

Discourses of sexual coercion in the  
talk of university students

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**DECLARATION:**

I declare that this thesis is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in Community-Based Counselling Psychology in the Faculty of Humanities at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university.

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of this research was to investigate the discourses employed by young heterosexual male and female university students in the constructions of sexual coercion within the context of focus group discussions. Talk was elicited through a semi-structured interview schedule that included questions regarding intimate relationships, the dynamics that arise within such relationships, and sexual engagement. Both the emerging dominant discourses employed in the construction of sexual coercion and those that functioned as contestation were analysed by means of a critical approach to discourse analysis. This research is situated in a critical paradigm and makes use of social constructionist assumptions. The prominent themes that emerged concerned gender, sexual initiation, sexual refusal, reduction in culpability and rape. The research participants appeared to rely heavily on dominant gender discourses (male sex drive, sexual double standard, etc.) to negotiate their sexual interactions with limited ability to challenge such taken-for-granted assumptions. Attempts to resist dominant discourse were made but never fully realised, however resistance was provided through the use of the progressive male discourse. It is through the intersection of discourse that an environment that fosters sexual coercion emerges. Most significantly the research reveals that there is insufficient understanding of sexual coercion which may facilitate opportunities for its occurrence.

*Keywords: sexual coercion; rape; discourse; social constructionism; discourse analysis; qualitative design; sexual violence; patriarchy; dominant gender discourse*

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION: FRAMING THE RESEARCH

A rape-prone society is a society in which there is noticeable gender inequality, high incidence of rape, and low conviction rates of perpetrators (Sanday, 1996). In such a society, women are typically considered inferior to their male counterparts and the rape of women remains a largely uncontested terrain (Sanday, 1981; du Toit, 2008). As such South Africa can be conceptualised as a rape prone society (Mills, 2010). The study of rape has received much attention over the last four decades with investigations into the attributes of victims (Brems & Wagner, 1994; Selby, Calhoun & Brock, 1977), perpetrators (Grubb & Harrower, 2009; Ong & Ward, 1999), rape myths (Sanday, 1981), scripts (Littleton & Axson, 2003; Littleton, Tabernik, Canales & Backstrom, 2009), attitudes and the numerous possibilities for its occurrence. However, despite the wide body of knowledge that has been generated, systematic examination and research into more subtle forms of sexual violence has only emerged within the last two decades (Jewkes & Abrahams, 2002). Contemporary research suggests that the prevalence of sexual coercion is greater, more insidious and has resulted in similar psychological consequences for victims as those exposed to more forceful or life threatening forms of sexual victimisation (Ryan, 2011). This study therefore sought to investigate the discursive constructions of sexual coercion in the talk of young men and women at a university situated in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Sexual coercion is conceptualised as a continuum of violence ranging from emotional pressure to physical violence or force of rape at the extremes of the continuum (Moewaka Barnes, 2010; Powell, 2008). The term sexual coercion, as defined by Fenaughty, Braun, Gavey, Aspin, Reynolds and Schmidt, is inclusive of any:

“Criminal acts of sexual assault, where physical force or threats of force are used, or where a (person) is physically unable to resist due to, for example, intoxication. Unwanted sex that occurs as a result of manipulation or pressure by another. Unwanted sex that occurs due to more indirect social pressures relating to perceived obligation, and lack of viable alternative choices” (as cited in Moewaka Barnes, 2010, p. 52).



Rape is understood as one form of sexual coercion. However, this study did not wish to focus exclusively on the extreme act of rape and aimed to achieve a broader understanding of the constructions and lived sexual experiences for university students.

Roughly 55 000 women report rape each year in South Africa (Mills, 2010). It is also widely accepted that for each reported rape nine will remain unreported, and that approximately one million women are raped each year (Walker, 2005). These high rates of violence have been attributed to our recent political history (Wood, 2005). Moffett (2006) suggests examining the links between apartheid's rigid stratification and this rise in sexual violence and highlights the persistent use of justificatory narratives, with origins in apartheid practices, in sustaining sexual violence which emphasises the necessity of violence perpetuated against a deserving 'other'. She argues that western feminist theories proposed during the 1970s and 1980s are inadequate in explaining the pervasive sexual violence currently experienced by South Africans, as these theories do not account for the complex forms of 'othering' resulting out of extreme racial conflict. However, she does not deny the importance of these theories in coming to grips with the root of rape in patriarchal dominance. Moffet (2006) urges South Africans to stop reducing rape to an issue of race, noting that "sexual violence is an instrument of gender domination and is rarely driven by a racial agenda" (Moffett, 2006, p. 134). The narrow construction of rape and emphasis on this extreme form of sexual coercion eliminates the majority of more subtle instances of sexual victimisation experienced in South Africa - those that occur by a partner, in the perceived safety of one's home, with very little violence or physical force and in the presence of no apparent alternative but to submit to one's partner's sexual demands.

In conceptualising the magnitude of sexual coercion experienced by women in South Africa Jewkes and Abrahams (2002) conceived of the issue as an ice-berg. The tip of the iceberg includes reported rapes and fatal sexual assault, but lying beneath the surface is a much greater problem that includes all manner of sexual coercion no matter how mundane and every day they have come to be experienced as. Research has made clear the intricate link between heterosexual sexuality (heterosex) and coercion, as well as its association with power relations (Shefer & Foster, 2009). Additionally, research has highlighted that young people conceptualise rape and unwanted sex in distinctly different ways and that non-consensual sexual activity is common place, and may not necessarily involve overt violence (Shefer & Foster, 2009). Sexual coercion may take on any number of forms and "may

ultimately be consensual, but still results in unwanted sexual intercourse” (Jewkes & Abrahams, 2002, p. 1238). It is these normalised and seemingly ordinary everyday acts which this research report attempts to illuminate and to identify the underlying discourses which act to reproduce a context which facilitates its existence.

## 1.1 RESEARCH RATIONALE

The rationale for such a study lies in the need to evaluate how discourses of sexual coercion are constructed in the talk of young men and women, with an understanding that such discourses both construct and are constructed by social reality. Sexual coercion is undoubtedly a very serious social concern that is experienced at every level of society, yet emphasis in research has been on the personal nature of sexual coercion and rape towards identifying individual characteristics of victim/survivors and perpetrators (Cowburn, 2005; Lea, 2007). It has been recognised “that heterosexual sexuality (heterosex) is enmeshed with dominant constructions of gendered identities and practices, as well as with gender power relations, coercion and violence” (Shefer & Foster, 2009, p. 267). As such social change cannot be solely achieved at the individual level and myths surrounding rape, beliefs about victim responsibility and scripts regarding appropriate sexual relations cannot merely be conceptualised as individual attitudes and beliefs. “Language is so structured to mirror power relations that often we can see no other ways of being, and it structures ideology so that it is difficult to speak both in and against it” (Parker, 1992, p. xi). Discourses not only facilitate understanding of a particular object, they also create restrictions on what can be said and done from the particular subject position assumed. Thus, a major concern is that discourses of sexual coercion have constructed such behaviour as normative and inevitable within heterosexual relations (Hakvåg, 2010; Hird & Jackson, 2001; Moewaka Barnes, 2010). This research seeks to highlight the reality from which young people operate while drawing attention to ruptures and contradictions in constructions of sexual coercion as sites for potential intervention.

## 1.2 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The research sought to contribute to the current body of knowledge on sexual coercion from a post-structuralist perspective. Post-structuralism can be understood as a theory of knowledge and language that holds that reading of texts is an active process and “not merely [a] passive

reflection of an objective text with singular meaning” (Agger, 1991, p. 113). The reader, therefore, becomes the writer of meaning. However, meaning can only be produced in relation to and with reference to other meanings, which are neither transparent nor fixed. Language and possible meaning-making, therefore, construct reality. It is in the acknowledgement of ruptures of meaning that the potential for competing and alternative meaning-making structures arise. In these spaces of contradiction change in meaning can be achieved (Agger, 1991). Knowledge is socially constructed, but it is not stable across time or place and cannot be understood as neutral. Post-structuralism attempts to dismantle the dominant meaning and knowledge constructed through language, so as to displace oppressive power maintained within it. The dominant constructions of sexual coercion as inevitable and resulting out of males’ sexual drives and legitimated through unequal power relations inscribed in discourse, need to be challenged so as to offer up alternative means of being and acting in the world.

The current research provided insight into the discourses utilised by university students to reproduce understandings of normalised sexual interactions between men and women, while acknowledging the implications of the discourses used and the subjectivities allowed for through their employment. Additionally, this study shed light on the discourses which are pervasive in the lives of young students and their attempts to contest these dominant perspectives on sexual relationships. While university populations have been the primary cohorts under investigation in international literature on sexual coercion and rape, South African research has sought to broaden this perspective and has focused its attention in both urban and rural contexts. The research findings of the current study may be used to inform future research and programmes aimed at addressing sexual violence within South Africa such as in preventative interventions that seek to challenge misconceptions of unwanted sex and consent held by both men and women within a university context.

### 1.3 SCOPE OF THE PRESENT STUDY

This research is situated in a critical paradigm and made use of social constructionist assumptions, whilst employing a feminist lens in the reading of discursive constructions of sexual coercion reproduced in the talk of university students. It is understood that discourses, arising out of social interactions, construct individuals’ realities. The research took the form of three focus groups - one male, one female and one mixed group. All participants were

psychology students at the university and ranged in ages from 19 to 24 years. Participants were conveniently sampled and attempted to create heterogeneous focus groups which produced rich data for analysis (Kelly, 2006). This research focused solely on heterosexual students and their experiences of sexual coercion which is aligned with the majority of research in this field. Talk was elicited through a semi-structured interview schedule that included questions regarding intimate relationships, the dynamics that arise within such relationships, and sexual engagement. Both the emerging dominant discourses employed in the construction of sexual coercion and those that functioned as contestation were analysed by means of a critical approach to discourse analysis (Willig, 2008).

This research has been guided by the following questions:

3.3.1 How is sexual coercion constructed in the talk of university students?

3.3.2 What dominant discourses are reflected in the talk of university students?

3.3.3 How are sexual coercion discourses reproduced and contested in the talk of university students?

#### 1.4 CHAPTER ORGANISATION

In Chapter One, the research is introduced and briefly placed in context. Chapter Two provides a summary of the relevant literature reviewed for the purposes of this study. This included an overview of sexual coercion and rape literature, along with a review of current epidemiological understandings of rape. Thereafter, a current understanding of discourse is presented as well as literature regarding gender and gender based violence. This is followed by research findings into rape myths and sexual scripts. The association between miscommunication and sexual coercion is elaborated and sexual coercion within the South African context is discussed. Chapter Three examines the methods employed, from the qualitative research design, the research questions, sampling of the participants to the data collection procedure utilised. This includes a description of the interview schedule and data analysis technique of discourse analysis used. In closure, issues of reflexivity and ethical concerns are considered. Chapter Four includes a discussion of the data under analysis through the presentation of particular themes and their subthemes and the discourses that have emerged out of the talk of young male and female university students. This is embedded in previous research and the literature reviewed. Chapter Five concludes with a summary of the findings, strengths and limitations, and the implications for future research.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a review of the relevant literature specific to this study. This research is situated within a social constructionist paradigm and relies on post-structuralist and feminist underpinnings in conceptualising the occurrence of sexual coercion. This chapter attempts to illuminate the historically situated and ever-changing understanding of sexual coercion so as to determine how society conceives of sexual coercion and perpetuates its occurrence. Sexual coercion, or more specifically rape, has been explored from multiple theoretical positions, although typically viewed from a predominantly individualistic perspective which has sought to determine attributes of victims and perpetrators. As such this chapter provides an exploration of sexual coercion and rape as an extreme form of sexual coercion. Additionally an understanding of discourse and its relation to sexual coercion is provided. The chapter reviews elements believed to influence dominant discourse and understandings of sexual coercion: rape myths and sexual scripts as well as perceptions held regarding sexual intent. The final component of this chapter is an elaboration of local studies similar to the one conducted here.

#### 2.2 SEXUAL COERCION AND RAPE

Over the last five decades feminist theory has influenced constructions of rape and made a considerable impact on law reform internationally and within the South Africa context. Chasteen (2001) stated that “conditions do not become seen as problems without being actively framed as such” (p. 102) and thus require reconstruction within the public domain. This research examines whether this reconstruction of sexual coercion is apparent in young men and women’s talk and whether further reconstruction is required to ensure its recognition in order to create spaces for change. Sexual coercion is broadly used to refer to all acts that result in unwanted sex and therefore encompasses acts of rape. Research in this area has predominantly focussed on the act of rape, the perpetrator of which is constructed outside of ‘normal’ society (Cowburn, 2005). The result is that the mundane experiences of sexual coercion in women’s everyday lives are often rendered invisible.

In an attempt to address the issue of sexual violence in South Africa a reform in rape law has been instituted. Previously, the Sexual Offences Act 23 of 1957 stated that “a man commits rape when he engages in intercourse with a woman; by force or threat of force; against her will and without her consent” (as cited in du Toit, 2008). Van der Bijl and Rumney (2009) argued however that law reform has little effect on enforcement of those laws and does not result in increased reporting rates.

Myths around rape permeate society, so even with a more inclusive law, denial of the broad spectrum of sexual coercion, which is inclusive of rape, results in underreporting of sexual violence. These attitudes towards both rape and sexual coercion are not specific to South Africa and research into sexual scripts and rape myth acceptance (RMA) has been conducted globally highlighting the prevalence of these phenomena. Previous research thus emphasised the narrow constructions of rape held by both men and women and the implications and invisibility of the occurrence of coercive experiences (Peterson & Muehlenhard, 2004; Ryan, 2011; Suarez & Gadalla, 2010).

Research suggests that there is an underestimation of the degree of sexual coercion perpetrated which is associated with a number of factors, and is concerned particularly with unequal power relations. Sexual coercion may arise in the form of sexual harassment by a work superior or, as is frequently the case in South Africa, by a teacher against a student who is threatened with failure. While such instances may appear consensual, the sexual activity remains unwanted and places the recipient in a position which appears to offer no alternatives (Jewkes & Abrahams, 2002). Sexually coercive interactions may potentially garner their legitimacy through the belief that an exchange is occurring, such as a financial exchange.

In reviewing the literature regarding college women’s experiences of sexual coercion, Adams-Curtis and Forbes (2004) found that while risk factors had been identified and the magnitude of the problem established, no meaningful change in the incidence of sexual coercion had occurred over the last 50 years. Additionally, their research emphasised that many of the sexually coercive behaviours described by participants were considered normative within sexual negotiations and that victims and perpetrators appeared unable to identify the behaviour as coercive. The failure to recognise coercive behaviour as such is hugely problematic as it leaves perpetrators unaware of the violation they have committed and victims unable to articulate their subjective experiences of unwanted sex.

Understanding rape as an extreme form of sexual coercion is essential in understanding more subtle expressions of dominance over women. Rape as defined by the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act 32 of 2007, Section 3 follows that:

“Any person (‘A’) who unlawfully and intentionally commits an act of sexual penetration with a complainant (‘B’), without the consent of B, is guilty of the offence of rape.

Sexual penetration is defined widely in s. 1 as including:

Any act which causes penetration to any extent whatsoever by –

1. the genital organs of one person into or beyond the genital organs, anus, or mouth of another person;
2. any other part of the body of one person or, any object, including any part of the body of an animal, into or beyond the genital organs or anus of another person; or
3. the genital organs of an animal, into or beyond the mouth of another person,

‘consent’ means voluntary or uncoerced agreement”

In determining reasons for the high prevalence of rape perpetration, local research suggests the influence of “gender power inequalities, status within male peer groups and a climate of male sexual entitlement...and at a societal level, a general climate of tolerance towards rape” (Jewkes & Abrahams, 2002, p. 1238). It is suggested that the experience of non-consensual or coerced sex is normative within South African women’s lives to the extent that “women’s right to give or withhold consent to sexual intercourse is one of the most commonly violated of all human rights in South Africa” (Jewkes & Abrahams, 2002, p. 1240). The understanding and addressing of this phenomenon thus becomes of paramount importance.

### 2.3 UNDERSTANDING RAPE

Many models of rape have been offered up over the last four decades and an extensive review is beyond the scope of this study. However, the three most prominent theories, within the literature reviewed, and current means of understanding men’s propensity toward rape will be discussed.

*Evolutionary theories* suggest that the origin of rape may be explained by our evolutionary history. An evolutionary model, as elaborated on by Thornhill and Palmer, purports that rape is the result of ancestral mating strategies that assist in maximising reproductive success

(Gannon, Collie, Ward & Thakker, 2008). Thornhill and Palmer (2001) proposed the existence of a *male deprivation hypothesis*, which resulted out of man's biological need to produce offspring and their inability to find a partner, possibly as a result of their perceived lower status (Koss, 2000). This theory has been vehemently critiqued by feminists as it constructed men as active and powerful with uncontrollable sexuality and women as passive objects who are all potential rape victims (Burr, 2001). However, Thornhill and Palmer insist that this theory is not biologically deterministic and do not suggest that "rape is biologically programmed in males and so is an excusable behaviour" (Gannon *et al.*, 2008, p. 990), instead Thornhill and Palmer argue that rape is only one sexual strategy which may be utilised by men unconsciously in securing sex.

*Social learning theory* purports that sexually aggressive behaviour is learnt through group interactions. In this manner, "behaviour is acquired and sustained both through direct behavioural conditioning, "differential reinforcement," and through "imitation" or modelling of others' behaviour" (Boeringer, Shehan & Akers, 1991, p. 59). Behaviour is reinforced or weakened through presumed reward or lack thereof. Normative attitudes are instilled by the social group identified with; to the extent that particular acts are constructed as right or wrong and ensure that behaviours positively evaluated are maintained. This theory proposed that sexual aggression in particular groups has not been negatively evaluated and is therefore believed to be appropriate, such as in young male peer groups within patriarchal institutions and society in general. When sexual coercion is constructed as normative it is not de-valued nor seen as wrong. Additionally mass media has also been blamed for reinforcing sexually aggressive behaviour which appears to be rewarded as opposed to punished, thus providing another medium for imitation (Chan, Heide & Beauregard, 2011). Therefore, if sexual coercion is socially supported and reinforced in male in-groups, such behaviour, instead of being condemned, is continued.

*Feminist theory* has also provided many insights into the prevalence of sexual violence perpetrated against women. Feminism has shifted historically and has been largely influenced by its social context. As such there is no unitary feminist movement with a singular understanding of sexual violence or its perpetuation. Essentially feminism may be regarded as "the political theory and practice that struggles to free *all* women" (Smith, 1982 as cited in Griffin & Phoenix, 1994, p. 289, original emphasis). *Second wave feminism*, arising out of feminist analysis of the 1970s, focused predominantly on the cultural means, as opposed to



individual means, of oppressing women as a group. They believed that “[t]he source of male power and domination over women was located rather in the socio-economic and ideological structures of modern capitalism” (Di Domenico, 1995, para. 2). Within socio-political institutions such as the family, finance, universities and marriage, women’s subordination was inscribed. Feminists of the time believed that men had little need to resort to violence as their unequal power was guaranteed by such structures. Millet, however, recognised that force was central to patriarchy (as cited in Di Domenico, 1995), and the debate around sexual violence was then taken up by writers such as Brownmiller, who is considered to have pioneered feminist theories of rape in the 1970s (Di Domenico, 1995).

Rape was hypothesised as a form of male dominance and not simply a sexual act; it was understood as a means “by which men maintain and enforce status hierarchy that is to their own advantage and to the disadvantage of women” (Chiroro, Bohner, Viki, & Jarvis, 2004, p. 429). Beyond that, rape was believed to be utilised to instil fear in women which diminished their participation in society and was considered an effective tool for social restriction and exclusion. Brownmiller reiterated earlier conceptions of rape as “a powerful mechanism of male control over women” (Di Domenico, 1995, para. 10), as opposed to an individual act. She believed that rape had a pedagogic function of educating women to fear men (French, 2013).

The French materialist feminist writer, Guillaumin, later generated the notion of appropriation. From such an understanding women’s bodies, or the physical unit that does the work, are appropriated. In the same vein as the bondage of ‘slavery’ in relation to land economics, sexage can be understood as “a definition of class relations where all women belong to all men” (Di Domenico, 1995, para. 19). French feminists proposed that the gender class of men made use of sexual coercion as an enactment of appropriation and expression of their property rights over the class of women (Di Domenico, 1995).

In the 1980s, feminist analysis attempted to deconstruct the social perception of rape and the exoneration and blame attributed to perpetrators and victims respectively, especially within the judicial system (Anderson & Doherty, 2008). At this time the most damaging aspect of male sexual violence was considered to be “the colonization of women’s minds and imagination” (Di Domenico, 1995, para. 33). Women’s actions were understood as restricted and their thoughts limited. This then brought into question the notion of consent, as consent can only be given when a woman has control and freedom of her thoughts. In a culture of

domination, violence manufactures consent and the oppressor convinces the oppressed that their compliance was a result of their free will (Di Domenico, 1995).

This particular understanding of women's subordination to male oppression is often referred to as dominance theory (Abrams, 1995). However, from as early as the 1980s dominance theory has received a great deal of criticism and sparked the "sex wars" debate. Feminist radicals of the time "charged [dominance feminists] that to depict women as shaped by pervasive male sexual coercion was to tell a partial and potentially injurious story" (Abrams, 1995, p. 305). Many struggled to comprehend, and thus challenged, the notion that "one's subjectivity – from one's mode of self-presentation to one's sexual tastes – could be so thoroughly shaped by social influences [which] flew in the face of the usual assumptions of autonomous self-determination" (Abrams, 1995, p. 328), particularly that this constructivist understanding appeared to apply only to women and that what they had experienced as self-direction was merely a delusion.

The sex wars debate was reignited in the early 1990s by writers such as Camille Paglia, Katie Roiphe and Naomi Wolf. These writers believed that "feminism had devolved into what they called *victim feminism*, in which women derived all of their rhetorical power from claiming to be victims, particularly of sexual violence" (Gilley, 2005, p. 188). Their self-proclaimed position as feminists has however been challenged; many believed that such writing had hindered the feminist movement rather than promoted it. Despite this criticism, the notion of agency became central to many feminist arguments with the recognition that "the repression of women's sexual agency [was] a significant component of gender power inequality in heterosex" (Shefer & Foster, 2001, p. 375).

Feminist scholars understand sexual coercion to be a result of power imbalances inherent in a patriarchal society. As such, sexual coercion results out of men's desire to assert control over women and is not due to lust. Patriarchy is believed to be at the root of female victimisation. In this way:

"Structurally, patriarchy is a hierarchical organization in which males have more power and privilege than women...The ideology of patriarchy provides a political and social rationale for itself. Both men and women come to believe that it is "natural" and "right" that women be in inferior positions. Men feel completely supported in excluding women and up to a point feel their exclusion is correct" (DeKeseredy, 2011, p. 299).

Everyday interactions reflect this imbalance, which is further entrenched through the socialisation of women to be passive in sexual relations, in contrast to men who are encouraged to be active (Hines, 2007). It is through this feminist lens that the data will be approached and analysed.

It is important to acknowledge the critique of much of feminist writing, particularly within the South African context, that has been proposed by Black feminists. These writers highlighted the racist, classist and exclusionary nature of previous feminist perspectives (French, 2013). Women's experiences are multidimensional and oppression is experienced at multiple levels (Sokoloff & DuPont, 2005) understood as intersectionality. Crenshaw first introduced the term intersectionality in her 1989 paper investigating the demarginalisation of the intersection of race and sex. This paper illuminated the "problematic consequence of the tendency to treat race and gender as mutually exclusive categories of experience and analysis" (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 139) particularly in the lives of Black women. She criticised feminist theory and its single-axis focus of oppression which distorts and erases the realities of many marginalised women. This agenda has currently been taken up by many scholars, who attempt to address the multiple oppressions experienced by women (Sokoloff & DuPont, 2005).

Crenshaw (1989) maintained that racism and sexism are conceptualised on the experiences of privileged members of these groups. Such accounts therefore failed to acknowledge the multidimensional discrimination experienced by those who are not white. She criticised feminist theory of the time for claiming to speak for all women, while failing to address Black women's needs and interests.

"Intersectionality is what occurs when a woman from a minority group...tries to navigate the main crossing in the city...The main highway is 'racism road'. One cross street can be Colonialism, then Patriarchy Street...She has to deal not only with one form of oppression but with all forms, those named as road signs, which link together to make a double, a triple, multiple, a many layered blanket of oppression" (Crenshaw as cited in Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 196).

Crenshaw's notion of intersectionality has been substantially elaborated upon in current feminist research, which has attempted to deconstruct the categories of social division. Yuval-Davis (2006) speaks of the 'triple oppression' experienced by Black women who typically suffer in terms of race, gender and class. However "there is no such thing as

suffering from oppression 'as Black', 'as a woman', 'as a working-class person'...each social division has a different ontological basis, which is irreducible to other social divisions" (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 195).

The dominance of gender in explaining violence against women is now recognised as insufficient. The emphasis is currently placed on examining "how other forms of inequality and oppression, such as racism, ethnocentrism, class privilege, and heterosexism, intersect with gender oppression" (Sokoloff & DuPont, 2005, p. 39). Current scholarship seeks to examine the experiences of marginalised people, and those marginalised by the white, middle-class feminist movement which maintained "that violence against women is a consequence of socially constructed and culturally approved gender inequality" (Sokoloff & DuPont, 2005, p. 42-43).

The historically situated nature of scholars' attempts to understand sexual coercion and rape are illustrated through the changing constructions and theories posited over the last four decades. It is evidence that there is no one truth or reality available in explaining the occurrence of sexual violence perpetrated against women as such the psycho-social understanding is constantly re-evaluated and improved upon, allowing for more effective means of bringing about change and the development of appropriate preventative interventions.

## 2.4 CRITICAL MASCULINITY STUDIES

With the critique of feminism's previously singular focal point of gender in mind, it is still crucial to explore a thorough elaboration of gender, its construction, perpetuation and influence on sexual violence. Critical masculinity studies emerged from feminist gender writing, with its focus on women, to include men and masculinities as a new foci and recognition of the effects of patriarchy on men. Within the public domain gender still remains predominantly conceptualised as essential and binary in nature. "Culturally sanctioned gender roles are intimately connected with ... gender-based violence (GBV) ... All known human societies make social distinctions based on gender, and virtually all allocate more power and higher status to men" (Strebel, Crawford, Shefer, Cloete, Henda, Kaufman, Simbayi, Magome & Kalichman, 2006, p. 516). Smiler (2004) posits that peoples' lives and experiences are gendered in nature. Thus, one's understanding of what it means to be a man

or woman is achieved by cultural constructions of gender and is not dependent on one's biological sex (Butler, 1990). Butler (1990), one of the foremost writers on gender, theorised that cultures attach particular meanings to one's sex which in turn denotes one's gender. Gender therefore cannot be conceived of as static as it varies across time, place and social context and is thus recognised as socially constructed.

The social sanctioning of appropriate gender is inscribed at birth once a sex category has been assigned and in this way the gendering of an individual begins along with the differentiated treatment of boys and girls (Lorber, 1994). Different expectations, or gender roles, govern male and female behaviour which results in two separate genders and two separate subjective experiences, from which men and women may act. Gender produces and is reproduced through interactions and what is considered by others to be gender appropriate behaviour. This behaviour is extended to the sexual arena which requires that different behaviours be performed by the sexes.

Butler (1990) posits that gender is performative and that individuals attempt to 'do' gender correctly. In so doing, two separate and unequal genders are conceived of as natural and essential. This limits deviations from the socially constructed and sanctioned norms which Butler (1990) then critiques. Neither masculinity nor femininity are inherent to an individual but rather are social constructions (Davies, 2002). These constructions prescribe the characteristics and attributes recognised as either masculine or feminine by society and exist in opposition to each other. These constructions are patriarchal in nature and limit what can be achieved by men and women. As such, boys and men are denied their feelings and "remain emotional cripples" (hooks, 2004, p. 4) while women are deemed unacceptable when they displace stereotypically masculine behaviours. This system of differentiation and classification "influences access to power, status and material resources" (Strebel *et al.*, 2006, p. 517) and allows for male dominance and control in their sexual relationships while fostering the submission of women in the sexual arena.

In reviewing masculinity, it becomes apparent that multiple masculinities are made available to men dependent on the particular contexts and relations between groups of men. An important concept to consider then is that of 'hegemonic masculinity', initially utilised to "explain the nature, form, and dynamics of male power" (Morrell, Jewkes & Lindegger, 2012, p. 12). Within South Africa, Morrell (1998) suggested that, three hegemonic masculinities exist – a 'white' masculinity, an 'African' rural masculinity and a 'black' urban

masculinity which represent “three different ideals of male behaviour, three different groups of men, and three different sets of gendered practice” (cited in Morrell *et al.*, 2012, p. 21). Hegemonic masculinity not only oppresses women but that of other masculinities. It maintains its legitimacy by devaluing femininity and subordinate masculinities; “it presents its own version of masculinity, of how men should behave and how putative ‘real men’ do behave, as the cultural ideal” (Morrell, 1998 as cited in Morrell *et al.*, 2012, p. 20). Hegemonic masculinity reveals that while multiple masculinities exist, a particular type provides power and privilege to those males who adopt it. It is important to recognise however, that hegemonic masculinity may be contested and like all socially constructed concepts does not remain stable over time.

Hegemonic masculinity has been critiqued with the recognition that the majority of men do not enact hegemonic masculinity and instead appear to maintain a complicit masculinity that nonetheless benefits from the patriarchal cultural ideal of hegemonic masculinity (Demetriou, 2001). The hegemonic ideal remains honoured and supported through its representation of ‘real’ men.

South African research has highlighted the association between hegemonic masculinity and violence by suggesting the link between male vulnerability and misogyny (Morrell *et al.*, 2012). Masculinity is demonstrated heterosexually and it would appear that men are able to gain control and power, in a climate of limited resources and poverty, by using violence against women. South Africa experiences high levels of violence with ninety-eight percent of those incarcerated being men (SAIRR, 2010). This may reflect the influence of South Africa’s turbulent past and that despite the liberal constitution and government’s commitment to redressing racial discrimination there has been less attention directed at gender inequalities (Morrell *et al.*, 2012)

Strebel *et al.*’s (2006) research into social constructions of gender and gender-based violence in two Western Cape communities found that “traditional gender roles of male dominance and a limited sphere for women [were] still influential” (p. 526). This research revealed that the participants believed there existed challenges to gender roles, but this had resulted in a loss of power for men and that women were to blame for this. Despite the apparent shift in power relations between men and women, this was not reflected in sexual negotiation.

Morrell (2001) refers to the backlash in women’s apparent shift in power as defensive and reactive masculinity which seeks to reassert dominance and the superior male position.

Another masculinity identified by this author is that of the accommodating masculinity which constructs manhood as wise, respectful and owning a sense of responsibility. This masculine response appears to accommodate the current transitions in gender roles experienced. Finally the progressive or emancipatory masculinity has been identified and includes masculinities of gay men that have shifted from a marginalised position to that of more acceptance. These occur alongside an acknowledgement and focus on gender-based violence which suggests a progressive shift away from previously championed oppressive masculinities (Morrell, 2001).

## 2.5 SEXUAL COERCION AND DOMINANT DISCOURSE

As stated above, gender is intimately associated with sexual coercion. The production and reproduction of gender is facilitated through the employment of discourse. Discourses refer to broad systems of meaning, which manifest through language and bring about the construction of objects; they “do not simply describe the social world, but categorise it, they bring phenomena into sight” (Parker, 1992, p. 5-6). They are historically situated and precede the speaker, who is unaware of their existence and the limitations it imposes on what can or cannot be said and done. Discourses are understood to reproduce power relations, by providing certain groups with the authority to speak and legitimising their claims to knowledge and truth, and making other subordinate discourses illegitimate. Such an example would be the medical professions claim for their knowledge to be superior to psychological knowledge. Discourses influence the way objects are constructed and how subjects are positioned in relation to them, and impact on who has the authority to speak and who does not (Gilbert, Walker, McKinney & Snell, 1999; Parker, 1992). Dominant discourses acquire their power through their establishment within institutions, such as legal, religious and familial structures. Dominant discourses then act to “legitimate existing power relations and structures by defining what is ‘normal’, alternative or ‘oppositional’ subjects positions [which] are not usually perceived as desirable or even possible alternatives” (Allen, 2003, p. 216). The power afforded to dominant discourses is not however absolute and it is because these discourses create relations of power that resistance is possible (Foucault, 1978).

Gender is understood to be “an active constructing process, produced and reproduced in everyday language and activities ... [thus men and women’s] behaviours are embedded and constructed within societal encounters and contexts that define what is appropriate and desirable for women and men” (Gilbert *et al.*, 1999, p. 753). It is, therefore, through the

social interactions that gender is made “real” and cultural discourses of how an ideal man or woman acts, thinks and behaves are internalised. Dominant discourses reflect and maintain the status quo as they are typically from the vantage point of those in power. With regard to heterosexual relationships, dominant discourses ensure gender inequality as they position men as superior and women as subordinate (Gilbert *et al.*, 1999). Discourses of heterosexuality have traditionally constructed sex in such a way that it is understood to involve vaginal penetration and as a heterosexual act that involves an active subject and passive object. These discursive constructions are perpetuated socially and politically and are regarded as normative (Allen, 2003).

Research would appear to suggest that there is an association between sexual coercion and sex roles (Faulkner, Kolts & Hicks, 2008). Sex roles are understood to be “socially defined character traits which are associated with specific patterns of behaviour ascribed to women and men and are seen as ideal within mainstream society” (Faulkner *et al.*, 2008, p. 139-140). Traditional female sex roles present women as inferior to their male counterparts and subservient with the prioritizing of childrearing and family. It is believed that women who ascribe to more traditional sex roles are more likely to experience compromising sexual encounters as opposed to non-traditional women, viewed as independent and assertive, as they are constructed as having limited ability in asserting their sexual desires and denying male sexual access. Traditional sex roles emphasise chastity when outside of a relationship and require sexual assertiveness, such that women are not viewed as ‘easy’, but once married an ideal women is sexually available and willing to cater to her partner’s needs irrespective of her sexual desires (Faulkner *et al.*, 2008). It is therefore believed that women who enact traditional sex roles are more susceptible to experiences of sexual coercion, particularly when traditional male sex roles enforce dominance and superiority over women.

The discourses of heterosexuality have been historically constructed and entrenched in the fields of medicine, religion, media, law and academia and have provided particular subjectivities for both men and women through which their understanding of their world has been shaped (Allen, 2003). A dominant discourse that operates in conjunction to that of heterosexuality is the male sex drive discourse. This particular discourse originates from a socio-biological perspective that is concerned with “men’s role to pursue and procreate” (Gilbert *et al.*, 1999, p. 755). The male sex drive discourse constructs men as possessing uncontrollable sexuality such that sex is understood as a “force of nature” (Gilbert *et al.*,



1999, p. 755). Men are responsible for initiating sex, and are believed to always want and be ready for sex. Furthermore, as these urges are biologically based and therefore natural, men are constructed as needing to be aggressive in seeking out sexual gratification. The male sex drive discourse additionally constructs women as responsible for men's arousal and they are therefore required to yield to men's sexual desires in order to maintain their relationships with them.

“The potency of a dominant discourse, such as the male sexual drive discourse, stems from two inextricably intertwined sources: the discourse's consistency with what is supposedly normal and natural in a culture, and the discourse's consistency with patriarchal views of male pre-eminence and female subordination” (Gilbert *et al.*, 1999, p. 768).

These dominant gender discourses construct women as vulnerable to male sexual aggression. Women are viewed as less easily aroused and as predominantly concerned with the emotional aspects of sexual engagement. This is often referred to as a romance discourse and suggests that women need to return sexual intimacy when men express their like and desire for their female partner. In this way a woman's sexual desire is connected to a man desiring her (Gilbert *et al.*, 1999). Women are passive and reactive to male sexual desires, wants and needs; they are understood to be “victim[s] to male sexual gratification” (Allen, 2003, p. 218). Dominant discourses of female sexuality construct sexual encounters as outside of women's control and women are seen as subordinate to male sexuality (Jackson & Cram, 2003). Women are constituted as the reluctant recipients who require persuasion and reassurance and are not autonomous in their sexual desire (Gilbert *et al.*, 1999).

Dominant discourses of heterosex offer divergent constructions of male and female sexuality. Through the employment of dominant gender discourses, males are conceived of as sexually assertive with insatiable and uncontrollable sexual desires, guaranteed bodily satisfaction and able to emotionally detach from the act of sex. Masculine identity is intrinsically tied to sexual engagement and it is through sex that it may be successfully achieved. These dominant discourses are resisted when men acknowledge the importance of intimacy as opposed to sexual gratification. Dominant gender discourses allow for the occurrence of sexual coercion and facilitate the normalisation of these acts.

Both international and local research highlights the apparent “lack of a positive discourse on female sexuality” (Shefer & Foster, 2009, p. 269) which is believed to be required for the establishment of equitable sexual practices. Research indicates that women have attempted to

contest these dominant discourses such that they are able to take up agentic subjectivities (Allen, 2003). However, it is not from a position of pre-discursive subjectivity that women find their ability to make these particular choices but rather discourse consists of constitutive forces which are understood as providing the subject with agency and the potential for resistance. Often, therefore, in constituting oneself, individuals make use of dominant and contested discourses in creating meaning with regards to their sexual selves, and this was particularly evident in Allen's (2003) findings whereby women were able to employ both the taken-for-granted discourse of heterosexuality as well as those which resisted passive constructions of female sexuality. These counter-discourses of female sexuality involve women taking up subject positions traditionally afforded to males and renouncing stereotypical female attributes such as the desire for commitment and intimacy. It is argued that women may assert more control over sexual negotiation if they "have a language for their sexuality and desire" (Shefer & Foster, 2001, p. 376).

Hollway refers to female sexual agency as the permissive discourse which constructs women as desiring and having the right to casual sex (as cited in Farvid & Braun, 2013). The use of counter-discourses by women may however be resisted due to the dominant sexual double standard discourse and the desire to maintain their social status and reputation (Allen, 2003; Goicolea, Salazar Torres, Edin & Öhman, 2012). The sexual double standard suggests that women's worth is associated with their sexuality and the virtues of purity and restraint whereas the same standards are not applied to men who instead achieve greater masculine status through sexual promiscuity. The expectations placed on women currently are to be both chaste and sexually liberated (Goicolea *et al.*, 2012). Both men and women are sexually constrained with their realities of appropriate sexual behaviour shaped by patriarchal dominant discourses.

## 2.6 SEXUAL SCRIPTS AND DISCOURSE

As noted earlier, the vast majority of research has focused exclusively on rape and not on a broader continuum of sexual coercion. As such, over the last two decades a great deal of attention has been given to sexual scripts as a means of understanding the prevalence of rape and how young people conceptualise their sexual behaviour. Scripts are a type of mental schema that provide guidelines for stereotypical behaviour to be played out during particular social situations (Littleton *et al.*, 2009) and may be understood as the internalisation of

discourse which extends beyond a set of social meanings to impact an individual's behaviour and understanding thereof. Gagnon and Simon were the first to define traditional sexual scripts as the sequence of behaviour resulting in intercourse (as cited in Fagen & Anderson, 2012). Sexual scripts can be understood to represent particular discourses of relating to members of the opposite sex in that they "explore the cultural norms that serve as guidelines for acceptable and expected sexual behaviour, how those expectations are negotiated between individuals and ways that the individual forms their own sexual identity" (French, 2013, p. 36). Research shows that traditional sexual scripts construct men as initiators of sexual engagement while women are constructed as gatekeepers of sexual activity (Fagen & Anderson, 2012; French, 2013; Littleton & Axson, 2003; Littleton *et al.*, 2009; Muehlenhard & Rodgers, 1998; Powell, 2008). Furthermore, sexual scripts dictate that males have higher sex drives and require multiple sexual partners in order to achieve successful masculinity, yet having multiple male partners for women is believed to lower their sexual desirability and respectability (Fagen & Anderson, 2012; Littleton & Axson, 2003). These scripts foster the existence of the 'sexual double standard' (Milnes, 2010) which serves to reinforce and further inscribe 'appropriate' gendered behaviour. The sexual double standard constructs situations in which male promiscuity and casual sexual encounters are condoned while the same behaviour in females is vilified. "Sexual scripts are culturally determined, they create sexual meaning and desire, and they enable individuals to interpret their own and their partner's behaviour" (Ryan, 2011, p. 775).

According to dominant sexual scripts, women are unable to indicate their sexual desire and men are required to persist in their endeavours of acquiring sexual gratification in the face of female resistance (Fagen & Anderson, 2012; Ryan, 2011). This particular form of female resistance is often referred to as 'token resistance' and is understood to be "refusing or resisting sexual activity while intending to engage in that activity" (Muehlenhard & Rodgers, 1998, p. 443-444). According to this sexual script, men do not need to take women's refusals seriously.

South African youth were also found to hold these sexual scripts and employ them in their dating relationships (Jewkes, 2005; Varga, 2003). Such scripts are discursively constructed and reveal discourses of unequal power relations. How individuals think about themselves and others as sexual beings is discursively constructed and enacted, placing power in the hands of the dominant group while oppressing and limiting women's ability to freely consent.

It is easy to see how such cognitive schemas may contribute to sexual coercion, rape and the justification of such behaviour and it is essential to understand the relationship between sexual scripts and sexual coercion so as to determine how sexual victimisation is interpreted and experienced by victim/survivors (French, 2013). Muehlenhard and Rodgers' (1998) token resistance research, based at an American university, consisted of a predominantly white undergraduate student sample, found that while a small percentage of males and females do engage in token resistance, the majority do not and "no" really does mean no.

Rape scripts provide individuals with a lens through which to understand a prototypical rape scenario and delineates how men and women are positioned through defining the attributes of perpetrators and victims as well as additional elements such as location, the use of force and sex of the attacker. Ryan (2011) studied the rape and seduction scripts of young adults and found that individuals employ very different scripts for understanding rape and seduction, such that dominant or 'real rape' scripts, as it is commonly referred to, involved mentally ill men who attack suddenly in a secluded area at night with the use of physical force or threat of harm to which the victim resists. The seduction scripts, however, resemble acquaintance rape and involved the use of alcohol and previous knowledge of the other person. Due to the specific rape scripts held by men and women, it may be difficult for them to identify sexually coercive situations and therefore negotiate a more favourable conclusion (Ryan, 2011).

Kahn (2004) researched "women who do not call their experience rape" or "unacknowledged victims" to determine the reasons behind this behaviour. In a study that consisted of a 90% white, female, undergraduate student population at an American university, he found that those who did not label their experience rape experienced situations that involved a boyfriend who made repeated pleas or threats, where the participant was intoxicated, or the perpetrator performed sexual acts other than penile/vaginal penetration. It is evident that what these individuals are describing are in fact instances of rape and sexual coercion, but they are not defined as such as a result of the 'real rape' scripts held by young women (Bouffard & Bouffard, 2011). This may decrease an individual's willingness to seek assistance through their inability to recognise the true magnitude of the event which is understood as having the same psychological consequences as other forms of sexual victimisation (Ryan, 2011). Kahn (2004) noted that while it may be beneficial for women to label their experiences as something other than rape in order to cope better with that situation, "[w]omen as a group,

and likely women in the future, would certainly be better off if all women who experience legal rape labelled it as such” (Kahn, 2004, p. 15).

Belief in the ‘real rape’ script has serious implications for women who are left vulnerable to sexual aggression, through their reduced ability to recognise acquaintance rape and specific risk cues that are not aligned with a ‘real rape’ script (Bouffard & Bouffard, 2011). Research indicates that several acquaintance rape scripts have been identified such as the ‘friends-gone-too-far’ script, the ‘man-is-ready-for-sex’ script and the ‘too-much-to-drink’ script which would suggest that women should be blamed for their victimisation because of their own negligence and inability to say “no”(Ryan, 2011). Ryan’s (2011) research indicated that men subscribe to ‘wrong accusation’ scripts, thus constructing men as victims of false accusations of sexual coercion and rape leading to women being constructed as deceitful and untrustworthy. Additionally, it would appear that men considered consent to be either given or not, while women describe scripts in which consent is negotiated throughout the sexual encounter such that they are willing to engage in certain acts and not in others which may result in sexual coercion through the male belief that their partners have consented to all acts (Ryan, 2011). Many men do not consider their sexually aggressive behaviour to be coercive or even as problematic through their justification of their behaviour. These justifications are courtesy of rape-prone and patriarchal societies that provide excuses for rape and sexual coercion through adherence to rape myths and dominant gender discourses which construct acceptable gender expression.

Several studies have attempted to define rape from an understanding that sexual scripts reflect reality. As the realities of sexual behaviours shift and become more permissive so to, it is believed, should the notion of perpetrators of rape. Therefore, it is predicted that individuals’ rape and sexual scripts will shift. However both Anderson (2007) and Littleton *et al.* (2009) have found that despite these social changes, traditional ‘real rape’ scripts persist in the minds of female American college students. This finding was additionally reflected in the research of Abbey, McAuslan, Zawacki, Clinton and Buck (as cited in Bouffard & Bouffard, 2011) that suggests that while students claim to hold egalitarian attitudes, their “views of dating and sexual relationships today still reflect traditional, gender-stereotyped norms and expectations about male and female roles” (p. 628). In contrast to this, Chasteen (2001), in an attempt to uncover whether feminist reconstructions had permeated women’s everyday understandings of rape, found that women appeared more likely to conceive of rape as being

perpetrated by an acquaintance and agreed that rape was very common. This study made use of a racially diverse population of varying ages, whereas Anderson (2007) and Littleton *et al.* (2009) made use of predominantly white student populations. Despite social changes of the roles of men and women in different spheres, within the dating environment it would appear that little change has occurred and scripts persist in reflecting traditional sex roles and norms. Holding traditional 'real rape' scripts and ascribing to rape myths limits how women and men are able to define rape and their ability to acknowledge when they have been the victim or perpetrator of sexual coercive acts (Bouffard & Bouffard, 2011). Furthermore, for males, research indicated that ascribing to these rape supportive attitudes shows a strong correlation with the enactment of sexually aggressive behaviour. Once again emphasising that "[i]n the highly gender-stereotyped, culturally accepted "rules" for dating and sex, some amount of coercion and force is viewed as normative" (Bouffard & Bouffard, 2011, p.629).

## 2.7 RAPE MYTHS AND DISCOURSE

Ryan (2011) maintains that rape myths construct particular sexual scripts which in turn influence individuals' sexual attitudes and behaviours. Rape myths, as theorised by Burt, are "prejudicial, stereotyped, or false beliefs about rape, rape victims, and rapists" (as cited in Peterson & Muehlenhard, 2004, p. 130). Such myths allow for the construction of a society where rape is accepted and justified and victims become the cause of their own victimisation. Four major rape myths have been identified: "husbands cannot rape their wives, women enjoy rape, women ask to be raped, and women lie about being raped" (Ryan, 2011, p. 774). They additionally identified rape myths that fall within each category. An example would be that "only bad girls get raped" (Peterson & Muehlenhard, 2004, p. 130). Such myths can be conceptualised as discourses of rape as they construct particular understandings of the world that allows for various subject positions to be taken up by both men and women while legitimating certain behaviours and condemning others. Rape myths additionally shape what would be considered instances of inferred or implied consent ensuring that submission is typically understood to be providing consent and absolving perpetrators of any wrong doing (Mills, 2010).

Myths are particular accounts that function to guide individuals' behaviour as well as false beliefs. As such, rape myths are those beliefs which are regarded as inaccurate but are generally accepted to be true and may be considered "the most self-serving justification of

sexual coercion ever invented by callous men” (Zillmann & Weaver, 1989 as cited in Ryan, 2011, p. 774). Myths, like scripts, create patterns of understanding which allow individuals to make sense of the world around them and of their own and other’s experiences, along with guidelines for typical ways of behaving. Rape myths represent a ‘just world’ cognitive schema or discourse which makes sense of the world through the understanding that things happen for a reason and that negative consequences result out of negative actions. The use of the just world discourse distances an individual from the possibility of negative events happening to them for no apparent reason. Thus individuals are able to hold onto the belief that they will not become victims; in this way rape only happens to those who deserve it. Males may adopt rape myths to exonerate their behaviour as well as distancing themselves from the possibility of being a perpetrator. The acceptance of rape myths function differently for men and women, acting as cautionary tales for women and providing sexual aggression guidelines for men such that “it’s okay to rape women who tease men, dress provocatively, or engage in sexual behaviour; women mean yes when they say no; and women want to be raped” (Ryan, 2011, p. 775).

Suarez and Gadalla (2010) conducted a meta-analysis on rape myth acceptance (RMA), and found that men showed significantly greater endorsement of RMA than women. This validated “the feminist hypothesis that gender inequality perpetuates rape myths” (Suarez & Gadalla, 2010, p. 2025) in that male-dominated societies will blame the victims of sexual violence in order to justify rape. Rape myths, like sexual scripts, are discursive in nature and highlight the uneven power relations evident in patriarchal, heteronormative, gendered society. The problem with high levels of rape myth acceptance in a male-dominated society, however, is that social change is not viewed as necessary and the burden of responsibility for sexual violence is placed on the victim. The limitations inherent in this meta-analysis are that it was conducted on studies from North America, with predominately white participants as well as an overrepresentation of student samples, and thus cannot be generalised to other populations. In addition, several rape myth acceptance measures were used in the reviewed studies and these were not equivalent with conceptual limitations of rape myths as a construct (Suarez & Gadalla, 2010).

The above mentioned studies highlight the socially constructed nature of the meaning of rape. What is considered rape is not consistent through time and space; rather, the actions that define rape and sexual coercion are contextually situated and made meaningful through

language. Language creates the categories with which communities order their realities and make interpretations of a particular situation possible. Our world and experience of it is constructed through language, interactions and shared systems of meaning. These shared experiences soon lead to habitualisation and institutionalisation of the categories used to define our reality (DeLamater & Hyde, 1998). This narrows the spectrum of possibility so that the act of rape takes on a specific form. For example: rape takes on the form of a stranger attack that happens outside of the home with the use of violence and the victim physically resisting the assault (Mills, 2010). This construction shapes a woman's experience and dictates where she places blame and responsibility for the assault. Research into the construction of sexual coercion and rape is important because as "feminists have observed, dominant conceptions of reality and truth in patriarchal Western society have tended to be male constructions which reflect and perpetuate male power interests" (Gavey, 1989, p. 462) and invalidate women's subjective experiences of sexual coercion.

## 2.8 PERCEPTIONS OF SEXUAL INTENT

Scripts, along with discourse, construct an individual's understanding of the world around them and what it means to be male or female. They assist in reading others' behaviour so as to establish the appropriate behavioural response. The signalling of sexual intent is a complex process which requires decoding often subtle social cues. Incorrect decoding of cues may result in failure to pursue an interested party or continuing to pursue an individual who has signalled their lack of interest in sexual activity. Research has suggested that some men may misinterpret their female partner's sexual interest and may view friendly behaviour as seductive (Bouffard & Bouffard, 2011). Farris, Treat, Viken and Mcfall (2008) conducted a review of literature that investigated men's ability to distinguish friendliness from sexual intent as well as situational factors which may influence misperception of sexual intent. This literature indicated that some men appear to be "hyper-sensitive to cues of sexual interest, including those that were not intended to be perceived as interest" (Farris *et al.*, 2008, p. 49). Men are believed to react aggressively due to the frustration experienced when women turn down male sexual advances after having appeared to give cues of sexual intent. These men, additionally, do not perceive their behaviour as sexually coercive or as problematic. These findings would seem to suggest that what women classify as friendliness may convey a very different message to men. This may be as a result of men perceiving the world through a sexualised lens. The majority of males however, were able to successfully distinguish sexual



communication with a sub-group of men creating the gendered difference. Men who rejected traditional sex role stereotypes were less likely to misperceive sexual intent than those who strongly endorse traditional sex roles. Another risk factor identified for misperception of sexual intent was men who held rape-supportive attitudes (Farris *et al.*, 2008).

Several situational factors were identified which were associated with misperception of sexual intent, recognition of which may be useful in sexual coercion prevention interventions. Provocative clothing was found, for both men and women, to be associated with increased estimations of sexual intent (Farris *et al.*, 2008). Such beliefs reinforce rape myths which suggest that particular styles of dress indicate a woman's desire for sex. The next factor identified involves particular dating behaviours, such as women initiating and paying for a date, also identified by Bouffard and Bouffard (2011) as an indirect cue suggestive of sexual interest. Going home with the person at the close of date was believed to be suggestive of sexual intent by both men and women as well as touching and eye contact. These behaviours have also been identified as justification for rape through their association with rape myths. Finally, the use of alcohol increased misperception of sexualised behaviour and sexual intent and the possibility for sexual coercion to occur. Additionally it resulted in men viewing female acquaintances as sexually disinhibited. Intoxication leads to reduced attention being paid to crucial behavioural cues. With regard to female alcohol consumption, men appeared to interpret greater sexual intent and thus more sexual availability from intoxicated women (Farris *et al.*, 2008). The consumption of alcohol appears to exonerate men of any responsibility, and allows for men to deny their actions, while increasing women's blameworthiness (Ryan, 2011).

“The finding that alcohol consumption is perceived as a sexual cue, suggests that alcohol increases the likelihood that a woman's platonic friendliness will be misperceived by a male companion as a sign of sexual interest. The cognitive impairments associated with alcohol consumption can, in turn, make it difficult for a woman to rectify misperceptions and to effectively resist unwanted sexual advances. Consequently, alcohol makes it more probable that misperceptions will become sexual assaults, either because a man mistakenly believed that his female companion really wanted to have sex or because he felt that she led him on to the point that force was justifiable” (Abbey & Harnish as cited in Farris *et al.*, 2008, p. 13).

Farris *et al.* (2008) concluded from their research that misperception of sexual intent does not result in sexual coercion but rather that men may use the excuse of miscommunication to

justify an assault that has been perpetrated. Alternatively, the misperception of sexual intent may lead men to interpret non-consent as token resistance when other cues have been decoded as indicating sexual interest which may lead men to believe that their acts of sexual coercion were merely attempts at seduction (Farris *et al.*, 2008).

## 2.9 MODES OF SEXUAL COERCION

Sexual coercion involves any behaviour that results in sexual contact acquired from someone who does not desire such contact. Research suggests that particular strategies may be utilised by either men or women to achieve sexual access; purposefully or without explicit recognition that the behaviour utilised may be construed as coercive. Much of these actions serve to exonerate the perpetrators of sexual coercion and are socially sanctioned and conceived of as normative within heterosexual negotiation. A 1987 report found that 25% of college women engaged in unwanted sex as a result of verbal coercion, 9% due to threats or physical force and 8% after being given drugs or alcohol (as cited in Struckman-Johnson, Struckman-Johnson & Anderson, 2003). Research has found however, that women report engaging in unwanted sex more frequently than their male counterparts. Struckman-Johnson *et al.*'s (2003) research into post-refusal sexual persistence tactics highlighted that the most frequently utilised tactic of sexual coercion, for both men and women, was the sexual arousing of one's partner. Following this, persistent kissing and touching was cited by 62% of participants and 60% reported being subjected to emotional manipulation and deception; these acts included repeated requests, professing one's love, threats to end the relationship or promises to extend it. Intoxication was the third most frequently cited tactic experienced by the participants followed by physical harm and force. The strategies used by women were found to be slightly different to those used by men as women typically made use of attempts to arouse their partner through compliments, flirtation, removing clothing and touching.

The Struckman-Johnson *et al.*'s (2003) study indicated that experiences of post-refusal sexual persistence are particularly common within a college cohort. Additionally, their research indicated a strong correlation between alcohol use and sexual coercion and suggested that this particular sexual coercion strategy is utilised because of the ease with which it allows both men and women to achieve their desired goal of acquiring sexual engagement while removing feelings of guilt associated with forced sex. Further, Struckman-Johnson *et al.* (2003) found that the percentage of individuals who reported experiences of sexual coercion

was far greater than the percentage of individuals who admitted to using post-refusal sexual persistence strategies. This led the researchers to question whether perpetrators were aware that such behaviours are characteristic of sexual coercion and the consequences that result from the use of such behaviours. However, as indicated previously, both men and women are limited in their ability to recognise sexually coercive behaviour because of the dominant gender discourses employed and the sexual scripts utilised in understanding their experiences.

Research has indicated that “when alcohol consumption and sexual interactions coincide, the risks of negative sexual outcomes often increase” (Livingston, Bay-Cheng, Hequembourg, Testa & Downs, 2012, p. 39). Livingston *et al.* (2012) believe that, despite recognising the risks involved in alcohol consumption, young women feel the need to engage in drinking as a result of the contradictory cultural messages they receive. Young women are constructed as sexual gatekeepers responsible for warding off men’s sexual advances in order to demonstrate their social worth. However, women are presented with contradictory messages of the need to satisfy men sexually and to express their sexual agency, particularly through media representation of sexually wanton women. With such expectations the “notion of a “double bind” might be too simplistic a description of young women’s entanglement with a complex knot of multiple, seemingly opposed normative injunctions: to abstain, to resist, to comply, to seduce, to express, to arouse, and to perform” (Livingston *et al.*, 2012, p. 39). Research indicates that despite the recognised risks young women utilise alcohol to traversing the multiple roles required of women (Livingston *et al.*, 2012).

Research additionally suggests that alcohol consumption may serve two functions; allowing ease of sexual expression while ensuring that women do not feel wholly responsible for their lack of sexual restraint. Despite alcohol assisting young women in traversing these multiple expectations, women are still perceived as to blame for any negative sexual consequences or coercion experienced when they have been drinking as a result of the rape myths maintained in society. Furthermore, the research conducted by Livingston *et al.* (2012) suggests that young men initiate quip pro quo interactions by providing alcohol to women with the expectation of repayment in the form of sexual activity. The research then indicated the difficulty young women experience in negotiating this situation and suggests that young women may feel obligated to uphold this exchange irrespective of their desire to engage sexually (Livingston *et al.*, 2012). Lau and Stevens’ (2012) gender-based violence study revealed that “the disinhibiting effects of alcohol deflected both personal responsibility and

potential for negative judgement” (p. 430) when utilised by their male participants. As such, men were able to construct themselves as passive victims who were able to excuse their abusive behaviour as a result of their drunkenness.

Interest and concern with regard to transactional sexual relationships has increased in the fields of HIV and gender-based violence (Shefer, Clowes & Vergnani, 2012). Research has indicated that transactional sexual relationships are not based solely on financial necessity but may also be used to achieve status. Shefer *et al.*'s (2012) research on a South African university campus highlighted that such relationships are common place and that “an expectation of sexual intimacy following a material exchange was normative” (p. 438). Furthermore, the research indicated that first-year female students were most vulnerable to non-equitable transactional relationships due to their inexperience. Transactional sex was constructed negatively and through a moralistic lens with women predominantly constructed as focused on material goods and men as focused on the sexual aspect of the transactions. In so doing the participants “reinscrib[ed] dominant discourses around heterosexuality and gender that deny the possibility of any transactional relationship being equitable or non-exploitative” (Shefer *et al.*, 2012, p. 443).

## 2.10 EMPIRICAL STUDIES ON MEANING MAKING AND SEXUAL COERCION

The study of sexual coercion is gaining prominence within contemporary psychological research, but in questioning its validity certain issues need to be addressed. The first concern presented by O'Sullivan (2005) is the way in which sexual coercion has been conceptualised in dating relationships. The language used varies across studies and sexual coercion has been variably termed “dating violence,” “sexual pressure,” “acquaintance rape,” “intimate partner violence”, “sexual influence,” “date rape,” and so on. This has made tracing developments of sexual coercion research difficult. Furthermore, O'Sullivan (2005) criticised the limitations of the methodological approaches predominantly used and called for more creative and critical approaches. Research is largely quantitative and the measures currently used are not standardized. When used presently they are generally adapted, and therefore their psychological properties are no longer valid.

Additionally, discrepancies arise over the meaning of sexual coercion and “it is not always clear that all unwanted acts are non-consensual or that an individual is aware that his or her partner does not want to engage in the sexual activity” (O'Sullivan, 2005, p. 5). O'Sullivan

suggested that while an individual may not want to engage in a particular act, they may for whatever reason, still continue to do so. For O'Sullivan (2005) it is essential that we distinguish coercion from non-coercion and that the research participants define the issue under investigation in the same manner.

Hakvåg (2010) argues "that feminist theorists need to engage in thorough analysis of the intersections between normative heterosexuality and sexual assault" (p. 121), especially the notion of consensual, unwanted intercourse. Issues of consent are raised and questioned as it is believed that consent is given within a context of inequality.

"Our cultural understanding of sex and heterosexuality has been shaped around the eroticization of dominance and submission... From this perspective, consent becomes a contentious issue, because false consciousness or internalization of submission is embodied in female subjectivity" (Hakvåg, 2010, p. 121).

Hird and Jackson's (2001) research into the normative heterosexual sexual practice narratives of adolescents in New Zealand and Britain found that discourses of 'biological essentialism' were used to explain inherent sexual differences. Men were viewed as having a stronger sex drive than females with male sexuality constructed as active while females were entrusted with the role of controlling male sexuality. Heterosexuality was constructed as natural and masculinity was achieved through multiple partners. Furthermore, contradictions in female sexuality arose as girls traversed the boundaries between 'sluts' and 'angels' which served to highlight how female sexuality is regulated by hegemonic masculinity. Women were not permitted to actively seek out sexual relations although they are still expected to stimulate male sexual desire (Hird & Jackson, 2001). Men were not free from hegemonic constraints either and tread a narrow line between being a sexually assertive 'stud' and proving themselves not to be 'wusses'. In this study, males justified rape on the basis of uncontrollable biological drives while women employed romantic discourses to account for coercion, which allowed males to use the notion of 'love' as a coercive tool.

Hird and Jackson (2001) show that sexual coercion is central to male's sexuality and is normalised as acceptable. Hakvåg (2010) has thus questioned women's choice and ability to consent when they have been constructed as passive and lacking in agency in dominant discourses. This is an essential flaw in rape law that requires voluntary agreement to indicate consent, however the law and lawmakers do not typically acknowledge the social inequality between parties, nor does it acknowledge that even an explicitly given 'yes' does not

necessarily imply voluntary agreement, as a 'yes' may be coerced for any number of reasons (Mills, 2010). Just as sexual coercion has been constructed over time, so too have gendered subjectivities, and men and women enacted sexual practices which conform to particular cultural norms. It is consequently crucial to scrutinize reasons for consenting to unwanted sex and to realise that while an act may not be defined as sexual coercion, it does not make the experience any less unacceptable (Hakvåg, 2010).

Female sexuality is consistently constructed through dominant discourses that appear to render any possibility for sexual desire and pleasure to exist for women as invisible. Milnes' (2010) research into women's sexual narratives found that participants challenged the notion of the sexual double standard and used alternative narrative frameworks in describing their experiences. A 'permissive discourse' was employed in constructing 'casual' encounters that positioned women as promiscuous and predatory. The participants asserted their rights to behave the way men did by paralleling constructions of male sexuality (Milnes, 2010). These narratives of 'sexual equality' allowed women to feel more sexual freedom and power. However, they may be considered ultra-masculine and in the process, ultra-feminine attributes and traditional constructions of female sexuality, as requiring intimacy and commitment, acquire negative connotations. Thus, women find themselves in another restrictive position as sexual agency and freedom is constructed as characterising the 'modern' women who is liberated and free which limits women's ability to enact more traditional scripts now characterised as 'dependent' and 'needy' (Milnes, 2010). The problematic nature of these constructions are evident, particularly the understanding that women's liberation can only be achieved by taking on typically 'masculine' behaviours. Furthermore, this study found that while the participants felt that they should be more sexually agentic, they were stigmatized through the use of negative terms which are reproduced through dominant discourses. Milnes (2010) highlighted that women do not simply employ one set of discourses in constructing their subjectivity, but rather simultaneously resist dominant discourses and reproduce them. Women find themselves "between two alternative, contradictory and highly 'gendered' sexual narrative identities, one informed by 'ultra-feminine' romantic narratives and another by 'ultra-masculine' sexual equality narratives" (Milnes, 2010, p.258).

Research suggests that discourses of female sexual desire are lacking and this may be as a result of the absence of language through which women may construct an active and powerful female sexuality (Shefer & Foster, 2001); when female desire has been eluded to it is in

relation to male sexuality and desire which is often referred to as ‘the male in the head’ (Jackson & Cram, 2003). In establishing the counter-discourses which oppose the sexual double standard in young New Zealander women’s talk about sexuality, Jackson and Cram (2003) found that women constructed themselves as agentic and knowledgeable about sex as opposed to passive. However, this resistance was “tenuous and fragile” (Jackson & Cram, 2003, p. 123) and often times dominant discourses were again employed. The women attempted to resist the discourse of the sexual double standard through the acknowledgement of the inequality it created, and by constructing male promiscuity as negative and female sexual agency as positive. Allen (2003), in researching young people’s constructions of sexuality in New Zealand, found that the participants believed that dominant discourses of the sexual double standard were obsolete. However, only a few participants employed discourses that resisted dominant constructions of sexuality. The above studies highlighted that dominant discourses may be predominately reproduced, but that strategies of resistance are also utilised to construct female sexuality as agentic.

The contextual and historically situated constructions of female sexuality are evident in much of the empirical research as well as in the changing rape scripts and rape myths research, and particularly in feminist writings. Traditionally dominant constructions portray women as passive and gatekeepers to male sexuality: women are not constructed as sexually desiring and their sexuality is constructed only in relation to active, domineering and powerful male sexuality (Jackson & Cram, 2003). However, recently counter constructions of women that opposed the passive, receptive dominant discourse have arisen in advertising and sexual education.

Advertising has always employed sex as a tactic in selling and has been criticised for objectifying women for men’s consumption while silencing their sexual desire. In response advertising has taken up a supposed feminist agenda which emphasises women’s sexual agency. Presently, female sexual desire is ubiquitous, particularly in celebrity sexuality. Female sexuality has been hyper-sexualised, particularly now that women have become the target audience for much of what is advertised. The advertising agencies have begun selling power femininity and have commoditised feminism (Gill, 2008).

Women are therefore portrayed as powerful and sexually agentic and have been hailed as empowered feminist icons. Women are represented within media as actively seeking out and

initiating sexual engagement. Gill (2008) recognised the power in these constructions and their potential in addressing the “missing discourse of female desire” as elaborated by Fine (as cited in Gill, 2008, p. 37)

Research has indicated that what is understood as normative sexual practice is influenced by the (re)production of particular versions of sex and sexuality represented in the media as it provides fictional scripts and language which shapes sexuality (Farvid & Braun, 2013). Female sexuality and agency are celebrated in media, instead of being chastised and in many respects represents a positive shift of constructions of femininity. However, Gill (2008) emphasised that while female sexuality has not been suppressed, power still acts to regulate and discipline female subjectivity and to reconstruct ways of being a sexual subject, particularly within a heteronormative framework. Additionally, while there may appear to be changes occurring within our constructions of female sexuality, research has suggested that the counter-discourses have not as yet been taken up by the majority of women who are still victim to the discourse of the sexual double standard and the limitations offered by dominant discourses of heterosexuality (Jackson & Cram, 2003).

## 2.11 THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

It was only in 2007 that South Africa introduced rape law reform that shifted the archaically defined rape from penile/vaginal penetration to a much more inclusive definition that accounted for ‘lesser’ offenses, inclusive of various sexually coercive practices, and reflected for the first time the actual experiences of women, men and children in South Africa (Mills, 2010). With its young democracy and considerably progressive constitution one would assume that women and children in South Africa are some of the most protected against gender-based violence globally. However, this would not appear to be the case. Women continue to find themselves in subordinate positions as a result of the patriarchal traditions embedded within society and are subjected to secondary victimisation and victim blaming in contexts of normalised sexual coercion (Mills, 2010).

Apartheid is understood to have left its mark on current day society by entrenching discourses of the ‘other’, constructed as dangerous and needing to be regulated. Women, in this fledgling society, now take up this position of ‘other’ in the minds of men, while the dominant group is theorised as experiencing a “crisis of masculinity” (Moffett, 2006, p. 137).



Rape is viewed as justified and understood to be a means through which to “teach” and “control” women who appear to step out of line by refusing to conform to traditional gender roles (Jewkes, 2005; Moffett, 2006; Wood *et al.*, 2007). This same discourse of violence as a corrective measure is familiar to those who experienced apartheid and was used to rationalise white-on-black violence necessary in maintaining social order against those who would not accept their ‘inferior’ position in society. Moffett (2006) emphasised that “[w]henver a small group attempts to dominate a large group, fear becomes an important strategic weapon” (p. 139). As women represent the majority of South Africa, sexual violence has become a legitimate means of control, keeping the subordinate obedient to social norms entrenched by hegemonic patriarchal structures. Sexual violence in South Africa is viewed by many as necessary for controlling and policing the unstable ‘other’ and reminding women of their place within that group (Moffett, 2006).

Research in South Africa has highlighted the issues of unequal power relations, male peer group status, and an environment “of male sexual entitlement” (Jewkes & Abrahams, 2002, p. 1238) as factors that contribute to a climate that tolerates rape. Additionally, local research “highlights the coercive and violent nature of heterosexual relationships and the powerlessness of young girls/women” (Shefer & Foster, 2001, p. 376). Due to the disparity of power between men and women, sexual violence can be understood as a demonstration of that dominance. Jewkes and Abrahams (2002) pointed to the social construction of masculinity within South Africa which enforces control over women, with sexual coercion being but one form of gender-based violence experienced by women and sanctioned by “a general culture of violence that pervades society” (Jewkes & Abrahams, 2002, p. 1239).

Local research has shown that the performance of masculinity operates within the context of male peer groups and is evaluated through competition. Successful masculinity is thus achieved through multiple partners and by obtaining a girlfriend who is desired by others (Jewkes, 2005). As noted by Mills (2010), “[m]ale control of women and notions of male sexual entitlement feature strongly in the dominant social constructions of masculinity in South Africa” (p. 82). Certain dating scripts in South Africa involve the male initiation of forced sex and construct situations in which men may determine the start and development of a relationship (Jewkes, 2005). When propositioned, women have little choice but to accept, or face a tarnished reputation or the punishment of rape for disrespecting a man. However, women may not accept a proposition immediately, as this may lead to them being thought of

as 'loose' (Jewkes, 2005; Wood, Lambert & Jewkes, 2007). The use of this particular sexual script is further evident in ethnographic research conducted by Wood *et al.* (2007) in rural Eastern Cape. They defined this script as "the propositioning game" which involves young men persuading women to accept their propositions, and may include force. Jewkes (2005) noted that genuine miscommunication is possible as a result of this script and may result in rape.

In another study conducted in the Eastern Cape, Jewkes (2006) suggested that factors underlying the rape of intimate partner and non-partners were similar and related to "the desire to seek power and control over women" (Jewkes, 2006, p. 2959). The perception of male ownership of female sexuality is widely accepted and may be further entrenched through female economic dependence, ensuring the existence of a sexual exchange component rife within intimate relationships and suggestive of sexual coercion (Mills, 2010). Varga (2003), in her study of constructions of adolescent gender roles noted that "adolescents' relationship dynamics are characterized by unequal decision-making between partners" (p. 160), which reinforced unequal relations and increases women's vulnerability to sexual coercion.

Patriarchal cultures foster environments in which sexual coercion and rape may be perpetrated and encourage justifications of sexual violence through widely held rape myths which allow men to maintain the belief that they are not rapists and further reify patriarchal ideology and justify all sexual assaults which do not correspond to a 'real rape' script (Bouffard & Bouffard, 2011). Sexual coercion thus remains unacknowledged as rape and so patriarchal structures which entrench sexual coercion remain uncontested (Jewkes, 2005; Wood *et al.*, 2007).

Shefer and Foster (2009) conducted a qualitative discourse analytic study on heterosexual negotiation at the University of the Western Cape with young black students and found that the participants relied on the discourse of difference in constructing "both their gendered subjectivities and the negotiation of heterosex... [which] prescribes, regulates and reproduces sexed, gendered and sexualised subjectivities within the constraints of the binarisms of masculinity/femininity" (Shefer & Foster, 2009, p. 271). The participants were thus able to justify the differences between men and women and heterosex negotiation as essential and legitimate. Furthermore the study revealed a lack of representation of positive heterosex experiences, particularly for women. As such "[t]he powerful association of heterosex as

bound up with violence and coercion was particularly evident” (Shefer & Foster, 2009, p. 273) in the study.

Much of the Shefer and Foster (2009) findings reflect international studies as well as an absence of a positive female sexuality discourse, which when acknowledged was constructed as ‘dangerous.’ Present also within the study were “subversive and resistant voices ... challenging hegemonic heterosexual subjectivities and relationships” (p. 278). As such male power and female subordination was critiqued through the use of a liberal feminist discourse however frequently diffused through pathologising discourses. Another study conducted at the University of the Western Cape, regarding coercive sexual practices and gender-based violence on campus (Clowes, Shefer, Fouten, Vergnani & Jacobs, 2009); found that the participants conceived of the university campus as highly sexualised and that this was furthered through alcohol use. There was further recognition by participants that the double standards in expectations of men and women were associated with culturally specific gender norms and that sexualised and gendered culture had negative consequences for men and women and was “implicated in high levels of male violence against women” (Clowes *et al.*, 2009, p. 28). Normative heterosexual practice is therefore characterised by coercion and inequality and has negative consequences for both men and women.

The prevalence of rape and sexual coercion has been demonstrated in numerous studies which suggest “that constructions of active female sexuality may not always find expression within the material constraints of relationship practice” (Allen, 2003, p. 224), despite the rise in feminist understandings of female sexuality. Additionally, it is important to recognise that “most of what passes as consensual sex has an element of coercion due to unequal gender power relations exacerbated by extreme poverty and inequality” (Mills, 2010, p. 84) and that coercion does not simply imply force or violence but may be due to the exercise of different forms of power. This may include emotional, psychological, economic, social or organisational types (Mills, 2010). Despite growing awareness and social challenges to oppressive hegemonic heterosexual and sexist practices, research suggests that this has had little effect in changing young South Africans’ behaviour and beliefs which continue to perpetuate “practices of unequal and coercive heterosex” (Shefer & Foster, 2009, p. 269).

South African research findings are in line with feminist theories that understand sexual coercion to be a strategy through which men assert their dominance over women. The limitations however, of current sexual coercion research in South Africa, is that much of the

research is situated in rural communities with predominantly Black participants. Research at an urban university with a diverse sample group provides additional insight into the constructions of sexual coercion. Another limitation is that research is largely ethnographic and there is a need for other types of analysis to further explain and reinforce current understandings of the prevalence of sexual coercion.

## 2.12 CONCLUSION

Historically research has focused predominantly on the act of rape and has generated a great deal of knowledge and understanding of its occurrence and perpetuation. However, the mundane experiences of sexual coercion have often been rendered invisible. Sexual coercion is a complex phenomenon that cannot be understood from a single vantage point and requires that one review multiple theoretical perspectives. This study has taken a social constructionist approach and feminist perspective in conceiving of sexual coercion with the recognition that constructions of rape have not remained consistent through time and space; rather, the actions that define rape and sexual coercion are contextually situated and made meaningful through language. This chapter has reviewed the association between discourse as a set of social meanings, and its influence on internalised scripts as well as behavioural responses so as to better understand the lived realities of young people who confront the normative experience of sexual violence. The reviewed literature reveals the narrowed spectrum of possibility in conceiving of rape and the contribution of discourse to the perpetuation of sexual coercion, rape and the justification of such behaviour. Sexually coercive behaviours are considered normative within heterosex negotiation and it appears that victims and perpetrators are unable to identify the behaviour as coercive. Both men and women experience the oppressive consequences of dominant discourse as their behaviour, understanding and subjective experience is constrained and limited to sanctioned ways of sexual expression. While dominant discourses may be predominately reproduced, sites of resistance may also emerge that challenge taken-for-granted ways of being. Additionally this chapter provided an overview of empirical and studies similar to the conducted research. The following chapter presents a discussion of the methods utilised in conducting this study.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHOD CHAPTER

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this research was to determine how young male and female university students' construct sexual coercion through the dominant discourses utilised and the discourses used to challenge such notions. This chapter indicates how the study was structured and begins by locating the research within a critical paradigm. The chapter provides a discussion and motivation for the particular research design selected, followed by a description of the sampling and data collection procedures used in the present study. Thereafter, the chapter describes the method of data analysis chosen and concludes with issues of reflexivity and the ethical considerations.

#### 3.2 PARADIGM

This research is exploratory in nature and is situated within a critical paradigm. Such a paradigm critiques positivist assumptions of observable truth. Positivism suggests that an object under investigation can be perceived free from assumptions and “that knowledge can simply reflect the world” (Agger, 1991, p. 109). As such, positivist research would be considered apolitical with the researcher remaining unbiased and emotionally-distant (Griffin & Phoenix, 1994). In contrast, a critical paradigm attempts to rupture the positivist understanding and emphasises that social factors represent a moment in history that can be changed and are not inevitable constraints (Agger, 1991).

The critical paradigm recognises that history has been “shaped by a congeries of social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender factors, and then crystallized (reified) into a series of structures that are now (inappropriately) taken as ‘real’” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 110). The aim then of the critical paradigm is to critique and bring about transformation within the structures which constrain human experience and are taken as real. Such theory maintains that the researcher has recognised that change is required and therefore advocates for such transformation. Within the critical paradigm, transformation is understood as inevitably occurring as ignorance is eradicated and insight gained (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

The interpretive paradigm, which emerged in response to the criticism levelled at positivism, differs from both the positivist and critical paradigm in its ontological, epistemological and methodological understanding and response to the phenomena under question (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006). Such research understands reality through an individual's subjective experiences of the external world where the relationship between the researcher and researched is foregrounded. Interpretative research seeks to examine the subjective reasons behind particular social actions and an individual's meaning attached to a particular phenomenon (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006). Interpretive research attempts to understand the social world and achieves this through a person's first-hand account and rich detailed descriptions, with the acknowledgment that meaning can only be fully garnered through understanding the context in which it was written (Terre Blanche, Kelly & Durrheim, 2006). Positivism views the world according to cause-and-effect patterns; interpretivism recognises that the world becomes real through an individual's subjective experience of it, and finally the critical paradigm understands the world to be socially constructed.

Social constructionists maintain that reality is constructed through interactions and shared systems of meaning, which are reproduced through language. From such a paradigm experiences are historically and culturally situated, such that "what we perceive and experience is never a direct reflection of environmental conditions but must be understood as a specific reading of these conditions" (Willig, 2008, p. 7). Social constructionism recognises that there are multiple truths and realities and a researcher would take a politicised epistemological stance while deconstructing versions of reality and the practices they allow (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006).

Social constructionists, unlike positivist scientists, challenge taken – for – granted understandings of particular phenomena, such as the normative nature and apparent inevitability of sexual coercion, with the recognition that all knowledge is a construct of language, social interactions and culture and do not represent absolute truth (Parker, 1998). It is crucial that one remain critical of supposed 'objective' knowledge (Burr, 2003) while acknowledging the individual within the broader context of society and social interactions. Social constructionism highlights that particular 'realities' serve particular groups and interests. Constructions of sexual coercion are gendered and find themselves closely intertwined with constructions of male and female sexuality which appear to serve the vested interests of men in a patriarchal society. Social constructions of sexuality elicit particular

behaviours in males and females which are then conceived of as essentialist and ‘natural’; however they require confrontation due to their potentially harmful consequences. Such a task is not simple, however, due to the power inscribed in dominant discourse and the apparent need to conform to such norms.

Discourse becomes a vehicle for constructing social phenomena and is inscribed in various media and text, not all of which require language to be conveyed; these texts may be evident in behaviour, art, culture and any other means through information can be communicated and transmitted to others. The present study looks at the talk of young men and women as the vehicle through which discourses may be revealed and analysed. Language is not considered neutral, nor representative of absolute reality, and is therefore the object of study within social constructionist research. Through language, the individual is always constrained “by the universe of possible meanings [and actions] made available to us” (Terre Blanche, Kelly & Durrheim, 2006, p. 279).

Stevens (2008) describes discourses as "those systemised ways of understanding, making sense, acting within, acting on and being acted upon by social reality, through a range of text or social practices that extend beyond language to include everyday social interactions and institutional practices" (p.178). The language used by the research participants cannot be taken-for-granted as the words they use or conversations they have are not isolated or individual opinions but rather are broad “systems of statements” (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006, p. 328) which bring a particular phenomenon into being. It is the meaning within what is said that will be analysed; as a result of the normalised nature of dominant discourse, the interpretation may be unbeknownst to the speaker.

“The systematic character of discourse includes its systematic articulation with other discourses” (Parker, 1992, p.10); to the extent that discourses do not function in isolation and intersect with other discourses, finding further support and greater reinforcement as dominant. Discourses construct members of society as either objects or subjects and inscribe who may speak, when and how; what one is able to achieve or what one is permitted from attempting (Parker, 1992). With regard to victim/survivors of sexual coercion the meaning that is assigned to these individuals is as a result of the discourses utilised by society, such that when individuals adopt rape myth acceptance discourses those that are sexually violated are seen as deserving and responsible for what has happened to them while men who perpetrate such acts are constructed as mentally ill or acting on uncontrollable urges. Thus

“discourse not only describes the social world but categorises it” (Parker, 1992, p. 5). Victim/survivors and perpetrators are constructed in numerous ways which influence the individuals’ subjectivity and generates subject positions from which they are permitted to act or restricted from acting. The constructions of victim/survivors as well as perpetrators has changed and shifted over time such that the inevitable nature of sexual coercion and rape have begun to be challenged as women are constructed as more agentic and blameless with regard to their victimisation.

### 3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

This research is qualitative in nature and attempts to highlight how individuals give meaning to their experiences and to the world they inhabit. Unlike positivism, qualitative research does not claim to have access to observable truth and objective knowledge, however allows for an in-depth analysis and understanding of individuals’ attitudes, perceptions, behaviours, value systems, concerns, cultures or discourses (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006). Qualitative research acknowledges that the researcher cannot remain unbiased, and cannot remain outside of the research. Phenomena are not predictable and are not necessarily the result of a cause-effect relationship. While positivism argues that there is only one correct way to observe reality, qualitative research emphasises that the way one chooses to observe phenomena determines what will be seen (Willig, 2008). The qualitative researcher becomes immersed in the research and understands that the phenomena can only be understood as historically situated within a particular context (Ospina, 2004). The qualitative researcher thus co-constructs meaning and knowledge production through subjective choices with regard to phenomena studied, data collection, interpretation and write-up.

Additionally, this research is conducted from a feminist stand-point which aims to understand individuals within their social world; this is opposed to the focus of mainstream psychological research on the individual. Feminist stand-point research recognises that individuals cannot be viewed or researched outside the context of social interaction (Wilkinson, 1998). Such research emphasises the importance of reflexivity and the notion that ‘the personal is political’, such that the private sphere of sexuality and sexual engagement is not free of power relations and “that what happens to ‘the individual’ is not merely the result of individual processes” (Griffin & Phoenix, 1994, p. 290). Feminist stand-point research further acknowledges that within mainstream research particular voices may



be emphasised and others silenced, which further generates power relations and validates particular 'truths' over others (Griffin & Phoenix, 1994).

Constructions of sexual coercion shift contextually and are neither neutral nor value free. Who has the authority to speak, assign blame or justify specific acts is bound up in particular power relations. Multiple truths exist with regard to experiences of sexual coercion; however qualitative research does not wish to evaluate these truths, rather this research seeks to understand how constructions of sexual coercion have been uncritically taken up or resisted by society. This was achieved through transcribing data gathered during focus groups consisting of both males and females and analysed through a critical approach to discourse analysis (Willig, 2008).

### 3.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This research aimed to explore the talk of young male and female university students about the sexual dynamics between heterosexual intimate partners. As such the research sought to determine how sexual coercion was constructed in the talk of university students. Additionally, the research sought to determine the dominant discourses which arise in the talk of university students and how these may be contested by young male and female university students. The following research questions guided this research:

3.3.1 How is sexual coercion constructed in the talk of university students?

3.3.2 What dominant discourses are reflected in the talk of university students?

3.3.3 How are sexual coercion discourses reproduced and contested in the talk of university students?

Data was gathered through the use of semi-structured interviews conducted during all-male, all-female and mixed sex focus groups. This data allowed for appropriate exploration and analysis so as to address the key aims of this study.

### 3.5 PARTICIPANTS

This research sought to identify constructions of sexual coercion reproduced through discourses employed by young university students, in constructing the realities from which they operate. Participants were conveniently sampled which refers to gathering research

participants based on their availability (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006). A number of methods of accessing potential participants were utilised during the recruitment process. Initially advertisements calling for volunteers were placed around the university campus as well as on social network sites to increase the number of individuals who would have access to the call for volunteers. Following the limited interest shown after advertising, the researcher made announcements during first, second and third year psychology lectures which yielded the participants for this research. The inclusion criteria for participation in this research were heterosexual, university students between the ages of 19 and 24. For the purposes of discursive analysis a smaller number of participants is sufficient in providing rich data for analysis (Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Kelly, 2006).

A total of twenty-four individuals participated in this research, of which ten were male and fourteen were female. Recruitment of female participants was far easier than that of males which may have been as a result of the researcher's sex and male students' possible reluctance to engage in this particular topic in a research setting. Of the total group, eight participants were 'Black'<sup>1</sup> females, four were 'Black' males, four 'White' females were recruited and 'six' White males participated. Finally, the sample included one 'Indian' participant and one 'Coloured' participant. The researcher attempted to recruit as racially diverse a sample group as possible so as to incorporate an array of opinions, perspectives and experiences. Thirteen participants were first year students and fell within the 19 – 20 year old cohort with the remaining eleven participants in various years of study. Four participants were post-graduate students and the remaining twenty undergraduates.

The first focus group was the most varied in age and consisted of both male and female participants. The discussion was led by the older participants who appeared to utilise counter-discourses of sexual coercion; these were contested by the younger participants who appeared to employ dominant discourses to express their understanding of sexual dynamics. The next focus group to take place was all-female. This group appeared to establish rapport very quickly and were able to generate a great deal of conversation. This group showed tendencies to rely on anecdotal evidence, humour and stories that they had heard to engage in the conversation. There were several shifts between dominant and counter-discourse as the group

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<sup>1</sup> The author recognises that the racial category labels are socially constructed entities that reflect historical and ongoing forms of social asymmetry. In no way does the author support the notion of these categories and constructs as essential or intrinsic entities (Stevens, Franchi, & Swart, 2006).

appeared to demonstrate their dissatisfaction with the dominant construction of female and male sexuality. The final focus group was an all-male group. The older participants appeared to dominate the discussion and referred to their own personal experiences; these participants appeared conscientised to notions of sexual violence. Despite this knowledge the group continued to make use of dominant gender discourses and thus shifted between dominant discourse and contestation of this discourse.

### 3.6 DATA COLLECTION

Three focus groups, consisting of 8 participants each, were conducted at a Johannesburg university. One focus group was comprised entirely of male participants, one of female participants and the third focus group included both males and females, with six female and two male participants. Focus groups are distinguished from one-on-one interviews because of the interaction achieved between participants and the researcher (Wilkinson, 1998). In this research, focus groups were considered to be an ideal data collection method as they allowed for the gathering of conversational data from appropriate participants (Kelly, 2006). The focus groups ranged in duration from 60 – 90 minutes. The participants were each provided with a Participant Information Form, and all content within was discussed with the entire group prior to the start of each focus group. This also allowed for any clarification needed as well as any concerns to be addressed before consent could be obtained. The focus groups were conducted with the use of a semi-structured interview schedule regarding young adults' relationships, the dynamics that arise within them and sexual engagement between men and women. The discussion was then audio-recorded. Consent for recording was obtained before the commencement of the focus group.

Focus groups construct an arena for group interaction; therefore analysis is permitted beyond what can be interactionally achieved through individual interviews (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006). A social constructionist position holds that knowledge generation is achieved through social interaction. Practice theory can be used to illustrate this point further, which foregrounds the “performativity of social practices” (Halkier, 2010, p. 72). Focus groups become the site for social enactments which are influenced by members of the group and discourse is constructed and contested collaboratively.

Several advantages of focus groups have been identified. One is the ability to facilitate participation from individuals who may be less inclined to disclose information in an individual interview, particularly around subjects which are considered to be sensitive in nature; for example, sexuality, as less inhibited participants break the ice and provide support for particular opinions or expression of feelings (Kitzinger, 1995; Wilkinson, 1998). Focus groups additionally allow for greater depths of data as participants question, reinforce or challenge other's perspectives (Kitzinger, 1995; Wilkinson, 1998). A commonly cited disadvantage however is the recognition that particular opinions may be silenced, especially those that would be considered deviant within the group. "[G]roup participants can collaborate or collude effectively to intimidate and/or silence a particular member, or to create a silence around a particular topic or issue, in a way that could not occur in a one-to-one interview" (Wilkinson, 1998, p. 116). Despite this, it is crucial to understand that meaning is co-constructed through social interaction and the group context; the bias that may arise as a result of the contradictory opinions, disagreements and challenges occur precisely because of the social nature of the focus group. Focus groups allow the researcher to fully "understand the person as situated in, and constructed through, the social world... Underlying concerns about "bias" and "contamination" is the assumption that the individual is the appropriate unit of analysis, and that her "real" or "underlying" views represent the "purest" form of data" (Wilkinson, 1998, p. 119) which is contrary to the social constructionist underpinnings of this feminist stand-point research.

The researcher acted as moderator and facilitated discussion, providing the setting for the particular discussion to occur and ensuring that the group returned to its focus (Morgan, 1996). Typically researchers attempt to reduce social desirability and it is assumed that the particular features of the researcher (gender, ethnicity, and appearance) may influence the participants' responses, and that this may then be exacerbated within a focus group context. From an individualistic perspective the researcher would be unable to retrieve the participants "true" expression, however individual opinions are shaped and constructed through conversation with others and what others say is constructed within a particular context and serves a particular function within that context when utilised within a particular social group (Wilkinson, 1998).

When conducting focus groups it may be considered advantageous to construct heterogeneous groups, such as the mixed male and female group so as to illuminate the co-

construction of phenomena amongst diverse members. However it is crucial to remember the power relations and hierarchy present and the impact that this may have on the ability of particular members of the group to fully participate (Kitzinger, 1995).

There are several ethical considerations that a feminist researcher would concern themselves with when determining the most appropriate data collection method. The one-on-one interview is recognised as problematic due to the potentially exploitative nature as “the researcher controls the proceedings, regulates the conversation, reveals minimal personal information, and imposes her own framework of meaning upon participants” (Wilkinson, 1998, p. 114). The use of focus groups does not simply remove the ethical concerns as the researcher remains powerful in the role of analysis and write-up. With this in mind feminist researchers acknowledge that the researcher’s power may be lessened during data collection as the focus group participants have greater control over the interaction. Additionally, it has been suggested that focus groups facilitate consciousness raising and solidarity between participants (Wilkinson, 1998), which is easily evident in all of the focus groups conducted that saw challenges to dominant discourse.

The increased power of focus group participants not only alleviates ethical concerns but heightens the quality of data collected as participants may prioritise that which is most important to them while using their own language and concepts and demonstrating “*their* frameworks for understanding” (Wilkinson, 1998, p. 117, original emphasis) through their interactions with other group members as opposed to the researcher imposing her own vocabulary on the participants.

### 3.7 DATA ANALYSIS

The audio recordings, obtained during the focus groups, were transcribed verbatim and a close textual examination using discourse analysis (DA) was applied to the collected data. DA is a growing method of research that is not specific to psychology and examines how language is used. Numerous techniques have been developed, although most theorists caution that there are no set method with codified guidelines and that despite the varying traditions of DA the degree of difference between them is often exaggerated (Coupland & Jaworski, 2001).

Willig (2008) distinguishes two major versions of DA: while both focus on how social reality is constructed through the use of language the two versions differ in the types of research questions that they answer. Willig (2008) identifies *discursive psychology* as the first tradition which has grown out of ethnomethodology and conversation analysis and their shared “interest in the negotiation of meaning in local interactions in everyday contexts” (p. 95). Discursive psychology highlights what individuals are able to achieve through discourse, regarded as discourse practices, as well as focusing on the performative nature of discourse. The second major tradition is referred to as *Foucauldian discourse analysis* and is rooted in the writings of Michel Foucault and post-structuralists. Discourse analysis in the Foucauldian tradition seeks to understand how language functions within the constitution of social and psychological reality. This type of DA is “concerned with the discursive resources that are available to people, and the ways in which discourse constructs subjectivity, selfhood and power relations (Willig, 2008, p. 95). The emphasis is on the various ways-of-being which particular object and subject positions, constructed through discourse, allow individuals to occupy and not on how discursive resources are utilised by people to achieve certain interpersonal objectives in their interactions with others as would be the case for discursive psychology. With the research questions in mind and an understanding of what the research aims to achieve the researcher analysed the data from a critical approach to discourse analysis (CADA) in the Foucauldian tradition.

The discourse analysis utilised in this research is within the Foucauldian tradition. However it is important to state that Foucauldian discourse analysis is not employed strictly as Foucault was more concerned with the historicity and genealogy of the discursive constructions of particular discourse (Willig, 2008). Ian Parker (1992), one of the foremost writers on a critical approach to discourse analysis, provided twenty steps to undertaking CADA which Willig (2008) integrates into six stages of analysis detailed below.

From the perspective of CADA, discourses are seen to “facilitate and limit, enable and constrain what can be said, by whom, where and when” (Willig, 2008, p. 107). Discourses construct objects and subject positions and in so doing determine the ways of interpreting and being in the world. Discourse analysis is an analysis of what people do through language, which allows for the investigation of the construction of social phenomena through the study of language and the linguistic strategies employed. By understanding phenomena from a discursive perspective, the individual is no longer viewed as outside and independent of the

social context, but rather as “constituted through the social domain” (Lea, 2007, p. 497). Discourse analysis attempts to understand behaviour through the study of the language used to explain it. Talk is situated within a particular context and does not reveal an unquestionable truth. Discourses are taken up and deployed in a manner that makes actions logical and understandable in a particular social context and time: “These discourses embody the socio-political realm that is then both produced and reproduced through language” (Lea, 2007, p. 498).

“Discourse are multiple, and they offer competing, potentially contradictory ways of giving meaning to the world” (Gavey, 1989, p. 464). As such, this research recognises that dominant discourses are reproduced in talk, but that they are also contested and challenged. Discourse, as a set of meanings, are not merely ideas held by an individual; they are produced through social interaction and practices over time, and maintained through social institutions. It is within discourse that power is established and sanctioned as appropriate (Gavey, 1989).

Individuals take up particular “subject positions” which construct the possibilities for being, acting and understanding. These positions determine subjectivities and change according to the power afforded to an individual within that position. A crucial element of the taking up of particular discourses, and its implications for subjectivities, is that individuals do not do so from a cognitive perspective instead “a complex process of becoming [occurs] that involves being subject/ed *to*, and subject *of* discourse” (Allen, 2003, p. 216). An essential component of dominant discourses is their taken-for-granted nature; such discourses are conceived of as “natural” and “common sense” (Gavey, 1989, p. 464) and as such are rarely contested. This is not to say, however, that individuals are passive recipients of discourses and the power inherent in them; individuals make conscious choices in the positions they take up.

The first stage of analysis identified by Willig (2008) is known as ‘discursive constructions’ and relates to how the discursive object under investigation is constructed in the text, both implicitly and explicitly. This is achieved by highlighting all references to the discursive object; in this case, sexual coercion, as well as dominant discourses used to reproduce the object under investigation in the data elicited by the semi-structured interview and talk between the participants during the focus group regarding relationship dynamics and sexual engagement.

Once all the sections associated with the construction of the discursive object have been identified, attention is shifted to the different ways in which the discursive object has been constructed and the differences between these constructions by “locat[ing] the discursive constructions of the object within wider discourse” (Willig, 2008, p. 115). A single discursive object can be constructed in numerous ways which would bring different subjectivities into being. Individuals discussing sexual coercion may employ several different discourses such as a romantic discourse to emphasise that sex is an act of love or the use of the male sex drive discourse so as to distance themselves from the experience of sexual coercion.

The third stage is referred to as ‘action orientation’ and is concerned with identifying what can be achieved by constructing the discursive object in the particular ways identified. It involves examining the specific discursive contexts and what functions the different constructions serve, as well as determining the relationship the constructions have with the surrounding constructions within the text (Willig, 2008). Therefore, when looking at the constructions of sexual coercion, the research sought to determine what could be achieved through utilising the particular constructions put forward by the research participants.

The fourth step is concerned with subject positionings. Once the different constructions of the discursive object have been identified and located within wider discourse, it is essential to determine how this location and construction positions the subject. An individual’s subject position locates them “within the structure of rights and duties for those who use that repertoire” (Davies & Harré, 1999 as cited in Willig, 2008, p. 116). Discourses construct not only objects but subjects and make particular positions available which can be taken up and determine the “discursive locations from which to speak and act” (Willig, 2008, p. 116). The subject positions made available influence one’s subjectivities.

The fifth stage is referred to as ‘practice’ and involves an exploration of the relationship between discourse and practice and how specific constructions and the positions they contain “open up or close down opportunities for action” (Willig, 2008, p. 117). Subjects are positioned in particular ways in particular versions of realities and ways of understanding the world which determines what can and cannot be done. Within certain discourses particular practices and behaviours are manufactured and become legitimate, while these practices then reproduce their legitimating discourses, as such “speaking and doing support one another in the construction of subjects and objects” (Willig, 2008, p. 117).



Willig's sixth and final step is referred to as 'subjectivity'; this stage focuses on the association between discourses and subjectivities. As different discourses are employed particular ways-of-being in the world and ways-of-seeing the world are brought into being (Willig, 2008).

“Once having taken up a particular position as one's own, a person inevitably sees the world from the vantage point of that position and in terms of the particular images, metaphors, storylines and concepts which are made relevant within the particular discursive practice in which they are positioned” (Davies & Harré, 1999 as cited in Willig, 2008, p. 117).

The researcher therefore aimed to determine the subjective experience that results for a person when a particular subject position is taken up. Discourse not only influence social realities but psychological ones as well. This stage questions what can be felt and experienced from different positions within different discourses (Willig, 2008). With regard to sexual coercion, when males employ the male sex drive discourse not only do they refute responsibility but the feelings of guilt as well.

### 3.8 REFLEXIVITY

Due to my feminist and social constructionist underpinnings reflexivity throughout the research process became crucial. All interpretations of data are subjective and present merely one possible reading and set of findings. Knowledge production is not neutral and is closely linked to power. It was crucial then that I reflect on my position in relation to the data gathered and the implications of that on the analysis (Parker, 1992). I am positioned as white, female, lesbian, and feminist; this subject position not only influenced the choice of topic under investigation, as women are disproportionately victim/survivors of sexual violence, but informed the reading and analysis of the transcribed data. It was essential that I remained cognisant of my own subjectivity and the implications of this on the research which has been influenced by my own values and perspective which will now be addressed.

The area of investigation has always interested me, particularly the discourses used to inscribe the inevitability of sexual coercion and the apparent need to educate women on the means through which to resist such an attack as opposed to questioning why such education would be needed and why the responsibility for the perpetration of sexual violence is largely removed from those who would perform such acts. I believed that the subject positions

offered by the use of dominant discourses were problematic and reinforced particular oppressive power relations. Additionally given the current social climate in South Africa, the need for intervention is evident and vital; however this can only be successfully achieved through adequate research regarding young male and female constructions of sexual coercion. I additionally reflected on the participant group selected, who were all heterosexual; this choice was made because of the predominance of research in this area, and while it is recognised that other orientated relationships are not free from this type of victimisation, constructions of sexuality within our patriarchal society appears to have entrenched particular ways of being male and female.

During the initial planning and review of literature I remained cognisant of my own assumptions and understandings of sexual coercion, rape, and male and female sexuality which have resulted out of my own life experiences and the lens of feminist ideology. It was crucial then that I ensured that the data was not over or under interpreted through a feminist ideology, such that I was blinkered from other alternatives. It was also essential that I be reflexive about my own construction of sexual coercion particularly during the focus group facilitation so as not to hinder the participants' expression of their perspectives and the later analysis and write up of the findings.

As stated previously qualitative research recognises that due to the social nature of focus groups both the researcher and the members of the focus group impact the responses of the participants and their ability to disclose or desire to remain silent. As a woman, this may have impacted both the mixed and all-male focus groups and the nature of their responses. The level of engagement regarding the topic of sexual relationships may also have been impacted and the perceived desirability of positioning oneself as a progressive male who rejected sexist perceptions of sexual coercion and rape, particular as contradictions to this thinking were evident throughout the focus groups. It was essential that the recognition of this occurrence be addressed in the analysis of the data; additionally I recognise that a male facilitator may have had different implications for the research data gathered and analysed.

Another notable area of influence is the possible age discrepancy between myself and the research participants. My older age may have imbued greater power differentials as opposed to that just of the differing roles and relationship between researcher and participants and may have had implications for the participants' ability to fully express their opinions. However the

researcher attempted to ensure that good rapport was established with the participants so that they would feel more at ease to present their opinions and perspective.

It was additionally essential that I “reflect on the term used to describe discourse, a matter which involves moral/political choices on the part of the analyst” (Parker, 1992, p. 10). Through analysing the data particular discourses emerged and were labelled to reflect the theme that they appeared to contain. The description and labelling of the different discourses were influenced by my own subjectivity as well as my understanding of sexual coercion within heterosexual relationships which is partial to a feminist interpretation. The need to be reflexive in this regard was crucial as was the ability to reflect on the literature when labelling discourse so as to construct a greater understanding that allowed for more than just my own personal perspective.

### 3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

During the conducting of this research all relevant ethical considerations were adhered to. This study attempts to ensure non-maleficence with an understanding that neither the research topic nor the facilitated focus groups were explicitly sensitive, and did not require either medical ethical consideration or that required for sensitive populations. However as this research has made use of human participants it was necessary to consider the particular ethical concerns that may have arisen during the course of the research. Initially a research proposal was designed with a detailed consideration of the ethical issues that may have been experienced during the conducting of this research for which ethical clearance was provided by the University (Appendix IV).

Individuals participating in the research received a participant information form (Appendix I), informing the potential participants of who the researcher is and stating the purpose of the research, including its aims and rationale. Information regarding what would be required of their participation was also included in the information form. Research participants were provided with two consent forms (Appendices II and III) upon their arrival at the focus group, the first of which served to confirm the participant’s consent to participate in the focus group. The second consent form served to confirm the participant’s willingness to be recorded during the focus group. Participants were once again informed of the requirements of their participation, namely participation in a 60 – 90 minute focus group in which their beliefs and

understandings about relationships and the possible dynamics that arise out of them, including the topic of sex would be discussed. The participants, all university students, were over the age of 18 and were further briefed that there were no risks or benefits to participating as well as the guarantee that participants were free to withdraw from the study if they, at any time, felt uncomfortable or so wished with no threat of negative repercussions as participation was entirely voluntary. Participants' confidentiality was also guaranteed and they were assured that this would be protected through the use of pseudonyms and by the changing of any identifiable details. However, it was noted that the researcher could not guarantee anonymity for the participants during the focus groups as individuals may have been familiar with each other. Additionally the research participants were informed that the information garnered from the focus group would be used and that direct quotes would be utilised in the analysis of the data. During this time participants were encouraged to raise any concerns that they may have had regarding their participation.

The research participants were informed that all audio-recordings would be destroyed once the research project had been evaluated. Transcripts will be disposed of appropriately after five years after completion of the research and will be securely held at the University of the Witwatersrand in the interim. During this time only the researcher and research supervisor would have access to the data so as to ensure further confidentiality. Participants were then debriefed at the close of each focus group and were provided with details for the Counselling and Career Development Unit (CCDU) should they have wished to discuss the topic further or felt distressed in any way. Finally the research participants were advised that if they wished to receive a summary of the results this would be provided for them after the evaluation of the research project.

### 3.10 CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided a motivation for the particular methods utilised in this study and elaborated on the sampling procedures and data collection method of focus groups as well as a description of the characteristics of each of the focus groups. This has been followed by a discussion on the chosen method of data analysis and description of the procedure utilised. To conclude, the need for reflexivity as well as the ethical considerations has been considered.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE REPORT

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will provide an in-depth discussion of the prominent themes and discourses identified within the data. After the initial data collection and transcription, the researcher immersed herself in the reading and re-reading of the transcripts so as to acquire a broad overview of the data. Following this, the comments of each focus group were analysed through the application of a critical approach to discourse analysis in the Foucauldian tradition (Willig, 2008). Within the framework of the reviewed literature regarding sexual coercion, rape, sexuality and sexual scripts, and with the semi-structured interview schedule designed with such research in mind, the talk of the research participants allowed for the emergence of particular dominant themes and discourses. Five prominent themes emerged in the research: discourses of gender and sexuality, discourses of sexual initiation; discourses of sexual refusal; discourses on the reduction of culpability and discourses of rape. Within each theme, three subthemes emerged which act in the construction of sexual coercion. Themes and subthemes will be fully discussed.

#### 4.2 DISCOURSES OF GENDER AND SEXUALITY

Research indicates that particular discourses are employed by both heterosexual males and females when interacting and engaging socially and sexually (Littleton *et al.*, 2009; Muehlenhard & Rodgers, 1998; Ryan, 2011). These discourses construct what it means to be male and female when engaging sexually and what can be achieved by assuming a particular subject or object position. Furthermore, the use of these discourses determines the subjective experience that men and women are afforded from such positions. The performance of these discourses serves to regulate both male and female behaviour. Three interrelated subthemes emerged: the male sex drive discourse; the sexual double standard discourse and the progressive masculinity discourse.

#### 4.2.1 Male sex drive discourse

A widely recognised dominant gender discourse is the male sex drive discourse (Gilbert *et al.*, 1999) which was utilised in all three focus groups to justify male sexual behaviour. The male sex drive discourse constructs men as seeking sexual expression as a biological imperative. Male sexuality is constructed as uncontrollable and needing satiation; thereby the association between sexual coercion and dominant discourse becomes evident. Men are understood to be sexual aggressors and at the mercy of their sexuality which is ignited by women who are expected to accommodate male sexual needs and desires (Gilbert *et al.*, 1999). Interestingly, however, there were both male and female participants who equated the socio-biological drives to both men and women through the use of a permissive discourse. This highlights the possibility for agentic female sexuality as not merely reactive but active in its pursuit of satisfaction, and may serve to contest dominant discourses which deny female sexuality. While female sexual drive is acknowledged, in a marginalised fashion, no explicit positive representation of female sexuality is constructed within the groups. This finding replicates both local and international studies (Gill, 2008; Shefer & Foster, 2009) however, demonstrates the potential spaces for change to occur.

P4: I know that if it goes too long I'll probably use that, this is my biology speaking, you know I'm just a guy and I've got plenty of hormones and whatever. [...] I really subscribe to this thing like humans are humans, you know like, we have tendencies we have urges. (Male FG)

P5: It's mostly because guys are assholes and want to get laid when they are 20 years old, so you know, whether they feel, you know, emotionally attached to it or not they've got this overriding biological urge to just get it. [...] the dumbest thing in the world is a man with an erection, you know, like, you know, guys aren't thinking properly at that time. (Male, Mixed FG)

In the talk of male university students, the male sex drive discourse was utilised and served as a justification for the need for sex and the inability to sustain the relationship without sex. The male sex drive discourse constructed men as driven by their hormones and animalistic instincts; desire is thus natural but can be overpowering and limits their ability to think rationally. This discourse is employed to coerce their female partners into submitting to male sexual desire, especially if the relationship 'goes too long' without sexual engagement. Sex is understood as a biological imperative and it is taken for granted that men require sex and are unable to control themselves without it. Despite the use of the male sex drive discourse, the participant appears to be aware that this may be utilised as a strategy in obtaining sexual intimacy from their partners, who may be sexually coerced. The use of such a discourse

positions men as victims to their biology. Women are constructed as the cause of male distress and therefore the only means of alleviation.

Men are positioned as subjects within this discourse and as dominant within sexual relations. Dominant patriarchal discourses maintain unequal power relations between men and women, such that male sexual expression is expected and required to be satisfied by women. As such, women are positioned as objects to male desire with limited recognition of female sexual desire. Male sexuality acts upon the female object whose ability to consent absolutely is removed (Hakvåg, 2010). Therefore sexual coercion becomes possible as men are able to use their biology to manipulate women into entering a sexual relationship by portraying themselves as victims of their bodies.

The permissive discourse, first identified by Hollway (1984), positions women as having inherent sexual desire that is equal to that of men. These tendencies and urges are constructed as having control over both men and women. Such a position counters dominant gender and sexuality discourses that have acted to constrain female sexuality and construct it as an extension of male sexual desire (Ryan, 2011). While the permissive discourse appears to contest dominant discourse and may provide greater opportunities for female sexual agency, it is believed to have created a context in which men have greater access to female bodies through the assertion that women require sexual gratification and are under the control of their sexual impulses. This discourse has been critiqued by many feminists who believe that the permissive discourse is aligned with a patriarchal discourse as male sexuality and sexual gratification remains unlimited. In line with this thinking, there would appear to be no need for commitment in the form of a relationship, which may meet men's agenda to achieve greater access to female bodies. Women may thus be perceived as having less power due to the pressure experienced in needing to be sexually active "without consideration of the power differences and double standards in the construction of masculinity and femininity" (Shefer & Foster, 2009, p. 277). Despite this assertion, the ability for this counter-discourse to foster opportunities for female agency should not be negated.

The male sex drive discourse was also utilised by male participants within the mixed focus group. However, this time it was employed to construct distance between the participant and other 'inferior' men who were now constructed with the derogatory term of 'assholes'. As such an additional progressive masculinity discourse is utilised which acknowledges gender inequalities. While men may be constructed as inferior, they remain constructed as not

responsible for their actions because of their 'biological urges'. The male sex drive discourse positions men as unable to make rational, intelligent or reasonable choices because of their anatomy. Such a discourse removes culpability from men as they are constructed as unable to control themselves. Women are then constructed as the objects or victims of men's poor decisions with their agency and desire remaining invisible and inconsequential. This discourse functions alongside rape myths which place the blame of sexual victimisation on women and is constructed as a result of their behaviour and role in arousing men's uncontrollable sexuality (Peterson & Muehlenhard, 2004, Ryan, 2011, Suarez & Gadalla, 2010). While removing guilt for sexual violence and coercion, the male sex drive discourse would suggest that all men are potential perpetrators, but that this would not be due to any fault of their own.

P2: I don't think you need to wait; it's not that difficult (.) I don't honestly think, if she wants it she will get it, it's like, like guys are like, when it comes to sex they are so pathetic.

P3: You know how a fish, if you put food like it'll always be eating, type of thing, so like a girl, like, if she just comes to a guy [...] she just does her little moves and then like he'll be like 'ok cool'.  
(Female FG)

P7: They're thinking with their penis.

P3: Yes, I was about to say, I don't think that they are thinking at that moment, they are not thinking about you or how you are feeling they are just like, 'ok, I just want to get this done' sort of thing.

P4: I think because it's there, cause like with girls it's like all folded in and its tidy. It makes me think of a Swiss army knife, like you take it out when you need it and it's all put away tidy when you don't need it, but with guys like it's hanging there and it's forever there.

P2: Not all men want sex, shame. (Female FG)

Female participants also made use of the male sex drive discourse; while the construction of male sexuality continued to function as a justification for their behaviour, it simultaneously functioned to ridicule men and their apparent inability to control their urges. Males retained their dominant subject position through the construction of their desire as primary and the recognition that the male sex drive constructs male sexuality as single-minded in its pursuit of gratification. Men are constructed as selfish and unconcerned with women's feelings - their main objective is acquiring sex.

Several of the female participants were able to position themselves as superior to their male counterparts in that they were not unthinking beings constructed as 'pathetic.' In this way the female participants were able to resist dominant gender discourses that constructed females as weak with a reactive sexuality that serves male desire; instead they become subjects of their sexual desire as opposed to objects of male lust. Women may therefore determine the course of sexual engagement and be free to initiate sexually intimate interactions. The female participants utilised a female sexual desire discourse, however marginally, in resisting



dominant discourse and constructions of female sexuality, thus opening up spaces for the acknowledgement of its existence. In utilising the male sex drive discourse they not only construct males negatively but also disavow any claims of sexual coercion by men. Men are unable to resist and therefore unable to say 'no' to a woman's advances as their anatomy or sexual arousal is conflated with consent.

Participant 4, in using a metaphor of a Swiss army knife, emphasises the utility of the female sexual organs that are constructed as a separate entity from her person. Within the female focus group there appeared to be minimal engagement with the discourse of female sexual desire and instead women were predominantly constructed as having limited sexual desire (Allen, 2003). Female sexuality was constructed as passive, to serve a particular function and meet the needs of males. Once this function has been performed, it is packed away. Female desire is therefore conceived of as controlled by women and can be neatly switched off or stored once no longer needed. Therefore, unlike men, women are not victims of their sexuality and have more power over their desires and the expression of such.

P4: [...] there was no reciprocity in having sex in a club, it cannot be about the other person [...] it was never about anyone else it was just about me [...] the other person needs to be involved it needs to be reciprocal and before it was just about feeling good, like, you know, the booze, the sex it's all the same thing to me, well really it was all the same thing, it was just a means for me to make myself feel better [...] I'm selfish I want to feel good [...] there's still that component, that fleshy, very kind of primitive I just want to do this to this person, thing going on. (Male FG)

Sex was described as a selfish activity for the male participants that did not necessarily involve a reciprocal relationship but involved achieving satisfaction. The male sex drive discourse emphasised that men were always ready and wanting sex, to the extent that their desire superseded female sexual desire. This view is aligned to the hegemonic masculinity discourse that maintains that masculinity is achieved through the conquest of female bodies to the satisfaction of male sexuality (Allen, 2003). Men are able to take what they desire for their own benefit as their desires are 'fleshy' and 'primitive'. Women, as such, are constructed as objects or apparatus of male sexual gratification and are thus dehumanised in the process. Female pleasure is made obsolete and its importance is rendered irrelevant. Sex thus constructed as a selfish act, has highlighted male dominance and privilege in the sexual arena and men's ability to use female bodies as objects. As such the act of sexual coercion becomes all the more possible as female agency and the need for consent is removed - males may use whatever strategy is deemed necessary in acquiring what they desire at the cost of female autonomy. However, the male group participants recognised that this was how they had interacted when they were younger and that they had since come to realise that sex

should be reciprocal and not merely about male pleasure. In so doing the participant uses a progressive masculinity discourse to recognise the equality needed during sex.

P4: I think that there is a biological drive and I think that everybody does, and I'm speaking from my own experience, but I do think you do have, you know, urges, you know, that you can't logically control some of the times. (Female, Mixed FG)

Both male and female participants utilised the permissive discourse in an attempt to normalise sexual desire and the commonality between men and women. As such men are no longer solely constructed as ruled by their desires and biology, and this opens up greater possibilities for women with regard to their choices and sexual agency. Participant 4 constructs both men and women as at the will of their biology and both as being unable to have rational thought or to control their urges. Women may adopt a liberated sexual position that no longer requires their sexual repression and submission to men. However, just as the male sex drive discourse provides men with a means of excusing their behaviour, it would appear that women are now afforded the same liberty and are positioned free of responsibility as they act on their biology.

#### 4.2.2 Sexual double standard discourse

The sexual double standard is a dominant gender discourse which prescribes appropriate masculine and feminine sexual behaviour and in so doing serves to restrict women's sexual behaviour. The sexual double standard discourse constructs situations in which female promiscuity and casual sexual encounters are denigrated while the same behaviour in males is encouraged (Allen, 2003; Goicolea *et al.*, 2012). This discourse was explicitly highlighted by both the female and mixed focus group participants who attempted to contest this discourse. The male group participants, however, did not make explicit reference to this discourse. Instead they utilised terms typically reserved for their female counterparts when highlighting seemingly promiscuous behaviour to reinforce their status as 'studs.'

P6: Social society views women and men very differently, so a girl going up to a guy, yes maybe they'll see her as confident but in many of the circumstances they'll see her as like a slut. (Female, Mixed FG)

P3: When a guy has a lot of girls, if he's screwing a lot of women, then you know, everyone is like, 'oh, oh my word, that's so cool', you know, but like if a girl does, it's like, 'what a hoe' [...]

P5: Girls get labelled a whore; guys get labelled a bachelor.

P3: [...] if she's just going out on one night stands all the time.

P2: Maybe she might have problems; daddy issues. (Female FG)

P6: [...] I think it's like within our society men sleeping around it's, it's fine. (Female, Mixed FG)

P5: Which it should be and it should be for women as well. (Male, Mixed FG)

The participants in the female and mixed-sex focus groups contest the dominant sexual double standard discourse through the recognition that there are distinct standards set for men and women. Confidence appears to be rewarded in men while the same attribute is constructed negatively for women when they appear to step outside the boundaries prescribed by society of how a woman should behave. Women who do display confidence do so at the risk of being shamed. At the same time, the participants contest hegemonic patriarchy which reinforces gender inequality.

Through the sexual double standard discourse, female sexuality is deemed unacceptable and requires policing. Female bodies are viewed as restricted with female sexual expression muted through the shaming of women and their desires; female sexual agency is denied. Despite the recognition of the injustice of the sexual double standard from some of the female focus group members, its dominance within society and taken-for-granted nature is evident within the female group: women who have frequent sexual encounters are pathologised by the group members. A woman who chooses to engage in several one-night stands is constructed as having ‘problems’. Having numerous sexual encounters is thus constructed as deviant and can only be understood if there is something wrong with the woman engaging in these activities and using sex as an attempt to resolve these problems. Through the construction of dominant heterosex discourses, such behaviour is deemed acceptable for males. In contrast, women are required to maintain standards of femininity, constructed as remaining chaste and without sexual desire. A woman’s respectability and worth is attached to her ‘purity’ and her ability to ward off male sexual advances; women are not constructed as sexual beings with access to their own sexuality (Allen, 2003) and if they do, they are considered ‘sluts’ or ‘hoes.’ Furthermore, there is a close association between the sexual double standard discourse and rape myths which serve to exonerate male perpetrators of sexual coercion as women who deny appropriate femininity are thus to blame for the assault they may experience.

Sex, it would appear, should not be enjoyed by women. However, a male participant in the mixed-sex focus group contests the dominant sexual double standard discourse with the use of the permissive discourse in recognising the rights of both men and women to express their sexuality without negative repercussions, as one’s sexuality and expression of such should have no bearing on one’s worth and acceptability within society. In so doing, the participant

is able to highlight female sexual agency and women's right to meet their own sexual needs for their own sake rather than in the service of the needs of men.

Men are subjects of the sexual double standard discourse: privileged in their ability to make sexual decisions without fear of societal rejection and the ability to entrench their masculinity. Men are rewarded for their sexual expression while women become objects of ridicule. The sexual double standard discourse finds its dominance and validity through its association with a prevailing patriarchal discourse which maintains men's elevated status within society by regulating and limiting the nature of sexuality as achieved or felt as a women.

P1: I was a bit of a slut, um, and I think girls just respond well to confidence. (Male FG)

P5: I've whored around quite hectically in my life. (Male, Mixed FG)

The sexual double standard provides labels for the sexes, all of which appear derogatory when applied to women and complimentary when associated with males (Milnes, 2010). Women receive labels such as 'whore' or 'slut' and in the process may be shamed into conforming to dominant heterosex discourses through the guilt that they are subjected to by denying stereotypically feminine behaviour. It is evident from the talk of young males that when such labels are applied to themselves there is a reverse effect and they are viewed with awe from their peers - the participants appear to express a sense of pride in their ability to acquire numerous sexual partners. Being sexually assertive is associated with confidence when demonstrated by men. However such 'confidence' when applied to women may potentially result in being labelled a 'slut' which serves to police women from engaging in particular behaviour. The female participants, while acknowledging the existence of this discourse and the different ways in which men and women are constructed within society, remain unable to suggest strategies with which to challenge it, nor do they appear to successfully employ the permissive discourses in pursuit of their own sexual gratification and expression. The talk in all three focus groups was suggestive of the need for greater sexual freedom and freedom from the sexual double standard. Yet this does not appear to be the reality for many women in South African society and it is evident that there is a great deal of contestation when women are to take up such a sexually agentic subject position.

#### 4.2.3 Progressive masculinity discourse

An alternative discourse which emerged was the progressive masculinity discourse. Such a discourse constructs men as more liberal in their thinking and able to recognise the importance of acquiring consent from women. This discourse resists dominant masculinity discourses and its reinforcement of unequal power relations. The progressive masculinity discourse constructs men who desire commitment and relationships, as opposed to only casual sexual encounters, and these men respect the need for equality while allowing for female sexual expression (Morrell, 2001). The emergence of this discourse may be part of the growing recognition of the importance of social equality and the infiltration of feminist discourse within mainstream society. Additionally, as the participants were psychology students it is feasible that they have encountered discourses which challenge hegemonic constructions of male and female sexuality. Despite this, the progressive masculinity discourse may additionally serve to alleviate feelings of guilt associated with sexist opinions and may ensure political correctness.

P2: If it's like a one-time hook up, like I got to, I got to wait for her to show an interest in sex in having sex, I can't do it because again, I think we live in a country where rape is quite a big issue right? [...] you have to be 100% sure that she is compos mentis, that she's like willing. (Male FG)

P2: It would be remiss of us to just kind of go well you know she said 'yes' and it meant that it was fine because actually as a guy [...] there's social norms around the man being in a position of power sort of vibes. (Male FG)

The progressive masculinity discourse constructs men as aware of their power and privilege as well as the serious nature of rape in South Africa. Additionally, men who ascribe to this discourse recognise that a 'yes' does not necessarily equate to consent nor does it remove male dominance over women. Participant 2, through the use of the progressive masculinity discourse, highlights the need for the initiation of casual sexual encounters to be directed by women and the need therefore to obtain consent. Additionally, the participant is able to demonstrate his obedience to political correctness as it is possible that consent is garnered as a means of protection from accusations of rape. It would appear that the participant does not construct the need for consent from his female partners with the recognition that rape in itself is a heinous crime. The progressive masculinity discourse does appear to position women as able to express their sexual desire and as therefore able to make sexual decisions by initiating the sexual encounter. Women thus appear to be empowered by the use of this discourse. However this counter discourse remained marginalised within the group and was not taken up by other participants in the male group.

P2: Ok, she's showing off a lot or whatever but I'm actually, the people who I've been exposed to that dress in that particular way don't interest me, because I guess I don't go out just to have kind of, you know, have random sex [...] I go out to find a girlfriend [...] so I'll go well this is traditionally what they are interested in, you know, and that's not cool [...] like they're entitled to it, but I'm not interested, fuck that shit, I'm not going near them, [...] it's what they're giving off and part of that is how they're dressed. (Male FG)

P5: Ja, I don't know like, I would never take that risk [of sleeping with someone who said 'no']. I would rather, I would think of the person as a bit of a bitch, you know, for being a bit manipulative and for looking like one thing and behaving like another but [...] always always, ja, take her word, I think. (Male, Mixed FG)

The progressive masculinity discourse constructed men as not simply looking for sex but rather desiring commitment and investment in a relationship. Through the employment of this discourse the male participants were able to contest and challenge dominant gender discourses, including that of the male sex drive discourse - these men were constructed as having control over their impulses and able therefore to make rational decisions while attending to the needs of their female partners. Despite this challenge to hegemonic masculinity, it was clear that the progressive masculinity discourse was interrelated with several other discourses. These were utilised simultaneously and reinforced oppressive dominant discourses.

Participant 2 asserts that one is able to determine the nature of a woman through her dress (Ryan, 2011). It is those women that he is not interested in because of what they want, which he has assumed to be casual sex. The participant does not explicitly explain what he means and the type of dress that would indicate a women's sexual promiscuity, but as the participant is employing a rape myth, it is suggested that one does not need to elaborate further due to a common understanding between the group members. This highlights the apparent truthful status acquired by dominant discourses, such that they are not questioned but taken as accurate representation of reality. The enactment of rape myths may result in sexual violence through the understanding that women who dress a particular way, want to and will have sex. Furthermore, this participant makes use of a slut-shaming discourse through the suggestion what wanting 'random sex' makes one inferior and uncouth, to the extent that the participant indicated that he would not go near such a person. A sexual double standard discourse is employed which polices and shames female sexual behaviour. It would appear that the participant's talk suggests that women should be unable to assert their sexual agency or sexual intent as 'that's not cool'.

The progressive masculinity discourse constructs men who require verbal consent before initiating sexual activity. Additionally, once their partner has refused sex by saying 'no',

irrespective of whether it may be perceived to be a ‘token no’, such a man would not persist. Despite the use of this discourse it is clear that the male participant, while asserting that he ‘would never take that risk’ as his actions may be construed as sexually coercive, employs the rape myth that provocatively dressed women are ‘asking for it’ by constructing women who look and behave in a particular way as manipulative (Ryan, 2011). The male sexual entitlement that results from dominant gender discourses is evident as well as the thin line that women are required to negotiate with the need to be sexually modest yet accommodating of male sexual desire. In this instance, the woman is labelled as a ‘bitch’ because of her sexual refusal and her explicit right to withdraw consent.

P2: it’s a scary grey area and you’ve got to be a 100% sure so that thing about, you know, ‘are you sure, there’s no pressure’, it’s almost like a rite of passage. (Male FG)

Sexual coercion within the men’s group is constructed as falling within a grey area. Several discourses, including that of the progressive masculinity discourse, are employed by the participants in an attempt to grapple with their power within the sexual initiation situation as well as exonerating such acts by shifting the responsibility back to their female counter-parts who, it would appear, place men in a very difficult predicament of having the responsibility of acquiring such consent.

P5: Because guys do have that perception almost engrained because of how our society works that you’ve got to be aware of it and go ‘no, it doesn’t matter how someone acts, looks or how someone dresses’ you can’t build someone’s sexuality, it’s not, it’s not justified, ja. (Male, Mixed FG)

A male participant, in the mixed focus group, attempts to challenge dominant rape myths through the employment of the progressive masculinity discourse. The participant asserts that rape myth perceptions, based on women’s actions or clothing, are engrained in men by society and that it is the responsibility of men to acknowledge this fallacy. The participant constructs men as victims to society, and while it does not provide justification for rape or sexual coercion it does appear to minimise the responsibility of men.

While several contradictions arise in the discourses utilised by the male participants, it would appear that attempts are made by men, through the use of the progressive masculinity discourse, to challenge hegemonic masculinity and dominant gender discourses which facilitate and justify sexually coercive practices. As such the participants appear to use both dominant and counter discourses in constructing gender and sexuality.

### 4.3 DISCOURSES OF SEXUAL INITIATION

Participants in each of the focus groups employed dominant discourses in exploring sexual initiation. Discourses of sexual initiation provide guidelines on appropriate initiation behaviour to be followed by men and women respectively and as such foster situations in which sexual coercion may occur when women do not enact appropriate female sexuality. Nevertheless several attempts were made by a number of participants to contest these often taken-for-granted performances of sexuality. The subthemes that emerged include: the male sexual initiation discourse; the discourse of mutuality of sexual initiation and discourses of persuasion and seduction.

#### 4.3.1 Male sexual initiation discourse

Particular dominant gender discourses have become socially sanctioned and are therefore enacted and maintained within society. These enactments allow an individual to perform their sexuality. Dominant gender discourses maintain that males are required to be active in their pursuit of female partners. Men are seen as initiators while females are relegated into submissive and sexually passive positions while acting as gatekeepers to sexual access (Ryan, 2011). Contestation of such behaviour was offered up by several male participants who voiced their frustration with 'stereotypical' male behaviour. Discourses of female sexuality however, received little if any attention from the research participants.

P1: I mean, for guys, I don't think that it's necessarily right that the guy should always be the one who goes for the girl and I respect a girl who goes for me but the thing is the world is how the world is and I'm not going to kind of treat it as something else. (Male FG)

P5: There are very few guys who are going to be disturbed if some girl approaches them, you know, if you just stand there and don't approach someone, as a guy, you'll just spend your night alone. (Male, Mixed FG)

P2: Once you're in a relationship it's different because you, you kind of begin to read each other's signals better so then you can sort of initiate it a bit more, I mean, I was going to use was 'forceful' but it's not quite the right word, but like you can be slightly more aggressive in your approach. (Male FG)

The transcribed data suggests that several of the male participants within the mixed and all-male focus groups held dominant gender discourses which maintain that males are dominant within the sexual arena and thus responsible for the initiation of sexual activity. The employment of a male sexual initiation discourse positions men as active in their pursuit of their female partners. Women are then positioned as objects to male initiation and are limited in their ability to actively seek out sexual encounters as well as their choice of partners.



Attempts were made by the participants to challenge the male sexual initiation discourse by highlighting that either party may choose and should have the ability to initiate sexual activity. Furthermore, the participants were able to demonstrate the constraints place on men in needing to be initiators, and therefore needing to take responsibility for the initial interaction with women.

The participants seem dissatisfied with these stereotypical gender roles, and appear to place the onus on women to change these discourses who are constructed as needing to take a more active role. The participants appear to suggest that it is due to female inactivity that men are unable to resist dominant discourse and appear to be burdened with this responsibility of meeting a partner. Men may therefore be viewed as victims of the patriarchal discourse which inscribes hegemonic masculinity and its successful performance to the extent that the male participants feel obligated to enact these discourses if they are to achieve sexual gratification.

The participants are unable to successfully challenge the male sexual initiation discourse. Instead it would appear that the research participants rely on dominant gender discourse to justify the roles believed to exist for males and females. As such, apparent essential gender roles ascribed to by either sex may be maintained, and resisting these norms is constructed as futile. The use of this discourse limits additional subjectivities to be exercised by both men and women and prescribes what can or cannot be done; that female agency and choice appear to be limited and opportunities for opposition to dominant discourse are hindered.

Initially participant 2 asserts that male sexual initiation may be problematic during casual sexual encounters unless appropriate consent has been guaranteed, thus employing a progressive masculinity discourse. However, it appears that he is no longer able to contest the male sexual initiation discourse once in a relationship. Participant 2 demonstrates the dominant position assumed by men once they are in established relationships. The difficulty in resisting dominant discourses and their taken-for-granted nature becomes evident, and males may potentially believe that it is essential for them to behave more aggressively to assert their masculinity and dominance within the sexual arena. The participant explains that once in a relationship men are able to engage more 'aggressively' and forcefully by taking up their role as the initiator. It would appear that men no longer need to wait for their partners to express their sexual intent and it is this belief that potentially fosters the occurrence of sexual coercion within intimate relationships.

The participant corrects his use of the word 'forceful' possibly due to the negative connotation and association with rape. This may highlight the dominance of the male sexual initiation discourse and the social sanctioning of the use of force against women such that men's dominance is naturalised. As such, the participant constructs men as active in sexual engagements and able to make sexual decisions. With this expectation, however men are placed under a great deal of pressure to behave in a particular way that the participants appear to wish to challenge.

Q: Ok, well then, who actually initiates the sex?

[P3: The guy] [P4: The guy] [P7: The guy]

P2: No, it can be either way. There are some kinky chicks out there [...]

P3: [...] I think that the man is just more dominant, in that with initiating, I think so. (Female FG)

P3: I think it starts with the guy when he starts sweet talking or like you know sitting really close to you [...] And then maybe you guys might start kissing and then (.)

Q: And then one thing leads to another?

[P3: Ja] [P2: Ja] (Female FG)

P3: I think that she's waiting for him to show her that he wants to, you know, so like, you know, if she can see that he wants to, you know, she'll just submit. (Female FG)

The female group participants appear much more certain as to who initiates sexual interactions. These research participants utilised the dominant discourse of male sexual initiation in their construction of sexual encounters in which men are understood to be dominant and active in their pursuit of sexual activity (Littleton *et al.*, 2009). Female sexuality is thus constructed as reactive; the participants appear unable to recognise female sexual desire which is silenced in these interactions. Women are simply objects to male sexuality and sexual initiation and are thus required to meet a man's needs. In this way women are constructed as unaware of their own desire or having no desire of their own. The male sexual initiation discourse reinforces patriarchal constructions of acceptable female and male sexuality.

Participant 2 attempts to acknowledge women's ability to be more active within their sexual pursuits and thus challenges the male sexual initiation discourse but highlighting female sexual desire and agency. However, this permissive discourse is not taken up by the other participants. As such it cannot be used to construct 'normal' female sexuality and participant 2 appears to need to justify her statement made against the dominant discourses through derogatory means. In so doing the participant constructs women who are sexually agentic as other and deviant. Such women are constructed as unlike the research participant and a distancing is created which allows participant 2 to maintain her position in the group and

avoid the risk of possible social rejection associated with rejecting the status quo. The ability of dominant discourses to police one's behaviour is highlighted; for instance, acceptable and desirable female sexuality is maintained as is male sexual dominance which is reinforced through patriarchal discourses.

A sexual double standard discourse is employed which maintains that women who would choose to initiate sex fall outside of the norm of appropriate female sexual behaviour and social acceptability (Milnes, 2010). In this manner, their subject positioning is something to be scorned and makes reference to a 'slut-shaming' discourse which once again acts to regulate and police acceptable female sexuality. The participants appear unable to challenge this discourse as demonstrated previously. The interactions of the various discourses employed, such as the sexual double standard discourse and male sexual initiation discourse serve to regulate women's unacceptable behaviour so that they are obligated to conform to an ideal of traditional sex roles and are thus limited in their performance and expression of female sexuality.

The focus group participants employ the male sexual initiation discourse in constructing typical sexual encounters that begin with men 'sweet talking' their partners, 'sitting close' and 'kissing' them. Furthermore, unlike the male focus group participants who emphasised reading the signals demonstrated by both men and women, the female participants appear to highlight the need to read men's signals so as to determine their partner's intentions and desires, and perhaps to signal their own sexual desire. Female sexuality is thus constructed as reactive and as finding existence only when confronted with male sexual desire. Women are constructed as needing to wait for men to initiate sexual engagements and become objects on which male sexuality is enacted and to which women merely 'submit'. Women's choice and agency is relegated to that of men and female sexual decision making is removed. As female agency and choice is limited the occurrence of sexual coercion is fostered.

#### 4.3.2 Discourse of mutuality of sexual initiation

Sexual initiation was not solely constructed as falling within the realm of men's responsibility. An alternative discourse of mutuality was utilised in constructing such situations in which it was not a single partner who initiated sex, but rather a common and mutual understanding emphasised between sexual partners. The use of this discourse challenges dominant discourses of heterosex that emphasise male dominance and subject

positioning by allowing women to assert their female sexuality and desire. This allows for the possibility of female sexual assertiveness in the face of sexual coercion. This discourse does not appear to be represented in the literature reviewed and appears to suggest the acceptance of female desire as well as their right to sexual expression. Despite this, it is important to consider that what may appear to be mutual initiation and sexual engagement may only be posing as such. The extracts under review refer to casual sexual activity during which consent is considered far more complex and while undoubtedly mutual initiation is common, particularly in established relationship, the implications of broader discursive practices needs to be recognised.

P5: The conversation isn't always necessary, I mean, if you guys are on the same page it just kind of happens. (Male, Mixed FG)

P1: Hmm, it's kind of, it's almost like it's taboo, like you can't tell this girl and I mean it's like the most obvious thing, like ja, I want to have sex with you and you want to have sex with me, this we know, like we both know it. (Male FG)

The research participants suggested that in many sexual encounters there is a recognition between both parties that they are 'on the same page' and 'both know' that they want to have sex. The use of dominant heterosex discourses appears to remove the need for verbal communication in indicating one's desires as both parties are expected to understand what their partner desires of them. However, it is not only the use of dominant discourse which dictates appropriate behaviour and therefore the apparent lack of necessity regarding verbally communicating one's intent but also a 'taboo' regarding talking about one's desires. As a result it would appear that individuals are obligated to utilise strategies which may cue their intent or rely on the reading of their body language. The inability to communicate one's sexual intent has negative implications for the occurrence of sexual coercion due to the possibility of misreading cues of being 'on the same page' or both knowing as these cannot be explicitly established.

Through utilising a discourse of mutuality of initiation the male participants appear to be able to determine their partners' sexual intent and desire. The use of the mutuality of sexual initiation discourse diminishes the full responsibility placed on men to initiate sex as well as possibly diminishing the subjective experience of needing to persuade one's partner. The participants suggest that men are skilful enough to ascertain female sexual desire and intent and thus are not required to obtain explicit consent. The participants may be employing dominant masculinity discourses to offer assurance in their ability to recognise female sexual

desire without any recognition for the power imbalances and their partners' possible inability to offer genuine consent as a result of the societal pressures to meet male sexual needs that she may experience. Additionally, research suggests that women require continual renegotiation of consent whereas men employ sexual discourses that maintain that consensual participation in initial sexual activity indicates consent to additional activity (Ryan, 2011).

P1: You gotta read the signals I guess, you gotta, eventually I don't know, there is body language, I don't think that it's anything I think you need to be all that conscious of, it's something you kind of feel [...]

P4: Not much talking.

P3: But what are you going to say to each other?

P2: [...] when you like have a one night stand type of thing, and you go back to the guys place, like, they won't just stare at each other, cause there's not much talking, so you're not just going to go like, 'let's do this', so the guys going to be, like, put on some music, just to make the environment, to ease it up a bit, (.) it make it easier.

P3: Set the mood.

P2: So that it's not so awkward.

P3: So that you'll also know what he's trying, what he wants, so he can kinda tells you. (Female FG)

Casual sexual activity involves a complex play of non-verbal interactions that require understanding from both parties. This understanding is generated through appreciating dominant heterosex and sexual initiation discourses, including that of mutual sexual initiation, which act to inform an individual what their partner is feeling, what they intend to happen and what subsequent actions to take in this regard. The female participants construct scenarios in which women are not constructed as sexually desiring, and their sexual involvement appears to be in response to male sexual desire and intent. Casual sexual experiences are believed to be 'awkward' and uncomfortable and women therefore require that men make the situation less so. Women are constructed as influenced by the will of their male partners and not as independent sexual agents. Additionally their desire is never made explicit and they are therefore constructed as not necessarily wanting to engage in sexual activity and thus require persuading through 'setting the mood' and making the encounter 'easier'. The participants then appear to challenge dominant discourse through the use of the mutuality of sexual initiation however this may not provide genuine resistance as a result of the interplay of dominant gender discourse. The possibility for sexual coercion to occur is also made apparent, particularly due to the lack of verbal communication and consent given which creates the circumstances for the misreading of sexual cues and intent.

#### 4.3.3 Discourses of persuasion and seduction

Through the interplay of dominant gender discourse, men are constructed as actively pursuing sex and are required to work to achieve their objective. As sexual gatekeepers,

women are constructed as able to grant sexual access to their partners with reactive sexuality that requires activation by men. The discourses of persuasion and seduction present interesting findings and construct different scenarios for male sexual initiation. The discourses of persuasion and seduction are constructed in very similar terms; however it would appear that the research participants' were unable to recognise the similarities between the two, possibly as a defensive mechanism to avoid the responsibility of sexual coercion.

Persuasion appears to be constructed as an unacceptable strategy in acquiring sex while seduction is considered an essential part of the sexual interaction. Research suggests that seduction discourses construct situations that may be considered coercive and construct scenarios that share a striking resemblance to that of acquaintance rape (Ryan, 2011). The use of a seduction discourse as opposed to a persuasion discourse may alleviate the negative connotations associated with acquiring consent from an unwilling partner.

P1: I think it's not about convincing them to have sex with you it's more about convincing the [...] girl that you're the sort of person that she wants to be with [...] I guess it's showing the girl that I'm of substance that I'm of, that I'm something worthwhile you know that it's not just some rubbish I'm not just like some guy.

P2: Ja, I mean I think, I mean you asked how do you persuade a girl, I mean it's a, bit of a dodgy.

P1: Ja, the wording.

P2: Like like, like I mean it's it's, not about persuading or convincing them or kind of like, it's about kind of getting them to want to, you know, like.

P1: Sometimes it's about getting them to admit that they want to. (Male FG)

It would appear that group participants make use of persuasion and seduction discourses so as to avoid constructing themselves in an unfavourable light. It is apparent in the talk of male university students that 'persuasion' has very negative connotations associated with it as does the word 'convince'; as such the male participants deny their use. The seduction discourse maintains that women require persuasion before sexual engagement and that it is the male partner's responsibility to introduce persuasion into the interaction (Ryan, 2011). The participants acknowledge that their sexual partners may not be initially sexually willing and while they assert that they do not engage in persuasion or convincing, it is clear that the actions that they take serve to achieve the same end. The persuasion discourse as utilised by the participants suggests that convincing one's partner is constructed as implying that their female partners do not wish to engage sexually. Such a discourse places men as its subject with women requiring male assistance to acknowledge that desire and are thus objects to male sexual dominance.

Through the use of persuasion and seduction discourses the male participants are able to resist constructions of sexual coercion, making its occurrence invisible, by reframing female sexual unwillingness as token. A dominant discourse of heterosex is utilised as well as a seduction discourse in the acknowledgement that men need to assist women in admitting their sexual desire, suggestive of persuasion. Men are therefore positioned as having the power to determine a woman's desire, while women are constructed as denying their desire and requiring a male to validate it.

P5: There is persuasion and then there is seduction though, right I mean like, they are two different things, like persuasion is kind of convincing someone who doesn't want to have sex with you to have sex with you while seduction would be convincing someone who is resisting for the hell of it because it is a game, you know, that they should, but you are already on the same page, you know, you not actually changing their mind you're just getting them over their little hang ups, I think that there is a big different between that, because one is openly manipulative you know, you both know what is going on and you are enjoying it and the other one is actually, actually quite dangerous.  
(Male, Mixed FG)

A male participant within the mixed focus group appears to deny the use of persuasion in order to resist being constructed as using 'dangerous' strategies. The persuasion discourse appears to be resisted in favour of a seduction discourse. Persuasion is constructed as fundamentally different to seduction as it acknowledges that the female partner does not wish to engage sexually. The persuasion discourse therefore constructs persuasion as manipulative and 'dangerous'. With regard to the seduction discourse, seduction is constructed as something that both parties enjoy and once again, the assertion is made that sexual intent remains unspoken.

Seduction is constructed as an acceptable means of convincing a woman to engage sexually, based on a common understanding between both parties as to what is being enacted and that a game is being played. However, participant 5 asserts that seduction involves assisting a female partner in overcoming her 'little hang ups' or rather her resistance to sexual engagement. In constructing such behaviour as seduction (as opposed to persuasion), the male participants are able to avoid engaging in discourses of sexual coercion and their implication in such acts. Through the assertion that women understand the particular seduction discourses and the behaviours being enacted, such behaviour is deemed not dangerous and men are therefore not culpable. The use of a seduction discourse diminishes the recognition of genuine sexual refusal as mere 'hang ups' and asserts that men are deemed able to both illuminate female sexual desire for their partners and are able to overcome this resistance. The existence of these discourses allow for the occurrence of sexual coercion as

men may potentially see their actions as seductive rather than coercive. It is however, important to acknowledge the validity of seduction discourses within heterosexual negotiation.

#### 4.4 DISCOURSES OF SEXUAL REFUSAL

Appropriately understanding the various forms of sex refusal is essential to successfully negotiating sexual interactions. However, sexual refusal appears to be a complex phenomenon that involves token resistance discourses, discourses of sexual refusal as game play and women as sexual gatekeeper discourses. The inability to recognise genuine sexual refusal is recognised as leading to opportunities for sexual coercion and rape. For these participants, these discourses may also be utilised to discredit the occurrence of sexual coercion and guilt feelings associated with perpetrating such acts.

##### 4.4.1 Token resistance discourse

A dominant sexual discourse that is utilised by men and women is that of token resistance: which appears to dictate how appropriate sexual refusal is achieved and therefore the nature of successful sexual refusal. The use of this discourse would appear to provide young men and women with the means to distinguish genuine sexual refusal from that of token resistance. Token resistance is understood to be the refusal of sex despite one's desire to engage in sexual activity (Muehlenhard & Rogers, 1998) and was identified by each group. The use of the token resistance discourse may have implications for the occurrence of sexual coercion and the misreading of particular cues.

P7: Maybe they don't want to seem easy, like they will just have sex on the first night; I mean if you like a guy and there is a potential future then you don't really want it put out so quickly.

P3: Ja, trying to show you have standards.

P4: You want to seem respectable.

P3: Ja, I mean it's just weird, like if, a guy was like trying to get with you and you were like 'YES' ((laughter from group)) you have to say 'no', like, you know, I think that he will even be like 'whoo, ok.' (Female FG)

P6: It would be because society goes against what she wants, you know, or there's something else that is bigger than her desires. (Female, Mixed FG)

The sexual double standard discourse that participants employ highlights men's sexual freedom and women's need to maintain their Madonna-like status. Women are constructed as needing to resist male advances in order to emphasise that they are not 'easy' and that they 'have standards'. Women appear unable to demonstrate sexual expression and are required to conform to traditional and acceptable female sex roles (Faulkner *et al.*, 2008). Women who



engage in sexual activity freely are negatively construed as less favourable partners who are not deemed worthy of their male pursuers. The use of the token resistance discourse is constructed as important as it allows women to maintain their 'respectability' which can only be achieved through the appearance of innocence and the denial of sexual desire. The participants emphasised that men would disapprove when encountering a woman who is ready for sex - this is in contrast to male sexuality constructed by the male sex drive discourse and additionally interacts with the sexual double standard discourse. As such, participant 3 highlights that there is an imperative for women to say 'no' and refuse sexual advances. This serves to deny female sexual agency and desire, thereby constraining their behaviour in sexual encounters and subjecting women to male domination.

In highlighting the need for women to refuse men's sexual advances, even when one would like to say 'yes', a dominant token resistance discourse is employed. A reality is constructed in which men may misconstrue the meaning of such communication as indicating consent. Therefore, they may act sexually coercively by persuading their partners to engage in sex, without recognition of their partner's true desire through the assertion that her 'no' is a token response.

A female participant in the mixed group highlights that society and dominant discourses constrain women's activities and their desires such that they feel pressured to refuse sex (even if they desire it). Through their sexual refusal, women may demonstrate socially appropriate female sexuality which is constructed as 'bigger than her desires'. Women's sexual desires are made invisible as women construct the use of token resistance as a means of achieving an ideal femininity which conforms to societal standards (Muehlenhard & Rogers, 1998). Refusing sex, and thus refusing one's desires, ensures female respectability, as the sexual double standard discourse would suggest women are deemed less than when they prioritise their own sexual desires and are no longer seen to have 'standards' (Milnes, 2010). Men may construe the situation as reflecting token resistance as women are believed to often use "non-consent cues laced with ambiguity" (Farris *et al.*, 2010, p. 14). As such, men may decode sexual cues incorrectly, particularly when coupled with rape myths which construct women as desiring to be raped and as 'asking for it' when their non-consent is not direct (Ryan, 2011).

P5: there's just one thing as a guy that you should do in that situation even if it is a 'token no', back the hell off, because you can never, you can never take anyone at their word [...] the whole idea of it is retarded because any woman who is going to say that, say 'no' and mean 'yes' should be shot.  
(Male, Mixed FG)

Male participants in the mixed group refuted the occurrence of token resistance deeming it unacceptable and suggested that men should not rely on the notion of token resistance. Instead, female sexual refusal should be taken at face value as suggested by the employment of a progressive masculinity discourse. Participant 5 appeared to suggest that it is irresponsible to rely on the token resistance discourse as people, and perhaps more especially women, are constructed as untrustworthy and cannot be relied upon to indicate their genuine sexual intent. Participant 5 reacts aggressively at the notion of token resistance and women's possible deceit and appears unable to recognise the broader social constraints and discourses which facilitate the existence of token resistance. Additionally, a wrongful accusation rape discourse is employed which constructs women as deceitful through their claims of non-consent while still desiring to engage sexually.

#### 4.4.2 Discourse of sexual refusal as game play

All three groups conceived of men and women as playing games in their sexual interactions; these games signal their sexual intention. Much like the token resistance discourse, this discourse constructs situations in which women appear to deny males sexual access however, the token resistance discourse is utilised to construct such behaviour as ensuring a woman's respectability. The participants suggest, through challenges to this dominant discourse, that some individuals may not fully understand the game being played or the sexual discourse being enacted which may lead to the perpetration of sexual coercion or rape. The research participants suggest that there are several reasons for the utilisation of this discourse. The male participants suggest that one reason may be that women wish to test their male partners and the extent of their persistence in gaining sexual access. Through constructing particular sexual interactions as game playing, individuals are not required to make their intentions explicitly known: the research participants furthermore suggest that sexual cues are understood by both men and women.

P1: It happens, and I mean I think obviously there are some girls who like saying 'no' when they mean 'yes', hopefully it's quite rare, but it happens.

P5: It's just part of the games really, to see what you're going to do, how much you want to, to see how much you wanna or more effort you wanna put in, I mean ja.

P1: [...] so like '50 Shades of Grey', [...] that is about a dominant submissive relationship and I think it would be naive of, of um, us to ignore that, I mean there are people, men and women, who kind of get off on the idea of, I don't want to say being raped, you know, but maybe the idea of being raped by someone who is healthy, sexy, good looking, charming, rich and all the other things that go with it, you know, be raped by Prince Charming, [...] but also it's kind of like innocence and they're like 'no, I don't want.'

P4: Stop it, I like it.

P1: Stop it but I like it, no but I mustn't, but don't, but do.

P4: It's a game; they're not always willing to admit it. (Male FG)

P3: You know the like "ah, stop it" but you're actually like, "hmm, I like it", you know, those are one of the games that people would play. (Female FG)

Within the all-male focus group, the participants use the discourse of sexual refusal as game playing to construct instances in which women appear to deny apparent sexual consent. A 'woman as gatekeeper' discourse is utilised to highlight women's apparent ability to dictate sexual activity in this regard. It is suggested that women are able to exert their sexual power and resist male domination through denying male sexual gratification. Yet, it appears that the male research participants view such behaviour as a game. By constructing female sexual refusal in this way, the male participants are able to normalise this behaviour as well as possibly trivialise it and thus diminish their need to take sexual refusal seriously. This is highlighted by participant 4 who notes that women are unwilling to acknowledge the games they are playing and thus require the help of men to realise that they do 'like it' and that men should not 'stop it'. By trivialising women's unwillingness to consent to sex, women may be constructed as not knowing what they want. This may serve to highlight the possible uncertainty experienced by women regarding their own sexual desire as they are positioned as objects to male desire and not subjects of their own needs. Female sexuality is constructed as existing as a reaction to male sexual desire and therefore women's choices to engage freely would appear to be restricted.

By conceiving of female sexual refusal as simply part of a game, men are constructed as having the ability to determine the extent of female sexual desire despite being denied by their female partners. Such an assertion denies the occurrence of sexual coercion. Men are provided with the power to denote the validity of a woman's 'no' and lack of consent. Participant 1 further undermines women's sexual refusal by conflating it with a desire to be 'raped by Prince Charming', which further trivialises actual experiences of rape. Through the use of the sexual refusal as game playing discourse, men's culpability in these acts is diminished and men are positioned in such a way that they are able to justify non-consensual sex. Men are subjectively able to remove feelings of guilt through constructing women as uncertain about their sexuality and desire. Alongside this is the assertion that women desire strong, dominant men who will remove their need for sexual agency. This is achieved through utilising the dominant rape myth of 'women want to be raped' (Suarez & Gadalla, 2010).

Through the use of the sexual refusal as game play discourse women are constructed as untrustworthy. Women are seen to desire game playing with men, to taunt them and refuse them sexual access. It also illuminates women's apparent inability to assert their sexual desires as dominant discourses hold that women require persuasion due to their reactive sexuality. As a result of the limiting nature of this discourse, women appear to be obligated to maintain their 'innocence' as highlighted by participant 1 - women are constructed as without sexual desire, lest they be subjected to the sexual double standard. Despite this, it is important to recognise the validity of the sexual refusal as game playing discourse when utilised by women and the agency demonstrated through its employment. Female participant 3 also employed the sexual refusal as game playing discourse with the clear recognition that women are enjoying the sexual activity but are still required to deny this. However the employment of this discourse may undermine genuine sexual refusal and result in unintentional incidences of sexual coercion.

P1: Sometimes there is unfortunately, game playing that is happening on both sides, but I'd say that it's both parties responsibilities, [...] it takes two people to make a mistake so you know you can't say that, you know, 'she was playing these games' and things like that, well ja, maybe but if you had sex without her consent that like it's still rape, I mean it's a grey area, like we said, but it's a grey area, it's not a clear cut, and I also think you've got to be safe. (Male FG)

The sexual refusal as game playing discourse was constructed as 'unfortunate' by a male participant in the all-male group with the recognition that maintaining this discourse may lead to a 'mistake' in the reading of the discourse and a woman's genuine intent which may result in rape. Women are conceived of as flirts who entice male sexuality through the games they play. However, if a mistake does occur, participant 1 suggests that it is the responsibility of both individuals and not merely the result of men's misconception but of women's playful sexuality as well. This is highlighted through the use of a rape myth of female ambiguous or playful sexuality and the suggestion that a woman's behaviour may be justification for rape (Ryan, 2011). Men are exonerated from full responsibility as rape or sexual coercion may be constructed as an unintentional mistake caused by women. Participant 1 then recognises the fallacy in that statement with the acknowledgement that one cannot say 'she was playing these games' and attempts to employ a progressive masculinity discourse.

The male participant appears to attempt to challenge these discourses by constructing sexual coercion and rape as falling within a grey area. In this light, men may be exonerated of any sexual behaviour engaged in without consent because of their uncertainty. However, this invalidates definitions or accusations of rape. Sexual coercion and rape appears to be a

difficult issue to traverse and it would appear that there are no clear guidelines for men to ensure that it does not happen. The issue of sexual coercion and rape provokes anxiety for men as 'it is not clear cut' and they need to be 'safe'. The possibility of violating a woman appears to be quite difficult to manage which may result in the use of rape myths and sexual refusal as game playing discourses so as to reduce feelings of guilt and anxiety.

P2: It's a game, and like the game kind of fits within some sort of prescribed social norms but that there are people that don't kind of have quite a sense of what those norms are and will go too far [...] like, you get guys completely misreading signals, not even guys, not only guys, but predominantly guys.

P1: And you get people accidentally giving signals.

P2: Like ja, like not giving the right signals, or whatever and so then you know, a move is made and freaks somebody out, and they're like 'no, fuck off, like leave me alone', or like, whoever, the guy in this instance, kind of, like 'what the fuck did I do wrong' or like 'did I completely fuck that up or how?' (Male FG)

The male group participants utilise the sexual refusal as game playing discourse and challenge its dominance with the acknowledgement that not everyone is familiar with the rules to these games, despite the games being socially sanctioned and based on stereotypical gendered roles. It is through lack of familiarity with the rules that individuals may misread signals. Participant 2 expresses his belief that males are predominately responsible for this misunderstanding which results in their failure to follow sexual scripts through perceiving female signals of sexual intent inaccurately. This is in line with Farris *et al.*'s (2008) research which highlights males' misperception of female friendliness as indicating sexual interest. This is challenged through the assertion by participant 1 that it is not merely misreading of signals but 'accidentally giving signals'. With regard to women, it is possible that their friendliness is misconstrued as signalling their desire for sexual engagement. As such, men who 'go too far' have been constructed as doing so not necessarily because they have misunderstood their female partners' intentions but possibly because these women have behaved provocatively, consumed alcohol or acted in a manner that men believe are cues for the signalling of sexual intent (Farris *et al.*, 2008).

The male participants construct women as teasers who merely taunt men and then refuse them sexual access, which may result in frustration and possible actions of sexual coercion. Women are positioned as blameworthy – as it is their miscommunication of intent that elicits behaviour in men that goes too far. Women are therefore required to regulate and police their behaviour so that misreading of signals does not occur. Through the acknowledgement that particular signals given by women are accidental, it suggests that women may be unaware of the signals that they impart or that they may be unfamiliar with the 'rules of the games' and of

the discourses being enacted. The participants utilise rape myths in suggesting that there are particular behaviours or actions that women may perform which signal willingness to consent to sex and which may later be considered justification for rape (Bouffard & Bouffard, 2011).

P5: It's completely, like you know, even if a women is like playing games and their body language says 'yes' and they're saying 'no', they're saying 'no', it's enough, you know, like men can actually take all of this responsibility by just listening to what someone says, all the women has to do is say what she means and that's it. (Male, Mixed FG)

P1: Better safe than sorry, the first thing, I mean sometimes, you know, she means no [...] usually for me at least rejection was never like a no [...] I really have never been in a situation where, I mean, the thing is I couldn't see it, you know, for instance if you pull into a girl and she pulls away, you know, that's quite clearly a 'no', maybe there's a chance that later on you'll pull into her and it'll work but, you know, with sex it's, you know, each time you go a step further it becomes a little bit more, you know, I think that if you're like trying to and she's like 'no', no on the sex then, unless it's, you know, sometimes they do it in a kind of a game fashion, but I think that's, I think that's usually easier to tell when it is sincere and if you can't, I mean when it's insincere, you know, when she's like trying to pull you forward or something like that and if you're getting none of those signs then, you just got to jump ship. (Male FG)

It was suggested by several male participants that irrespective of what the women's intentions may be, if they explicitly say 'no' this should be deemed a refusal based on the notion that 'sometimes' the sexual refusal is genuine and not simply game playing. As such, a progressive masculinity discourse is utilised which suggests that men need to be 'better safe than sorry' as they are able to recognise the possibility of actual sexual refusal and the potential for sexual coercion. The utilisation of this discourse challenges dominant masculinity discourses which construct men as able to decipher genuine sexual refusal from that of game playing. Furthermore, participant 5 suggests that men should take the responsibility in case a mistake does happen, further utilising the progressive masculinity discourse. However, participant 5 appears to believe that women are required to say what they mean. Due to dominant discourses of female sexuality and the need to retain one's respectability, it would appear that this may be very difficult for women to achieve as they attempt to meet the expectations of dominant discourse. Despite the use of the progressive masculine discourse the participant remains unable to fully grasp the unequal power relations experienced and assumes that equality has already been established within the sexual arena.

Participant 1 utilises the discourse of sexual refusal as game playing as well as a rape myth to suggest refusal from a woman does not necessarily mean that she will not say 'yes' later as highlight by Muehlenhard and Rogers (1998). A hegemonic masculinity discourse is utilised that positions men in such a way that they do not need to respect a woman's sexual refusal and are expected to persist until they achieve the outcome that they desire as they possess

greater power and needs to that of women. Males appear to be positioned such that they feel they can negate a women's sexual refusal and persist in attempting to overcome such rejection. In negating a women's sexual refusal, this additionally negates a woman's ability to consent and minimises her sense of being able to deny sexual access. The prominence of the dominant discourses employed by the participant is further emphasised by the apparent lack of explicit explanation of sexual interactions. Instead, use of the phrase 'you know' suggests that this information is known to the group. The participant does appear to claim that sexual refusal is more common in the earlier stages of the interaction; with further progress in the sexual interaction, it is suggested that female sexual refusal will be more unlikely. The utilisation of this rape myth constructs initial consent as sufficient and removes women's ability to withdraw consent at a later stage of the sexual encounter.

Farris *et al.* (2008) highlight that men typically construct sexual encounters as requiring initial 'yes/'no' consent while women typically negotiate consent throughout the sexual encounter. Additionally, the participants in the male focus group hold that men are typically able to determine genuine or 'sincere' sexual refusal from 'insincere' refusal. Once again, males are positioned as having the power to determine female sexual desire and can exert this power over women. The participant employs dominant heterosex discourses through the construction that women require persuasion and that rejection does not signal sexual refusal; men are therefore required to be active in pursuing sex.

P3: Ja, if they teasing the man.

P2: Ja, but I don't think you can say, no no ((laughter)) ((gestures))

P3: No, but I think that the man will be able to tell whether you're just teasing or whether you actually mean it.

P2: My friend she did that and she meant no, like literally like 'no', like 'no stop it.' ((laughter))

P3: Can't tell when they mean it or not.

P2: Ja, it got messy, yoh, my word, like, like the guy, like because she's such a playful individual, like her saying 'no', like he thought she was playing, but like she actually meant no, and ja, they fought and like ja, it just ended badly, very badly. (Female FG)

The female group participants highlight that the use of a sexual refusal as game playing discourse may serve as a means to 'tease' their partners. As dominant discourses of female sexuality would suggest, women are required to sexually entice their partners through teasing or game play. Male sexuality and desire is constructed as dominant and women therefore act to serve male needs. However, the use of the sexual refusal as game playing discourse may be viewed as constructing women as powerful within the sexual arena by denying men the object of their sexual desire. By denying men sex, women may assert themselves and may feel that they are able to control the sexual encounter. Women are therefore constructed as

directing sexual access through the use of the women as sexual gatekeeper discourse (Fagen & Anderson, 2012; French, 2013). Women however, are required to tread a fine line of needing to accommodate male sexuality while remaining chaste and pure. As such an environment is facilitated in which sexual coercion may occur as women attempt to meet the contradictory expectations of regulating male sexuality and acting to seduce and entice men (Bouffard & Bouffard, 2011).

The female participants suggest that men are able to distinguish sexual refusal as game play from that of actual sexual refusal. However, the possibility that sexual coercion or rape may occur as a result of employing this discourse is also identified. Participant 2 suggests that men may not have the ability to recognise genuine sexual refusal. In the example provided a rape apology discourse is utilised to justify the act of rape by emphasising the female partner's playful nature which was misread by her male partner and therefore exonerates him. 'She was asking for it' as a rape myth is additionally utilised which constructs women as blameworthy and responsible for their assault (Ryan, 2011). Rape myths appear to assert the appropriate ways in which to decline sexual advances, such that women need to be firm in their responses. This does not take into account the differential power relations and the unease that women may feel with regard to sexually refusing males' sexual advances. Women are once again constructed as objects of male sexuality, to the extent that their behaviour is regulated and their ability to consent to certain acts and not others is eliminated.

#### 4.4.3 Discourse of women as sexual gatekeepers

The discourse of women as sexual gatekeepers is a mixed discourse that constructs women as sexual gatekeepers who are able to determine sexual access and in so doing, are required to regulate male uncontrollable sexuality (Livingston *et al.*, 2012). This particular discourse would appear to function alongside dominant constructions of masculine sexuality, being active and unrelenting in its pursuit of sexual gratification (Jackson & Cram, 2003).

P5: Which is one of the most irritating things about modern social dynamics, you know, you have feminism, and you know, men have most of the power in the world but the one thing women have almost complete power over, in a respectful kind of setting, is sex; women are able to dominate that because guys always chase it and women can always say 'yes' or 'no'. (Male, Mixed FG)

P4: Then I guess, sorry, that it's the same thing as women almost not having power because you are expected then in a modern sort of social circumstance to not go out and initiate, you're supposed to be, you're expected to kind of wait for someone else to initiate something. (Female, Mixed FG)

Both the male and female participants employ the woman as sexual gatekeeper discourse. However, disagreement between the male and female participants arose within the mixed



focused group. Participant 5 utilises the women as sexual gatekeepers discourse to challenge dominant female sexuality discourses that assert that women are passive in their interactions with men. He claims that women have ‘almost complete power’ with regard to sexual engagement. In this way women are constructed as having the power to deny men sexual access. Men are therefore objects to women’s sexual agency and no longer able to assert their desires. Additionally, their active pursuit of sexual engagement may be fruitless and the participant appears to express resentment towards women as a result of apparent diminished male sexual privilege.

The male participant constructs male sexual desire as omnipresent through the employment of a male sex drive discourse. As such male sexual gratification is constructed as something constantly sought out and ‘chased’, and female sexuality and desire is constructed as limited and less prominent. Women are constructed as having less access to their sexuality and therefore this construction regulates what women are believed to be able to experience. Participant 5 employs a progressive masculinity discourse to highlight male dominance and patriarchy. As such, the participant is able to construct himself as a progressive male and as understanding the experiences of women. Through the employment of a progressive masculinity discourse, the male participant garners the right to speak about female sexuality through the acknowledgement of his male privilege. This allows him to distance himself from sexist men and may relieve any feelings of blame or guilt associated with male dominance.

Despite participant 5’s use of the progressive masculinity discourse, which constructs a liberal subjective experience, his apparent resentment may be a result of a patriarchal discourse which positions men as dominant and suggests that men retain complete control of the sexual arena. The use of the progressive masculinity discourse appears to entrap the listener and coerces them into believing that the participant holds a liberal viewpoint of equality. This constructs a position from which the participant may feel secure and free of prejudice while disguising the underlying sexism. It is also important to note that the participant differentiates when women have ‘complete power’ and when they do not. It is only in instances of ‘respectful kinds of settings’ that women are able to utilise their power in determining sexual engagement and may truly act as sexual gatekeepers. A setting may possibly be deemed respectful when a woman’s male partner is able to respect her ability to refuse sex. The participant appears to utilise a rape myth which suggests that there are

particular settings which are not respectful. It is within such settings that rape may occur and such settings may sanction male dominance and power (Mills, 2010).

Participant 5's progressive masculinity discourse appears to be challenged by a female participant who highlights the contradictions experienced by women who are constructed as gatekeepers to sexual access. Women are understood to have dominance and power within the sexual arena, yet are constructed as unable to assert their sexual desire and initiate sexual activity. As such the participant attempts to challenge the contradictions inherent in the women as sexual gatekeepers discourse and the discourse itself through recognising the limitations and restrictions placed on women who enact this discourse. While participant 5 positions women as powerful subjects, it would appear that women are still limited in their sexual expression, as are men, as a result of the dominant discourses which influence the performance of both male and female sexuality. Through the employment of the dominant heterosex discourses particular positions appear to be made available to women, who are constructed as lacking sexual agency and instead become objects to be acted upon by male sexual expression.

While the same discourses may be employed by both males and females, as evidenced above, they are utilised to achieve different ends and construct a different reality for men and women. This leads to different actions and behaviours that may be enacted by either males or females, and provides different perspectives and understandings of the world as well as different subjective experiences. The participants suggest that the subjective experiences are dissatisfactory for both men and women who are constrained by dominant discourse. There is a need to challenge these discourses so as to provide for alternative ways of being and engaging sexually.

#### 4.5 DISCOURSES ON THE REDUCTION OF SEXUAL COERCION CULPABILITY

Both the male and female participants recognise that different strategies are utilised to obtain sex, many of which have been identified in previous research. Research suggest that women engage in unwanted sex more frequently than their male counterparts and that while both men and women report experiences of sexual coercion, only a small percentage of individuals admit to using post-refusal sexual persistence strategies (Struckman-Johnson *et al.*, 2003). Many individuals who engage in particular modes of sexual coercion may not recognise the

significance or consequence of their behaviour. As such it would appear that the tactics utilised in acquiring sex additionally function to diminish feelings of guilt and culpability. This study found that the discourses concerning deceit, alcohol use and transactional sex all form culpability reduction discourses which serve to facilitate sexual coercion without the perpetrator experiencing feelings of guilt. As such the participants were able to demonstrate a lack of responsibility with regard to acquiring sex from a potentially unwilling partner without the need to label their actions as sexually coercive.

#### 4.5.1 Discourse of deceit

Both the male and female focus groups identified the employment of the discourse of deceit as a strategy used particularly by men in obtaining sexual activity. Male participants' use of the discourse constructed deceit as a necessity in acquiring sex as they did not believe that who they are would be sufficient enough to attract a sexual partner due to their own insecurities. Women were constructed as naive and gullible, particularly by the female participants, for believing the deceit and allowing male sexual access. No association was made between the use of deceit and its implications for sexual coercion.

P4: Has no one here fucking lied like shit [...] you want to make your outsides match her insides, I mean come one, come on guys when you pissed, you want to make, you know, you want to meet her kind of expectations if you're in it for the sex, does no one do that?

P1: [...] I say you're special, I love you.

P4: But honestly there is lots of ways to be dishonest [...] Just to show that you kind of like taking an interest with her, I think that that's a necessity [...] you want to put the best picture of yourself forward, how can you do that without being insincere to who you really are as a person. (Male FG)

The male focus group participants utilised the discourse of deceit when they are attempting to 'hook up', particularly if the individual was 'in it for the sex'. The male participants suggest the need to embellish stories about themselves to enable them to meet the perceived expectations of what women consider an acceptable male partner to be. Deceit is constructed as a necessity and instead of being conceived of negatively may be used positively to a man's advantage and may counter the insecurities that he experiences about himself for not possibly meeting hegemonic masculinity ideals. Participant 1 highlights the use of the romance discourse which constructs women as concerned with love and commitment, however, this may be utilised by men to deceive and to ensure sexual access.

Participant 4 maintains that dishonesty is a 'necessity' if males are to achieve the desired sexual interaction. As such, the male sex drive discourse is employed which emphasises males preoccupation with sex in that men might 'show that you kind of like taking an interest

with her'; although this may be a means to an end. The discourse, constructed as advantageous, is employed to create a facade of a better man so as to ensure sexual engagement. This may be conceived of as sexually coercive as genuine consent cannot be garnered through embellished facts. The male participants construct men's actions as deceitful and intentionally so, with the agenda of persuading women to have sex when they may not do so otherwise; however, the culpability and responsibility of men is reduced as the consent acquired appears wilful.

Women are constructed as desiring an ideal man and possessing expectations that presumably cannot be met by their male suitors. Once again women are constructed as sexual gatekeepers with men needing to overcome possible resistance through the use of deceit. Furthermore, women appear to be constructed favourably and as superior to men, as the participant suggests that deceit is utilised in order to match the woman they are pursuing and thus women are elevated. Despite this, women may additionally be constructed as superficial in their desire for a particular type of man and because of the unattainable standards and expectations they are to blame for the facade created by men and thus are responsible for the assault that might ensue. The pressures and harmful nature of patriarchy in setting unrealistic masculinity expectations for men becomes evident through the assertion that the participants may be undesirable to women. As suggested by literature (Morrell, 2001), the majority of men do not conform to hegemonic masculinity, although it remains the ideal, and thus may continue to strive for it. Men are constructed as subjects of this discourse with women taking up the object position and are acted upon through the deceit utilised. In attempting to understand the subjective reality allowed for by the use of this discourse it is crucial that one question how a person would benefit from its employment. It is clear that through the use of this discourse the participants may alleviate feelings of insecurity as they are able to gain sexual access and are able to assert their sexual dominance and thus meet some of the previously believe to be unattainable masculinity ideals.

P2: Men are liars, and they can fake, they just like, you're know, they'll just like do anything. (Female FG)

P4: What, women don't lie?

P2: Eh, not like men, men it's like it's in their genes. (Female FG)

P2: A lot of promises.

P3: Ja, empty ones too.

((laughter))

P3: I think they can tell what you want, so if they can kind of figure out like what you're looking for they're going to promise you that, just to get what they want.

P5: Like if you're the kind of girl who's like 'I like to take walks on the beach', he'll be like, 'oh, baby, I'm going to take you to Cape Town and we're going to walk on the beach'.

P3: [...] I mean if he tells you he'll take you to Cape Town and you guys aren't even dating, he gets a one night stand; he leaves you the next morning. (Female FG)

The use of the deceit discourse was also identified by the female focus group participants as a particular strategy utilised by men when they are persuading a woman to have sex with them. Men are no longer constructed as insecure, as the male participants suggest, but rather are constructed as manipulative and conniving in their pursuit of sex. As such men are constructed as willing to say and promise anything 'just to get what they want'. Men are dominant and active in their endeavours to persuade a partner to engage sexually with an apparent lack of concern for their female partners and their desires. Women are negatively constructed as gullible, falling for men's empty promises; additionally women are constructed as exchanging sex for goods, such as a trip to Cape Town. The sexual interaction is not a means of achieving sexual gratification or meeting female sexual desire and it would appear unlikely that women would consent to this interaction if it were not for the promises made by the men. Female sexuality and desire is thus rendered invisible. The participants believe men's promises to be fruitless as 'he leaves you the next morning', as such the transaction is not completed and the interaction can be conceived of as coercive. Women are constructed as naïve for misunderstanding the broader sexual discourses of male sexuality which is constructed as relentless in its pursuit of sexual gratification and thus appear to fall victim to men's lies.

P 4: Yeah, they seem to think that you really like hearing about how nice you look, or how beautiful your voice sounds, or like 'wow, you're so smart' [...] it just seems like they have all these expectations, not expectations but what they think women want to hear and it's like a dialogue that they are reciting and hoping that it leads to (.) stuff. (Female FG)

Compliments are also identified within the discourse of deceit and are constructed as tactics used by males when persuading a women to have sex with them. As participant 4 points out, these compliments may not be sincere and serve instead as a means for men to acquire sex. The female participant suggests that once again there are particular expectations held by women that men feel the need to meet. Thus interactions may involve not genuinely portraying oneself for possible fear of rejection.

Men appear to be ruled by their desire to have sex and become unthinking in its pursuit; this is illustrated by the male sex drive discourse utilised by female participants. Once again it would appear that men simply say what they believe women would like to hear, and it is not about the women but rather about acquiring casual sex. A misogynistic and patriarchal

discourse is invoked through the male construction of women as sexual objects as opposed to sexual subjects. Women can be used by men for their gratification and then disposed of the following day.

#### 4.5.2 Discourse of disinhibition

Alcohol consumption was a commonly cited tool used to ensure the ease of gaining a casual sexual partner. Struckman-Johnson *et al.* (2003) suggest that there is a high correlation between alcohol consumption and sexual coercion. The use of the discourse of disinhibition appears to allow both men and women to achieve their objective of sexual activity, despite recognition of the risk involved. Furthermore, responsibility and culpability for any sexually coercive behaviour is removed. However, several of the male participants utilised the progressive masculinity discourse in recognising that sexual engagement must be entered into with caution when their partner has been drinking as the possibility of a sexually coercive situation occurring is heightened. It would appear that alcohol is utilised so as to manage the complex expectations reinforced by dominant discourses and allows both men and women to assume socially appropriate gender roles and to rely on their disinhibited state as justification for their behaviour.

P4: [...] drinking is essential before I go out because it's all about women [...] the truth is I get so fuck before I go out and when I'm out um, and when I'm in that state I'm not caring about what my friend is saying really, um, I'm caring about like meeting women and like having a good time and whatever that entails. (Male FG)

P4: My strategy was just like eliminate any feeling of like inadequacy or like insecurity um, and by like getting like completely trashed and then like ja, law of averages, after that. (Male FG)

A male participant employs the discourse of disinhibition in constructing scenarios which allow men to meet women with greater ease and this is achieved through the consumption of large amounts of alcohol. Through the use of this discourse men appear to believe that when they engage in this behaviour they will have a 'good time'. As such it serves to eliminate feelings of insecurity and inadequacy so that men are able to approach women despite fears of rejection. Participant 4 employs a hegemonic masculinity discourse by asserting the need to be confident and secure in oneself. The male participants conceive of a particular construction of masculinity which can only be achieved through the use of alcohol and the employment of the discourse of disinhibition, such as the macho male (Lau & Stevens, 2012). Furthermore, it is suggested that the greater the disinhibition the greater the chances of acquiring sex, potentially from unwilling partners and through means which may be construed as sexually coercive due to the inebriated participant's inability to rationalise

appropriately. The participants are subjectively able to deny feelings of responsibility as they are constructed as having less control of their behaviour.

P4: We put you know substances in our bodies that compromise our judgement especially when we're out and to have all these values and ideals and whatever is just, I don't know how congruent it is always with the, the way things like pan out [...] because when in the heat of the moment and I'm sitting with a pretty girl and we've got something in common and this and that, I mean really, I can justify it in a million ways but the truth is I want to have sex with that girl and if she's consenting I'm going to do it.

P1: [...] we are putting these substances into kind of [...] it's just sometimes so we have an excuse the next day so we can say we have worse judgement. (Male FG)

The discourse of disinhibition facilitates the occurrence of sex, possibly as a result of an individual's compromised judgement. Participant 4 emphasises the incongruence in the previous conversation and the use of the progressive masculinity discourse in highlighting that men may be unable to make moralistic judgements when their faculties have been compromised through alcohol. The participant appears to recognise the association between alcohol consumption and sexual coercion as the way things 'pan out' and that men may not have the cognitive resources to deny their own sexual desires. Dominant heterosex and patriarchal discourses are employed with a total lack of regard for women. Irrespective of women's ability to consent, the male desire appears to supersede this. The participant maintains that he would be able to justify his actions by any means if there were some cue of consent. The discourse of disinhibition highlights the lack of responsibility placed on men when they have been consuming alcohol.

The ability of alcohol and men's disinhibited state to absolve men of wrong doing has provided men with an excuse for their behaviour which they are able to recognise as potentially coercive, as constructed by participant 1. Men would appear to be able to justify their behaviour through their assertion that their judgement was compromised, thus employing a rape apology discourse. It is clear from the literature reviewed that women are not afforded the same justification and the full weight of responsibility is placed on women for having consumed alcohol and allowing themselves to be sexually violated (Ryan, 2011). As such men may remain blameless and guilt-free as they cannot be accused of sexual coercion. This discourse and its interaction with the male sex drive discourse suggests that despite the regret a man may feel after the sexual activity, the imperative in acquiring sex is greater than the consequential feelings thereafter.

P1: Sometimes people go [out] to find a guy, so if you're drinking for that, then obviously you don't want to be sober, well maybe some girls do, but like obviously when you're a bit more tipsy, then you have a bit more confidence. (Female FG)

P1: But like you know how when you're drunk, you're irrational, impulsive, spontaneous. (Female FG)

The participants in the female group highlighted their use of the discourse of disinhibition and the recognition that it constructs and allows women to feel more confident when dealing with men. This finding is in line with Livingston *et al.*'s (2012) study which emphasises that women need to negotiate complex expectations of being sexually available and able to excite male sexuality while maintaining their virtuous position of innocence. The use of the discourse of disinhibition may position women as more confident and may appear beneficial however this is also challenged by participant 1 through the recognition that disinhibition may lead to irrationality, impulsivity and the possible sexual risks associated with these characteristics. Women who engage in sex in an intoxicated state may appear to consent, yet may be simultaneously cognitively unable to give consent. Thus the opportunities for sexual coercion to occur are increased.

The participant makes reference to a permissive discourse in recognising that some women would go out to 'find a guy', but that the confidence required and the ability to express sexual desire and act beyond the constraints of socially sanctioned sexuality, may require the use of substances such as alcohol and may require that the women be disinhibited.

P2: I'll never sleep with a girl for the first time when she's drunk, [...] if she's suddenly sober the next morning and she's like 'actually this was a, this was a mistake', you know, fuck, ok, this is complicated now [...] like I'm going to sleep with her when I know that she wants me to sleep with her and that's got to be made in a sober state of mind as far as I'm concerned.

P1: Like how sober, like 2 glasses of wine is fine still? I mean it's diminishing returns [...] And sex with them is not going to be that much fun with them anyway.

P2: But, ja, like if they are able to hold a conversation then ja, they are sober enough that they can kind of give a, give some kind of consent that you're comfortable with. (Male FG)

The male participants additionally utilised the discourse of disinhibition by positioning women as subjects of this discourse. However the participants appear to recognise the coercive nature of engaging in sex with women who have consumed a particular amount of alcohol and who may be unable to offer genuine consent. Participant 2 asserts that he would only sexually engage with someone who wants to sleep with him, and can only make such a judgment when their cognitive faculties have not been compromised by alcohol, as this may result in possible negative ramifications. The assertion is made that one is required to be sober in order to make such a decision. As such the participants attempt to challenge the legitimacy of the discourse of disinhibition. Participant 1, then goes on to challenge this assertion and question the degree of sobriety required, potentially due to the association for young people between alcohol consumption and sex, once again relying on the discourse of



disinhibition to construct women as willing to engage sexually when drinking. Participant 1 suggests that the more sober the woman is, the more unlikely it is that she will be willing to engage in sex by claiming that there are ‘diminishing returns’ in requiring that the woman be sober. Women are constructed as less inhibited when they consume alcohol and more willing to engage sexually. Men are constructed as taking advantage of women’s vulnerability and as single-minded in their pursuit of sexual obtainment, but remain blameless as the risks of alcohol consumption are believed to be known to all and thus become the responsibility of the woman.

What is essentially described by participant 1 is an act of sexual coercion, although the participant is unable to recognise this. As such the participant uses a rape apology discourse and invokes rape myths to suggest that women are able to genuinely consent to sex regardless of the amount of alcohol they have consumed and that women become more sexually permissive when consuming alcohol (Farris *et al.*, 2008). The two participants seem to come to an agreement as to the soberness required in the assertion that sex would not be as enjoyable were she to be too intoxicated. Participant 2 asserts that the woman would need to hold a particular level of conversation that he can be satisfied with. The participant constructs himself as able to determine consent which is thus not necessarily dependent on the amount of alcohol that has been consumed and relies on a patriarchal discourse. This construction of level of soberness is still quite problematic as the woman may be sober enough to hold a conversation and engage in sex yet still be too intoxicated to make the decision to consent to sex. The male participants have taken it upon themselves to determine whether this is the case. Men exert their power in this situation without recognising the coercive nature of their behaviour.

#### 4.5.3 Discourse of sexual exchange

Research indicates that transactional sexual relationships are normative within the university context. While not always constructed as a necessity in overcoming impoverishment, it would appear that transactional relationships are engaged in for financial benefit and as a means of achieving status within one’s social group, especially with the acquisition of sought after goods (Shefer *et al.*, 2012). Transactional sex was framed negatively with women constructed as focused primarily on material goods and men as focused on the sexual aspect of the transactions. The research participants appear to utilise the discourse of sexual exchange to justify engaging sexually despite the unwillingness of the female partners. In this way sex is

constructed as a commodity and men may be exonerated of using sexually coercive practices as they may believe an exchange has been made and that they are entitled to sexual fulfilment.

P1: Money helps get the girl. (Male FG)

P1: I think sometimes you almost want to show the girl that you're a dick, [...] beautiful girls love having guys flirt with them [...] they love getting bought drinks they love these things and you don't want to fall into that trap of being just another guy buying this girl a drink who's not going to get anything. (Male FG)

The end goal of male sexuality is acquiring sex and this is constructed by the male sex drive discourse, furthermore it is constructed as something that can be bought. Through the use of the sexual exchange discourse their female partners appear to lose their identity and are merely objects to be consumed through the exchange of money or bought items. The research participants utilise this discourse to construct sex as a commodity; thus in order to 'get the girl' one needs to have money. It is however, essential that both parties understand that an exchange has been made so as to ensure that the male participant does not 'fall into that trap' of making a payment and not getting anything in return. Women are therefore constructed as devious through their recognition of the exchange and wilfully accepting/trapping men with the promise that their sexual needs will be indulged however sexual acts are then withheld. As such, the participants suggest men need to demonstrate that they will not fall victim to the exploitation of women, by showing women that they are not at the will of sexual desire and thus challenging the male sex drive discourse. Unfortunately if the employment of the sexual exchange discourse is not recognised by both parties a sexually coercive situation may result. Additionally a sexually coercive situation may arise when an individual does not feel they have any alternative but to utilise sexual exchange.

P2: Like, like sometimes in relationships you have to sacrifice, you do things that you don't necessarily want to do; like if this is going to make him happy.

P3: You know, but I think that when they do things for you it's just a means to an end they're just trying to like, you know, if this is what I have to do for her in order to get what I want then I'm going to do it.

P2: It's the same thing with the girl, if she wants that pair of shoes she's going to do it. 'Like can this guy just cum and finish like now', then she'll be done. ((laughter)) (Female FG)

P1: Is it also like [...] the cost-benefit model, like, relationships have an economic model of cost and benefits. (Female FG)

While the male participants appear to exchange particular items for sex, women use sex to achieve different ends. Sex is again constructed as a commodity with both groups acting in their own self-interest through the use of the sexual exchange discourse and there does appear

to be reciprocity between men and women. Participant 2 constructs this as a ‘sacrifice’ on the part of women with the acknowledgement that sex may represent an activity that women do not wish to engage in, but do so to ensure their partner’s happiness. Men’s satisfaction or happiness is constructed as more important than a woman’s. Furthermore, sex is constructed as unpleasurable; a tedious activity that they desire to end quickly, although they understand that sex may guarantee them a ‘pair of shoes’ and other commodities. The female participants acknowledge that relationships can be conceived of as a ‘cost-benefit model’: but when the benefits are considered to outweigh the cost of engagement, the arrangement can still be considered beneficial. Through the use of the sexual exchange discourse, women are placed in a greater position of power as gatekeepers of sexual engagement. However, when the benefits are deemed a necessity, women become subordinate to men’s will and a sexually coercive relationship is established. While consent is given and this may not be considered rape by the participants, Hakvåg (2010) would suggest that the consent provided is coerced and cannot be deemed to have been wilfully given. However recognition of this may be eliminated through the construction of an equitable exchange occurring and thus feelings of guilt are diminished.

#### 4.6 DISCOURSES OF RAPE

Over the last four decades the study of rape has received much attention with researchers investigating the attributes of victims (Brems & Wagner, 1994; Selby *et al.*, 1977), perpetrators (Grubb & Harrower, 2009; Ong & Ward, 1999), myths (Sanday, 1981), scripts, attitudes and the numerous possibilities for its occurrence. Much of the data collected in the current study reflects similar findings. Participants attempt to construct appropriate consent and means of acquiring that consent through the use of a discourse of female sexual consent as well as constructing situations of ‘real’ rape, thus distinguishing those elements which cannot be considered rape through the use of the ‘real’ rape discourse. Furthermore, a rape apology discourse is utilised to diminish occurrences of rape and further police appropriate female sexual behaviour, as well as providing justification for the act of rape.

##### 4.6.1 Discourse of female sexual consent

Discourses of female sexual consent appear to provide appropriate means of garnering genuine sexual refusal and consent from women. Discourses of consent are extremely complex and involve an interplay of a multitude of gender and sexual discourses. The

research suggests that, at times, female sexual consent is difficult for men to manage and that men may feel pressured to ensure genuine consent due to fears of engaging in sexually coercive behaviour. Despite this, male participants continue to rely on dominant gender discourses in constructing heterosexual negotiation.

P1: I mean my first serious girlfriend, you know, um, she like, the first time we had sex you know [...] it was like you know, 'should we do it?', 'are you sure?', 'are you ok?', 'is this fine with you?', and she was like 'yes, yes, yes' [...] and then we had sex then and it was like 3 months or 4 months later and then suddenly she was telling me that I was, that I pressurised her into sex, which for me kind of felt like well a) no I didn't and b) even if you do feel like that is the case now we've been dating for quite a while, why bring it up now. (Male FG)

P1: I mean like it's on what you say, it's also, it's not sexy. It kind of kills the moment when you have to go, 'don't you just want to sign this consent form', you know, it's, it's insincere [...] it does kill the mood. (Male FG)

The use of a female sexual consent discourse is utilised by participant 1 to assert that 'yes' does in fact always mean 'yes'. This discourse constructs situations in which men are required to ensure consent and it appears to suggest that women are objects as opposed to subjects in this discourse. It is clear that female consent is presented as difficult terrain to traverse as men appear to be placed in a position of not being able to determine genuine consent, even when it appears to be explicitly given. Hakvåg (2010) suggests that it is crucial that one engage in issues of consent, due to its complexity, and the recognition that women may experience false consciousness as a result of their gendered subjectivities and may not be fully able to consent.

The progressive masculinity discourse is employed to demonstrate the recognition of the need to acquire absolute consent. However, the use of the female sexual consent discourse when utilised by the participant appears to construct women as untrustworthy, and therefore needing to be asked multiple times for consent, and additionally as possibly 'crying rape' to serve their own needs. As such males are constructed as victims to false accusations and a wrongful accusation rape discourse is employed in constructing such situations.

The male participants made use of a rape apology discourses in order to minimise experiences of rape and are able to occupy an exonerated position whereby men cannot be held responsible for female deviousness (Ryan, 2011). The participant utilises a rape myth that once women enter into a relationship and choose to remain in a relationship it removes their right to feelings of violation because they have chosen to remain in the relationship and are therefore responsible for the sexual coercion experienced (Ryan, 2011).

There was a constant theme in the male focus group of acquiring consent and ‘being 100% sure’, by means of employing the progressive masculinity discourse. However, there was also an acknowledgement that acquiring female consent is ‘not sexy’ and ‘kills the mood’. Additionally acquiring female sexual consent is constructed as ‘insincere’ as it is deemed evident and unnecessary to qualify. Nonetheless, this ignores female rights to withdraw consent at any time and assumes that once explicitly given through verbal cues of ‘yes, yes, yes’, or assumed through other signals, that consent to other actions is given. The construction that consent ‘isn’t sexy’ leads one to question the apparent sexiness of forced or coerced sex.

P3: No, honestly I think it’s only rape if she say’s ‘no’ and meant it. (Female FG)

P3: But agreeing means that you’re ok with it doesn’t it?

P1: It does.

P3: I mean maybe you don’t want to, but it means that you’re like ‘ok’.

P1: You’re fine.

P3: You agree to do it, so I don’t think it’s rape. (Female FG)

P4: I think that it’s the only surety that you have is what someone says because you can’t go back and say, but say with the example of a rape, ‘but she meant yes’ because you don’t know what she meant unless she said it and even though that may not have been what she was thinking that is the only thing that you can take a person on, well besides actions. (Female, Mixed FG)

Confusion regarding rape arose within the female group and once again the female participants conceived of rape occurring when a women explicitly says ‘no’ and meant it’. Furthermore, like the male participants, the female participants understand female sexual consent as agreeing to have sex. This appears to construct distinctions between legitimate and illegitimate rape, with all instances of a woman not explicitly saying ‘no’ invalidating her claims and subjective experience of rape. This may be as a result of anti-rape campaigns that emphasise that “no means no” without any recognition for the many instances in which a woman may feel she does not have the power to say “no”. Furthermore, it is important to recognise that silence does not indicate consent. Female sexual consent is constructed as the agreeing to sex, although this calls into question a women’s ability to consent and the reason for a women to agree to engage sexually as opposed to refusing when she does not wish to have sex. Furthermore, the participants utilise rape myths that suggest that once consent has been given it cannot be withdrawn. Consenting through agreement renders particular power dynamics that may be at play invisible as well as ignores the reasons a woman may feel compelled to agree and the possibility for their inability to refuse sex. The female sexual consent discourse as employed by the research participants assumes that the power relations

between men and women are equal and that each party has the same ability to consent or withdraw that consent.

P2: To be firm about what she says, um, I think if, if you shouldn't like make it seem like, you know, he can convince you into it, you should be firm and say 'no', even your body language should say 'no' um, and then, then you've done your part cause if you, if you give him the signals and play games it just complicates things. (Female, Mixed FG)

The research participants utilise a female sexual consent discourse to construct appropriate ways to indicate one's sexual refusal such that a firm 'no' is required. Women are constructed as needing to regulate their behaviour and are cautioned against behaving or providing cues which may be conceived of as indicating sexual intent and that may be read as consent through the lens of a female sexual consent discourse. Once again, the participant highlights that consent may be provided through the body and that verbal confirmation and agreement is not necessary for a man to conceive of the consent. Interesting to note is the complete lack of apparent need for men to consent to sex through the use of dominant sexual discourses which do not appear to provide for instances in which a woman may attempt to garner consent from her male partner. Men are constructed as needing to obtain consent and women, as sexual gatekeepers, are required to regulate this process. Female sexual consent is constructed as explicit and as involving more than just verbal consent such that ones' actions need to demonstrate consent or lack thereof as well; if this does not occur things become 'complicated' and it would appear that rape myths are employed to suggest that when consent is provided non-verbally or perceived as such through a woman's apparent sexual cues and behaviour, sexual coercion or assault is justified and that a woman would be to blame for feelings of violation.

#### 4.6.2 Discourse of 'real' rape

The discourse of 'real' rape constructs prototypical scenarios for the act of rape, such that rape is confined to instances of stranger attacks, outside the home, accompanied by the use of violence and physical resistance to the attack (Mills, 2012). Belief in this discourse and its subsequent construction of rape narrows what can be conceived of as rape - this results in serious implications for women who become vulnerable to sexual aggression, yet may be unable to name their subjective experiences as such violations. The use of the 'real' rape discourse diminishes the acknowledgement for both survivors and perpetrators of rape and sexual coercion (Bouffard & Bouffard, 2011). The research participants in this study make

use of this dominant 'real' rape discourse to determine instances of rape. However, contestation and resistance is provided through the use of feminist discourses and through the acknowledgment of occurrences of rape that do not conform to the 'real' rape discourse.

P3: How do you charge someone for that though, like say for instance if the woman like 'no, I feel like I was raped' and the guy is like 'but she said ok'.

P5: And she didn't fight back.

P3: And she didn't fight back and she was like lying there.

P1: I just don't think that its rape, I'm sorry. (Female FG)

The female group participants employ a 'real' rape discourse in initially constructing scenarios which constitute rape. The participants assert that a woman is not able to be raped if she 'said ok' but rather is required to 'fight back' and not simply lie there (Ryan, 2011). The participants appear to hold that rape cannot occur if a woman appears to provide consent. This then leads to the invisibility of sexual coercion which may characterise many of the sexual violations experienced by women in South Africa and instead acts to normalise such experiences that occur within heterosexual relationships. The participants appear to construct rape in either/or terms and are uncertain as to the occurrence of other forms of sexual assault. The participants additionally utilise rape myths that suggest that a woman who does not explicitly say 'no' and does not fight her attacker is responsible for the assault. This understanding is furthered through a rape apology discourse which justifies sexual abuse by males and highlights their susceptibility to false rape accusations, and thus the grounds for 'legitimate' or 'illegitimate' rape are thereby constructed.

P1: You have to feed your dog or else it's going to go elsewhere, some woman will be like I really don't want to but I really don't want him to go eat somewhere else so I'm going to sleep with him. So can you really say that's rape? (Female FG)

The female participants highlight the need to provide sexual access to their partners so as to ensure that men do not seek such attention elsewhere. The participants employ a male sex drive discourse to suggest that men cannot control their sexual urges and that to ensure monogamy women need to cater to their sexual needs or face the consequences, such as the termination of the relationship or their partner's infidelity. The participant utilises the 'real' rape discourse in questioning the validity in considering such activity as rape as the woman has consented despite her displeasure and lack of desire for sexual engagement. While the acts described may not be considered rape, they may indicate sexual coercion. The research participants appear to lack both the vocabulary and nuanced understanding of this phenomenon to the extent that the occurrence is made invisible and degrades women's

experience of sexual coercion. Through dominant gender discourses, women are positioned as needing to meet their partner's sexual needs at their own expense.

P4: Maybe, it lies in that sense of violation, like if you feel like, I don't want to but I agreed but I still feel like, this is an intrusion on me and I'm being attacked in some way, even though I say 'ok, fine', there is still that sense that something's just not right.

P7: Well, I think that if you have sex with someone because you're scared that maybe they're going to leave you then, you know, the whole relationship is wrong anyway regardless of whether its rape or not. (Female FG)

P4: I think that in some cases, no, obviously if the guy is stronger and he can make you submit and you can't fight back then, like, but then also, that kind of, if we say stuff like that it assumes that women can refuse to be raped but then in some cases they can't like maybe with the boss who's like 'ok, like you want to keep your job' and stuff like that, she can refuse but then she can't really refuse if she really needs the job. (Female FG)

P2: Like you find that girls lose their virginity that way, they don't necessarily want to but because they know what type of person that guy is or how much power he has, they just say 'ok', they still feel as if they were raped because they didn't necessary want it, you know. (Female FG)

In attempting to further understand what constitutes rape, many of the female participants were able to resist the previously utilised 'real' rape discourses and were able to broaden their construction of rape to include more subtle forms of sexual violence through the use of a sexual coercion discourse. Here the power differential between the sexes, as well as particular hierarchical structures, were highlighted. Sexual coercion is constructed as resulting from situations that would bring about negative consequences for women who refuse the sexual advances of men. The conceptualisation of sexual assault as falling along a continuum may be invoked whereby lack of consent may be understood as rape and incidences that involve agreement but an unwillingness to participate may be understood as sexual coercion. Sexual coercion then involves a lack of choice or lack of alternative options for women as highlighted by the participants. Participant 4 challenges the other participants' constructs of rape to suggest that rape may be defined by the subjective experience of violation that may result, despite apparent consent. The participant constructs a scenario in which a woman may subjectively feel that 'something's just not right', thereby broadening the possibilities for the conception of rape and sexual coercion. In so doing the participants open up possibilities for greater understanding of sexual coercion and in so doing may recognise and challenge its occurrence.

Despite this previous construction, participant 7 reverts back to the use of a rape myth by asserting that there is something wrong with a woman who will remain in a relationship and consent to unwanted sex. As such the claim of rape becomes void as it is the woman's choice to remain in the relationship, and there is a lack of acknowledgement of the many reasons why a woman would remain in such a relationship, such as economic security. This



understanding is strongly embedded within a patriarchal discourse of male dominance which remains uncontested by the focus group participants.

#### 4.6.3 Rape apology discourse

A rape apology discourse acts to diminish constructions of rape and provide justifications against its occurrence. Rape apology discourses function simultaneously with rape myths and influence attitudes regarding legitimate victim/survivors and perpetrators. Rape apology discourses allow for the acceptance and justification of rape and sexual coercion as victims are constructed as the cause of their own victimisation. As such they identify instances of inferred or implied consent as well as ensuring that submission is typically understood as consent, thereby absolving perpetrators of any wrong-doing (Mills, 2010). Rape apology discourses were evident in the talk of both male and female university students. However, the discourses were not accepted by several of the participants who vehemently attempted to challenge the oppressive nature of these discourses in regulating women's movement, behaviour and dress and which exonerate perpetrators.

Q: Ok, and do women have any responsibility?

P2: No

P3: They should though

P7: I really don't think that, because [...] I mean I really don't think that any behaviour that a girl is doing should warrant rape, like I really don't, so I do think it's the man's responsibility, I mean as a girl I suppose we just check our behaviour but I don't think that anything would warrant rape.

P3: But I guess now, in society we just kind of feel like ok, that there are certain things we have to do just to make sure that we don't make the guy think we want it, you know, it shouldn't be like that but that's just how it is and as girls we just know that there are just some things you should not do, just in case you send off the wrong kind of messages. (Female FG)

Within the female group disagreement arose with regard to the responsibility of women in incidences of rape. Particular members of the group utilised rape apology discourses in their construction of victim/survivors with the acknowledgement that it is their behaviour that may be to blame. As such the participants suggest that women need to take responsibility for their actions (Mills, 2010). However, these constructions are challenged by participants 7 and 3 who assert that men are responsible for rape, yet in so doing, the participants highlight the need for women to protect themselves against such abuses by means of their behaviour. There is a need to 'check our behaviour' which affirms that there are particular types of behaviour or dress that may result in rape. The participants employ rape apology discourses that maintain that rape is motivated by sexual desire and influenced by how a woman looks or acts. Despite the participants attempt at challenging such discourses, their talk serves to

reinforce them, thus positioning women as having a responsibility in preventing such acts and regulating their movement and choices within society.

P6: I think your responsibility as a women is to not to put yourself in that situations as much as you can, as in don't go walking around the street in like the tiny skirt at like 2 in the morning. (Female, Mixed FG)

P2: See now I disagree with that [...] If we're going to accept that, um, that responsibility for the girls then we might as well say they mustn't smile to guys, they mustn't speak to anyone, they mustn't go outdoors because you know. Then we can take it to that for girls living their own lives, it starts with the misconception that wearing a short skirt is an invite, because you are not wearing it to get guys, you are wearing it because you like your short skirt and you wanna wear it; you should be able to wear it without being disrespected. (Female, Mixed FG)

P1: But at the same time I do get her point about walking around at night [...] like to some guys like walking the streets at night like wearing is like, you know, it's like you are inviting them, you want this thing. (Male, Mixed FG)

Again within the mixed focus group, a rape apology discourse is utilised in regulating women's actions, and the participants appear to position women as responsible for their assault (Ryan, 2011). Women who wear short skirts and go out late at night are constructed as deviating from appropriate female behaviour. A just world discourse is employed in maintaining that deviance begets punishment. A 'real' rape discourse additionally appears to be utilised in suggesting that rape occurs at night, outside and is perpetrated by an unknown attacker. This is then immediately challenged by employing feminist discourses which exonerate women of any responsibility and highlights their right to move freely within society, just as men are able to. The sexist nature of rape apology discourses is disguised by an apparent acknowledgement that they are employed for the protection of women and to ensure their safety from assault. The group participants struggle to resolve the disagreement and appear uncomfortable with fully challenging particular dominant beliefs. This highlights the power associated with the use of dominant discourses which invalidate and disempower the utilisation of counter-discourses. Through the employment of a feminist discourse, the participant attempts to empower women and reject the policing of female behaviour, additionally the participants attempts to expand notions of rape and acknowledges that anything may be used as justification for violating women.

P1: I mean let's be honest, I wouldn't know, because I've never been a woman in this society, but for a woman in a society where there are certain values and a woman has to act in a certain way and, I mean, they have hormones and urges just as much as we do, so it's nice to have an excuse, but at the same time, you know, you don't want them to have that excuse if they're going to be using it against you. (Male FG)

The occurrence of rape appears to be conceived of as a result of the nature of modern society and women's rejection of stereotypical feminine behaviour. Through this construction the participant appears to challenge dominant rape myths however continues to suggest that rape

is inevitable and resistance against it is thus futile without the regulation of women. Participant 1 utilises a progressive masculinity discourse in recognising the expectations and 'values' placed on women which serve to regulate their movement. He then uses a permissive discourse to highlight that women have sexual urges, as men do. As such the participant suggests that accusations of rape may be utilised by women as an 'excuse' so that they are able to maintain their social desirability through their innocence. The participant utilises a rape apology discourse which suggests that men suffer false rape accusations and constructs women as deceitful and serving their own interests in acquiring sex while maintaining their respectability. Participant 1 identifies the sexual double standard inherent in the dominant discourses of heterosex but is unable to challenge the limitation that it places on women and thus is unable to conceive of a situation in which a woman may resist normative conventions without invoking rape.

#### 4.7 CONCLUSION

The construction of sexual coercion is contextually situated and achieved through the interaction of multiple dominant and alternative discourses and can therefore not be understood in a singular fashion. It is important to recognise that many of the discourses are referent and multiple discourses are employed simultaneously. As such difficulty arose in making clear distinctions of both themes and subthemes and a degree of overlap is to be expected as discourses do not function in isolation – instead discourses intersect to bring about particular understandings and ways of being; providing the particular positions to be taken up as well as allowing for the particular actions which may be enacted. As such this chapter has attempted to show how, through the talk of young university students regarding intimate relationships, sexual coercion may be constructed and contested through both dominant gender discourses and resistant discourses. The findings in this study align with both local and international findings and may indicate why social attempts to develop improved awareness have had a limited impact on participants. The participants in this study appear to conform to dominant gender discourses and constructions of male and female sexuality, such that the association between gender and sexual coercion is highlighted and constructed as normative. However, resistance is offered in the form of the progressive masculinity discourse which recognises the need for gender equality and the need to resist sexually coercive practices. Finally, the research suggests that the participants maintain a limited construction of both rape and sexual coercion which appears to render invisible the

majority of sexually coercive experiences to the extent that these cannot be challenged. The aim of the research has been achieved through the use of a critical approach to discourse analysis (Willig, 2008). The following chapter will provide a summary of findings presented here as well as examine the limitations of the study and highlight directions for future research and application.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This research sought to explore the talk of young male and female students with regard to sexual relationships and the dynamics which arise within such relationships. Furthermore, the researcher intended to critically examine the discourses utilised by the students in constructions of sexual coercion. Three focus groups were conducted, consisting of eight participants in each group, and lasting between 60 – 90 minutes. From this data several broad themes were extracted and analysed, the results of which are presented in Chapter Four. This chapter provides an overall summary of the findings and attempts to address the research questions posed at the outset of the study. Additionally, the study is evaluated by means of exploring the limitations to the research. The chapter is concluded with possible recommendations and further areas of research for future analysis.

#### 5.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Men and women employ particular dominant discourses when interacting socially and sexually (Littleton *et al.*, 2009; Muehlenhard & Rodgers, 1998; Ryan, 2011). Dominant gender discourses are understood to construct what it means to be male and female when engaging sexually and what can be achieved by assuming a particular subject or object position. Additionally, one's subjective experience as a man or woman is influenced by the position afforded through the utilisation of particular discourse. Research indicates that the performance of these dominant discourses serve to regulate both male and female behaviour (Butler, 1990). The research participants relied heavily on dominant gender and sexual discourses in demonstrating their understanding and possible subjective experience in engaging with their sexual partners. Additionally the association between normative sexual practices and sexual violence was highlighted in the talk of the participants, which confirms previous studies, as they demonstrated their difficulty in distinguishing sexually coercive situations and showed limited resistance to the dominant discourses utilised.

Men were predominantly constructed through the use of the male sex drive discourse by both the male and female participants. As such, they were afforded a dominant position relative to

their female counterparts and were constructed as driven by a biological imperative to achieve sexual gratification (Gilbert *et al.*, 1999). Male sexuality was constructed as uncontrollable and requiring satiation as well as single-minded in achieving its objective of acquiring sex. Additionally, men were constructed as irrational when governed by the male sex organ. The male sex drive discourse finds its existence through dominant patriarchal discourses which emphasises male dominance and enforces structural and ideological inequality. Furthermore, this dominant discourse provides justification for male sexual aggression and removes feelings of guilt associated with sexual violence perpetrated against women.

When utilised by the female participants, the male sex drive discourse constructed men as 'pathetic' as a result of their inability to control themselves. As such, women may be constructed as superior to their counterparts as they appear to have greater control of their sexual desire. A permissive discourse was utilised by several male and female participants to resist dominant gender discourse and while this discourse remained marginalised it may be utilised in creating sites of transformation and recognition of female sexual agency and desire.

In recognising the sexist nature of the dominant discourses employed, several male participants utilised the progressive masculinity discourse to distance themselves from thoughtless men. This discourse serves to construct men as progressive in their understanding of unequal power relations, and the need therefore to acquire un-coerced sexual consent. The progressive masculinity discourse resists the male sex drive discourse as well as that of the sexual double standard. As such, men have now been constructed as able to control their sexual impulses and are able to recognise female sexual agency. Additionally, the progressive masculinity discourse may be utilised to challenge hegemonic constructions of masculinity as men are constructed as desiring commitment and relationships as opposed to casual sexual encounters. The use of this discourse provides spaces for the acknowledgement of female sexual desire; however, it may also serve to render the dominant discourse invisible and to alleviate male subjective feelings of guilt associated with sexist ideology.

There was only limited recognition from the female participants regarding female sexual desire, as highlighted by previous research, while this discourse was not taken up by the majority of participants it emphasises the potential for change and opportunities for intervention. The participants showed adherence to the dominant gender discourse which

constructed female sexuality as reactive and limited. A woman's respectability appears to be associated with 'purity' and her ability to ward off male sexual advances; thus finding its existence primarily in the presence of male sexual desire.

Dominant gender discourses maintain that males are required to be active in their pursuit of female partners and this was evident within the research. Men were constructed as sexual initiators while females were relegated into submissive and sexually passive positions, although acting as gatekeepers to sexual access. Women are then positioned as objects to male initiation and are limited in their ability to actively seek out sexual encounters. However, attempts were made by the research participants to challenge the male sexual initiation discourse, through the use of a permissive discourse.

The male participants further attempted to challenge dominant gender discourse through the use of the mutuality of sexual initiation discourse. This was not reflected in the female group and may potentially be missing from their experience of intimate relationships. The male participants assert that there is a common understanding between men and women who rely on dominant sexual discourse to provide guidelines for appropriate interaction. This may lead men to believe that their partners are sexually desiring, whereas the female partners suggest that it is crucial to wait for their male partners to indicate their intent and desire so as to activate female desire. The mutuality of sexual initiation discourse appears to provide opportunities for sexually coercive interactions as the need for verbally communicating one's intent is removed. It would appear that the use of the mutuality of sexual initiation discourse diminishes the full responsibility placed on men to initiate sex.

Research suggests that seduction discourses construct situations that may be considered coercive and share a striking resemblance to acquaintance rape scenarios (Ryan, 2011). There was a clear avoidance of the use of a persuasion discourse, constructed as dangerous and akin to manipulative coercion of an unwilling partner. The use of a seduction discourse appeared to alleviate the negative connotations associated with acquiring consent from an unwilling partner. Sexual coercion research highlights that the seduction discourse maintains that women require persuasion before sexual engagement and that it is the male partner's responsibility to introduce persuasion into the interaction. Men are therefore positioned as having the power to determine a woman's desire, while women are constructed as denying their desire and requiring a male to validate it. Through recognising men's apparent need to persuade their partners, additional space for sexual coercion to occur within intimate

interactions becomes apparent. In constructing such behaviour as seduction as opposed to persuasion, the male participants are able to avoid engaging in discourses of sexual coercion and their implication in such acts. There is no recognition of the power differentials experienced by women and their possible feelings of being unable to resist 'seduction' or persuasion within dominant sexual discourses which suggest that women need to be available and able to meet their male partner's needs.

The negotiation of heterosex appears to be facilitated through dominant discourses of sexual refusal such as the token resistance discourse which dictates how appropriate sexual refusal is achieved. Token resistance, the refusal of sex despite one's desire to engage (Muehlenhard & Rogers, 1998), was identified by each group. The participants suggested that the employment of the token resistance discourse allowed women to adhere to appropriate female sex roles as those who engaged in sexual activity were constructed as deviant and pathologised. This construction is a result of the sexual double standard discourse. The participants suggest that there is an imperative for women to say 'no' and to refuse sexual advances. This serves to deny female sexual agency and desire, thereby constraining their behaviour in sexual encounters and subjecting women to male domination. Through the dominant nature of this discourse, it is suggested that men may interpret sexual refusal as a token response and may engage in sexually coercive practices. However, as Farris *et al.* (2008) suggests, it is not the misconstruing of female sexual refusal or intent that results in sexually aggressive behaviour, but rather that this is used for later justification of such behaviour.

Much like the token resistance discourse, the sexual refusal as game play discourse was utilised by each group and game play was constructed as normative within intimate relationships. The use of this discourse appears to allow women to meet dominant femininity constructions of the need to entice male sexuality. There was acknowledgement by both the male and female participants that there are those who 'do not know' the rules of the games being played which may result in 'mistakes', although this was not solely males' responsibility. As such, the participants suggested that women provide inappropriate sexual intent cues which the female participants reinforced and cautioned women against.

The use of the sexual refusal as game play was constructed as a dominant discourse believed to be understood by all such that individuals do not necessarily need to make their sexual intentions explicitly known. Thus female sexual refusal is undermined and its construction as a game is normalised. The male participants appear to suggest that women are sometimes



unwilling to acknowledge the game they are enacting and require male intervention to recognise their desire. Furthermore, men are constructed as able to differentiate genuine sexual refusal from that of game play, and as able to determine the extent of female sexual desire. Thus men appear able to negate a women's sexual refusal and her consent. As such, the research would suggest that men are able to deny the occurrence of sexual coercion and may relieve any feelings of guilt that may be associated with that. A progressive masculinity discourse was utilised to challenge the dominant nature of this discourse through the recognition of the power imbalances between men and women and that a 'no' may indicate genuine sexual refusal.

Both the male and female participants identified means of facilitating sexual activity which may be construed as sexually coercive and recognised as reducing male feelings of responsibility or culpability. The participants were unable to recognise the activities as potentially coercive and thus did not label the identified behaviours as such. This is aligned with international studies that suggest that more individuals admit to experiences of sexual coercion than do people who admit to performing such acts (Struckman-Johnson *et al.*, 2003). It is suggested that through this lack of acknowledgement, individuals may be able to remove feelings of guilt associated with sexually coercive behaviour. The behaviours revealed by the research participants include the use of deceit, disinhibition and sexual exchange.

Research participants suggest that men utilise deceit to obtain sexual engagement. However, the male participants suggest that this is as a result of their feelings of insecurity and possibly the need to meet hegemonic masculinity ideals of acquiring sexual partners, which appears otherwise unattainable. Men construct women as superficial and desiring of an ideal man and thus require deceitful practices to entice them. As such, it is women who are constructed as blameworthy in setting unattainable expectations of men. When the discourse of deceit is utilised by the female participants, they construct women as gullible and thus attempt to distance themselves from women who would succumb to this deceit.

The male research participants did not appear to recognise the danger in utilising this discourse nor its implication for sexual coercion, as one is unable to give wilful consent based on embellished facts. The pressures and harmful nature of patriarchy in setting unrealistic masculinity expectations for men becomes evident through the assertion that the participants may be undesirable to women. As suggested by literature, the majority of men do not conform to hegemonic masculinity, even though it remains the ideal.

Alcohol use was also identified as used by both men and women to facilitate sexual encounters. Through the discourse of disinhibition it is suggested that initiating sexual activity can be anxiety provoking and that both men and women are constructed as more confident when they have been drinking. Previous research has highlighted the association between alcohol consumption and sexual coercion (Struckman-Johnson *et al.*, 2003). The research participants appear to suggest that alcohol is utilised to manage the complex expectations reinforced by dominant discourses and allows both men and women to assume socially appropriate gender roles and to rely on their disinhibited state as justification for their behaviour.

This discourse was challenged through the progressive masculinity discourse and the assertion by the male participants that men needed to ensure that women were able to consent if they had been drinking because of the possible sexual coercion that may result. However, this was not taken up by all of the male participants who suggested that the greater the inebriation, the greater the chances of sexual activity occurring. The ability of alcohol and men's disinhibited state to absolve men of wrong doing has provided men with an excuse for their behaviour which they are able to recognise as potentially coercive.

It is suggested by the participants that a discourse of sexual exchange is utilised and is constructed as normative within intimate relationships. The research participants appear to utilise the discourse of sexual exchange to justify sexual engagement despite the unwillingness of the female partner. In this way, sex is constructed as a commodity and men may be exonerated of using sexually coercive practices as they may believe an exchange has been made: and thus they are entitled to sexual fulfilment. Unfortunately it would appear that the majority of research participants are unable to recognise the unequal power within the sexual exchange situation and suggest that the exchange is wilfully and equitably made. It is crucial to recognise the potential for sexually coercive situations to arise when sex is constructed as a commodity and sexual exchange constructed as the only option.

The participants made use of the 'real' rape discourse to discern legitimate instances of rape which was constructed as requiring that a woman fight back and not provide initial agreement to sex. As such, it appears that the majority of participants construct rape in either/or terms. This discourse constructs rape along narrow lines and thus limits what can be conceived of as rape as well as sexual coercion. Many of the research participants appear to lack both the

vocabulary and nuanced understanding of this phenomenon to the extent that the occurrence is made invisible and degrades women's experience of sexual coercion.

Some female participants attempted to resist the 'real' rape discourse through the use of a sexual coercion discourse which conceived of sexual violence in broader terms and appears to provide potential spaces for challenging dominant constructions of rape and sexual coercion. As such the probability for change is enhanced.

The participants' difficulty in accurately conceptualising sexual coercion and rape was further highlighted through the use of the female sexual consent discourse and the rape apology discourse. Consent was constructed as extremely complex. When the discourse was utilised by the participants, it appeared to provide appropriate means of garnering genuine sexual refusal. Through the use of rape apology discourses participants were able to justify the occurrence of sexual violence and reduce the need for explicit consent. There was, however, resistance to dominant constructions of rape and the use of rape myths through the employment of feminist discourses which acknowledged women's rights to sexual freedom and bodily autonomy as well as the progressive masculinity discourse which highlighted the need for obtaining un-coerced consent. This was however, contested by male participants who constructed the acquisition of consent as unsexy and unnecessary as reliance on the dominant discourse ensures that both parties understand the interaction. Although, this does not take into account the power imbalance between men and women and allows for situations in which sexual coercion may occur.

### 5.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

While the three focus groups yielded sufficient enough data to address the aims of the research, it is probable that a range of differing and more varied themes and discourses are likely to have emerged with a larger, more diverse population. All participants were humanities students completing courses in psychology. As such the findings of this study cannot be generalised to more diverse samples. Additionally recruiting male participants proved difficult, possibly due to the research focus and male participants' difficulty in discussing this topic with a female facilitator. The male participants who did choose to join the focus groups may potentially represent a particular type of participant. As such a more

diverse male population, which includes those who had been unwilling to participate may have yielded differing and a wider variety of themes and discourses.

Additionally, given the topic at hand and the nature of dominant gender discourse a possible limitation may be presented in the participants need to conform to gender norms. Thus there may have been a hindering effect as participants attempted to ensure their acceptance within the group by means of their acceptance or resistance to discourses presented.

A further limitation of this study is concerned with the use of discourse analysis as the methodological approach. Discourse analysis maintains that knowledge and the reality it constructs is never static and thus changes contextually. As such, the findings of this study can never be conceived of as truth and remain open to varying interpretation, critique and negotiation.

#### 5.4 IMPLICATIONS AND AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The findings of this study have provided greater insights into heterosexual negotiation and understandings of sexual coercion in the talk of young urban university students and imply several areas for future research. South Africa is incredibly diverse across race, class and culture. As such the complex phenomenon of sexual coercion may vary according to specific and largely subjective understandings or perspectives within different groups. It would be advantageous to undertake a wider exploration of this phenomenon as it is subjectively experienced within these groups. Much of the literature reviewed was based on university samples with a background in psychology, along with this study, and this is recognised as a limitation.

This study did not address sexual coercion directly and attempted instead to determine its occurrence within the sexual relationship talk of young students. In so doing, this study revealed the limited constructions of sexual coercion available to the participants, many of whom were unable to identify situations as sexually coercive. With this in mind, the research implies the potential for research into the various manifestations of sexual coercion, persuasion, economic coercion, arousal, verbal coercion and physical force, so as to address specific forms and the understanding of such for participants

With the recognition of the individual's inability to identify sexual coercion it may be of benefit to explore the role of societal influences and institutions in facilitating the normalisation of sexual coercion through, for example, school, families and so forth.

The research findings revealed that female sexual consent was constructed as a very difficult phenomenon to understand and thus guarantee. It was constructed with much confusion, especially as to what constitutes consent whether verbal or non-verbal. This was heavily influenced by dominant gender discourse and apparent appropriate masculine and feminine behaviour as well as dominant rape myths. It would appear crucial that greater investigation into young peoples' understanding of consent be explored so as to further address understandings of sexual coercion and the perpetration of unwilling sex.

Interestingly there was no reference to male victims of sexual violence nor means through which this may be achieved by women. Even so, the literature suggests that women do in fact utilise post-sexual refusal tactics to initiate sex, despite the recognition that men report experiencing far less sexual coercion than their female counterparts. It would appear crucial to determine the extent to which men do experience sexual coercion and how such experiences are conceived and the subsequent subjective reality that is created regarding such experiences.

An additional area for future research would be research into the constructions of sexual coercion within homosexual relationships with the recognition that the majority of research has focused predominantly on heterosexual. Research indicates that there are changes within sexual relations and that non-nuclear relations and families will soon be the norm and it would be crucial to determine the implications of dominant discourse on homosexual sexuality negotiation.

This research has achieved its post-structuralist aim of knowledge generation and may potentially be utilised in developing university-based interventions which seek to highlight positive female sexuality; challenge hegemonic masculinity through advancing the progressive masculinity and finally informing interventions which address young people's understanding of consent and sexual exchange.

## 5.5 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the aim of this research was to investigate the discourses employed by young heterosexual male and female university students in the constructions of sexual coercion within the context of focus group discussions. Talk was elicited through a semi-structured interview schedule that included questions regarding intimate relationships, the dynamics that arise within such relationships, and sexual engagement. This study has achieved the illumination of the dominant discourses utilised by the participants in conceiving of sexual relationships and their association with, and implication for, sexually coercive practices. Additionally, the study has presented those discourses used to resist dominant discourse. The findings of this study are aligned with both international and local studies. The research suggests that dominant gender discourses are highly influential in shaping young peoples' understandings of sexual negotiation and it would appear that the participants construct sexually coercive relationships as normative. Resistance was presented by some of the male participants in the form of the progressive masculinity discourse which acted to challenge hegemonic masculinity by recognising the need for equality. While the female participants challenged dominant constructions of female sexuality, 'real' rape discourses and the sexual double standard. Challenges to dominant discourse remained marginal however suggest the potential for change and resistant. Finally, the most significant finding is the apparent inability of the majority of research participants to identify more subtle forms of sexual coercion and the difficulty they demonstrated in accurate conceptualisation of acts of rape. Through the intersection of discourse, the research participants construct an environment in which the occurrence of sexual coercion is normative and rife, although it is largely made invisible and never fully acknowledged. With the limitations of this study in mind, the research thus provides a platform for future research and application.

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## APPENDIX I: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION FORM



Good day,

My name is Lauren Gmeiner, and I am conducting research for the purposes of obtaining a Master's degree in Community-Based Counselling Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand. I shall be conducting several focus groups so as to explore young men and women's thoughts, beliefs and understandings about relationships and the possible dynamics that arise out of them, including the topic of sex. Therefore, I would like to invite you to participate in this research which will require your participation in a focus group of approximately 90 minutes in duration.

Participation in this research project is entirely voluntary. You may also choose to withdraw from the study at any time you so wish, without prejudice. Furthermore, you have the right to not answer any question that you do not feel comfortable answering. There are no direct benefits to participating in this study and no risks are predicted. However, if you experience any distress during or subsequent to the focus group contact details for free counselling services at the Counselling and Careers Development Unit (CCDU) situated on WITS campus will be provided.

I would like to assure you that your identity will remain confidential and all identifiable information will be removed, in addition, a false name will be used to guarantee that you cannot be identified from the report. Unfortunately, due to the nature of focus groups I will not be able to ensure you anonymity especially if there is familiarity with other members of the focus group; however the confidential nature of the research will be addressed at the start of the focus group.

With your consent, the focus groups will be audio recorded. Only my research supervisor and I will have access to these audio files which will be stored securely with restricted access at the University of the Witwatersrand, for the duration of the research and destroyed once the



research report has been evaluated. The transcriptions will be securely stored at the University of the Witwatersrand for an additional 5 years after the research has been completed, however, only the researcher and supervisor will have access to this data.

This research will be presented as a research report and published research articles. If you would like a brief summary of the report, one will be provided to you upon request. Your participation in this study is highly valued and your contribution will significantly contribute to knowledge generation in this area.

If you are in agreement with the terms stipulated above please will you indicate this by signing the attached consent forms.

Yours sincerely,

Lauren Gmeiner, Researcher (072 997 2993)  
lauren.gmeiner@gmail.com

Prof. Garth Stevens, Supervisor (011 717 4535)  
Garth.Stevens@wits.ac.za

Counselling and Careers Development Unit (011 717 9140)

APPENDIX II: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM



University of the Witwatersrand

School of Human & Community Development

AGREEMENT BETWEEN STUDENT RESEARCHER AND RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

I (participant's name) \_\_\_\_\_, have read the participant information form and consent to participate in the research project of Lauren Gmeiner on university students' talk regarding relationships and the dynamics that arise within them.

I understand that:

1. The researcher is a student conducting the research as part of the requirements for a Community-Based Counselling Psychology Masters degree at the University of Witwatersrand.
2. My participation will involve a 60 - 90 minute focus group, and a brief summary of the final project will be available if I so request.
3. If I am asked to answer questions of a personal nature, I may choose not to answer any questions about aspects of my life which I am not willing to disclose.
4. I am invited to voice to the researcher any concerns I have about my participation in the study and to have these addressed to my satisfaction.
5. I am free to withdraw from the study at any time and will not be prejudiced in any way because of this.
6. The report on the project may contain information about my personal experiences, attitudes and behaviours, as well as direct quotes, but that the report will be designed in such a way that it will not be possible to be identified by the general reader.
7. There are no foreseen risks or benefits to participating in this research study.

Participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Signed on (Date): \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher: \_\_\_\_\_ Witness: \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX III: AUDIO-RECORDING CONSENT FORM



University of Witwatersrand

School of Human & Community Development

AGREEMENT BETWEEN STUDENT RESEARCHER AND RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

I (participant's name) \_\_\_\_\_, have read the participant information form and consent to having the focus group audio-recorded.

I understand that:

1. Only the researcher and the researcher's supervisor will have access to the audio files and transcripts.
2. All audio-recordings will be destroyed once the research project has been examined.
3. Transcription will be secured at the University of the Witwatersrand for the duration of the research and held for 5 additional years once the research has been completed with only the researcher and researcher's supervisor having access to this information.
4. All identifiable information will be removed and a fake name will be used throughout the project so that responses remain confidential.
5. I will allow for the use of direct quotes in the research report
6. I am aware that anonymity cannot be guaranteed owing to the face-to-face nature of focus groups.

Participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Signed on (Date): \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher: \_\_\_\_\_ Witness: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX IV: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

### 1. Scripting – dating and sexual scripts

- 1.1 As a single man/woman, what would a typical evening out consist of?
- 1.2 How do you go about meeting members of the opposite sex?
- 1.3 How long do you believe someone should wait before engaging sexually with an intimate partner?
- 1.4 How is sex negotiated between partners and by whom?

### 2. Manhood/womanhood?

- 2.1 What do you believe sexuality to be?
- 2.2 Are there differences in sexuality between the sexes, and if so what are they?
- 2.3 Where do these ideas come from?
- 2.4 What does this mean for relationships?
- 2.5 What does this mean for sexual relationships?

### 3. Experiences of token resistance

- 3.1 Why do think people say “no” when they really wanted to have sex?
- 3.2 How do you know when “no means no”?
- 3.3 How do you think it may be different in a relationship?

### 4. Sexual Coercion

- 4.1 Do people ever persuade our partners to have sex, even when they don't want to?
- 4.2 What kinds of things/strategies are used to persuade their partners?
- 4.3 When does rape happen?
- 4.4 Why does rape happen?
- 4.5 What is a woman's role with regard to rape?
- 4.6 What is a man's role with regard to rape?

## APPENDIX V: TRANSCRIPTION NOTATION

(.) – Pause

(( )) – Action by participant

( ) – Words inaudible on transcription tape

[. . .] – Words omitted