexual coercion. Gavey (1992, 2005) contends that this produces women who are unrapeable through coercive techniques that are either social (for example, expectations of frequency and trajectory of sex) or interpersonal (for example, partner pressure and rape).

Pseudo reciprocal gift discourse

In expansion of Hollway's three discourses, Gilfoyle, Wilson and Brown (1992) conceptualise a 'pseudo-reciprocal gift discourse', which functions through operations of reciprocity and obligation and also reproduces the sexual double standard. This discourse informs sexual experiences in such a way that women are obliged to *give* themselves to men and men in return *give* women orgasms.

This discourse perpetuates and reinforces the sexual oppression of women through supporting views of the active male/passive female binary. Men are positioned as needing sex with a requirement from the object of that desire (women) that she surrender her body to his control, reproducing male sex drive discourse to construct women as passive objects dependant on male desire.

In exchange for women giving themselves up to men, men are required to pleasure women's pleasure, usually by gifting her an orgasm. Gilfoyle et al. (1992) explain that the appearance of mutual benefit is deceptive, as the male is reinforced in a subject position of receiver of women and giver of orgasm. Women are in this way not afforded autonomy or sexual agency and their pleasure is placed in his sex. This discourse maintains the dependent and passive sexuality of women who nurture and submit to his desires (Gilfoyle et al., 1992).

When women are positioned as dependant in this way, male power exercised through sexpert men giving orgasm to a women who has no other avenue for pleasure, is perpetuated (Gilfoyle et al., 1992). This may be a desired position for women who draw on a discourse of romance where submission allows recusing from a perceived hero. However men are positioned as having power over women's pleasure as they take responsibility for her orgasms and earn themselves positive labels as good lovers so even in a discourse where women's pleasure is integrated, men's power is exhibited (Gilfoyle et al., 1992).

By its very nature reciprocity instils a sense of obligation which Braun et al. (2003) describes as a logical sequence of events where women's pleasure and possible orgasm must be followed by coitus and man's orgasm. The imperative nature of coitus coupled with pleasure being recognised as orgasm, reflects an orgasm imperative (McPhillips et al., 2001). The expectation of coitus and male orgasm in response to the gift of women's orgasm draws on an invisible and binding contract (Gilfoyle et al., 1992) that requires fulfilling to avoid being positioned negatively, such as a tease. The obligation to continue sex to ensure male orgasm is instilled through obligation and this is even more apparent if they have been gifted an orgasm. The enforced obligation is reflective of disciplinary power operating to coerce women in to performing sex in response to male desires.

Women without desire

In the male/female binary, male is categorised as dominant and female as "other" through the absence of a penis. Davies (1990) explains that femaleness is constructed as a lack; a lack of substance, a lack of ability, a lack of identity, a lack of sexuality. Jackson and Cram (2003) stipulate that women are positioned through heterosexual male discourses that subordinate women's sexuality. Fine and McClelland (2006) explain desire by placing sexual activity within the context of social and interpersonal structures that constitute the act of "wanting". The act of wanting assumes that sexual freedom renders desire as an entitlement to institutional and structural resources for healthy sexuality. However, the operation of the sexual double standards that produce women as objects to be acted upon, with limited agency in sexual activities that prioritises male pleasure, ensures women's disconnection from the body occurs (Lamb, 2010) which leads to a desexualised state of being, where silence become equated to lack (Costa et al., 2009). The absence of a desire discourse further compounds women's inferior position and stigmatises female initiated sexual activities, including masturbation, and non-penetrative sexual relations (Gavey et al., 1999; Gilbert, Walker, McKinney, & Snell 1999; Jackson & Cram, 2003).

Regan and Atkins (2006) explain that sexual desire, as something distinct and separate from genital sexual arousal persists through arousal and orgasm and can even persist after orgasm contrary to the Masters and Johnson's sexual response cycle. For example, as Basson (2000) explains, sexual arousal for women is more often recognised as emotional anticipation, more related to the enjoyment of the sexual stimulus (partner for example) and less about the perception of genital changes. Additionally, sociocultural influences ensure conformity to gender-specific positions where social scripts authorise the appropriate feelings and responses to desire and sexual activity. For women, this position has generally been an informed space of response rather than active pleasure. This can lead to internal conflict where women are unable to actively perform the own desire through the social sanctioning of their sexual bodies, especially if they speak their sexuality in public. For example, there are very few public spaces that women's masturbation is represented (Yuxin & Ying, 2009). In this way women's self-pleasure is not absent but secreted and silenced by powerful regulations and social sanctions. Kaestle and Allen (2011) suggest that if masturbation for women was openly discussed and sanctioned then the possibility for women to discursively negotiate their pleasures may become possible. Female desire, sexuality and masturbation are so powerfully complete that they contest phallocentric dominance by empowering women to fulfil their own sexual desires without relinquishing control to male dominance and this poses a threat to male primacy (Gilbert et al., 1999; Puppo, 2013; Yuxin & Ying, 2009).

Women's desire is silenced through institutional power that disciplines individual and social bodies, through education systems. Fine and McClelland (2006) suggest there are negative effects on marginalised groups that negate sexual expression, especially through continued moral discourses that promote the institutions of marriage and reproduction that silence pleasures. As Sieg (2007) reminds us, the education curriculum includes no reference to female pleasure or orgasmic possibilities. A negative outcome of this silencing are the ways in which men are able to verbalise their sexuality without fear of repercussions (Gilfoyle et al., 1992). Costa et al. (2009) found that it was difficult for women to speak about desires outside of a formed relationship demonstrating limited discursive space where women's desires can be spoken of as something separate to and outside of male desire. Levine (2003) suggests that the differences produced through the drive/desire binary becomes a political site where the need for negotiation is possible.

The permissive discourse also provides possibilities in which a negotiated mutual intersubjective sexuality may emerge (Sieg, 2007). Although this is a possibility, Davies (1990) reminds us, we as women need to speak our desires out of silence and into society in order to create new ways of thinking and being. Fine and McClelland (2006) argue that such a space recognises women's political, social and sexual desires. Numerous theorists propose the importance of political space allowing for women's desires including the legitimate teaching of women's desires in sex education, reducing the distance between desire and possibility for women (Allen, 2003; Fine & McClelland, 2006; Lamb, 2010).

History, culture, and the legitimacy of heterosexuality have positioned women as 'other' to men, and displacing women's articulation of desire into the unsayable. Because sexuality is a gendered action it is situated within social power relations of domination and subordination thereby rendering the normalised masculine vision of women's sexuality as incomplete, inaccurate and misleading. By considering women's location in heterosexual normativity as a product of political and social inequality resulting from their positioning within intersecting social localities, research that attends to women's

sexuality and desire as intricately linked gendered power relationships (Krekula, 2007) also sets the conditions for emerging a new space of which to speak of our bodily desire.

Transforming meaning by opening spaces

If we continue to speak the same language to each other, we will reproduce the same story.

(Irigaray, 1980, p. 81)

It is both a possibility and an aim of this research to transform meanings of sexual pleasure and desire for women through opening spaces for the possibility of counter narratives and points of resistance. Dominant discourses can become so entrenched in society so that they become seen as 'common sense'. It is at this site that insight into new discursive construction can be valuable to forming a new narrative (Burr, 2003; Willig, 2008). Hollway (2001) suggests that realising disruptive counter-narratives opens new discourses to emerge alternative subject positions. These new or previously unvoiced discourses afford the possibility of alternate ways of existing and create new opportunities for constructing women's sexuality. Research that attends to gendered social power relations in the production of research knowledge is a tenet of feminist research (Coombes, & Morgan, 2001) and bring new narratives to the production of knowledge that Gilfoyle et al. (1992) argue is necessary to the project that enables women to actively engage and create culturally (politically) knowledge of their sexuality.

Dominant discourses appear natural, and appeal to common sensibilities. By doing so they appear impartial and gain authority over the general populace of the time and space in which they have developed. These discourses, support and maintain existing power relations, because they constitute subjectivities. As an example, systems of meaning such as feminist theory is limited in their power to transform women's knowledge because they are marginalised within disciplinary boundaries and the social sanctions for speaking from the margins does not open opportunities for new subject positions. Weedon (1987, 1999) argued that women's access to new knowledge is disjointed and contradictory due to the continual discursive battle over meaning, and this opens up spaces for diversity of meanings and subjectivities. Post-feminist claims to having the freedoms to choose to conform to subjugated femininity or to resist, reject and challenge them is limited. Rather than a simple choice, it is what Gavey (1989) suggests, a discursive battle for individual subjectivities.

Although there has been a long history of attending to women's knowledge within feminist research (Hollway, 2001), it is the goal of feminist poststructuralism to disrupt oppressive dominant discourses and increase the availability of alternate discourses for women to utilise and position themselves within (Gavey, 1989). Foucault (1978, 1990) refutes traditional concepts of sexuality by arguing that If sexuality and desires are repressed, prohibited and silenced then merely speaking them into existence or speaking about them has the appearance of a purposeful disobedience. Any person who divulges in such forbidden language places her/his self to a certain extent outside the reach of power; they disrupt established norms and regulations; they start to anticipate the coming freedom.

And in anticipation of coming sexual freedom, this research attends to women's knowledge of their experiences of sexual desire through hearing their stories. I anticipate finding space for new narratives to emerge that transform women's potential for desire and pleasure.

CHAPTER FOUR- Methodology

Reflexivity –Myself; how do I fit in?

Them as can do, has to do for them as can't. And someone has to speak up for them as has no voices.

Terry Pratchett-The wee free men (2003, p. 196)

As Foucaultian Discourse Analysis has been useful to feminist post structuralism, to understand gendered social power relationships, including the relationship between a researcher and the 'subject/object' of interest. Traditionally, the researcher and object of interest are assumed to be distinct and independent from one another; the object is something that exists regardless of the subject's own awareness. This means that the researcher's job is to 'discover' knowledge or 'truth' regarding the object. Willig (2001) suggests that the traditional research process is viewed more like the production of a meal following step by step instruction, and performed in such a manner that it is replicable and formatted explicitly. The presumption is that the resulting understandings will be impartial, and without bias (Willig 2001). It ignores the relationship between the researcher and her investment in the research.

Poststructuralist research does not deny the influence of the researcher or separate the researcher from the object of interest, as 'knowledge' is assumed to be socially constructed (Harper, 2006). If researchers are socially situated/disciplined subjects, then we cannot remove our influence from the wider social/cultural/historical context in which we are also located. Therefore, the recognition that meaning is produced in context, including the time and place and the interaction with what and whom (i.e. the social interaction at the time) means then that research must also be considered to be contextually produced, and in this way it is situationally produced, and not the 'truth' of the object.

Willig (2001) suggests that the researcher cannot be separate to the phenomenon under investigation due to the relationship she holds with the research question and the interactions she has with the participants. Thus, the researcher co-constructs the 'knowledge' that is obtained in research (Gergen, 1999) and can be seen as an additional 'participant' in research.

Parker (1990) argues that reflexivity is an indication that the researcher has identified with a discourse; in order to acknowledge a discourse, the subject is required to draw on their personal discursive repertoire as a socially situated subject. As it is not entire discourses that are represented in speech, rather statements that make up part of a discourse, it is the researcher who imparts their understanding of discourse to 'fill in the gaps' and identify the wider systems of meaning informing the speaker (Parker, 1990). This process is also a practice of reflexivity, and forms the research product as produced. Researchers are producing meaning from a particular position in the social/political hierarchy. The researcher brings the narratives of the participants into a meaningful text through their understanding of discourse, perhaps also resulting in personal ethical and moral dilemma for the researcher (Coombes, & Morgan, 2001).

It is therefore important to acknowledge my position as researcher and the influence I have over the final research product. I have chosen the research question, selected the articles to make up

my literature review, carefully constructing the argument I was aiming to show and locate my analysis. Therefore, in the context of a qualitative research process that invites reflexivity, this has been an important part of my engagement with the text.

Being reflexive also involved an appreciation of the personal stake that I have in this research, as a result of the experiences that I, as a woman, have encountered with sex and sexuality. To address my personal stake in this research, I have been careful to locate my interpretations in the text itself and have understood the text to be situated within wider systems of meaning- not statements coming from the actual individuals. In doing so, I try to avoid making assumptions about the actual participants involved, by focusing on what discourses *do*, or how they *position us* and by examining them in their own right. This has been an important part of my research process, considering my sometimes frustrated responses to the social power relations that inform sexuality were reiterated in and through the voices that motivated me to undertake this research.

Finally, my position as the 'researcher' in the construction of this research needs consideration. It is my analysis that is heard in place of those who have participated in the generation of this knowledge. My input and my interpretations have been moulded within the dominant institution of psychology as a social science. By placing sexual behaviours within social context and power relations, I try to disrupt social power relations between the 'researcher' and the 'researched' by implicating all of us in relation to women's sexuality as a *social* problem. However, whilst making space within this analysis for the identification of alternative discourses, I will at the same time avoid privileging alternative discourses, so as not to reinforce oppressive power relations (Hook, 2001).

Therefore, in order to honour the assumptions of this research it is necessary to acknowledge my own presence as the writer. Who am I? How do I locate this research? What does it aim to do?

Myself as a woman and as researcher

I am 44 year old woman from rural New Zealand who has indulged in a range of sexual activities with a variety of different men since the age of 17 years. I have been privileged to have had a wonderfully sexual marriage with my husband of 24 years with whom I have had the most incredibly sexually fulfilling time, not to say there have not been occasions when the sex has been only okay, but it has never been unsatisfactory.

In my time prior to marriage I have experienced pain, distress, wonder and dissatisfaction in my sexual encounters. I have had sex with a lot of men, I have had sex or sexual encounters with men I did not want to, I have had sex for money, I have had sex for power and I have had sex as an expression of love. I have discussed sex with thousands of the women that I encounter along the way. I have been fascinated with sex for as long as I can remember. I masturbated from childhood and had my first orgasm at age eight, without the limits of understanding that became more visible later. I sought orgasm regularly although rarely orgasmed through sexual encounters with men until I met a young farmer who took the time to acknowledge that not only was I there but that I mattered. By this time, I was 20 years of age. I never looked back and from that moment sex with men became another pleasurable act for orgasm.

My discussions with other women have lead me to understand that I am somewhat unusual in my enjoyment of sex, my ability to orgasm and my sexual inhibitions. I have a desire to help women in the fulfilment of better and more satisfactory sexual encounters. My hope is that by learning

about women's sexual desires we can learn a language of desire, and I hope this image is reflected in the writing of this thesis. I have learnt on this journey that pleasure and sexual satisfaction change meaning overtime, and I have come to recognise that for me as a result of interviewing the women who participated in this research and beyond and writing about women's sexuality.

At the point of interaction the knowledge is existence may even change as one's own values and beliefs are discussed and disseminated.

(Velody & Williams, 1998, p. 36).

I am totally humbled by this experience.

Feminist Poststructuralist Discourse Analysis and Embodiment

Alongside locating myself as a sexually desiring woman, the assumptions made in this research in relation to knowledge (how it can be obtained and the kind of knowledge research can produce) is informed through feminist post-structuralist theory and discourse analysis. What and how we know depend on who we are, that is, on the knowers historical locus and his or her position in the social hierarchy. This appreciation is critical to post-structuralist understandings of research as a social movement concerned with how meaning is embodied, both constructed and transformed, through gendered social practices. Feminist post-structuralist theorists consider that women's bodies occupy a subordinate and substantially different position from men in dominant patriarchal culture. Thus, the generation of knowledge must start with the lives of women; yet even with this view the post-structuralist approach does not consider women's lives to be either reducible or universal.

A post-structuralist view posits, that experience and acuity are negotiated through historical, cultural and linguistic operations (Willig, 2001). Within a post-structuralist epistemology, rather than an availability of 'truth' through observation, the world is recognised as being given meaning through the way it is constructed and negotiated as interactive (Weedon, 1999). Feminist post-structuralism offers a mode of knowledge that understands that is through social performances, language and discourse that subjectivity is established (Gavey, 1989). When we speak we are applying and/or creating a particular set of meanings to make our talk intelligible.

From a post-structuralist position, reality cannot be separated from the meanings given it through language; instead of one reality, Willig (2001) reminds us there are always multiple and competing realities which are situated in and relative to the speaker's personal experiences. Investigating the discrepancies that multiple discourses create is paramount to understanding how people essentially draw on several discourses at once, to form logical, coherent and rational articulations. Parker (2005) reminds us that these irregularities and contradictions also combine to form the social world, by reflecting the ways in which people operate through discursive regulations that enable and constrain particular actions. For instance, because discourse enables particular materialities whilst constraining others, people are required to draw on multiple and sometimes conflicting discourses to construct selected accounts and achieve certain subject/object performances in the social world. These social performances are necessary to the process of making sense of our world, in these moments shared meanings are created, producing standard or normalised situations that are recognised as cultural norms, traditions and discourses (Crawford et al., 1994).

Discourse influences interpretations and understanding of the world and our experiences within it. In addition, Gavey (1989) explains, discourses are multiple and open to change; both the formation and change coincide time, location, culture and socio-political context. Discourse analysis therefore stresses the performative functions of language and examines the way multiple discourses are utilised to do certain things (Willig, 2001). This co-articulation between discourses provides opportunity for new understandings to emerge (Parker, 1990). Power, is both produced by and operates through discourse and according to a poststructuralist view is neither positive, negative nor oppressive (Sawicki, 1986; Willig, 2013). Power ultimately informs what is able to be recognised as 'fact' through authorised dominant discourses that is also sensitive to socio-historical changes. Dominant discourses function to uphold the power of those whose formulation of truth is in operation at the time. In other words, discourses both legitimise and reinforce existing dominant social structures, and hierarchies which in turn further reproduce the discourses (Willig, 2013).

Both language and knowledge are situated in discourse and the availability of certain normalised discourse mean we draw upon discourse dependant on our social locality to construct our experiences and thus our social realities (Gavey, 1989). Language, as a medium of knowledge transmission, along with power and knowledge are intimately connected with discourse. Language is therefore both constructed and constructive. It is constructed in that, talk and text are assembled by selecting from the available linguistic repertoire within particular cultures or social groups. Each setting makes available collections of words, meanings and expressions. As constructive, language is far from a passive means for conveying ideas, language actively creates social meanings and is used to perform particular functions in particular contexts (Gergen, 1985). It is in and through language that the world is given particular meanings; meanings that locate people and objects in certain ways. Meaning therefore does not originate from discursive constructions, as they draw from and at the same moment reproduce available discourses in the representation of particular objects (Parker, 1990). Language therefore actively does things in so much as it positions subjects and objects in relation to other subjects and objects. Discourse produces *objects*, and *subjects*; therefore discourse analysis seeks to understand subject positioning (Willig, 2013). Parker (1990) states reference to an object turns it, through language, into a *reality*; nothing truly exists until spoken into reality. Subject positions influence how a person performs within their social world, by providing a normalised trajectories of seeing and being (Gavey, 1992; Hollway, 1989). Subject positions do not make up the individuals, nor are they natural traits - they are discursive locations from which a person can perform within a structure of privileges and responsibilities (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008). As a discursive location, these positions are always already contested (Gavey, 1989; Willig, 2013). In this way, our understandings of how, who, when and where to engage in sex involve certain ways of talking about these positions that both draw on socially available meanings and have particular situational and social actions or consequences.

For Foucault, particular patterns or sets of understandings of the world (and the objects and subjects within it), can be identified, through discourse, which set the conditions of possibility. The production of 'knowledge' and subject positions work together to enable particular ways of 'seeing' and 'being', and also constrain alternatives (Willig, 2013). As well as providing normalised ways of understanding the world and objects in it, discourses similarly define individual subjectivity and lived experience; the 'self' as fluid and dynamic, has multiple options for expression and experience, positioned in systems of meaning. Discourses produce subject positions that enable and constrain

what is able to be said, who may say it, where and when (Willig, 2001). These subject positions have direct implications for people's subjectivity and experience, as through social power regulations that individuals learn what to think, feel and act. Willig (2001) explains that this occurs as power makes available certain discourse and thus certain subject positions giving rise to a conformed social or cultural self. Subjectivity refers to the way discursive power relations are directly connected to mental processes, emotions and material experiences of individuals who occupy certain subject positions (Willig, 2013). Foucaultian discourse analysis therefore looks to the effects of discourse in social relations in general, and also the direct implications for the specific subject (Willig, 2013).

Foucault (1978) reminds us that language, discourse and power are always linked, as power always constitutes what is acknowledged as 'truth' through the favoring of particular discourses and the rejection of others (Hall, 1992). Thus, power in Foucaultian understanding is present in every social interaction and is both productive and creative, and is fundamental in the production of social understanding (Foucault, 1978, 1982). In relation to gender for example, rather than the imposition of direct restrictions on appropriate behaviours or performances the spoken construction of gender, bodies, and sexuality produces a certain version of the world and a certain way of being. Men and women are restricted in what they are able to do or express and what others may do or express through dominant discourses that are produced and reproduced relating to gender, bodies, and sexual activity. The way the world is constructed then has implications for relationships of power.

We also live our material and social lives through our bodies, and this embodiment is a crucial lens through which to understanding of gender and sexuality. As Bartky (1990) argues, our experience of the world is experienced within our bodies and is created from the way our physical form perceives things. In disagreement with Descartes and Merleau-Ponty, the dualistic state of disembodiment (I think, and so I am) has shifted to one where the ability to rationalise is enabled and constrained by embodiment (I can only think through what I am) (Morgan, 2005). Living in and through our bodies therefore heavily influences how we interact with others and the world, and how we negotiate meanings around bodies' gender and sexuality (Butler, 1990). This research locates gender as an overarching and intricate component of the social and material worlds women are positioned in. Feminist researchers have argued that gender is of primary importance to the way we perform appearance, movement, action and living (e.g. Bordo, 1993).

Gender is particularly important in relation to bodies, and the embodiment of sexuality. For example, the meanings and experiences of being female or male has implications for how men and women live sexual experiences in and through their bodies. Feminist writers have often led the way in highlighting not just the importance of gender, but also the importance of theorising the body (Braun, 2000). Utilising these lenses (feminism and embodiment) allows a recognition that the way people construct bodies and associated phenomena (such as sexuality), including taking up or resisting certain discourses and positions, will be influenced by their gendered embodied subjectivity, their being-in-the-world, which incorporates the physical bodily form as well as a context of socialisation, material objects and available discourse. While this research primarily focuses on the talk of eight women, it is written with an appreciation of the complex interactions between embodiment and discourse.

Utilising a Feminist Poststructuralist perspective, therefore, allows for investigation into the gendered social power relations in which women understand messages around bodies, femininity and

sexuality, that are open to the uncertainties of everyday talk and the expansive possibilities of resistance, as well as with an awareness of socio-cultural and political context. Feminist Poststructuralist discourse analysis also opens up the possibility for creating positive change in regards to women's sexuality, through challenging taken-for-granted ideas and creating the conditions for different understandings. This in turn, enables an examination of the limitations of how we currently understand women's sexuality and transform it.

Method

Going through ethics

The ethical conduct of the research was evaluated by peer review and deemed low risk by Massey University Human Ethic Committee (MUHEC). Although this is an everyday conversation among women, the researcher had approached several agencies for consultation and support as unlike the everyday, the researcher is not a friend. These agencies were available if the need arose and included women's refuge, rape crisis, and a women's health collective who were consulted and offered letters of support prior to meeting the requirements for ethical research (see Appendix A- letter of support ARCs 22/10/2014, see Appendix B- Letter of support Women's Health Collective 24/10/2014, see Appendix C- Letter of support Women's refuge 22/10/2014).

The researcher was also protected throughout the research process by regular contact with her research supervisor. While the research was unlikely to have any negative effects, safety of the participants and researcher were considered. For example, given that interviews were often located at the homes of participants, some of whom I had not previously met, my supervisor was advised of these interview times and locations, and was contacted prior to and following the interviews. This also provided the opportunity for debriefing as required.

Snowballing

Recruitment for participation was completed through the process of snowball sampling as it results in purposeful sampling and is used widely in qualitative research within the social sciences (Polkinghorne, 2005). Snowball sampling allows a sense of personal agency (Wilkinson, 1998) and advocates ownership of participation and contributions among the participants through familiarisation with the research process (Noy, 2008). Based on the principle that sharing experiences during conversation with others is normal and common to everyday lives, utilising social interaction and conversation about the ordinary is a form of connectedness for women.

Snowball sampling allows researchers to reach an increasing number of participants through contact with an initial participant. I (researcher) notified both family and friends of the research, its nature and purpose, along with contact details, and asked them to pass the information on to anyone they knew who might be interested in participating

Potential participants were provided with a participant information sheet (see Appendix D) that informed them that I (the researcher) was interested in women's stories about sexuality and desire. Participants were fully informed of the nature and purpose of the research, in addition to my commitment to ensuring their participation remained voluntary and confidential. They were also fully informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any point until analysis had begun, their right to refuse to answer any questions, and their right to review and make changes to their

interview transcript. They were also advised of the support services that had been contacted and were available for counselling or assistance should the need arise

From there, anyone who was willing engage expressed their willingness to be involved in the research by directly contacting me (the researcher). An email address was created for the purpose of the research and provided to participants to communicate with the researcher. The email address was disabled upon the completion of the research project.

We women

For this research, women's stories were gathered and then transcribed for analysis. I (researcher) completed conversational interviews with eight women due to the well-established criteria of data saturation. As O'Reilly and Parker (2012) stipulate, the sample is deemed adequate when the research questions are answered and at the point where nothing new is being generated. Bowen (2008) suggests that adequacy of sampling relates to the demonstration that saturation has been attained, equating to depth as well as breadth of information being reached. Mason (2010) argues that the pool should be large enough to capture a range of experiences but not overly so where it would become repetitious, and the common guiding principle is saturation.

The women who agreed to participate were all over eighteen years old and had at some time engaged with sexual relations within a heterosexual context. The women were all demographically located within the Manawatu /Horowhenua district. The women ranged in age from 27 to 56 years old. Two of the women identified as Māori, one as Scottish and one as English, six identified as Pākehā New Zealanders. Two of the women had engaged in sexual relations with only one partner and both remained in long term relationships with that partner. Two of the women were currently single and the remaining were in relationships. Several of the women were brought up in religious communities, were currently practising, or in a relationship with partner who was practising with imposed boundaries around their movements sexual and otherwise. Two of the women had experienced instances of rape. Two of the women had worked in the sex industry as prostitutes. The number of sexual partners in the women's experiences ranged between 1 and hundreds. Some of the women who had engaged in uncountable sexual encounters had not exchanged sex for money. One participant was engaged in counselling to support her participation in the research, and expressed her gratefulness for inclusion in the opportunity to share her experiences for this research.

How do these demographics matter to the research? Firstly, the age group is broad and offers several generational differences, therefore any similarities would provide evidence of generational consistencies in the positions of women over time. The cultural differences allow a view of colonised women who experience a double oppression within gender and western discourse and therefore are positioned through particular marginalities. Migrants offer further intersections of marginality. The number of sexual partners is a particular site of contest over meanings of gendered sexuality. Religious values offer particular trajectories of morality on sexuality. It is well understood when conducting research with women and sexuality that sexual violence histories may emerge, so how they impact on women's desire is important to this research.

Interviews

The women were offered a place that afforded them comfort and privacy. For the most part the women chose to have the interviews conducted at their own home. One of them took place in the office of the researcher, and one in a grass area in a public space. Prior to conducting the interviews, the women had been sent an information sheet outlining the aims of the research, including a list of several agencies that had offered their support should the need arise out of discomfort or distress during or after the interviews.

On initial physical contact and before the interview process began the participants were shown another copy of the information sheet and any questions were answered that they may have had. Participants were notified that they could withdraw consent up until such time as they had signed the transcript release. We also talked about confidentiality and privacy. We also talked about what was expected of their participation, and that they were not required to answer any particular questions, and there were no expectations of right answers. I explained that rather than asking questions, I was interested in the stories they wanted to tell.

A consent form (see Appendix E) was signed only after the participants were advised that the interviews were to be recorded by Dictaphone. Before the official interview took place, there was a period of unrecorded discussion about general wellbeing and relationship building.

The interviews took at least one hour and were conducted using conversational interviewing that attended to the women's stories of their experiences of heterosex. Conducting the interviews as conversations accounted for the ordinariness of sexuality in everyday life. The interviews were conversation driven, with participants leading the conversation having been informed as to the research topic of interest. Prompts and questioning to encourage talk in response to their stories. Distress to participants was not expected due to the ordinariness of sex and heterosexual relationships in our lives.

The researcher did have some particular areas of interest to bring into the conversation, however she allowed the participants the freedom to talk about things that they may have found relevant, and this generated some new and interesting ideas to emerge. Only one of the participants became distressed during the interview and was well supported in her participation through access to her counsellor, which had been negotiated in advance of participation. For the most-part, all of the interviews were light hearted and included large amounts of laughter. Interviews ended once the researcher felt the conversation had come to an end. However, in two instances, the post interview talk returned to sex and we negotiated further recording.

It is acknowledged by the researcher that she was very nervous and that her first interview was possibly not as relaxed as would have been ideal, although she has kept in touch with this participant and there has been no need to re-interview. It would be fair to say that her interviewing technique and comfort with the process grew with each interview. This also reflects the co-construction of the text, as in the process the conversations shifted and changed through the experience.

Several of the women sent texts to thank the researcher for the experience and these have been added as reflections in between chapters as have the reflections of the interviewer.

Transcribing

Each one hour (sometimes slightly more) interview was downloaded to the computer of the researcher and then transcribed. Each transcript took at least six hours to complete and at times several rewinds and slow downs and speed ups were necessary to ensure that each transcript was completed verbatim. The researcher included pauses, laughter and crying in the transcripts.

On completion of a transcript it was sent to the participant through email along with a Release of Transcript form (see Appendix F), as had been discussed and they were given an opportunity to amend or add to their words. None of the participants amended or added to their transcript and they were all signed off for release.

Once the transcripts were released the Dictaphone was wiped and the recordings were deleted from the researcher's computer. The transcripts were then saved in a double coded file with names and identities deleted and pseudonyms added to ensure anonymity. The consent forms and release of transcript forms have been given to Dr Leigh Coombes (research supervisor) who has ensured they are locked away in a safe place at Massey University.

Learning to read

By my own recognition I work in unsystematic ways, which has been really apparent in the way I have analysed my data. I printed each transcript out five times (thankfully because the cats ate some of them) and read through each one highlighting anything that caught my eye, or stood out, or that I found intriguing. I picked up any transcript at any time and re-read it. This is something I did for about four months without writing anything from the transcripts down. At any time when I couldn't focus on writing I would just read the transcripts. I followed no basic pattern, but noticed that some basic patterns of discourse started to present themselves. I spent hours mulling over meanings and reading the transcripts. As Coombes and Morgan (2001) remind us the researcher bring the transcripts into their understanding of the discourses.

I jotted down some random words that I saw repeated in the transcripts and used them as potential headings. I then proceeded to add quotes from the transcripts to the analysis section under those potential headings in my draft work. As I did this I recognised more discursive patterns and found that some things belonged in more than one place. In order to become more succinct, I started to write down why I had this particular quote down and why under this heading. By doing this I was able to start understanding the six stages as set out by Willig (2001) and actually start fully processing what it was I was actually attempting to analyse, why I was doing it and what I was trying to achieve. The very nature of the thesis meant that quotes moved repeatedly, headings changed and very slowly the entire piece of work started to tell a story from front to back.

Foucaultian Discourse Analysis (FDA) offers a particular detailed approach to the research of psychological and social worlds by pondering broader contexts, and carefully scrutinising discourses rather than imposing a single theoretical framework. With an aim of revealing power relations, Foucault argued that discourses comprise bodies of knowledge which produce and reproduce social institutions (Hollway, 1997; Hall, 1992). Foucault aimed to reveal how particular discourses work to sustain systems of social meaning which regulate and control people without appearing anything but natural (McNay, 1994).

Method of Analysis

Willig, (2001) suggests that FDA can be performed wherever meaning exists and outlined an abridged version incorporating six stages that make up a Foucaultian discourse analysis: (1) discursive constructions, (2) discourses, (3) action orientation, (4) positioning's, (5) practice and (6) subjectivity. Firstly, discursive constructions must be identified by examining the shared meanings present. In this research, the shared sexual script must be examined which may reveal a construction of the importance of orgasm.

Secondly, differences in constructions must be identified and each construction placed within wider discourses. This step identifies the multiple discourses that are drawn upon, for example the specific discourses that inform the sexual script. For example, the construction of pretending orgasm draws upon a discourse of biological markers for evidence of sex.

Thirdly, the influence of these discourses must be examined. This involves questioning what the particular construction achieves, how it functions and how it interlinks with other constructions. For example, a discourse of biology limits outcome possibilities within sexual encounters by constructing orgasm as 'natural' or 'right' and interacts with the coital imperative so that each discourse upholds the other.

Fourthly, the subject positions that are available and accessible are identified. This involves looking not only at the subject positions taken up by the women in the study but also at the subject positions that others are placed in and the exploration of this particular way of viewing oneself, others and the world. This also involves identifying how women are positioned in and through the discourses, and this raises issues of choice; i.e. what positions are enabled or constrained. For example, women may take up a nurturing position that justifies obligation to pretend orgasm in that it avoids hurting men's feelings, thus men are positioned as having natural sexual needs that need to be cared for and women are the carers.

Fifthly, the implications of these constructions and subject positions are examined. This step looks at the actions, talk and understandings/interpretations that are both enabled and restricted; it defines the conditions of possibility that reflect, reproduce and reinforce particular discourses. This may involve looking at how women talk about/understand orgasm, their lack of choice as a result of men's expectations of sexual acts due to obligation and the justification and sense making that occurs after the sexual encounter.

Lastly, individual experience that results from the taking up of certain subject positions are examined- i.e. the costs and benefits, what's in it for them, but at the same time what is being lost? This takes into account the positive or negative feelings the women express by positioning themselves in certain ways or within (or against) certain discourses. For example, women may express satisfaction that they were able to nurture their sexual partner's needs though pretending orgasm, so although no harm has occurred to them and their standing as good partners remains, yet at the same time, they might also articulate that their needs are not being fully met.

CHAPTER FIVE- Analysis and Discussion

My Analysis their words.

No-one tells you how to eat a bowl of cereal- Learning Sex

One of the most important understandings of poststructuralist research is that how we produce knowledge is pivotal to the development of women's power and self-agency (Willig, 2008). In this research, one of the questions I was interested in was how women gain their knowledge about sex. In formations of knowledge, parents, institutions, peers, and interactions with others work together to form knowledge and dominant discourses which then produce subjects (Crawford et al., 1994; Gavey, 1989). For the women in this research, when talking about how they understood sex in the context of growing up, a dominant discourse emerged that located sex in romance. According to Diamond (2003, 2004) romantic love is constructed as the motivation related to feelings of connectedness and the tendency to pursue commitment with one partner. The discourse of romantic love assumes feminine sexuality is passive, and drawing on this discourse, the women assume that men will love and protect them (Gavey & McPhillips, 1999). In this way, romantic love discourse can be seen to exist in partnership with the have/hold discourse that is drawn on later in the women's accounts. In romantic love, displays of affection communicate internal states of emotion of the sender and also provide information on the status of the relationship between the sender and the receiver of the affection (Gonzaga, Turner, Keltner, Campos, & Altemus, 2006). In the have/hold discourse the notion of romance is drawn on through waiting for the right man to sweep in to the rescue, which is reflected in western fairy-tales such as Snow White and Cinderella. Fairy-tales both discipline women into fulfilling feminine roles and produce disenchantment for women (Sieg, 2007). Displays of affection are an expectation of romantic love and something notably absent from the accounts of the women in this research. These missing accounts operated to constrain any ability by the women to approach their parents for informative sexual knowledge.

Me "how did your parents do sex? Did you see them, were they sexual around each other?"

Hannah "Not really, not really, I walked in on them once. Oops, Laughs."

Hannah "They weren't into public displays of affection."

Stacey "No I don't remember seeing any affection between them, they were always arguing, I remember that but no affection."

Michelle "there was no kind of handholding or hugging, there was very little affection in our house."

A discourse of romantic love is drawn on here to explain how women's sexuality is an outpouring of continued affection not a private event. By witnessing a lack of affection, women have difficulty reconciling the romantic love discourse that informs their early knowledge of relationships through fairy-tales that are read to them as children and fairy-tale marriages that are portrayed through media. In romantic love discourse, beautiful and worthy women are rescued by heroes who willingly display affection as part of their emotional outpouring, however in the households of the women in this research the reality was very different. In this way, romance discourse places women in subservient positions effectively fostering opportunities for male coercion, manipulation and obligation (Jackson, 2001). This paradox between lived experience and taught understandings

constrains women's conceptualisation of romantic relationships. The romantic love discourse enables masculine power by positioning women as delicate, beautiful, perfect, and in need of rescuing. At this stage, the knowledge gleaned by the women did not address sex or sexuality and knowledge about desire was missing.

Melanie "I mean they gave each other a little kiss on the cheek, not a full-on snog, maybe a little peck. My parents were more they'd tell each other they loved each other but as far as sexual play between them I don't really recall seeing anything?"

Susan "No, I can remember once that I noticed that they were doing something sexual. I mean they would give each other pecks on the cheek when they left for work and that kind of stuff."

The dominance of the romantic love discourse was evident when the women were making sense of their own experiences when they were younger. The romantic love discourse was again evident in the next account, as Joanne drew on the discourse to make sense of how her relationships with men positioned her as something other than a "proper Lady."

Joanne "seeing my dad buying flowers or treating her like a proper lady and not just like two flatmates then I would probably have learnt that was how I should be treated but I never saw that so yeah."

Joanne locates her father as responsible for her subjugation in as much as he did not display affection towards her mother so did not fit with the understanding Joanne developed by socialisation to the romantic love discourse. Morgan and Zurbriggen (2007) remind us that parents (including fathers) are necessary to the socialisation of knowledge regarding gender as they continue to speak certain discourses that position others and themselves in certain ways. A continued silencing of women's sexuality by simple patriarchal limiting of affectionate responses limits daughters' experiences. In the women's accounts of their parents' sexual relationships, mothers were positioned as sexless which further works to constrain sexual conversations between mother and daughter. This also limited the possibility of talking about sex with their mothers. Therefore, when mothers do not have access to the discursive resources to articulate their own sexual subjectivity, they are unable to provide their daughters with access to a discourse.

Tracey "I tried to talk to mum when I was in my teens and do you know why? She'd never been told either so she thought it was ok."

Not having a language to talk about sex suggests that the relationships between mothers and daughters has become so through its shared silence that women's sexuality has continued to be inarticulable. The romantic love discourse that positions women as sexless and positions women as responsive to men's sexual activity is also a form of disciplinary power that regulates what can be said between mothers and daughters. The have/hold discourse which upholds fairy-tale understandings of happily ever after and being swept off your feet with no mention of sexual desire or even sex works to further constrain sexual conversation between mothers and daughters other than warnings of the dangerousness of sex.

Michelle "the only conversation was no sex before marriage."

Women's positioning within the have/hold discourse, controls women's sexuality through risk. Have/hold discourse is closely linked with monogamous relationships and invokes the required

norms for women's conduct. Kristeva (1981) reminds us of the power of the have/hold discourse and the ways in which it regulates female sexual activity and sexuality through the risks of slander. This also implies that a virgin woman is a commodity with virginity an asset not to be surrendered outside of the confines of marriage. In this way women's sexuality is controlled through threats of lack of social standing by making oneself unmarriageable through engaging in premarital sex. When this is the only conversation and the only discourse made available to young women they are positioned as powerless within their own sexual desires and women's sexuality remains missing.

Susan "I had two talks with my parents about anything sexual in my life. One was when I was 19yrs about periods with my mum, dad wasn't there and I had had my period for a while. And the other was about six months before I got married about contraception."

Susan "nothing about pleasure and nothing about sex itself."

Again, a have/hold discourse is drawn on to teach that the dangers of women's sexuality in relation to her reproductive capacity which needs to be disciplined. Dunn and Vik (2014) consider that this form of control over women's bodies and sexual freedoms ensures men's authority in the control and confirmation of parenthood. Reducing women's sexuality to biological understandings means that women are only positioned as reproductive vessels and their morality is entirely based on the conception of children within the sanctity of marriage. As Calhoun (2003) reminds us the most prominent social position is that of man and his wife.

One of the women was provided with a sex education book which provided the anatomical working of sexual intercourse that continued to provide a biological understanding of women's sexuality.

Melanie "I learnt about sex when I was really young because my, I don't know if I had been asking where babies came from or what but mum and dad got me that book, where did I come from."

In one woman's account, a counter position within reproductive safety opened up space for discussing women's sexuality. At the same time, the sexual knowledge provided continues to limit female sexual expression to the confines of marriage and children (Guessan, 2011), the mere speaking (by way of providing knowledge) of the function of sex provides opening for discussion and the unspoken can begin to be resisted (McNay, 1999).

The only woman who had open discussions with her parents spoke of increased sexual awareness and more importantly sexual agency.

Alice "they did talk about it, you know they are very open to talk to about sex and all sorts of stuff but she never really displayed a hell of a lot."

Alice "oh yeah her and dad sat us down and talked to us about sex and mum was the one saying, you know it should be, it's not a dirty thing, it's not something horrible or disgusting. It should be something you want to do not something that you do because someone else wants to... It should be consensual. It shouldn't be about peer pressure, you know if someone is pressuring you to have sex then obviously you don't want to then it's okay to walk away and say no. So she was very mindful of all those things and took us through that it should be something you enjoy, not something dirty or hidden away, it's just a natural part of life."

This account shows that there are possibilities for resistance to social sanctions that relegate women's sexuality and sexual agency to realms of privacy. A shift is noted here where women's agency in sexual activity is rendered visible. The shift to agentic changes the position of women from one with no sexual agency to one where consent is possible. Foucault reminds us that bringing the private into the public and the unspoken into a place of speaking enables political movement and repositioning of power positions (McNay, 1994). In this account both parents provide an understanding of sex as an enjoyable space where 'no' is also a possibility. Although this account shows a degree of agency for the women as consenting rather than objects of male desire, this 'limited space' of consent enables women to begin to question and discuss options for sexual pleasure as intersubjective participants positioning them as agents in their own sexuality.

Knowledge about sex was also constituted through biological discourse through their embodied experiences of physical markers. This is how Tracey explains her experience of menstruation led to her first discussions about sex.

Researcher "so how did you learn about sex?"

Tracey "I thought babies came from cabbages until I was about 14. Until Auntie (name) told me differently, she was forced to, because when I got my period I thought I was bleeding to death."

The silencing of not just women's sexuality but women's deficit bodies as well ascribes them with meaning equating to something not to be spoken of. Where sex is understood only in relation to reproduction, women are positioned through normalised womanhood. Learning sex then is reduced to the biological and only of necessity when menstruation hits, due to it being equated to reproductive ability and risk of pregnancy.

For one woman the silencing of sex was deeply embedded her social religious location that formed a sexual vacuum in which she was positioned as totally naïve and without knowledge.

Michelle "at high school. I remember thinking I was pregnant when I was 12 and I hadn't even had sex".

Michelle "just like that. Quite by mistake really with a lot of naivety. I was so naïve about everything in the world. Because we were [religious community] we were not you know to be part of the world. So that left me really vulnerable actually, I was hugely vulnerable."

Michelle "I had no idea what sex could or couldn't be or what sex should or shouldn't be. I had no idea."

Patriarchal power has been so effective at silencing women's sexuality that women are left in a position of increased vulnerability with limited ability or knowledge in which to draw on (McHugh, 2006). Informed only by biological discourse and risk talk, women are left with little understanding of what sex is, leaving them vulnerable. In this position of vulnerability and by drawing on the romance discourse women often comply with male sexuality in attempts to discover of their own sexuality. When placed in a vulnerable position, women can be coerced into being sexually available through the male sex drive discourse that prioritises penetrative sex and male orgasm.

A coital imperative coupled with limited discursive resources of women's sexuality continue to reinforce sex as coitus while at the same time limiting possibilities for women's expressions of alternate sexual experiences and pleasure.

Stacey "All you know is that you take your clothes off and intercourse is when the penis goes into the vagina. That's sex, and that's all you know because that's all you are taught at school and you don't have conversations about what sex is."

Given the limited access to discursive resources, women lack a knowledge of pleasure going into sexual relationships. Nicolson and Burr (2003) explain that peer sex talk is often full of myths and impractical ideologies. In this instance, a biological discourse of inherent male sexuality is used to inform and justify continued silencing of women's sexuality. The biological narrative is continued below as Joanne explains;

Joanne "it was probably from friends but again I don't know. Somebody said to me it's like eating a bowl of cereal, you're not taught how to eat a bowl of cereal you just know to put milk in it. So with sex you are not taught how to have sex, you just know. I trusted that and I believe that is actually the case."

A position of 'just knowing' gives a sense of sex being an embodied experience where sexuality is learnt in and through the body. At the same time, it allows and justifies the limitations of agency imposed on women's sexuality by enforcing continued silencing. The continued silence surrounding women's sexuality enables normalised understandings of sex as coitus through biological mechanics to be continually reinforced while limiting women's ability to express full agentic sexual expression.

Limited discursive resources further mean that women often refer to common media representations to inform their personal sexual practices. Pornography is one such mainstream normalised media stream. Antevska and Gavey (2015) found such a discursive climate in which the consumption of pornography was so normalised and naturalised that under normal circumstances its consumers did not have to think about or explain why they wanted to watch it. It is normalised to such an extent that it is readily available in many houses even when everyday discursive resources are not. Relying on such representations which are often characterised by male sexually controlled acts and female submission means women are further able to be coerced into submissive sexual encounters.

Alice "we were young kids and mum and dad were asleep early in the morning, this was back in the day when they had video players and there were all these video's and we were like ohhh we haven't seen that and we stuck it in and it was porn. Laughs."

All of the women in this research had experiences of sex education in school, and the knowledge produced was constructed through biological discourse. It was described as mechanical, based on physiology and through a moral narrative of women being responsible for their own safety by knowing the risks, knowing how to say no, and by knowing the constitution of marriage.

Researcher "What was sex education like at school?"

Melanie "Umm scientific, like I had sex education you get at intermediate is about the mechanics of sex and proper word use. And sex education at third and fourth form was how to say no, never how to say yes, and that was pretty much it."

Joanne "I didn't have any. They told us what having your period was if that counts and men were told what an erection was. I went to catholic school. So no sex before marriage and we didn't even get

taught that. It didn't get spoken about apart from asking what a period was and wet dreams and what wet dreams meant."

Stacey "Oh god, pictures of penis's and pictures of vaginas, how you got pregnant, development of the baby, all that crap really."

Alice "It was more like about your body, you know this is a girl's body and you know she will get her period and that sort of stuff and this is a boy's body and he will have sperm and stuff. So they talked about anatomy but not the act of it."

What is evident in these accounts is the absence of sexual desire and any talk about the possibilities of sexual experience outside of penetrative sex. In this way, sex education draws on the male sex drive discourse where the focus on anatomy limits sex to coitus. At the same time sex education reinforces the silencing of women's desires and positions them as objects of male sex. Sieg (2003, 2007) reminds us that sex education primarily focuses on the biological functions of sex and the risk of pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. A discourse of desire is inherently absent from the current sexual education curriculum (Fine, 1988). The women had no access to talk on women's sexual desires in their experiences of sex education and when talk was about women it was situated within their risk, and the dangers of feminine pleasures not in bodily pleasure. In this way sex education functions to reinforcing the sexual double standard and limits the subject positions available to women within dominant discourses of sexuality.

Researcher "so no pleasure stuff?"

Stacey "oh hell no, they don't teach you about that stuff at school. Heaven forbid, the teachers would all just go bright red."

Susan "and the fact that they don't talk about it in sex Ed (relationships and pleasure) and the fact that they don't talk about female orgasm in sex Ed."

With the evident lack of knowledge of women's bodily pleasures how do women come to negotiate the meaning of sex and sexual pleasure as they form sexual encounters?

Joanne "Umm, I dunno, mostly because I was with my partner and he was probably the first person I really thought I was in love with, even though I wasn't because I was 14. And everyone else was kind of getting to that stage. "

Melanie "And it seemed like everyone was having sex and I was really curious and I really wanted to have sex, and I really liked him, so sort of like yeah, cool."

The construction of feminine sexuality as risk is not limited to reproduction. Women reproduced their positioning as moral sexual subjects locating their curiosity about sex within a monogamous relationship. Women who engage in non-romantic sex, can be afforded with a perilous subject position when it comes sexual negotiation. The have/hold discourse operating here offers women a socially sanctioned position through which to engage in sex, as permissive sexuality is not yet accessible. This is an operation of gendered social power where women are coerced into intercourse as an expression of love. In this way the romantic love discourse leads to sexual coercion.

Some women were coerced into sexual activity through notions of love whereas others positioned themselves through social desire rather than sexual curiosity/desire. Moran and Lee (2014) suggest some women make sexual decisions centred on their appearance to other people, including partners not on their individual needs or desires. Sex, as it is linked to youth sexual discourse is arranged and articulated by way of a cultural understanding that promotes a focus on sexuality and the self as a means to personal development and fulfilment (Attwood, 2016). Being 'up for it' is part of discursive social coercion through normalised trajectories of personal development. Gill (2008) asserts that postfeminist sensibilities suggest social desire is another form of imposed femininity where there is access to power, but it is constructed through coercion not choice.

Hannah "umm probably curiosity on my part as much as anything. Obviously on the farm sex is obvious. Laughs, there's no real hiding it when you're in a farming background. Yeah I was just curious, some people had talked about it and what have you."

Joanne "so quite a lot of my friends had already had sex, so for that reason as well I suppose."

Stacey "I dunno, I suppose I had got to that age and it seemed like what you should be doing."

Drawing on the idea of fitting in to gendered femininity means women often approach their first sexual encounter as a product of social coercion. Social coercion operates through peer associations and expected trajectories of normalised actions (Moran & Lee, 2014; Ramazanoglu, 1993). Not having sex in a sexually active group positions a woman as an outcast so although none of the women in the above accounts expressed a sexual desire they expressed a social desire. In order to belong to the peer group, women need to position themselves as "up for it" and are therefore coerced both through social, and dominant discourses of femininity. In this way, a social exchange is evident where sexual activity is not a desired choice but rather embedded in gendered power relations where knowledge of women's sexual encounters is complicit to male focussed activity. In this way, the dominant discourse of heterosexual femininity informs women as to what they are expected to do and not do, and rendered choice and agency limited in the romantic love discourse. Social coercion limits agency and free expression by imposing time framed behaviour and compliance due to technologies of power evident in social structure and discourse.

In the following account, the regulation of Susan's sexuality was socially sanctioned through marriage. What Susan had experienced as natural desire was controlled through regulation of sex and desire.

Susan "yeah well originally when we first started dating it wasn't like let's go at it, it was kind of more a natural outflowing of the connection that we had that just kind of sent it into the physical area. Because we were Christians and (partner) worked as a (particular job) we kind of had to be good Christians and not have sex outside of marriage, which then kind of put the brakes on our natural expression of our relationship and we had to kind of force it off. Which then meant when we finally did get married it was really awkward, especially for me. I had just kind of switched that off and it took me a long time to properly switch that back on."

The constitution of women's desire as reproductive (Hollway, 1984a) quashes desire for sex outside of marriage and children. As Costa et al. (2009) explain when self-agency and natural expression are socially controlled women can be seen as desireless. In this discourse, unfettered

female sexuality that could disrupt heterosexual normativity and the nuclear family, must be regulated by men and the boundaries of marriage.

If women's sexual desire is in need of control then not surprisingly women's passive sexuality is reproduced. What is also shown in the next account is the way women are self-disciplined and socialised to adhere to male desires and please men as well as a position of passive sexuality that disables non-consent. Positioned within the ordinariness of passive femininity where women's desire is non-existent women/girls learn to submit to male informed practices that align with male pleasure.

Michelle "I went to kiwi ranch, but I only was 12, I think I was nearly 13 and then this 18 year old guy took a fancy to me....and then he made me play with his, no he didn't make me, he bought his penis out and I was really scared, and he told me what to do and I did".

Sexual coercion therefore, works to maintain men's position as entitled to sexual pleasure with limited agency for women to negotiate a safe exit before attending to his orgasm, regardless of their own desire. Through discourses of masculinity and femininity women have been successfully trained to perform for men and function as a male dominated object (Guessan, 2011) that there is limited availability in which young women/women can exit a sexual encounter before they have seen to his orgasm regardless of their own desire to perform the act. The male sex drive discourse further positions women as responsible for male sexual inflammation and therefore responsible for seeing to his sexual gratification. Sexual coercion therefore operates through the male sex drive discourse and gendered social power relations that render women unrapeable (Gavey, 1992, 2005).

While the women's first experiences of sex were embedded in coercion, safety and curiosity, romantic love discourse also set the scene for having sex for the first time, although choice remained limited as in the following account where "it just happened".

Alice "it just felt right. It was just a feeling like, it wasn't a pressure, I wasn't pressured or anything like that. It wasn't something I set out to do that day, it just happened, but not in a pressured environment."

First times are usually constructed, prior to their occurrence, by women through romantic love discourse where the goal is to promote pair bonding (Diamond, 2003, 2004). In this way first times are romanticised through romantic love as pleasurable and fun, loving and caring, and of course special and they also operate within a coercive function through the promise of increased bonding.

The women also told of breaking social norms by acting outside the constraints of marriage within the have/hold discourse. The social risks for women to pre-marriage sex resulting in the necessity of sneaking and not getting caught.

Researcher "So what was that first experience like?"

Tracey "It was naughty and it was sneaky."

Tracey "I was petrified that we would get caught and we broke the couch."

Without knowledge, or access to discursive resources that enable women the opportunity to understand sexual desire or women's sexual pleasure they are not always aware of the mechanical

intricacies of sexual intercourse. In the next accounts, the inexperience of one's own body is evident.

Alice "it was awkward because I'd never ever done it before, so it was just really awkward, yeah, that's what I'd call the first time."

Alice "not being experienced I suppose, not really knowing you know. I think at 16 you sort of know your own body but you don't know about sharing your body. So I think that all comes with experience I guess."

Melanie "Bad. [Laughs]. It was like an in but not in situation where at the end of it I was like I don't know if we had sex or not. Something happened but I don't know if it was proper penetration like I think was more fumbling around and I didn't know what to expect and I remember thinking most of the time, I don't really know what to do with my hands. Like I was lying there going what do I do with my legs. It was kind of unnatural."

Inexperienced women without agentic ability draw on cultural depictions of what normalised sexuality looks like. In this instance, their bodies become an object of male intercourse where the inclusion of the entire body and bodily experience is constrained to mean penetration.

Furthermore, informed that male pleasure is situated in coitus means women are constrained in their ability to negotiate other activities even when they experience uncertainty, bodily pain or discomfort. As several of the women describe the act of male pleasure can be painful for women.

Tracey "And no it wasn't very nice, it was horrible and it was painful."

Stacey "Painful, Painful."

Joanne "sore."

Gavey et al. (1999) remind us that the coital and orgasm imperative prioritise penetration and male orgasm. Positioned within the coital imperative as an abject of male pleasure means that male pleasure is prioritised over female pain and discomfort. The coital imperative also makes it difficult to disrupt or stop coitus, as the endpoint. The acts prior to penetration, are disregarded and orgasm through coitus is prioritised regardless of female readiness or desire. Pain was drawn on only in terms of penetration along with an unwritten contract of an obligation to provide orgasm through coitus as evidenced in the next excerpt;

Joanne "So it was just pretty sore and then I remember I felt terrible. I felt so many different emotions. I cried after that. I felt happy I felt sad I felt bad that I hadn't made him orgasm. I felt different, I was overwhelmed, I'd say more sad than happy emotions, so and then even though it hurt so much I tried again that day at night and that was even worse that time because I hadn't let myself heal in any way and there wasn't any foreplay before it, so it was not pleasant."

Drawing on the male sex drive discourse where pleasure equates to male orgasm and expectations of correct femininity and object of his sexual pleasure means that her inability to ensure his orgasm positions her as having failed femininity. The male sex drive discourse stipulates that it is a primal urge for men to orgasm and once inflamed by a women, it is her job to complete his pleasure (Gilbert et al., 1999; Walker, 1997). Within the have/hold discourse she must fulfil her

partner's sexual needs as an expression of her love for him (Hollway, 1984). Disciplinary power operates to coerce women into engaging in intercourse despite a lack of personal desire, and experiencing pain and distress. This account shows how women are disciplined to pleasure men and that failure is deemed her responsibility.

Joanne "And it wasn't until my third partner that things changed, and I was fifteen when I met him and I was with him for three days when I had sex with him which was a lot different from the first two. And he actually did climax and the wave of relief that came over me was you know, I still cried, but I cried more because I was happy."

Joanne "I succeeded in having sex right through to the end."

The male sex drive discourse, coital imperative and orgasm imperative position women as responsible for male pleasure and that success as a woman entails succeeding at pleasuring him. Gavey et al. (1999) explain that to disrupt coitus before the male achieves orgasm deviates from the expected scripted trajectory of sexual activity and places women in the position of male pleaser. The mere consent to intercourse suggests a contractual agreement which obligates women to fulfil men sexually.

Sexual coercion is not always subtle, for one of the women her first time was one of force, pain, distress and rape.

Michelle "I mean my first sexual experience I was raped and that was really unpleasant."

Burkett and Hamilton (2012) remind us that where sex is concerned it is not necessarily a woman that a male desires, but often times it is a women's body. When bodies are disembodied from the person they become objectified and available for male domination. The act of rape affords no space for negotiation and no space for consent, it is assumed and therefore taken. The silencing of women's sexuality and lack of voice for desire means that women continually struggle with pressures of obligation, negative social sanctions and negative or unwanted sexual experiences. Gavey (1992, 2005) suggests that possibly the most detrimental consequence of continued silencing of women as sexually desiring subjects is that women can be rendered unrapeable through their attempts to fulfil male directed femininity. A male sex drive discourse that enables male entitlement to sex affords opportunity for men to subject women to objectification and trauma. Although rape is at the extreme end of sexual coercion and it is not a usual occurrence, other coercive acts are and this account simply evidences the extremes that coercive technologies are able to extend to.

Melanie "My next boyfriend was a bit of a dud really and he pressured me into having sex with him the first time I met him. I didn't really want to but I didn't really know how to and it was just kind of happening, and I didn't want to. I didn't know what else to do. I didn't know how to exit the situation."

Technologies of coercion in this and some of the other accounts reflect those found by Gavey (1992) where women are exposed to continuous experiences of unwanted coitus with no language to refuse. The normalised sexual trajectory obligates particular performances, including intercourse and male orgasm, and allows little room for negotiation between sexual partners. Women, positioned within the male sex drive discourse as vessels of male sex or within the have/hold as desiring a formed relationship are without a locale from which to refuse sexual advances. Gavey (2005) suggests that by functioning through these dominant discourses, technologies of

heterosexual coercion declare sexual consent and allow coercive practices within normative sexual practice.

Coercive practices limit sexual agency and render women's pleasure as something that is complementary to male pleasure. For most of the women in this research, pleasure was something they thought could happen but were unsure how it was related to what they were experiencing.

Melanie "I mean we knew it was meant to feel good because any R16 movie would have little sex scenes in it where they were having a good time, and you go like, oh so that's how it is. But then it's not. Laughs. Such a let-down, and it's like ohh this sucks."

Tracey "I kind of got that gut feeling it could be fun. Well it had to be because lots of people were doing it."

Susan "yeah, I knew they could have pleasure and I suppose I knew they could have orgasms but it wasn't something you could talk about. I remember getting a book out of the library about female puberty and stuff like that."

As sex became more accessible to the women they learnt certain sexual practices along the way. Sex with multiple partners is situated within a permissive sexual discourse, which assumes that men and women are sexually liberated, that they are free to engage in sexual encounters with who they choose. But in the following account the sexual exchanges are mutual and safe.

Tracey "Practice with all those men. Honestly that's serious, it could be that's how I've learnt."

For one of the women drunken sex formed much of her sexual learning. In the following account, she draws on a permissive discourse that frames sex as fun where she is positioned as an active agent and thus enabled to engage in and justify sex outside of formed relationships, sex was still often disappointing and awkward.

Michelle "for many years after that (the rape) it was just drunk sex really and most of that was inadequate or downright awful or stupid or. But some of it was pretty outstanding. Again it was dependant on the partner, not on me, whereas now it's more dependent on me."

Despite the freedom/agency to be a sexual subject, the sex was still a performance of meeting men's desire and not about them. Informed by the male sex drive discourse, male sexual prowess constrains women's sexual pleasure to male performance.

Michelle "you know I've been with guys before and it's been awesome and it's been long but it hasn't been about me, it's been about them and their prowess, you know what I mean? There's a difference there, you know I'm the man and I can do this sort of thing, you know not for you or with you but I can do to you sort of thing."

The permissive discourse makes it possible for women to participate in sex outside a committed relationship and pursue sexual pleasure but in these accounts, the sex that is possible remains embedded within the male sex drive discourse, where women are the receptors of his sexual pleasure. Therefore, if heteronormative understandings that draw on male sexuality and male discourse continue to influence society then 'true' sexual agency is not possible for women. Hollway contends that the permissive discourse is rooted in the male sex drive discourse, the result being that non-romantic sex is still enacted within hetero-normative principles, and agency is constrained

(Beres & Farvid, 2010; Moran & Lee, 2014). Despite an assumption of choice, the women were constrained by the ways that heteronormative/heterosex subordinates the legitimacy of women's sexual agency, and desire.

In the next account, Michelle takes up a position in the agentic permissive discourse yet is constrained by the standards of femininity and therefore her agency is still limited in terms of her own sexual desires.

Michelle "It's like a Venus fly trap, you know if I behave this way I can draw you in kind of thing. But it wasn't about me, it was about the image I could portray, but it wasn't what was inside of me."

Even when there is agency, Michelle's account shows how strongly self-regulatory disciplinary power informs women of their purpose in society and how to perform femininity that serves men. By portraying an image that attracts men. Women are able to be both object and prey and responsible for male arousal (Bartky, 1998). Autonomy and agency formed through a permissive discourse still constrain women's sexuality under the normative conditions of masculine sex (Beres & Favid, 2010).

Some of the women however were able to draw on the permissive discourse without any adversity or object positioning. The agentic post-feminist position enabled through permissive discourse (Gill, 2008) is a space where feminine sexuality can do desire and pleasure through casual sex and one-night stands.

Hannah "I've lost count. I had, laughs, umm when I was 18 to 19 I went through lots of partners, like one-night stands and stuff."

Tracey "I have no idea, oh my god [researcher] hundreds on that side [working]. Now I know this sounds silly but this figure has always been in my head, I'd been with 17 guys before I turned 19."

Tracey "They were fantastic, the one-night stands. I would have been drunk for most of them. "

Tracey "And they would have all been fun, I don't remember any bad experiences and if there was an event that was horrible I would have definitely remembered."

Drawing on the permissive discourse allows free sexual expression outside of formed relationships and with fewer social sanction but also with a space for desire without the necessity of commitment. As "free" sexual agents they are also constrained by unequal power relations that engender casual sex as egalitarian. The double standard then still applies as there are still distinctive masculine and feminine subjectivities in play. For example, women are expected to engage in the "self-care" described by Beres and Farvid (2010) to ensure they are not emotionally connected.

Hannah "I've never had an inclination to cheat but I also figure when I'm free and single I'm allowed to play. There's no commitment, there's no commitment so that's what it is, so I'd probably say my numbers in the 50ish probably."

Stacey "When we first got together and being first sexual partners, but when I had sex with some other random partners it gave me some experience and expectations and stuff like that which could be part of how I knew what I liked and what I didn't like, what I expected and all that sort of stuff."

Through lack of commitment women are free of the social conditions of the have/hold discourse that prioritises marriage and commitment. Again, drawing on the permissive discourse that enables sexual autonomy space where alternatives and resistance to male dominant sex can occur is possible. In this space women can challenge the sexual double standard and assert their own desires outside of regulations and disciplinary control. These women offer up disruptions to the construction of (passive) female sexuality and represent possibilities for agentic sexuality for women who partake in casual sex (Beres & Farvid, 2010).

Hannah "adventure, different sex, trying different things, there is no commitment so there is no embarrassment as such, so you can sit there and go no that doesn't work, go away."

Some women talked about deliberate accounts sexual activity through casual encounters. They challenged traditional heterosexuality that portray women as passive objects of male sexuality.

While the women are talking about pleasure they are also talking about their own responsibility for whether it is regrettable or not. Within a postfeminist sensibility (Gill, 2008) the female agent is responsible for her decisions as well any problem that might occur during the encounters. Farvid and Braun (2013) remind us that casual sex must be done correctly and the rules must be adhered to, rendering it an unnatural act. However, within these complexities of responsibility there is a sense of empowerment that is enabled through a permissive discourse where casual sex is permitted.

Hannah "It also opened my eyes to different ideas about what you can do, experimenting, yeah, yeah, it I mean you can't regret what you've done because it was a decision you made at the time for whatever reason so there's no sense regretting it. And so I might as well take what good came out of it, and I learnt a lot about myself and as well as what I can do for other people to make them happy, so it was very educational."

Although Hannah is empowered as active, there are limitations on her own pleasure. So here, although there is a sense of achievement in giving pleasure to men there is a freedom where she is able to seek pleasure for herself.

In the following two accounts, although drawing on the permissive discourse to learn what gives them pleasure in sexual experiences, it seems what they may enjoy with one they may not enjoy with another. In this way, not all men are able to perform to their pleasure which then leads to further silencing of personal desires through the coercive nature of casual sex where coitus is the expected outcome. Farvid and Braun (2013) remind us that casual sex is typically viewed as just about 'the sex', without emotional connection or the intent to form long term relations and where coitus is the norm (p. 360).

Hannah "Learning about stuff I enjoy, stuff that I don't and teaching myself that because you don't actually enjoy some thing with one person doesn't mean it's the same when you do the same act with another person."

Melanie "Different things. Different men do things in different ways."

While casual sex offers women access to multiple sexual experiences that are constructed through sexual freedom and autonomy, the rules of casual sex for women are also constraints. So what we have is a permissive sexuality that is also governed by rules. The rules of engaging in casual

sex, provide positions for women's desire, but at the same time, that space for desire reproduces the conditions of femininity through the governance of casual sex and her desire is limited. This further reproduces dominant discourses that enhance masculinity and male sex and further oppresses women's sexual desire. This is an example of social embeddedness of dominant discourse and patriarchal power; by limiting their own agency they actively engage in self-disciplinary procedures that constrain women's sexual freedom even while drawing on a permissive discourse.

Joanne "I've had sex before where I've not been in love and they don't love me so really they're just out to orgasm. And that's the way they see it, a bit of fun. So I don't think me saying I'm in pain would matter. If it's an agony pain then obviously I'd be like stop, but if it's a pain I can handle then I've thought to myself I'll get used to it".

The rules of casual sex are a disciplinary practice that reproduce coitus and the penis centered version of sexuality. Women still struggle with negotiating the active position within sexual encounters that continue to be regulated by disciplinary power- these perceived sexual freedoms and experiences are predicated on men's desires and pleasures. Braun et al. (2003) suggest that this unbalanced reciprocity operates through women's positioning in femininity, nurturing men's pleasure regardless of whether her pleasure, comfort or orgasm is achieved.

Within the casual sex encounter above sex is seen as fun but with the casualness comes a lack of connectedness. Melanie's account below reminds us of the ways women attempt to set limits to protect their emotional needs in casual sex (Beres & Farvid, 2010) where the mechanics of sex are identified as the same sexual experience however space for spoken desire is opened in a connected experience.

Melanie "Well sex with someone you love is wonderful, but sex is still sex. It's not that different. I guess maybe if you have been with someone for a really long while you are more willing to try different things because you are more comfortable with them."

Through their experiences of sexual encounters and their experiences of silenced sexuality, including their positioning within subjugating and empowering sexual discourse, the women expressed how they resist the silencing of women's sexuality and sexual desires. By expressing their sexuality, communicating with their children and offering expressions of sexuality the women can be seen to resist the normative rules of femininity that silence their subjective desires.

Susan "physical affection is good for them but obviously there are lines where they can't join in."

Susan "Yeah we do it all the time (pinching bums etc) and sometimes our seven year old's like "mum dad stop it", she's kind of at that kissing gross stage. So we do it more because it's good for them to see it's important for them to see."

Michelle "yeah, I'll sit on the bench and pull him towards me and kiss him and smack his bum. Nah they've seen lots of that good stuff because that's just, it's all that for me. The whole thing is all day every day sort of thing, not just a bedroom thing, its hold hands its kiss when you feel happy."

Silencing of women's sexuality is disrupted here as the women take their sexuality out of the private realms of the bedroom and into a comfortable space whereby their children are able to recognise sexuality as ordinary. As McNay (1994) asserts, it is the speaking of or acting out of those

subjugated positions that enables alternative discourse to arise, thus bringing the body into view was another disruption of feminine sexuality.

Susan "I demonstrate what it is to be comfortable in my own body, so I walk around naked all the time, so they know what it is when I have got my period because they come into the bathroom..... I want them to grow up going I'm beautiful, just how I am, hairy legs and all, it's like to be comfortable in your own skin."

The production of women's bodies as docile is resisted through enacting a sexuality that not only displays comfort in an unornamented body, but also a desiring subject. Another aspect of women's sexual desire, is negotiating the meaning of sex and gender with their children. In the negotiating of meaning however, the women reproduced the gendered norms of heterosexuality (girls emotional/connection stuff), while at the same time making communication about sex and safe sex.

Alice "so I've sat down with (son) and we have talked about the whole feelings and the honesty with her you know and I said sex can be different for boys and girls. Girls can be emotional and you know that sharing themselves with another person can be daunting and you know that is telling you that they trust you with everything about them. So if you are going to have sex with a girl keep in mind what she's might be going through, she might have deeper feelings than you have." ...So you need to communicate, make sure you are always communicating properly."

Michelle "well I'm really open with my boys. We talk about sex, we talk about condoms, and we talk about the first time. We talk about you know think about who you are with and why you're with them... But at the same token I've handed on a lot of my past shit to my daughter because I didn't know what I know now when she was young."

While they reproduced feminine (emotional and connected) sexuality, and simultaneously engaged in the meaning of sexual differences, they have done so from a women's position as sexually desiring subjects and mothers. In this way they are not operating out of heteronormative constraints but taking up a position that gives voice to women's sexuality.

[It's about layers - What is sex?](#)

Heterosexual normativity informs men and women of the meaning of sexual encounters. The coital imperative suggests that intercourse should be prioritised over other sexual practices as it is widely assumed to be the 'real' form of sexual expression (McPhillips et al., 2001). In previous research (Gavey, 1992; Hird & Jackson, 2001; McPhillips et al., 2001), it has been found that both men and women usually equate sex with intercourse and describe it as the defining act in sexual encounters. Even when more complex understandings of sex were formed, intercourse was always a part of sex (McPhillips et al., 2001; Peterson & Mulhlenhard, 2007).

In this research, the women did recognise the coital imperative; for some, the hegemonic meaning of intercourse was drawn on to talk about the meaning of sex, even when sex was understood as more than intercourse.

Tracey "anything that turns you on"

Tracey "but then hmm, nah I would say having sex, actually having sex"

Tracey's account, moves from an understanding of sex that includes more sexual practices than intercourse, to the inevitability of 'real' sex as intercourse. The coital imperative is so dominant that the women's choices in their sexual encounters were limited through a lack of discursive resources to talk about sex differently.

The inevitability of intercourse was clearly articulated as the quintessential form of heterosex when asked what constitutes sex, however there was variation in understandings of what counts as sex. The coital imperative continues to demonstrate gendered social power in the shaping of heterosexual assumptions and desires, however the women were also able to articulate the complexities of sex that are not so simple. The women broadened their definitions of sexual practices that were contextually shaped and dependent, while at the same time are embedded in hegemonic male sexuality.

As a younger woman sex was exchanged for being socially accepted as desirable. With sexual experience, a new position of a desiring sexual subject emerged. Here sexual pleasure is taken up as a powerful sexual subjectivity, however, intercourse is the implicit expression of normative heterosex.

Melanie "And now it's more like sort of, something fun that I decide I want to do and therefore go and do if I can find a willing participant or I have a partner."

So while Melanie was able to access an active desiring sexual (permissive) position that challenges the hegemony of feminine sexuality, resisting the normative meaning of sex and intercourse were more difficult. From the position of a sexually desiring subject, the meaning of sex was understood through multiple practices, but intercourse remained inevitable. The broadening meaning of sex opens a space to challenge normative heterosexual practices, without a shift in the coital imperative.

Researcher "So what does it involve?"

Melanie "The regular touching and kissing and everything and hopefully at some point a condom, laughs."

Without a shift in the coital imperative, the hegemony of the coital imperative makes it difficult to imagine heterosex without intercourse, reaffirming that desiring sexual subjects are limited in their agency to negotiate sex outside intercourse. Simply understood by Hannah, all the way is successful sex.

Hannah "we went all the way."

Limiting women's sexual desires and sexual practices through the phallocentric construction of sexuality (Nicolson & Burr, 2003), and the dominance of the coital imperative, was realised in the women's talk.

Stacey "sex, naked people, bodily functions, two people intertwining, intercourse. What other words do you want?"

Stacey "like there's positive and negative sexual encounters. Like a negative one would be a rape and a positive one would be consensual intercourse."

Given the opportunity for further exploration of the meaning of the coital imperative opened up spaces where there were opportunities for talking about non-penetrative sexual encounters. In these spaces, sexual desire emerged as meaningful and connected to bodily pleasures, and bodily intimacy.

Researcher "so a sexual encounter is intercourse? It is always intercourse?"

Stacey "umm, sexual encounters are, well then there's also touching, foreplay, touching body parts, yeah that would also be a sexual encounter."

Stacey "When you feel like there's that bond, when you have that bond sort of thing; you know how the other person is feeling and they know how you are feeling and you are attracted."

Stacey "So if it's an adventure and that's fun too, where you can't be serious for five minutes, yeah sex should be fun."

Hannah "Now it's about that intimacy that connection with each other. I mean sometimes it's a healing thing, you know when you're down and low and nothing makes you feel more empowered."

The women drew on the relational aspects of the have/hold discourse to articulate their sexual pleasure outside of intercourse, and at the same time, articulated the bodily pleasures of limited post-feminist empowerment. Negotiating the possibility of sex without intercourse with a heterosexual partner is a 'radical challenge' (McPhillips, Braun, & Gavey, 2001) to the coital imperative.

Susan "you can have a sexual encounter without sex, which has taken some convincing sometimes for my husband."

Although heterosexual without intercourse became a possibility for Susan, she had not excluded intercourse from her multiple sexual practices, which were both physical and intimate.

Susan "there's sexual intercourse in there but there's a whole lot more than that, it can be something as simple as like kissing and having a feel. Something you know just an intimate moment where it's physical, I guess there is something physical connection between the two of you. You can have a non-sexual kiss you know like a peck on the cheek when the kids are running around, and you can't go anywhere. Yeah I think if the intention is to connect intimately on a physical level that would probably class as a sexual encounter"

Susan "yeah it's more about the intent behind it, I think."

Non-penetrative sex, to become meaningful as a sexual encounter was constituted as physical intimacy, and resonates with romantic intimacy as a feminine requirement in the relationship between have and hold. However, it is also a site of contest where negotiation of the sexual space to include a broad definition of sex also speaks to women's desire. Challenging the meaning of the dominant discourse opens up the possibility for disrupting disciplinary power (Phillips, et al., 2001).

Joanne "it's changed as I've gotten older. At the moment, I would describe it as two people who want to be together in every single way possible, like physically, emotionally and you come together as one pretty much. Yeah that's what I'd describe sex as. Yeah well, it's about pleasure obviously and all that but it's not the be all and end all to it. It's actually about the person you are connecting with, and sharing that feeling, and you're into me and you're connecting on a different level after you've had sex".

The connection between the physical and emotional become the criteria for sexual pleasure, and the feminine position within the have/hold discourse is contested. It becomes both relational *and* active, and offers women a position as an active sexual subject. The shift in position to an active sexual subject shifts the construction of women's sexuality and meanings of sex are able to take place within the intersubjective realm as they communicate through accessible empowering discourse.

In a formed relationship, the intersubjective space allows for a united understanding of sexual activity allows women agency that is not evident in one-night stands where the coital imperative is most strongly upheld. Regardless of the intersubjective space for negotiated experience an intercourse imperative is still evident but it is related to notions of meaning and intimate connection.

Researcher "so it's not necessarily intercourse?"

Joanne "sometimes it can be, like well I'd say 80% of the time it is but like it's more than that, even if it's just sex it still means more. Like it's different than a one-night stand. That to me is just intercourse, it's just sex."

Joanne "But like with (partner) like yeah, we can have a five-minute quickie but it would still mean more than if I was just to do it with someone else, somebody random, because I'm with the person I actually love and I'm comfortable with him, so it's about more than intercourse for me."

The inevitability of intercourse, while discursively used in the intersubjective space that conforms to the coital imperative "most of the time", the meaning of sexual intimacy exceeds the boundaries of male sex drive discourse, and women as active sexual subjects both take up and exceed the criteria for intimacy in have hold discourse, even where it is necessary to non-coital sex.

Several of the women articulated sexual encounters as a process of exchange, not of coitus, and intercourse was not prioritised in their talk about sex until prompted by the interviewer and even then the prioritisation of coitus in the sexual act was disputed.

Alice "oh any kissing and touching, yeah I would have to say that."

Researcher "so it's not necessarily intercourse?"

Alice "it's about being able to appreciate each other and feeling appreciated and you know before and during and after you know feeling beautiful and wanted and those sorts of things"

Alice "it's not just straight intercourse, it can be on a whole other level"

In this account, meaningful sex was constituted through connection and intimacy, and at the same time, intercourse was denounced as *the* priority. Although there is a disruption to the coital imperative and physical and emotional connectedness was prioritised, women's sexual desire is expressed as exceeding clear boundaries.

The next account similarly draws on a broader definition of sex, and rather than adhering to the coital imperative, which is still reified, speaks to sexual practice as a process. In this sense, a sexually desiring subject is one who meaningfully negotiates sex from early expression of desire and the freedom to explore the layers of meaning.

Michelle “is, is, but then you know like sexual to me, being sexually active to me also starts with the kissing and the Frenching, you know, it’s the figuring out what to do. You know coz it’s all part of it, so obviously having sex is just the icing on the cake. But as a young person starting kissing and your first kiss of a boy, you know at six or something and giggling and being all sweet about it. Because that’s part of the process.”

Researcher “so the intercourse part is not the most important?”

Michelle “well I don’t think it’s the most important part, I mean no I don’t think it’s the important part because there’s lots of layers and that’s only one layer.”

In this account, intercourse is along with kissing and frenching are sexual practices that inform the meaning of sex. However, as a layer, intercourse continues to occupy the place at the top of the hierarchy. In this way, the coital imperative is reproduced and continues to uphold power in sexual relationships. As a young person enters adulthood it seems the coital imperative emerges stronger until it becomes the object of sex acts, rendering choice for alternatives difficult.

From these accounts, there is strong evidence that the hegemony of the coital imperative is inescapable and informs sexual meanings however at the same time, women are able to contest their positioning as objects of sex. As sexual subjects, the women talked of sexual desire through pleasure, even though they were constrained in their subjectivities through the dominant feminine discourse of love and intimacy. Some of the women disrupted the direct relationship between sex and intercourse, intercourse remained taken for granted as at least partially an inherent feature of heterosex. Non-penetrative sex, or at least in the moment before the inevitability of coitus, was a site where negotiated intersubjective space was possible.

[From pumping petrol to intersubjective moments - Relationship Sex](#)

As a researcher interested in intersubjectivity and heterosexual relationships, it became necessary for me to reflect on my own emotional response to the women’s stories. It became evident that many of the women struggled with the sexual space within their relationships. Here the stories of the women’s relationships, constructed through the gendered specificity of the have/hold discourse becomes a troubling problem for the negotiation of women’s sexual subjectivity.

Because marriage or at least stable long term relationships dominate the socially sanctioned space in which women are able to and are expected to engage in sexual activity, there is still (in western societies) a strongly upheld standard of relationship sexuality and relationship monogamy (Elliott & Umberson, 2008). The have/ hold discourse, heteronormativity and the sexual double standard work together to bind women’s sexuality to socially sanctioned spaces even within permissive discourse. This in turn reinforces gendered performances in the intimate space of the relationship. For most of the women in this research the overall relationship, monogamy, intimacy, love, commitment, contributed to any ‘up for it’ sexual performance, and the women provided sex in exchange for the intimacy that they desired.

Caring actions by men portray their commitment to the relationship and to her, and this works to increase both her sexual desire and her willingness to engage in sex.

Tracey "if he's really nice to me, like if he's really really super nice to me all day and makes an effort to be nice to me, I don't want him to smother me too much because I'm quite independent, but if he's nice to me, just nice to me even then it can sometimes trigger little thoughts, oh well I might give him a bonk tonight, I'll see how I feel."

Embedded in the have/hold discourse, it is a women's responsibility to sexually reward men who have shown emotional conviction and commitment to the relationship. In this way sex becomes an obligation or "reward" through the rules of reciprocity.

Yet others talked of how they attempted to connect during sex when things were not going well in the relationship. The have/hold discourse reminds us that to be normal a couple must be having sex. Although framed as reconnection, the strength of the heteronormative ideal disciplines women to engage in sex to please men, and men are informed that sex is a requirement for masculine performance. In this way, the have/hold and the male sex drive discourse operate to discipline docile subjects into engaging in sexual activity despite any emotional connectedness, or lack thereof. Some women engaged in sex regardless of the relationship functioning well but noted that when the general relationship was functioning well the sex was better.

Hannah "in the early days we had some awesome awesome nights, but in the end, it was I wanted sex but it was really frustrating when I got it anyway, there was no connection with it. And after being together that long we should have had an awesome connection."

Michelle "so like the sex is also for me been, sex has always been a part of what's happening in our life. It hasn't just been sex. Like if we were doing good in the relationship then the sex is really good but then when things got really bad then the sex just kept getting, for me the sex just kept getting worse and worse, for him he didn't care. He just kept getting his rocks off. But for me I was emotionally involved."

These accounts continue to re-enforce the have/hold discourse whereby women are positioned as needing to be emotionally connected for sex to be desired or even desirable. The connection between love and sex, physical desire and pleasure are related to sexual desire. Where male physical desire can be attributed to the act of sex (sex-drive discourse), for the women in this study, emotion and sex were intertwined. The meaning of sex for women was articulated through an emotional connection within the have/hold discourse, however their sexual engagement was also embedded in a performance of normative heterosex especially where their relationship was violent.

Michelle "so it's really hard to have sex with someone who you don't feel safe with and who has actually threatened to kill you on numerous occasions, and I was really scared to leave cause I thought, what if he did (kill me)."

The have/hold discourse is evident here through the constitution of a woman's vulnerability to violence within an intimate relationship; her sexual performance is thoroughly embedded in the hegemony of male sex drive discourse and negotiating safety is precarious. In this contested space, the women perform sex as a pacifier. This position is more tentative than the normalised gendered position of caring for the relationship, the negotiation of his sexual pleasure for her own safety.

Michelle "Really low, 'cause it's been too dangerous, because (ex-partner) gets really angry."

The space for negotiation is limited. Other limits to negotiating the intersubjective space heterosexual relationships were evidenced through the women's talk; the women variously took responsibility for negotiating men's sexual desires and at the same time resisted their positioning as sexually passive objects.

Michelle "...Instead of going I like this or I would like to try that, it was, I would try to do it without putting any pressure on him, like it wasn't a need or a want or a desire that I had, it was just let's try it 'cause it's on the screen. Or I thought about it, as opposed to something, I guess I thought that if he thought I really wanted it he might not do it 'cause maybe he never gave a shit enough to try for me. So rather than be rejected for me or for what I wanted it was easier to put it out there like it came from somewhere else."

Hannah "I tried. I tried to talk, I tried the sex therapist, I tried writing it to him, you know this is what I really like that you do, this is what I'm not quite so fond of, this is what this makes me feel, so the whole when you put all the focus on me I feel pressure so it takes me further away from what you are desperately trying to make me do. So, but yeah he thought he was just great how he was doing everything and he didn't seem to want to change for me."

Both Michelle and Hannah contested the space afforded women's sexual desire within the parameters of relationship reciprocity. While their sexual performances tended the relationship and his sexual desire, without the space to become actively desiring subjects there is no exchange.

Hannah "...you're actually physically together and you're still lonely, I felt more lonely."

Hannah "So I think I, yeah I probably did with my ex-husband a bit just towards the end of the relationship because there was no relationship anyway so there was no give and take, so I did start to get resentful because it was just about him."

Michelle "And there's been lots of times when I've cried afterwards or during because I had stuff I needed to say and I wasn't saying it and if I said it I wasn't being heard so when it came to sex it just kind of released it. And one of the last times we had sex when we were in (Place) before we broke up, and that was when I knew I had to leave him because we had sex and we didn't have a condom and he came on me and I just about vomited. I physically just about vomited and I thought why am I letting this man invade my body when he is not showing any love or compassion to me and not listening to me in our everyday life."

The rules of engagement (the exchange of sex and love) were incorporated into sexual embodiment through the responses of disgust which signalled the failure of the exchange. Normalising discourses of feminine sexuality determined the corporeality of their sexual experiences. Servicing male sex drive as a sexually embodied practice produced loneliness, pain, shame and was invasive. Sexual performativity of affective embodiment since the sexual body is also lived in and through the mind (Butler, 1990).

In the exchange of sex for commitment, the embodiment of sexual desire is internalised through affective meaning making processes. The internalisation of the have/hold discourse and its affective embodiment offered a space of resistance within the sexual economy for some women.

Alice "it should be healing for you, and you should be able to say, 'you know what I'm not in the right headspace today, I'm going to sleep'."

Susan “yeah it can be tricky and awkward and it’s hard to go into a sexual encounter if you are self-conscious if, you know, what noises you’re making or what you look like in that position and if you are constantly in your head you can’t get aroused. Like you are too much in your brain than in your body and some days we’ll have sex and I’m like ‘I can’t get into it, I can’t get me out of my brain and into my body’.”

In these accounts, it is both the sex act and the embodied effects that enable women that open up an intersubjective space for women’s sexuality where the symbolic and material power relations of normative sexuality are a site for performative subjectivities. By opening a space for embodiment that enacts sex in and through the body and the mind (Jackson and Scott, 1997) women are able to actively negotiate both the discursive and performative. This space for negotiation positions women as having choice and agency and disputes the authority of the have/hold discourse where women are obligated to fulfil men’s insatiable drive for sex. In Jackson and Scott’s (1997) understanding, the women are active subjects with sensual ability.

Women’s sexual agency however is constantly undermined and contested. Talk of intimate non-sexual touch took on a narrative of coercion for some of the women. While intimate touch had the potential for meeting women’s desire for connectivity, it often became the site of obligation. In the economy of exchange, when a women’s desires are met, sex is demanded as an outcome. While women may have sexual agency, it is precarious, as physical contact should lead to sex (Gilbert et al., 1999; Hollway, 1989, 2001). The following positions challenge a discourse of nonsexual touch and socially sanctioned actions that have a coercive itinerary.

Tracey “yeah, yeah that’s right. Yeah yeah exactly so he’d give me a massage and so I’d go ‘oh yeah’, but then I clicked on that whenever he gave me a massage he wanted sex after, so what I started to do was go oh no not yet, keep on rubbing my back I’m not turned on yet, yeah or my legs and the poor bugger had been rubbing me and massaging me and still not got a bit so then I’d give in eventually.”

Stacey “the moment he would come across for a cuddle”.

Researcher “ok, so there was never any let’s just have a cuddle just for the sake of having a cuddle?”

Stacey “no because it would always lead to sex. Because the cuddle was the start and the cuddle was let’s say the best thing. And I would actually say ‘fuck off, can’t you just give me a cuddle for a cuddle’.”

Gilbert et al. (1999) suggest the male sex drive discourse assumes that women naturally inflame a man’s normal sex drive, and the have/hold discourse positions them as feeling obligated to surrender to a man’s sexual needs to protect the relationship (Hollway, 1989). Not all of the women saw the non-sexual touch as being coercive. In the following account, the inevitability of sex following intimate touch is interrupted, but is dependent on an exception - her male partner’s control over his desire for sex.

Researcher “what about other things like a kiss on the cheek or a pinch on the bum”

Joanne “will always lead to sex with me and (Partner) unless I don’t want it to. But about 99% of the time unless I don’t want to, but pretty much always. So sometimes (partner) won’t kiss me back because (he) doesn’t want me to think he is all about sex. So sometimes I will kiss him and he

would rather just lie there because he knows that if I start to kiss him he knows he will get turned on and want to have sex. Which is quite surprising for a man (wanting to show it is not about sex)."

Although the male sex drive discourse that suggests any touch turns to sex is being recognised, in this account there is a space where the male is resisting it in order to affirm his love and commitment. It does not however, challenge the sex drive discourse because sex remains inevitable the moment he engages in the pleasures. In this account, despite women being active sexual subjects, they are always negotiating the male sex drive discourse, positioned as responsible for the inflammation of his sex. From Hollway (1984) we understand that women are the gatekeepers of men's sexual desire, but it is not quite so fixed in this account.

The gendered binary of the male sex drive discourse coupled with the have/hold discourse construct positions for men and women regarding the uptake and willingness of sexual encounters in relationships, however in these accounts, women resist sex when the emotional connection is missing.

Melanie "I don't like sex when I'm arguing, I don't like make up sex, I don't like angry sex. I don't want a bar of it. I'm like don't fucken touch me. No. I'm like I don't really find it a turn on all that heightened emotional stuff."

Tracey "I don't really know because I don't think we have done it a hell of a lot, make up sex. We have been quite resentful towards each other and I don't believe in giving him a reward when he has been bad."

Despite their active resistance to sex without emotional connection, the women were not offered a position outside the boundaries of male sex drive discourse, their resistance is a refusal of their position in the economy of exchange rather than an expression of desire. The following account highlights the physical exchange of the sex act: constructed as a tool for temporary gain the sex act loses its importance in the relationship as communicative space.

Tracey "...how it used to be when we had our really rocky times if we had sex it was a temporary fix, it was never permanent. So it would make things ok for maybe half the day but that thing would come back to haunt you and you never actually sorted it out."

Other participants constructed their active engagement in sex as an opportunity to reconnect and reform that emotional connection within the have/hold discourse.

Joanne "Yeah. Like if me and (partner) are having a particularly big argument that has caused me to get upset, to be honest there is nothing I want more than him to be with me physically and that itself is enough to bring us closer together and I know when times have got hard in our situation when (partner) moved out, because it has happened, then I know that not necessarily when we are having sex but in that moment after we have sex then that moment there is when we realise that we love each other."

Joanne "it will pull itself back together (the relationship) sex or no sex but it happens much quicker if you have sex".

Alice "Yeah I think so, yeah. It's called make up sex for a reason, laughs."

Researcher "laughs. So it's healing?"

Alice "Yeah, I think so definitely. I think it is."

From within the have/hold discourse of exchange, women actively engage in sexual practices within the intersectional space offered within heteronormativity. Communication enables the bodily expression of sexual pleasure.

Melanie "well I do tell him, like so he does change and do things the ways that are more enjoyable for me because like I said it's just enjoyable for him anyway."

While the have/hold discourse is designed to articulate men's interests, when the women were afforded a position to negotiate what takes place during a sexual encounter, they were able to shift the meaning of sex to meet their own their own desires. When women are enabled a space in which to negotiate their sexual pleasures, they become active subjects in the shared meaning of heterosex.

Susan "I think it's been improving over the last five years or so, definitely come a long way since we first got married. When we first got married it was kind of he needs sex, I'll just you know supply, pumping petrol type, you know there was no me invested in that, it was just physical servicing. It took a good year or so after we got married until we kind of realised things weren't working in that area and we changed what was happening".

Researcher "how did you decide together, how did you do that as a couple?"

Susan "'sighs, um, a lot of that came from him because he kind of claimed that I wasn't liking what we were doing and I wasn't into it".

Negotiating sexual pleasures shifts sexual pleasure away from servicing men's pleasure to a meaningful space of negotiated mutual pleasure. While still operating through the have/hold discourse, the pseudo-reciprocal exchange emerges as a reconstructed intersubjectivity – sex is gifted – he receives sex as he gifts pleasure. Negotiating sexual pleasure within a relationship for these women suggested both a male sex drive and a permissive discourse about sex was at work, and yet it also involved women's active desire for mutually enjoyable sex.

Alice "it just gets better and better, because you are freer with the other person and you can talk about what you do like and what you do want and what you don't want. So yeah for me it gets better and better."

Joanne "...but now, with (Partner) if it was getting sore in a certain position then he would actually know because I would tell him."

Researcher "So how would he react?"

Joanne "we would still continue but we would change position, but there are people I've been with that it doesn't matter what position you are in, it's just too sore. I just wouldn't tell them so I don't know how they would react. But I don't think they would react in any way shape or from how (partner) reacts, because me and (partner) are in love with each other."

Hannah "yeah, it's still early days but we can communicate and you know I can do stuff for him and he wants to try different things."

Hannah "And it's building the intimacy because it's a new relationship and it takes time to build the intimacy and the sexual relations. He makes me feel a lot safer than my last partner, my husband."

The voicing of sexual desires disrupts the representation of desire-less women and yet women's sexuality is negotiated as both awoken by men, and through the negotiation she is enabled a position as a permissive subject, the meaning of sexual pleasure is shared. These accounts suggest that the formation of women's sexual encounters is an often competing intersubjective process that can afford women an active position to voice their sexual desires where the exchange and their bodily affect are negotiated within the commitment. In the following account, the permissive discourse is engaged to transform her sexual encounters with her partner after 16 years, taking up a position of a sexually active and desiring subject with equal access to the pleasure of initiation.

Stacey "Married life absolutely nothing, after married life and having sex with (Ex Husband) after having other partners, it was like fuck you, you can please me before I even please you. I suppose it was more like having a voice which I didn't feel like I had when I was married."

Stacey "laughs. Before. I'll give you a rating out of ten and before [during marriage] I'll give you one out of ten."

Researcher "and that was right through from the start of the marriage?"

Stacey "Yeah until we separated [16years], and then after we separated it sort of went to eights and nines, you know but never a ten but eights and nines."

Stacey "well I was telling him about all the sex I was having with all these other guys and it made him quite horny and excited, so he told me. Yeah so it turned him on that I'd had sex with these other guys."

Researcher "okay."

Stacey "and it was, yeah, just showing him I was experimenting and telling him oh I'll show you what I like and of course he wasn't used to me being so forward and I was like, no, you just lie there and I'll show you."

The subject position of the woman has shifted from the male sex drive discourse and the have/hold exchange at the initial stages of the relationship, into the intersubjective space of negotiating shared meanings of sex and pleasure. The have/hold relationship was disrupted, actively taking space to engage in meaningful sex through access to her own sexual pleasures, was enabled through a permissive discourse.

A position within the permissive discourse does not always enable access to an active sexuality if there is no disruption to the have/hold discourse. In the flowing account, the woman's position in the have/hold discourse is in precarious relationship as she negotiates the meaning of her permissive sexuality within her relationship.

Joanne "now I'm satisfied with it. It's kind of hard to say satisfied because when you're growing up you're at a very vulnerable age and like I regret sleeping with that many people. Like it does affect my relationship with (partner), he doesn't like it."

The affective embodiment of sexual regret is meaningful through the understanding of permissive discourse contradicting the expectations of the have/hold discourse.

It's my whole body talking- the importance of sex

While the contradictory discourses that produce women's sexuality are constrained through the dominance of male sexuality, for the women in this study, sex is embedded in relationships where love and intimacy exceed the act of sex. Affective embodiment recognises the intimate connection of bodies and discursive resources that enable women agency within sexual and intimate relationships. Here sexual desire can be understood through women's pleasure within intimate relations. In this research, evidence was provided by most of the women that the act of sex in intimate relationships carries importance that is not limited to biological or reproductive function, but rather stems from personal desire.

While the women in this study draw on the discourses of heterosex, they did not take up positions as having little or no desire. Rather, the women argued for an active sexual agency that is both about intimacy and pleasure. The importance of intimacy does echo the importance of emotional connection as is found within the have/hold discourse, however bodily pleasure is more than sex – they derive pleasure through the intimacy afforded in and through the sexual encounter.

Susan "yeah, being together and having that kind of closeness that is not shared elsewhere".

Alice "Yeah I think so definitely like well some people think you don't need to have sex in a relationship and in some you don't, but I think in a personal relationship it's about sharing, because it's about sharing that part of you that you don't share with other people or at that time you're not. You're exclusively sharing that with them."

Melanie "I think it's important. I think it's the only act that separates you as a couple apart from the relationships you might have with other people. My friend (name) who is gay and her partner (name) and me go to the movies together and we get coffee together, and she comes and we do gardening together and the one thing that I don't do with her, is I don't sleep with her. I tell her I love her, she tells me she loves me, she's not my partner though because I don't sleep with her. I think sex is the only thing that makes you somebody's partner rather than a really close friend."

The women articulated an active desire that is constituted through the exchange of love expressed through sex and exceeding sex.

Alice "it's about love and sharing that love with somebody that you love or you know deeply care for. I think it's an exchange of souls."

Michelle "I think sex is really important in a relationship, it is a way of expressing your connection with each other, it's a way of expressing your depth of feeling. [Pause]. I think it's a really good way of expressing all the feelings that happen in a relationship too."

Relationships intimacy provides the space for women to experience affective embodiment that is pleasure. Intimacy disrupts feminine disembodiment and docile bodies as the women position themselves as actively engaged in sexual encounters that enable embodied desiring subjectivities within relations of love and commitment.

Joanne “yes. After and whilst you’re having sex. Immediately after you both have orgasmed and you are lying there completely naked something changes and you have been together in every way shape and form”

What these accounts are showing is that although women are positioned within a have/hold discourse, the women are not passive recipients within the exchange. Rather, the women actively desire sex as a bonding experience (Hayfield & Clarke, 2012) that communicates through bodily connection. In this way relationship sex works to increase shared experiences within an intersubjective space, as suggested by Simpson (1987), making sex an act of importance that extends beyond the physical act of sex.

Susan “yeah it can be, you can read each other’s bodies and sometimes word’s don’t quite work, although my husband is quite adept at reading body language and faces anyway, [laughs], but um yeah, sometimes I find it easier to express that kind of stuff physically rather than through words so yeah. So yeah it’s like a higher level of communication and connection where stuff can come out that can’t in other ways.”

Michelle “Well for me it’s my whole body talking, more than, there are no words, there’s that connection. Well there should be that connection. [Cries]. That’s ok, it’s really sad but I’ve allowed it.”

Michelle “there’s not just sex, especially not in marriage, there’s a whole being involved, your value system is involved, your feelings are involved, your life is involved, your body is involved, everything is involved, it’s not a mindless act, but that is what it kind of felt like.”

Bodily expressions of affection becomes a form of language for many women. Given the continued silencing of women’s sexuality there is an absence of language for spoken women’s desire so by verbalising in and through their bodies, women are able to articulate the strength of their commitment to the relationship. McHugh (2006) reminds us that what women want are better, more affectionate fulfilling sexual relationships, where there is time for considered sexual expression of love and desire. However, the physical act of sex remains a pervasive marker for successful intimate relationships.

Joanne “I’d say 60% of the relationship is intimacy and that includes sex. So if you take that away that is over half of your relationship gone, as far as I’m concerned you need to be physically attracted and physically connected and if that isn’t working then without a doubt one of you is going to and not necessarily the man, then you’re gonna go and find that elsewhere. We need to have sex as human beings” ... “it is essential.”

Lack or loss of sexual attraction can place a relationship at risk. The have /hold discourse positions women as giving sex for relationship stability which can be seen in this account, however the passive position is resisted by physical attraction and physical connectedness. In this way, the object of sex is to maintain connectedness by positioning both subjects in an active intersubjective space of mutual desire which in turn assists in maintaining the relationship. Disruption to the double standard operates through a permissive discourse where women actively pursue sex within the relationship to maintain physical closeness and at the same time women’s active desire for and pleasure in sexual activity enables affective subjectivities.

Michelle “I think it’s really important. [Pause]. I think it’s really important for lots of reasons. I think for the intimacy, I think it relieves pressure in the relationship as well and I know in myself it relieves

pressure. When I'm really stressed out I like to have a good fuck, because it just releases all those endorphins and stuff or serotonin or whatever it releases; feel good.

Farvid (2012) has argued that researchers have had difficulty “locating the ‘physicality’ of female sexual desire” and bodily pleasures. In this account, while sexual pleasure is embedded in the cultural meaning of intimacy, it is experienced as bodily desire.

Heterosexuality for the women in this research, was not reduced to sexual practice, but was embedded in discourses of love and connection. While active sexuality was important to the women, desire was more than sex.

Tracey “I don’t really think it’s important, I really don’t. I think compatibility and love, I mean sex comes into the equation but I don’t think that is what a relationship should be based on, I think companionship and things like that should come first.”

Stacey “I think communication is more the key than sex.”

From these accounts, we can understand women’s active sexual desire as both discursive and affective embodiment as they negotiate the meaning of relationships and sexual encounters as they simultaneously occupy a position in the have/hold discourse.

An itch that needs scratching -Orgasm

As I developed this research I was curious about women faking orgasm. For me, orgasm is a desirable part of sexual experience, and I was surprised by a discussion among my peers that there was a very discernible understanding that women are faking orgasm, and I wondered about what might lead to feigning sexual pleasure. Of course, faking orgasm reinforces the meaning of orgasm as the marker of successful sex.

Potts (2000) argues that orgasm does not necessarily reflect embodied experience, but rather is embedded in relations of heterosex where ‘his’ orgasm is inevitable, and ‘hers’ validates his skill. Through the coital imperative, orgasm represents the ultimate sexual pleasure. When we reduce women’s sexual pleasure to orgasm, to meet his orgasmic marking of the end of sex, we conflate the meaning of pleasure and orgasm. Thomas, Stelzl and Lafrance (2017) argue that women’s sexual pleasure is not only evidenced as orgasm, but as a “culturally produced, version of orgasm that incorporates noise and physical performance” (p. 282).

A lack of discursive resources through which women’s sexual pleasure can be understood has resulted (Jackson, 1984). Despite the lack of discursive resources for women to express their sexual desires outside the inevitability of the orgasmic imperative, in the women’s accounts the meanings of orgasm are complex. While the women voiced a desire to experience orgasm, they did not necessarily achieve orgasm through coitus. There were various strategies the women engaged for their own orgasmic pleasure, masturbation and self-pleasure, and while they took up an active position in sexual pleasure, men’s orgasm was often prioritised in their talk.

The meaning of orgasm was also contested. Opperman, Braun, Clarke and Rogers (2014) have argued that women associate orgasm with multiple meanings, marking the end of sex, signifying their partner’s pleasure, as the ultimate sign of their own pleasure, a physiological response, and as something to fake. The women in this study also showed there are multiple ways of interpreting and making meaning of orgasm.

In the following extract, making sense of the embodied experience of orgasm was difficult to articulate, especially when the experience does not meet the criteria of *la petite mort* (the little death). Potts (2000) argues that understandings of orgasm as a sensation that is likened to death produces an embodied loss of self for a moment in time. What also complicates the meaning of orgasm, is the distinction between orgasm and ejaculation, or the pleasure and the physiological markers of that pleasure. For example, the tightening or contracting of the vaginal walls, or bodily secretions evidences the orgasmic effect on the biological body (Puppo, 2013), but the expectation of a convulsing or entire body is in line with cultural understandings of orgasmic performances, including vocal performances (Potts, 2000; Roberts et al., 1995).

Hannah "Like I can come quite easily but orgasm's a different thing for me. Yeah I've only actually had two of them and both of them were in dreams with nobody touching me. Yeah I can't even get myself off fully like that which is frustrating and it must be frustrating when you're in a solid relationship and they're trying. It's like they're trying too hard and now the pressure is on me so it's not going to happen".

Hannah "so the orgasm is the whole body is really into it. Like the umm"

Researcher "convulsion"

Hannah "yeah the convulsions but it's the whole body was, um, like I come and you'll feel your pussy tighten, you'll feel you know you still get the [pause] But it's all lower body for me. I'm not getting so much the mind, I'm don't get like you're gonna blow every blood vessel in your face".

Hannah "You know the mini death that you supposedly, I mean I've obviously never had it but yeah I hear some people have".

The dominance of the representation of orgasm as the little death relies on the socially embedded assumption that orgasm is the ultimate sexual experience, designed to pleasure women to death. It is not surprising then, that women find orgasm elusive when the culturally produced orgasmic imperative also constitutes women's lack of orgasm as problematic, difficult or complicated (Frith, 2013).

In the following account, the meaning of orgasm was unrecognised, when it did not meet the performative markers of an explosive rush of pleasure.

Susan "...we didn't really know what that was (female orgasm). It was really weird, you know back in high school in sex Ed you were taught that an orgasm is a big explosion like fireworks in the sky. I didn't get that, I kind of got it feels, god it feels good, it feels good, it feels even better, it feels weird, stop, it's weird, stop, stop, kind of no explosive, just a crest of a wave and it took us a couple of years to realise that I was actually having an orgasm in the midst of all that. And that's why it suddenly felt weird and so I suppose (partner) honed his skills and worked it out so now I do have explosive ones and sometimes I have big swells in the ocean and the other day I was laughing my head off."

In this account, orgasm was constructed through a reciprocal exchange where mutual pleasure is enacted by men 'giving' women orgasms. The pseudo-reciprocal discourse both opens space for women to seek (or expect) an orgasm, and at the same time, she is obligated to deliver his orgasm through coitus. In the following account, an embodied knowledge of orgasm was gained in the intersubjective space of negotiating sexual encounters to be more than 'sex'.

Alice - "I think at first by coming across it on accident-[laughs]. Is that fair? Yeah just on accident and I think that once you find something you like you just explore more on that."

Researcher "so did you find out through masturbation?"

Alice "umm no, purely through sex itself. Because sex is not just one position it's not just straight intercourse, it can be on a whole other level."

No knowledge of orgasmic possibilities for women implies a lack of importance afforded to women's pleasure and positions women as passive receptacles of male sexuality within a male sex drive discourse. Where orgasm is culturally constructed through heterosex as the marker of sexual pleasure, the women did not locate their orgasm in coitus.

While the orgasm imperative is embedded in the coital imperative, for the women in this research orgasmic pleasure through masturbation was both a possibility and a pleasure that was not necessarily located in heterosex. What emerged in their talk was that clitoral stimulation, rather than make them "feel inadequate" (Frith, 2013, p.499), opened up the possibility for women to achieve orgasm. Understanding their own sexual pleasure enabled them a position within the discourse of reciprocity to pleasure themselves, and negotiate their sexual encounter through ensuring his pleasure.

Melanie "I probably started masturbating when I was about 11. "

Researcher- "so with those first masturbations did you experience orgasm?"

Melanie "um probably not until was about 12 or 13"

Researcher "So did you connect, when you started having sex that what you were doing with masturbation could happen during sex?"

Melanie "nah it didn't happen during sex. Nah I think the first four years of my sexual life was really disappointing because I was always waiting for it to feel as good as masturbation and then it never did"... "I think you know your own body better than anyone else does so you can instinctively change what you are doing so it feels as good as it possibly can and your partner is not going to because they can't feel it themselves."

In the following account, being able to self-pleasure orgasm opened up the possibility for an active sexual subject, and at the same time able to meet the obligations of their position in the have/hold discourse. It is a complex relationship between active and passive subjectivities. It also separates women's orgasmic desire from the sexual encounter, reproducing sexual pleasure as connectedness.

Researcher "So what about masturbating?"

Melanie "Well why would I masturbate and not have an orgasm, what was the point of that?"

Melanie "sex for me is about being with the other person but masturbating for me is about giving it a good, well having an orgasm is all its about whereas sex is not, well because orgasm doesn't really happen for me during sex, sex is not about orgasm, I enjoy it don't get me wrong but its more about being with that person and being in their space".

What is evidenced in this account is that women's orgasm is a function of the inevitability of men's orgasm, and the affective embodiment of the cultural discourse of reciprocity within the have/hold discourse. In the following account, orgasm achieved by masturbation does not achieve the pleasure enabled through the intersubjective space of intimacy and connection.

Susan "I can masturbate and not necessarily have an orgasm"... "when I masturbate I normally orgasm fairly quickly. It's normally a quick release, it's just like a quickie by myself like an itch that needs scratching I suppose. But in the relationship, it's more the intimacy and connection and mutual pleasuring of each other."

The orgasm imperative that marks orgasm as the 'goal' of sex is not an easy fit for women within a discourse of reciprocity in which "both partners should give and take (pleasure, notably orgasm) equally" (Opperman et al., 2014, p.504) especially where orgasm is constructed as a gift, usually locating the responsibility for giving with men. This creates a tension for women, especially if men experience women's self-pleasure as a failure (Nicolson & Burr, 2003). In the pseudo-reciprocal discourse women give themselves to men and it is men that gift women orgasms (Gilfoyle et al., 1992).

Susan "And my husband gets annoyed sometimes when I have been masturbating and he kind of goes 'you haven't let me give you an orgasm in a month and now you just masturbated.' It's like 'what's up with that?', and I'm like well 'cause I don't want what you had to offer I just needed to scratch and itch and it's not the same thing."

The recognition of clitoral stimulation and masturbation as a means of achieving orgasm suggests women's active orgasmic pleasure does not meet the criteria for the orgasm gold standard of heterosex (Fahs & Plante, 2017; Thomas et al., 2016). In the following account however, self-pleasure offers women a position of resistance to pseudo-reciprocity, where coital and orgasmic imperatives are challenged. Orgasm through intercourse is neither necessary to sexual pleasure nor intimacy.

Michelle "I masturbate all the time, that's how I relieve myself like, now. Yeah I pleasure my own self... I know what I like, I mean there's some stuff I can't do, which I would like a man to do, but I can pleasure myself and be loving and tender and caring and take my time, I can take my time, yeah it takes time, I can't just have an orgasm in two minutes".

Shifting orgasmic pleasure away from the coital imperative opens up intersubjective spaces where women can negotiate the meaning of their own pleasures within their sexual encounters. Rather than a passive recipient of men's desire for orgasm, in the following account, the sexual encounter became a space through which clitoral stimulation and heterosex enabled orgasmic pleasure that was shared.

Joanne "(partner) thinks I'm easy because I use my fingers or some electronic device to rub my clit."

Joanne "(sister) was talking about her sexual encounters and she was like you are only going to orgasm if you, she called it help yourself, and it was like use your you know put your hand down there and stimulate your clit while you are having sex and you will orgasm, and I did and the first day I tried it, it took me a lot of confidence to try it. I was like of my god what if the man doesn't like it or what the heck ...and then I tried it and never looked back from there."

Joanne "Like I just thought orgasms just came through masturbation only. And at that age through oral sex, yeah so either through masturbation or oral sex. That's what I thought, you would never ever achieve and I thought as a female you would never ever achieve an orgasm through sex until my sister told me".

The invisibility of the clitoris from discourses of heterosex is an effect of the hegemony of the coital imperative. Despite knowledge that the clitoris is highly relevant to women's orgasms, women who reveal their knowledge of or desire for clitoral pleasure is a precarious position within have/hold discourse (Wade, Kremar & Brown, 2005).

A coital imperative and the myth of the vaginal orgasm leave many women unsure of the ability to achieve orgasm during heterosexual engagement. In this account, bringing clitoral pleasure into the sexual encounter opens up the intersubjective space where women are afforded an active position to negotiate their orgasm in the sexual encounter.

In some cases, learning to orgasm is a result of time and experience and finding one's voice in the sexual encounter.

Researcher "So when did you have your first orgasm?"

Stacey "about two years after separating from (husband)"

Stacey "It was with someone who was quite, ohh very energetic shall we say."

Researcher "so after you had your first orgasm with somebody different did you then start having orgasms with your estranged husband?"

Stacey "[pause]. The majority of the time yeah. Because I made him wait, you know be a bit more patient and take his time."

Moving from the position of passive recipient to active participant is not always possible within the same relationship. The permissive discourse that ostensibly celebrates the freedom to express sexual desire can be taken up as resistance to the taken for granted hegemony of heterosex, especially where women actively negotiate their own orgasmic pleasure without disrupting the coital imperative.

Researcher "so how much masturbation did you do in order to learn what made you feel good?"

Stacey "I never did. I never got the gist of it, of masturbation, I'd rather be having sex with someone, or with the toys but it doesn't do anything for me."

Researcher "So you masturbate with toys?"

Stacey "Yeah I've tried and it doesn't make a difference, some women can use toys and they can have orgasms and stuff but it doesn't work for me".

In this account, a lack of orgasm achieved through masturbation reproduces the coital imperative, but where orgasm within the sexual encounter is meaningful (Potts, 2000).

While the women in this study experienced orgasm, it was not necessarily the priority for their sexual pleasure or desire (Gavey, McPhillips & Braun, 1999). Most of the women explained that

orgasm wasn't the only or even the necessary outcome the sexual encounter, and often pleasure from intercourse was unrelated to orgasm (Braun et al., 2003).

Researcher "so how important is it for you to reach an orgasm when you are having sex?"

Melanie "Not really, it doesn't really bother me. I mean it's nice but if it doesn't happen I don't really care"

The women were able to talk about the pleasure of intercourse that was not reduced to orgasm, resisting orgasm as the logical conclusion to a pleasurable encounter.

Researcher "so do you orgasm during sex?"

Michelle "ohh, I do sometimes".

Researcher "Is that a preferable sexual experience?"

Michelle "[Pause]. Yeah, yes and no because to me that's not the be all and end all of it. I mean there are times I've orgasmed and it's been amazing and there's a couple of times with other people not (husband) that stand out in my mind like penultimate moments ...I would rather be respected and touched and caressed and, and all that build-up stuff that build up to an orgasm anyway. So that will probably happen anyway but you know what I mean, for me it's the whole experience is more important from beginning to end so if I have an orgasm or not I don't care. Yes it is awesome, there's nothing better but, [pause], I want the whole experience from beginning to end to be magic."

Researcher "so the orgasm's great but the build-up"

Michelle "it's more important to me. An orgasm's like a bonus."

When there is no idealised end point or pinnacle the orgasm imperative is disrupted. The women are not expressing a lack of desire for orgasm, rather a lack of pressure to achieve orgasm and instead a focus on the journey not the end point. In this way women are able to negotiate the importance of orgasms and express their desires through a variety of activities that are normalised as foreplay within heterosex (Firth, 2013).

Researcher "so how important is it for you to achieve orgasm for your sexual pleasure?"

Alice "umm, it's not. It's not a high priority because I think the whole sexual act is great, you know so I think, it's not high on my list of wants, it's more about being with them."

Alice " Yeah and I think that takes you to that level a lot faster and not having all those expectations...so when you take away expectations those things will happen naturally as they should."

However, despite resistance to the importance of orgasm through a desire to experience pleasure from togetherness, as they negotiate their pleasure it seems that while perhaps secondary, orgasm is privileged as the 'natural' endpoint. Here however, the positioning of the male-as-sexpert is challenged, opening space for negotiated sexuality. While some women expressed ambivalence as to the importance of orgasm through coitus, the desire for orgasm in the following accounts is rendered more pleasurable than non-orgasmic sex. Rather than located as a necessary endpoint, it appears that orgasm is located as the pleasurable 'highpoint' (Jackson & Scott, 2002).

Researcher "so how important is orgasm?"

Joanne "It's become more important now. Yeah I know exactly what I like, and sometimes if I don't orgasm like sometimes I say I'm gonna let (partner) enjoy himself and half way through I get so turned on that it actually annoys me and so I'll try to orgasm and it might be too late by that time for (partner) to try and make me and kind of stop himself so then he orgasms and it annoyed me because I'm like well you shouldn't have done that ... So it's quite important to me. But if you told me tomorrow that I would never have another orgasm I wouldn't be depressed or anything"

Researcher "so you'd still have sex?"

Joanne "I'd still have sex absolutely because I still enjoy the connection and things even when I don't orgasm I still enjoy the sex but just don't enjoy it as much."

Even where sexual pleasure is framed through intimacy and connection, frequency of orgasm was privileged in the following account. While the following account draws on the orgasm imperative, rather than positioned as passive recipient of men's desire for orgasm, the participant locates orgasm as a sign of her own (active) pleasure. However, as an active agent in her own pleasure, she positions herself outside normative discourse where her active desire is understood as selfish.

Researcher "did you find that orgasms made sex more pleasurable?"

Tracey "Oh yeah. But then I wonder if that's because I know how to trigger them. But orgasms make it more pleasurable and you always look forward to them"

Tracey "I'm quite greedy. I always make sure I have an orgasm. It's not like I don't orgasm, I certainly do. Every time I have sex I have an orgasm. Definitely."

These accounts suggest that some women are active participants in their experience of orgasm, disrupting traditional ideas of women's passive subjectivity in their sexual encounters by taking up a position of active orgasmic desire that aligns with the permissive discourse of sexual pleasure.

While in the above accounts the orgasm imperative operated as a highpoint or as an endpoint of active pleasure, in the following account, men's orgasm is reproduced as essential to 'his' pleasure, and women's orgasms are "positioned as a 'bonus' and not expected every time" (Firth, 2013, p. 500). However, the orgasm imperative requires that men 'give' orgasms, and "women's elusive sexual responsiveness" (p. 501) becomes problematic.

Susan "unless he has an orgasm it's like incomplete. There's something missing from the sexual encounter"

Susan " ...if he has an orgasm, I'm like, I don't need one, I'm fine, we can yeah, I'm quite happy with that. The intimacy is there, the connection is there, I don't need an orgasm, and I'm fine....."

Susan "...like it seems to him that an orgasm every couple of days is necessary but for me I have periods where a couple of weeks, yeah even a month I can have no orgasm and that's fine and then I might have another week where there's three or four is just fine too and it doesn't really matter. It's not kind of constant for me and he kind of struggles to understand that I guess."

In this account informed by male sex drive discourse it is clear that men's orgasm is represented as natural so while it is expected that men will orgasm it is not expected that women will (Nicolson & Burr, 2003). It is a taken for granted assumption that men will always orgasm from penetrative sex but that this is not necessarily true for women, which raises questions about a discourse of reciprocity (Braun et al., 2003) especially where women's orgasms are understood as less essential to sex than men's (Firth, 2013).

Melanie "And guys pretty much want to stick their cock in there and have a hammer and roll off and everything else they do is just, realistically, just a build-up so they can do that. And they kind of make sure it's good for you but whether or not you are going to get that (orgasm) realistically they are always going to have an orgasm and they make sure it always happens."

One of the women who did orgasm regularly was concerned that insisting on orgasm for herself would constrain her partners ability to find the sexual act pleasurable and although a position in the permissive discourse was desired it had to be negotiated. Here the discourse of reciprocity that "opens a sense of entitlement" for women to seek/expect an orgasm in the sexual encounter is not a 'real' choice where women are constrained by the obligation to ensure his pleasure. For example, "taking too long" may undermine his expertise (Braun et al., 2003, p. 252; Jackson & Scott, 2007).

Joanne "..... Like (partner) will make sure I do, unless I don't want to, sometimes I'll have sex and because I know that him making me climax, well I feel as if it may hinder his enjoyment because he needs to be conscious of what he'd doing and try and stop himself from enjoying it too much coz I take longer. So maybe every one in ten times I will just not, I won't try and climax, I'll just let go and then so he can actually properly enjoy himself."

Disciplinary power operates through the discourse of reciprocity to produce a problematic relationship between entitlement and obligation that is coercive. Operating within heteronormativity if she does not orgasm she is positioned as undermining his expertise, reproducing the expectation that she is obliged to have an orgasm. The normative script for heterosexual permeates all the women's accounts of their sexual encounters, where the definitive act is coitus and the pleasure is orgasm (Braun et al., 2003; Gavey, McPhillips & Braun, 1999; Jackson, 1984; Jackson & Scott, 2007; McPhillips et al., 2001; Ramazanoglu, 1993).

While the women clearly contested particular heterosexual practices (as seen above) this research was interested in how dominant discourses enabled and constrained the possibilities of material discursive practices. For example, how are two bodies engaged in sexual encounters performed according to cultural scripts? The coital imperative occupies a privileged place in our culturally produced norms of sexual behaviour (Gavey et al., 1999; Jackson & Scott, 2007).

The following accounts are closely aligned with the normalised cultural assumptions of heterosexual as necessary for male orgasm, suggesting that the structure of the sexual encounter "has proved resistant to disruption" (Jackson & Scott, 2002, p. 104).

Stacey "oh, as soon as he'd come, that's it, and I was like 'yes, I can go to sleep now."

Researcher “so when you were having sex with your husband who finished those encounters, like was that after you orgasmed?”

Michelle “no, when he comes and sometimes he would come within two minutes or something and sometimes it would be a bit longer and very rarely would it be a decent amount of time”

In these accounts, it is possible to identify heterosexual practice through a male sex drive discourse that positions men as having a natural drive to intercourse, actively achieving orgasm with speed and ease and women as passive objects of the discourse. The assumption of masculine meanings of the male anatomy order the meanings embedded in the male sex drive discourse. “That a ridiculous degree of significance is accorded to a small quantity of body fluid – with the consequent equation of coming and ‘cum’ with what is ejaculated from the penis – is a matter of social definition” (Jackson & Scott, 2003, p. 105) and not intrinsic to orgasm. The conflation of ejaculation and orgasm denies women the discursive resources to articulate orgasm in purely physical terms so that the experience become culturally meaningful through discourses of love and intimacy (Jackson & Scott, 2003; Potts, 2000). While the marker of the end of the sex is assumed with his ejaculation, it does not necessarily mean that women do not achieve orgasmic pleasure.

Tracey “when he comes.”

Tracey “yeah, it’s over Grover, yeah and I’m pleased with that. I’m happy with that because I don’t want more (orgasms).”

What is evident here is that women’s orgasms are not accepted as a marker of a completed sexual engagement. Male orgasm is still being prioritised and women’s bodies are expected to remain available until his performance is completed, reproducing male orgasm as the goal of coitus. Positioned in this way women have little choice but to remain in play until he has attained orgasm, and in doing so, they become objects of his ejaculation. This following accounts follow the normative sequence. She comes and then he comes and then it is over (Jackson & Scott, 2007).

Susan “hmm, he probably decides when it ends, umm of course I can do things to encourage things. It probably ends in orgasm and usually his orgasm, though if I’m gonna have one it’s usually before his. For some reason, he kind of needs it this way. ”

This account suggests that women’s orgasms are an enactment of male power, they are not a marker of women’s pleasure but an affirmation of male virility (Jackson & Scott, 2007). The script dictates when women’s orgasm is given and ensures men maintain control of the sexual encounter and control of her sexual expressions. The pseudo-reciprocal discourse is gendered: women give themselves or give sex, and in return men gift women an orgasm (Braun et al., 2003; Gilfoyle et al., 1992). Within this discourse men are the active agents of giving and receiving pleasure.

By not permitting the women’s orgasm to be the completion marker, men continue to dominate the exchange and women continue to remain in a passive position for the fulfilment of his sexual desires.

Researcher “right, have there been any instances where you’ve had an orgasm and that’s it?”

Susan “yeah there has been a couple... we’ll we’ve been together 11yrs or so”

Researcher “yeah, so what happens after that?”

Susan “well, umm, [pause]. Sometimes it’s fine and though there will usually be a fairly quick follow up like the next day rather than a few days later like it would be if he had an orgasm.”

This account shows a negotiated position where there is potential for her orgasm to signify an endpoint, however it hasn’t really ended. There is a contractual understanding that she will be available for the moment when he requires his orgasm, suggesting a limit to the discourse of reciprocity: “male orgasm continues to signal the end of ‘sex’ while the female orgasm does not [...] have the same effect” (Braun et al., 2003, p. 247). Within the following account, reciprocity operates in such a way that her gift of orgasm will precede his entitlement orgasm through coitus. While her partner participates in reciprocal heterosex, it does not open up the space for a less painful non-coital exchange.

Joanne “me normally. So he will orgasm, but he knows that as soon as I orgasm that I’m no longer enjoying it. So I will orgasm then he will orgasm after me within 10 seconds after, which is why I think it hinders his enjoyment because I know he was holding back so I could enjoy myself and then he has to finish quickly”

Joanne “After I orgasm I feel like sandpaper. You know not sore but uncomfortable, so I’m not dry or anything it’s just uncomfortable so I would rather just stop.”

Braun et al (2003) question the potential for liberation of the reciprocity discourse in the complex relationship of the male sex drive discourse and the coital imperative. In the above account, once engaged in the sexual encounter, and having been gifted with an orgasm, she is obligated to finish the exchange despite her discomfort, suggesting that the meanings of orgasm are complex for women. Orgasm as a commodity to be exchanged remains the extension of the coital imperative, where the orgasm imperative provides the meaning of successful sex. However, as Opperman et al (2014) have noted, the exchange of orgasm is not necessarily achieved through sex (vaginal orgasm) but women gain their pleasure through clitoral masturbation. In the following accounts, orgasm is embedded within the emotional connection with intimacy that is meaningful.

Joanne “You know what I mean and I get frustrated and then sometimes I’ll end up masturbating but (partner) will always be beside me until I can orgasm.”

Alice “umm, sometimes it can stop as soon as he has orgasmed, reached his level, but it sort of doesn’t stop in the sense that, sometimes it does but other times it can, it’s about five minutes after that after that’s happened,”

Researcher “yeah”

Alice “We’re you know still hugging and kissing and you know being there for each other”.

In these accounts, sexual desire is achieved through the act of pleasing their partner by giving, but reciprocity has more to do with emotional connections. So while these participants reproduce the norms of heterosex they also experience pleasure through the connectedness that the sex act provides, affording themselves an active position in the completion of the encounter.

Orgasm in heterosex is clearly something of interest, given the amount of discussion held about it and the amount of information provided by the women in this research. It is evident that although there is space for women to begin expressing their desires for orgasm, there is still a cultural prioritisation of male orgasm as the goal of sexual activity. It is the unquestionability of

orgasm as the goal and end of sex that leads to understandings that the absence of orgasm is problematic, particularly for women.

You know if you go ohhh ohhh – Faking it

Although not all the women in this research admitted to times of faking it, they all spoke about pretending pleasure/orgasm. Where the prioritisation of coitus and orgasm in heterosexual encounters are normalised, women's inability to orgasm is often framed through deficit (Braun et al., 2003; Gavey, 1992; McPhillips et al., 2001; Potts, 2000). Research has shown that women fake orgasms to ensure men's needs are met, preserve men's position as sexperts, and to maintain their relationships (Fahs, 2014; Jackson & Scott, 2007; Potts 2000). In this way, women's orgasms are not only the performance of emotional labour in the sexual exchange, they have also been attributed to influence or end sexual encounters (Fahs, 2011, Frith, 2015; Thomas, Stelzl & Lafrance, 2017). Braun et al. (2003) have found that where women take up a position as responsible for the emotional work of the sexual relationship they feel obligated to give their partner an orgasm regardless of their own satisfaction. Faking orgasm as a "viable solution to upholding hegemonic discourses without risking negative repercussions" (Thomas et al., 2017, p. 283) then becomes an enactment of feminine responsibility to reward their partners' sexual performance and reproduces the prioritisation of men's desires and pleasures.

In the following account, the participant describes faking it in response to consensual but unwanted sex. In this context, faking orgasm enables his needs to be met and maintain the relationship. In this way, she takes up a position as the object of his desire, but rather than passive recipient, her position in unwanted sex is an active choice to end the encounter.

Melanie "all the time...like when I was with my controlling partner...like it made him come faster and I just wanted him to stop fucking me really, so I would just make it as exciting for him as I could so he would finish and I could go back to sleep or I could study."

In this account, she has no desire to perform the sexual act and he has had no desire to pleasure her so she negotiated her position as an object of biological male sex on which he can enact his sexual needs. Gavey (2005) suggests that women will engage in sex to satisfy men even when they have no interest or inclination to do so in order to preserve either the relationship or protect themselves, a complex relationship between male sex drive and have/hold discourses that inform heteronormativity. Positioned as active agents, women can be seen to offer a form of resistance by faking it so that he can reach his orgasmic pinnacle faster and the act can be over (Fahs & Swank, 2016). As Gavey (2012) suggests faking may enable forms of resistance as it simultaneously adheres to social norms and obedience as a good feminine social subject.

The notion of the 'choice' to be both 'passive' and 'active' through the enactment of consent and faking it both constrains and enables her subjectivity within the norms of heterosex. With sex performed in the manner of taking, the opportunity for intersubjective space is negated. Faking in this account risks the reproduces male entitlement through the sexpert position, and women's obligation to give.

The following account shifts the meaning of object of desire to that of a willing subject, accomplished through faking it to reassure her partner of the adequacy of his performance. Here the participant negotiates the emotional work of the sexual relationship. Rather than challenge the

notion of reciprocity within the have/hold discourse, faking it works to confirm his skill and gives the illusion of reciprocity (Firth, 2013) and to ensure continued efforts to pleasure her as part of his investment in the relationship.

Melanie "But now (new partner) bless him, it's because he tries so hard and I don't want him to give up so I want him to think that it's working. Because I don't want him to be disappointed because it's important to him that it's good for me so I'm like 'okay, it's really good'...like I want him to feel validated. Like you finally get a guy who wants to be nice to you, like if he went and cleaned my whole house I wouldn't go oh he didn't dust that corner"

Reproducing the discourse that male orgasm is inevitable (male sex drive discourse) and that women's pleasure requires his work and skill, women's orgasm is exchanged for men's work (Jackson & Scott, 2007). Through the discourse of reciprocity, women become obliged to produce a performance that affirms both his orgasm and his expertise and at the same time enables an experience of 'good sex' when the reciprocity is an emotional connection (Fahs & Plante, 2017). The have /hold discourse suggests that women engage in sex that is not always focused on their pleasure in order to maintain the relationship.

Positioned within the have/hold discourse, women risk either their desires not being met, or losing the relationship. Faking it to reassure their partners is part of the emotional work of femininity (Bartky, 1990) – conforming to the expectation that women will "feed egos and tend wounds" (Jackson & Scott, 2007, p. 106). This sets up a paradox for women where their enactment of orgasm by women positions them as passive objects of his expertise and as active subject to produce the affirmation.

Other women also spoke of the performance of the emotional work in their sexual relationships to preserve their partners' feelings. However, in the following account, this does not exclude women's actual experience of pleasure.

Joanne "I think maybe in my entire relationship with (partner) I've faked it twice. Like faked an orgasm twice, but (partner) knows that because I've told him. Later on down the line, but he doesn't know what times...but when I first met him as I said he was really insecure and he doesn't like the fact that other people have made me climax without my help with oral...So for the first couple of times I just yeah, maybe just did it so he doesn't stop doing that because I enjoy it. But I knew that if he feels like he can't make me climax he may have given up. Yeah that would have been really damaging to our sex life so yeah I had to fake it a couple of times. Yeah to keep him interested. Laughs"

In the above account, Joanne draws positions herself as meeting the norms of femininity, caring and understanding of her partner's performance. Performance takes precedence over pleasure to maintain her "massaging egos" (Jackson & Scott, 1997, p. 563) position in the have/hold discourse. By positioning her orgasm as the centre of his ego she takes responsibility for his feelings of accomplishment and success as a sexual expert (Jackson & Scott, 1997). This reproduces women's orgasm as a matter of men's skills in controlling women's sexuality, rather than recognising the importance of various sexual pleasures for women themselves (Duncombe & Marsden, 1996., Jackson & Scott, 2007). This account reproduces dominant understandings of the orgasm imperative, whereby the primary objective of sex is to reach orgasm. Informed by the permissive discourse,

female sexual agency positions women as responsible for their orgasm and failure or inability to obtain that peak is connected with failed femininity. Roberts et al. (1995) argue that while faking orgasm reaffirms women as passive recipients of men's expert performances, it also requires actively engaging the mind to perform the body.

This position has been taken up as a result of surveillance and disclosure that enables positions of power in gendered sexual relationships. By confessing previous sexual experiences with other men, produces anxiety for men's performance. As McNay (1994) explains, the confessional concept described by Foucault encourages people to speak in confession to realise how they are or can be in relation to others. The performance of faking it protects men's masculinity providing men with feelings of power, sexpertise and dominance (Fahs & Swank, 2016). This account shows how the concept of the confessional works to position people in gendered social power relations. Through a process of confessing and nurturing women are able to negotiate improved techniques and protect the relationship at the same time.

Faking it as a 'choice' was mostly a negotiation of the women's positioning in the have/hold discourse. In this account, where the relationship was not located within reciprocity, faking it was not an option. Rather, in this account, the participant did not engage in the emotional work, and took up a position as object so as not to protect his failure at gifting.

Michelle "yeah and there's been times when I've just laid there and not fucken pretended anything because I've been so over the bullshit that was going on in our relationship".

In this account not faking can be seen as resistance to disciplinary power through taking up a position as a non-desiring subject (Thomas et al., 2016). Sex can be a way of communication when other ways don't work so by refusing to pretend when the relationship is not functioning well women can open space for recognition of her emotions outside of the sexual act. By refusing to pretend she refuses him his full pleasure and his ability to consider himself good at sex (Jackson & Scott, 2007).

Jagose (2010) has argued that fake orgasm can be empowering for women where it is an active choice to perform what has been contested as a traditional feminine script. In the above accounts, the performance of fake orgasm can be understood as an agentic act albeit within the confines of the meaning of heteronormative reciprocity. What has emerged in these accounts is that women both resist and embody normative expectations of feminine sexual subjects. In the following account, we are drawn into the notion that a woman's performance of fake orgasm is a pleasurable act and has potential gains for identity.

Hannah "don't we all?"

Researcher "but why"

Hannah "well it's still fun anyway and you don't want them to stop trying".

My own position in this account suggests that the relationship between sex, agency, pleasure and politics may warrant rethinking – and it is complicated through post-feminist sensibility (Gill, 2008) where the permissive sex discourse is recognised as both agentic and pleasurable despite the constraints of normative heterosexuality (Jagose, 2010). Jagose argues that fake orgasm can be understood as a "counter-disciplinary practice" (p. 529) that "makes available a mode of feminine

self-production in a constrained field of possibility” (p. 530). At the very least, fake orgasm offers women a space through which to engage with the conditions of heterosex, including the everyday ‘ordinariness’ of marking the end of sex (Fahs & Plante, 2017). Jackson (2008) argues that focussing on the problematics of orgasm obscures the everyday mundane negotiations of sexual lives. In the following account the notion of faking it is illustrated through the “noisy and exaggerated display” that represents ‘authentic’ orgasm as pleasurable (Frith, 2013, p. 505).

Stacey “just sometimes, just sometimes, you know if you go ohhh ohhh then you know they’re gonna finish so it was like ohhh ohhh, yeah I’m good now”

Researcher “yeah so it hurried things along. Laughs”

Stacey “oh come on the majority of women must have said exactly the same. Please tell me I’m not the only one that does that.”

Embedded in the ethic of sexual reciprocity, the practice of faking it is an active performance that is also an embodied act. The notion of performance complicates the idea of a distinction between fake (acting) and authentic (experiencing) orgasm where the sex may be feel pleasurable. Understanding that the sexual act is an embodied experience that is also embedded in social discourses that regulate good sex, faking orgasm can be understood as a positive cultural practice (Jagose, 2010) through communication in an intersubjective space. In the following account, although still embedded in the discourse of reciprocity, the intersubjective experience of orgasm (fake and authentic) is achieved through mutual agreement.

Susan “we have a mutual agreement on when I’m allowed to fake”

Susan “I am allowed to pretend if I am helping him have an orgasm so like I’m helping him have a wank and I’m kind of involved myself, then I’m allowed to fake kind of moans of pleasure and stuff to help him in the moment...”

Here it is clear that the act of faking it is a negotiated sexual act, that is, a performance of *as if* for the purpose of a partner’s orgasmic pleasure, showing that discourses of heterosex intersect with bodily practices, and it is women’s work that produces his orgasm. While faking orgasm might be understood as implying agency and pleasure for women, they simultaneously are limited through the constraints of the present – that is, they reproduce dominant discourses of the performance of gender. The next account also identifies faking it occurring for his pleasure and while this does not exclude her pleasurable performance as an active agent, it appears as a strategic act. While this performance may be understood as an act of resistance to passivity it also embodies obedience to normative expectations operating through a feminine sexual script.

Joanne “so when I don’t want an orgasm, I want (partner) to enjoy himself, and that’s normally with him having oral sex as well but he’ll know I’m actually not bothered about having sex, but I’ll still pretend everything is amazing and well you know that it’s for his enjoyment, like I’m doing it for his enjoyment, like I don’t not enjoy it but I’m not fussed like I could live without it, like he knows that but I’ll still just completely play along because I’m not going to lie there like a sack of potatoes”

Operating here is the notion of an agentic feminine subject performing gender that resonates with Gill’s (2008) concept of pseudo empowerment where sexual agency that is constrained within

the meanings of orgasm as the endpoint of the sexual encounter, masks the disciplining of women's bodies through the contractual obligation of the have/hold discourse.

The following two accounts suggest that faking does not open up the potential for women's pleasure in the intersubjective space of sexual relationships. Here there is an implicit understanding that sexual performance has become taylorised, that is, "how everyday life and intimate spaces are increasingly recast as 'work' and subject to rationalisation and managerial attention" (Frith, 2013, p. 500). Here we see the emergence of the postfeminist sexual subject who is responsible for her own pleasure. Jackson and Scott (1997) argue that the finished product (orgasm) requires work and improvement. Both women and men are required to invest in the development of their sexual capital. Women's work is not only for his pleasure, but she is responsible for her own sexual pleasure.

Susan "but if it's for both of us then I don't fake. There's no point in faking it 'cause if you fake it then they are just kind of getting the wrong idea of what's nice and then they're gonna do what they think is nice and you have just lied to them about what's nice so it's not mutually beneficial"

Alice "um, no. Because I think I can be honest with him and I think if you aren't honest then the next time it's going to be the same way and you're gonna be like 'oh god not this again' you know. "

In these accounts, attention to the intersubjective meaning of the sexual encounter opens up the potential for resisting the requirement to fake orgasm where doing sex is mutually beneficial and other forms of pleasure can be negotiated.

Researcher "so it's kind of about honesty?"

Alice "yeah, honesty and trust definitely".

By refusing to fake it through the principle of mutual benefit and honesty the sexual act becomes a negotiated space where mutual pleasure is the aim and not necessarily orgasm. Operating here is Fahs (2014) notion of embodied sexual selves where women engage in relational sex work that enables both their desire for sex and for relationships.

Money and Power- Financial exchange in the sexual economy

In the previous sections, I have argued that discourses of work and management are embedded in neoliberal discourses of sexual subjectivity to produce appropriate outcomes, for example, orgasm (Frith, 2013). In earlier sections, the economy of exchange was constituted through the have/hold discourse where the exchange of sex was for love, social desirability and standing, intimacy and commitment. The pseudo-reciprocal exchange discourse was also engaged by women where women's orgasm was exchanged for men's work. Several participants in this research had experiences of paid sex work, an easily identifiable form of exchange that has the potential to shift how we understand women's resistance to heterosex. This section of the analysis attends to the stories of the exchange of sex for financial gain, a space where it is possible, perhaps, where women are able to negotiate the terms of their sexual encounters. This space however, is not unproblematic, especially where dominant discourses of heterosex have a direct impact on how sex work is regulated.

Several of the women talked about the power they experienced through controlling their sexual encounters. Here, Michelle takes up a position as a sexual predator to make sense of the control she had over the initiation and ending of her sexual encounters. Interestingly the metaphor of the sexual predator was engaged to narrate the non-victim position of her abuse history.

Michelle "Lots of the time it's been me, I turned into the predator,"

Researcher "the predator, laughs"

Michelle "laughs, yeah I did, laughs, after what happened to me I guess it was my way of taking control of things even though I wasn't in control lots of the time I was drunk, but I was the person who asked people out, I was the person who flirted with people, I was, it was me. I was the predator and I was also the ender. I would wake up in the morning and just go, or I would say nah, I'm over this"

Researcher "yeah"

Michelle "But it was kind of like, I think it was my way of taking some control over the situation"

By positioning herself as the (non-feminine) subject who is instigating the sexual encounters in exchange for power and control rather than love and commitment, Michelle is resisting feminine passivity enabled through the have/hold discourse. This exchange however is not a feminine position within the permissive discourse, but rather, as predator, she assumes a masculine position and renders her 'victim' the receptor of her sexual prowess. By positioning herself as the "ender" of sexual encounters Michelle is also resisting normalised male sex drive discourse of male ejaculation as the end point of sexual encounters, her sexual encounters ended when she left. By 'leaving' she has negated any opportunities for men to pursue further sexual activity, or relationship.

Tracey too spoke of the exchange of sex and control, but through the embodied experience of fun she took up a position in the permissive discourse. Here, power is engaged as being in control of the exchange, disrupting the sexual double standard that constructs passive female sexuality toward the possibility for agentic sexuality.

Tracey "What was I getting. Fun. It was fun. A bit of control, a bit of power as well. I was very much in control, very much a control freak, so it made me, it made me feel powerful because I could have sex with these men and go off the next day. "

While the permissive discourse does not necessarily empower women, it does enable women to assert their own desires outside the regulations of heteronormativity. To be in control of the encounter gave Tracey the ability to decide on its endpoint.

In terms of the economy of paid sex work, the male sex drive and permissive discourses are intimately connected. While the women set the conditions for the exchange, both the sexual encounter and its economic reward, they attended to men's biological need to sex, and 'preyed' on it. This position disrupts the notion that women perform femininity as object and prey of men's desire (Bartky, 1998).

They believed they could gain power and money by exchanging what others consider a valuable commodity and they would benefit monetarily: Their power derived from the monetary

exchange and enabled financial freedoms. If we understand sex work as just sex, except where women are able to gain financially, we can both recognise the gendered power relations operating within heterosex and at the same time, recognise a space where women, rather than men, are in the position to negotiate their sexual relationship in the exchange (Gavey, 2005).

Researcher "so what made you think oh I will become a working girl?"

Tracey " Money, yeah I always used to frown against working girls, you know that kind of scenario we were bought up with like they were dirty, look at that dirty hooker...It was actually (partner at the time) because I didn't start working until after he died, but (partner at the time) lived with a stripper...and I never actually met her but he told me of her experiences and I remember talking to him after we became broke about me becoming a sex worker and he was like no way, not after what she went through. But after he died I had all this debt and I actually got into sex work with my cousin".

Michelle "that's how come I ended up working as an escort because I was having so much sex...I remember thinking one day and I was really broke and I saw those adds in the paper and I thought well you know I'm doing it for free I might as well get paid for it, there's no difference to me, there's no attachment, I just want sex and I'll get money for it, and I did."

Tracey and Michelle's accounts fit within the historical perspectives of economically valued sex, (Dunn and Vik, 2014) while at the same time understanding that in the power relationship between themselves and their clients, they are in control. According to Kontula (2008), this is especially so when they have experienced sexual domination in their intimate sexual relationships. While the notion of control enacted in sex work can be understood as empowering, the concept of agency in the context of both relationship and commercial sex does not necessarily challenge normative constructions of heterosex.

Tracey and Michelle who postulate that money can be pursued by women for purely financial purposes through sex which in turn can also be used to show power over the weakness of men who are viewed as hapless victims of their biological urge for sex (Gavey, 2005) as proposed by the male sex drive discourse, is not necessarily straightforward. For example, the choice to exchange their own bodies for sex is embedded in the function of the labour market and women's position in the labour market is limited through the meaning of heterosex (Gatrell, 2010).

Aarens et al. (1997) argued that prostitution is an example of victimisation of women by the economic system, however these women offered no sense of victimisation in their accounts. The women's accounts suggested that they were desiring (of money) subjects with power and the men were objects of the exchange. What is at stake here is how we understand agency. For these participants, the exchange is for financial gain, and like many women, we can understand that work is a social condition of our lives. While much research focusses on the exploitation of women's vulnerability as sex workers, the women in this study resisted being constructed as exploited, but rather as gaining power and agency. Acknowledging the women's agency, it is also important to recognise the structural and material limits of their gendered positions. The very notion of sex work as a means of securing material and social survival is situated within gendered social power relations. While the women in this study were able to set the financial agenda and separate their private and public lives as an investment in their own feelings of power, or what Gatrell (2010) considers as "setting] the rules of the game", it was not so easily to reconcile in their social relations. Sanders (2004) has argued that while women can separate the meaning of sex between work and

home, their understanding of sex work was not necessarily that of their partner. It has been found that often women's personal relationships failed because their partners were unable to separate the difference in forms of sex. While little mention of partners' experiences appears in the literature, Sanders (2004) has suggested that "[men] can't take it, they are jealous, or want to take your money, and they can't see the difference [in the types of sex] so they bring it all back on you" (p. 567). In Tracey's account, the difficulty her partner had emerged through a direct equation between money earned and number of clients.

Tracey "We were together and I was coming home at the end of each shift and I was going yeehaa I made this much money, and I didn't know until a few months later when he told me, 'don't tell me how much money you made because I can convert that into how many men you've slept with'"

Tracey "you see it was really bugging him... and oh you know the poor guy".

Here we encounter a complex demarcation between public and private sex. For these women, there was a contradiction between men as objects and men as partners. While they could take up a position of sex and not sex – the difference here becomes meaningful through the discursive context of their relationships. Here we return to the notion of the commodification of the 'gift of exchange' where women within the context of their relationship exchange sex for love and commitment. Women sex workers are required to manage the split between their commercial and relationship sexual activities. There is a tension between private and intimate heterosexual and (non) sex for financial gain. Women therefore both "acknowledge and yet simultaneously disavow the sexual content of their work" to separate work from sex (Oerton & Phoenix, 2001, p.389).

The category sex in the following account suggests that the meaning of sex becomes contested where bodily practices that constitute common sense understandings of heterosexual can be "de-coupled" in the commercial exchange (Oerton & Phoenix, 2001, p. 391). Tracey's talk of switching off suggests a separation of working and relationship selves reproducing commercial sex as not sex, but rather an exchange of bodily practice.

Tracey "work became specifically work"

Tracey "yeah it's all about flicking switches I guess"

As Oerton and Phoenix (2001) argue, the differentiation between punters and partners enables the women to "live within the contradiction of the same bodily practices" of both sex and not sex (p. 403). The meaning of sex within the discursive space of relationship reciprocity is resisted through the boundary of the business contract. The boundary between the act of sex and enacting sex however, becomes blurred. Research has shown that women exert control over their bodily responses in sex work to separate sex work from intimate relationships (Murphy, Dunk-West, & Chonody, 2015). The notion of 'switching off' also suggests that the separation between sex and not-sex is also a separation of a body/self where their "real/authentic-selves" is not present in the exchange (Oerton & Phoenix, 2001, p.399). However, the management of identity for sex workers depends on their ability to maintain the boundaries between their work and their intimate relationships, and tensions necessarily emerge within the discursive space of an intimate relationship. As Sanders's (2004) explained, while women found ways to separate work from intimate sex, men "bring it all back on you" (p.567).

Tracey "yeah because I've done all that, like sometimes he'll go let's do, oh I dunno like 'ohh talk dirty', and I'll go 'fuck off'. Laughs."

Tracey "...he obviously gets turned on by that, but I don't, I just go 'oh god I'm at work'."

What emerged in the participant's accounts about the exchange of sex for money, was a discourse of sex as an economy of exchange. Embedded within a postfeminist discourse of sexual agency and liberation (Gill, 2008), sex for material gain can be understood within the economy of patriarchal and postfeminist narratives where women "come to apprehend (and talk about) their bodies and subjective sexual desires as products" (Brown-Bowers, Gurevich, Vasilovsky, Cosma, & Matti, 2015, p. 330). Taking up a position within the sexual economy, women can negotiate the exchange of sex within a relationship to achieve material goals. While the discourse of reciprocity within the have/hold discourse suggests that women perform sex for their partners' pleasure in exchange for emotional connection (Fahs & Plante, 2017), there was also evidence that sex within intimate relationships involved 'trade'.

In the following excerpt, Stacey draws on the have/hold discourse of relationship sex and further develops how money or material items can be seen by women as fair exchange for their engagement in sexual activity.

Stacey "I used sex to get what I wanted."

Researcher "like what"

Stacey "Money, oh that sounds awful doesn't it, I made myself a marriage prostitute, you know if I wanted something"

Sex in exchange for money within the economy of relationships does not necessarily shift the meaning of sex within the have/hold discourse as sex remains a valuable commodity for women's male partners. As Fahs (2011) has argued, within the exchange, women's performance in the economic exchange reproduces men's sexual desire, albeit that she might benefit from the exchange. As Gill (2009) has argued, women's ability to 'take control' of the exchange is limited to her willingness to perform 'good (heteronormative) sex'. While the exchange of sex for money, either as sex work or 'sexual entrepreneurship' (Harvey & Gill, 2011), the position of women remains constrained by heteronormative performances and competencies even where 'doing sex' within the economy of exchange, engages a postfeminist (neoliberal) sensibility. Discourses of choice, empowerment and the seemingly limitless potentials for women's sexual availability desirability and competence demand that women are sexually available, proficient and commodifiable. Gendered social power relations continue to demand a "matrix of alternately compliant and resistant negotiations of cultural injunctions about sexuality, and intimate justice remains an intricate achievement" (Brown-Bowers et al., 2015, p.332).

CHAPTER SIX- Conclusion

This research process began with my own personal experiences of sexuality and concerns I developed for my daughters sexual freedoms as I watched the processes of sex education and societal silencing impact on women I knew. My interest in how women in my peer group made sense of their bodies and intimate relationships and was informed by numerous conversations with friends commenting on the dissatisfaction of their sexual intimacy with their partners and their lack of orgasm or other pleasures. I was aware of discomfort in my own responses to other women's unsatisfying sexual experiences and the fact that many of them did not orgasm regularly. I wanted to use these contradictions to access the discourses that underlie the construction and maintenance of these negative sexual experiences in order to explore the ways in which women can create spaces in which to resist and challenge the traditional gender and sexual discourses that function to oppress and regulate them. This analysis identified the discourses these women relied on, how they positioned both themselves and their sexual partners and the effects of sexual scripting on their sexual encounters and sexual subjectivities.

Prompts were developed through which I could interview the women to focus on three primary areas of investigation. Firstly, I aimed to explore the dominant discourses involved in the construction, and maintenance of women's sexuality, and the way in which the women I interviewed negotiated their positioning's within these. However, rather than simply giving voice to the women's experiences, this research aimed to challenge existing patriarchal discourse and power. Therefore, I aimed to explore the power structures within the discourses involved in the sexual discourses how they functioned to constrain and oppress the women, and the ways in which the women exercised resistance to these discourses. Thirdly I wanted to investigate intersubjective space within heterosexual relationship and how women negotiated their own desires and their own orgasm.

The purpose of this research was not simply to merely reflect on women's current experiences but explore how women are embedded in social practices and language informed through dominant discourses that uphold patriarchal power and prioritise both masculinity and male sexual expression through the sexual double standard. I also endeavoured to understand what constraints were placed on women's subjective experience of embodiment and sexuality through these discourse and then discover the opportunities from which women are able resist and disrupt patriarchal power constituted through these dominant discourses.

A feminist post structural approach using a Foucaultian discourse analysis was chosen as it enabled the questioning of existing power structures and the uniformity of dominant discourses. A feminist post-structural approach reminds us that experience and understanding is never independent from language, knowledge, discourse or power, and personal subjectivity/ies is/are constructed in and through these processes. Examination of the language used by the women provided me with explorative access to the subject positions available and taken up within the discourses that informed their subjectivities. This provided me with an opportunity to examine the relationship between power and knowledge in order to challenge and disrupt oppressive patriarchal discourses. Within this framework I was also able to reflex on my own subjectivity/ies and the ways in which this project affected my sensibilities.

Current understandings of women's sexuality emerged from nine separate discursive constructions coinciding with dominant discourses that were highlighted in the current body of literature on as discussed in the literature review. These discursive constructions made up my analysis and were; No-one tells you how to eat cereal-Learning Sex, It's about layers-What is sex, From pumping petrol to intersubjective moments-Relationship sex, It's my whole body talking-The importance of sex, An itch that needs scratching-Orgasm, You know if you go ohh oh- Pretending Orgasm, and Financial exchange in the sexual economy. Within these discursive constructions subject positions were examined in relation to privileged interpretations of normative and expected behaviour and how these enabled or constrained particular actions of the women.

When learning about sex women drew information from parents, sex education, peers and media representations, and interpersonal sexual experiences. A common finding among all but one of the women's was the lack of information provided to them by their parents regarding sexual encounters; including parents not talking to them at all about sex or bodies, showing no physical affection to each other, informing that sex was forbidden before marriage, or providing limited biological knowledge through books.

Through technologies of shame and silence the women were unable to find a space in which to broach sexual conversation. Disciplinary power operates to constrain women's sexuality through silencing and is evident in how sexual silencing was reproduced in adulthood with the women describing how you cannot really talk about the 'nitty gritty's' of sex or how to gain pleasure through sex due to embarrassment and discomfort. Thus women are provided with only limited sexual knowledge based on fairy tales which is contradicted by what they were able to observe.

The one woman who was able to have conversation with her parents constructed understandings of pleasure and consideration and expressed positive experiences of sex which highlights the importance of parental openness. Sex education also provided little practical information, focusing instead on the biology of sex and anatomy. Educational discourse informed by biology neglects space for relationship understandings, pleasure or female orgasm.

Peer conversations drew upon myths and male dominated understandings of sexuality and a coital and male orgasm imperative, informing women that the aim of sex was to fulfil male pleasure. One woman in particular spoke of succeeding at sex when she finally enabled a sexual partner to orgasm through penetrative sex. Conversations with peers also opened space for social and interpersonal coercion through developmental discourse. For most of the women, sexual encounters provided the best space in which to learn sex and through their discursive positioning afforded men a sexpert position through which their sex was informed. This constrains women's sexual expression and positions women as respondents to male desire and objects for male consumption.

Sex itself was constructed through heterosexual normativity including a coital imperative. This coital assumption is so disciplined that the availability of sexual activity that is not centered on the penis and intercourse is rendered difficult. Biological understandings of the necessity of intercourse for human survival maintain and perpetuate the coital imperative and through disciplinary power women are socialised to prioritise penetration especially once they 'lose' their virginity and are

positioned within the have/hold discourse. Although the women talked of other experiences and disrupted the coital imperative, the sexual double standard and male sex drive discourse which position women as gatekeepers limit their ability to voice alternative sexual activity.

Within relationships there was opportunity for sexual agency to develop through intersubjective understandings. These spaces had to be negotiated through the permissive discourse and the pseudo-reciprocal discourse. Sexual agency was still limited in formed relationships as the coital and male orgasm imperatives still hold. The reciprocity contractual understandings required the women to prioritise male enjoyment even if they are being afforded pleasure (Gilfoyle et al., 1992). In this way disciplinary power continues to operate through the have/hold and male sex drive discourse where women are expected to remain available to ensure male orgasm regardless of their continued pleasure or any discomfort.

Sexuality was described as being important in long-term relationship in terms of providing emotional connection and shared space by drawing on romantic and have/hold discourses. Most of the women positioned sex as a communicative act through which they were able to express the depth of their emotional connection. Sexual importance was mostly evident in relationship sex and draws on the have/hold and social interpretations that normal relationships involve sexual activity.

Orgasms were something that had to be learnt within sexual encounters even if they regularly occurred during masturbation. The prioritisation of coitus neglects the clitoris (Puppo, 2013) and restricted women's ability to orgasm through heterosexual penetration. Six of the eight women constructed orgasms as pleasurable but not a necessity for sexual pleasure. For women, the occurrence of orgasm is uncertain while for men it is a given and they are expected to denounce their orgasm if it hinders his pleasure. Disciplinary power operates, through the male sex drive and the have/hold discourses, to inform women that men have a biological need to orgasm, whereas they do not. The two women who orgasmed regularly and with ease drew on the permissive discourse to afford their orgasm equal power, though at the same time they were obligated to remain available until male orgasm was attained through functions of power operating through the pseudo-reciprocal discourse.

The pretence of orgasm was a form of negotiation and resistance while at the same time an operation of disciplined feminine response to male sexuality. Normalised understanding of women's sexuality see women as passive respondents to male virility through dominant male sex drive discourse. They are expected to follow scripted behaviours and afford men a sexpert position within this discourse. The permissive discourse although appearing to afford women pleasure requires them to enjoy sex and expects them to orgasm through male effort. The have/hold discourse further obligates women to not only give sex to committed men but also affirm their positions within masculinity. Faking orgasms affords women a position of resistance to the requirement to remain in position for male orgasm and provide them space to negotiate the speed through which sex is performed.

Women's sexuality is normalised to be a response to male sexuality and within this there is limited space for women to voice independent desires. Person (1980) suggests that biological understanding produce a gendered binary of heteronormativity when men are constructed as

needing sex and women as passive and desire-less. For some of the women different desire levels opened space for coercive behaviours within the have/hold discourse. Despite this the women in this research clearly articulated what it was that they enjoyed about sex and what they wanted from sexual relationships. Most of the women wanted time, effort and consideration coupled with desires of oral sex performed on them and non-sexual touching. None of the women prioritised coitus and in fact one of them said that once she is penetrated she loses all of those wonderful feelings. The silencing of women's sexuality through dominant masculine discourse and hierarchal control has rendered some women unable to experience sexual pleasure outside of an abnormal biological discourse.

Numerous exchanges take place in sexual encounters, ranging from monetary gain to social standing. The monetary value of sex stems from the males sex drive discourse which positions men as needing sex. Within marriage sex was exchanged for commitment in the have/hold discourse and for social standing. Normal relationship behaviour requires sex, so in order to appear normal sex is gifted to men. In other marriages sex was exchanged for peace and quiet and drew on the male sex drive and the have/hold discourses. As masculinity is the dominant expression within gendered social power relations, women recognise that in order to attain position and recognition in society they need to please men, thus sex is sometimes exchanged for acceptance.

What was very evident in this research was that women's sexuality was still informed by the sexual double standard through which men are encouraged to have multiple partners but women are still constrained through their positioning within the permissive discourse. The double standard is maintained through the male sex drive and have/hold discourses that continue to discipline women's bodies and operate through patriarchal controls and regulations. Sexual reputation still functions as one such form of control over women. Resistance to the sexual double standard was apparent through the taking back of bodies, through overt sexuality, through the voicing of desire, through intersubjectivity and through opening discussions of sex with their children, thus attempting to break the cycle of oppression. Lamb (2010) reminds us that disrupting these dominant discourses before they inform sexual subjectivities of young people may provide women space as they develop to embrace an embodied sexuality as opposed to an objectified sexual body and discover real liberation through their personal desires.

What is evidenced through this research is a limited space for women's expression of sexuality and educational opportunities which embrace a liberated sexual understanding and afford a place for women's sexual desires and women's sexual discourse. The points of resistance highlighted in this study are opportunities and spaces from which new and alternative discourses are able to become productive. A discourse of connection, a discourse of women's pleasure, including practices of masturbation, a discourse of women's independent desire, and most importantly a discourse of pride to be sexual. Opportunities for extension of these discourses can easily be taught through educational systems and through informed parenting as the women in this research have modelled.

Of course no study is without limit and this one is not exempt. The eight women interviewed were educated women living in New Zealand and informed by Western culture and ideals. Ages ranged from 27 to 56 years of age, these findings are therefore based on a particular group which did not include every available age group. The research was also aimed only at hetero sex and did

not investigate sexualities outside dominant culture. Two of the women in this research identified as Māori and one was Scottish, while the rest identified as New Zealand Pākehā. This limits generalisations with regards to culture, as culture is necessarily intertwined with one's subjectivity. Women of different social or cultural groups may have different experiences and may construct heterosexual sex in other complex ways. Lastly, several of the women were also informed by religious beliefs, one of the women interviewed was identified strongly with Christianity, and one was raised Jehovah's Witness. Beliefs such as abstaining until marriage and not giving up on marriage mingled with other teachings of would have swayed the construction these women's sexuality and gendered positions. It is therefore integral that we keep in mind the particular, social and cultural understandings of these women's stories and subjective experiences and act with caution when generalising these findings to other women. Future research could therefore extend this research into other sexual groups, ages, genders and cultural societies.

It is my opinion and my dream that the sex education provided in school systems is overhauled and restructured with a clear focus on embodied experience and mutual pleasure and respect. I believe that through changes to the current oppressive system that women will be empowered to have real and honest sexual conversations, be empowered to extend their knowledge of sexual pleasure to their children and empower women to regain control of not only their sexuality but also of their bodies. I hope that this research is able to assist this process by adding to the pool of research and forcing political change.

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Appendix A-Letter of support ARCS



22 October 2014

Dr Leigh Coombes
Psychology Department
Massey University
Private Bag 11 222
Palmerston North 4442
New Zealand

Dear Dr Coombes

Candice Moore

This letter is to confirm that Candice Moore has discussed with us her proposed thesis investigation "Coming ready or not; Women's accounts of negotiating intersubjectivity within hetro-sex". Candice has an awareness that there is a risk her study may raise past experiences of sexual trauma for those who are participating. However, we are confident that Candice has the necessary knowledge and skills to respond to any distress and to advice participants of appropriate support services available to them within our community.

It is our understanding that Candice has successfully completed volunteer training with Palmerston North Women's Refuge which included information on sexual violence and responding to survivors of sexual violence.

If you wish to discuss the content of this letter further please contact me on 06 356 5868.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ann Kent".

Ann Kent
Manager

Appendix B- Letter of support –Women’s Health Collective

53 Waldegrave Street
P.O. Box 4253
PALMERSTON NORTH

Phone: (06) 357 0314
Email: pnwhc@xtra.co.nz

24/10/14



Re: Support for research by Candice Moore on Women faking orgasm

Kia Ora

The Palmerston North Women’s Health Collective (WHC) would like to express support for Candice Moore’s research to be conducted at Massey University under the supervision of Dr. Coombes. We feel that this is an important topic that affects women - including some of our clients – and that is not well recognised as an area that can have a significant negative effect on women’s wellbeing and the quality of their relationships. We feel that research that expands understanding and awareness of this area is very valuable.

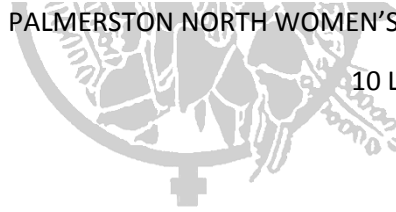
We agree that there is a potential for participants involved in research of this nature to find that this topic raises feeling or issues that they would then appreciate further support to manage or discuss. We would be happy to be listed as an agency that participants can contact if they find themselves in this situation. Our agency provides low cost counselling (can be free for women in financial hardship) with a fully qualified and experienced counsellor who has a comprehensive understanding of women’s issues. We provide a women’s-only space and work to be accessible and supportive to all women.

Yours sincerely

Morgan Booker
Community Health Worker / Manager
For the Palmerston North Women’s Health Collective

Appendix C- Letter of Support- Women's Refuge

PALMERSTON NORTH WOMEN'S REFUGE TRUST



10 Linton St, P O Box 573 Palmerston North

Ph (06) 354-5355 Fax: (06) 354 5055

Email: pnwr@inspire.net.nz

22 October 2014

Dr Leigh Coombes

Psychology Department

Massey University

Private Bag 11 222

Palmerston North 4442

New Zealand

Dear Dr Coombes,

Re: Candice Moore

This letter is to confirm that Candice Moore has discussed her proposed thesis investigation, "Coming ready or not; Women's accounts of negotiating intersubjectivity within hetro-sex", with us. Candice acknowledges that there is a risk her study may raise past experiences of sexual trauma and/or violence for those who are participating. However, we are confident that Candice has the necessary knowledge and skills to respond to any issues raised and to advise participants of appropriate support services available to them within our community if these are required.

Candice has successfully completed volunteer training with us which included information on sexual violence and responding to survivors of sexual violence.

If you wish to discuss the content of this letter further please contact me on 06 354 5355.

Yours sincerely

Ang Jury

Manager

Appendix D- Information Sheet



MASSEY UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES
AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
TE KURA PŪKENGĀ TANGATA

“Coming Ready or Not”; Womens accounts of negotiating intersubjectivity in heterosexual relationships

INFORMATION SHEET FOR INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

Thank you for taking the time to read and acknowledge my project, I really appreciate it.

My name is Candice Moore. I am a student in Psychology at Massey University. As part of my Masters degree I am required to complete a research project. In adult relationships the sexual act is often the defining behavior that distinguishes the degree of the relationship. How we understand our sexual experiences within the social context of our lives has largely been ignored in the research literature. This research will investigate the ways women in heterosexual relationships make sense of their sexual experiences.

If you are a woman over 18 years of age and are engaged in or have been engaged in a heterosexual relationship and are interested in talking about your sexual experiences, I would like to invite you to participate in this study. In order to do this you will need to make contact with me or my supervisor (details below).

Participation will involve an interview which will take approximately 60-90 minutes. As a participant, you will be asked open-ended questions about your experiences regarding sexual activity particularly in the areas of expectations, desire and negotiation.

This interview is participant-driven, with your answers shaping the order and form of further questions, and allowing talk to flow and develop freely. This freedom also allows you to speak using your own terms and allows you to tell your own story.

This interview will be recorded and transcribed. You will be invited to read over and edit your transcript before I use extracts from your story in the research. Any identifying information will be removed so that your participation will remain confidential. Pseudonyms will be used in place of names and only myself and my academic supervisor will have access to the interview transcripts. Once the interviews have been transcribed, the audio recordings will be disposed of. Consent forms will be kept in a secure location at the School of Psychology for five years before being destroyed.

The location of the interview will be selected by you as the participant. Privacy and lack of interruptions will be an essential part of location selection; however your comfort is priority. You are welcome to bring a support person/people with you if you would like. Flexibility in interviewing will be made as needed, with breaks as required.

While I am not expecting that you will disclose negative experiences, if you become distressed during the interview about a past event, I have contacts with a number of organizations that I can help you to access if required.

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- decline to answer any particular question;
- ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview;
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used;
- withdraw from the study until such time as you have signed off your transcript;
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.

Appendix E- Participant Consent



MASSEY UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES
AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
TE KURA PŪKENGĀ TANGATA

*“Coming ready or not”: Women’s accounts of negotiating intersubjectivity
within heterosex.*

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM - INDIVIDUAL

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree/do not agree to the interview being sound recorded.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Full Name - printed _____

Appendix F- Release of Transcripts



MASSEY UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES
AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
TE KURA PŪKENGĀ TANGATA

*“Coming ready or not”: Women’s accounts of negotiating intersubjectivity
within heterosex.*

AUTHORITY FOR THE RELEASE OF TRANSCRIPTS

I confirm that I have had the opportunity to read and amend the transcript of the interview(s)
conducted with me.

I agree that the edited transcript and extracts from this may be used in reports and publications
arising from the research.

Signature:

Date:

Full Name - printed

