Hughes Hall
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‘Exploring Relationships’: A Study of Young People’s (Hetero)sexual subjectivities, Knowledge and Practices.

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Dissertation Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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In acknowledgement of two very special people, this thesis is dedicated to

Lorraine and Bob

....the wind beneath my wings.
Declaration

This thesis describes research undertaken at the University of Cambridge School of Education between October 1996 and December 1999. The data, analysis and conclusions are the result of my own work and include nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration. No part of this thesis has been submitted for any other degree, diploma or other qualification at this or any other university. Specific acknowledgement has been made in the text where I have drawn upon the work of others. The length of this thesis, excluding the footnotes and bibliography is approximately 80,000 words.

Louria Allen
Acknowledgements

This study would not have been possible without the financial support from the Health Research Council of New Zealand to whom I will be eternally grateful for their faith in me.

I could not have wished for two more expert and respected women academics to light my way than my supervisors Madeleine Arnot and Sue Middleton. Thank you Madeleine for your sharp analysis of my work, your time, energy and unfailing support. Many thanks also to Sue for your great ideas, time and academic/general encouragement during my fieldwork.

Through the tunnels and turns of this research I have encountered people whose dedication to sexuality education and professionalism has greatly impressed me, Sally Hughes you are one of these people whose wisdom has been invaluable.

Although I would like to name them individually ethical regulations dictate I cannot. Collectively then, I wish to thank all those energetic teachers and community training facilitators whose interest in my work enabled me to recruit a sample. Your commitment to your students/trainees reveals you are truly super human!

This research could not have been undertaken without the participation of the young people with whom I came into contact. This research is for you. For those who took part in the individual and couple interviews I would like to extend a special thank you for your candid responses, your time and your humour.

I also extend a special thank you to George Tuaine, who very kindly gave his expertise in deciphering Maori iwi affiliations in the sample. I heard your karakia George. Thank you also to Megan Tunks who generously gave up her time to review some of my research methods.

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Without the network of my 'league of nations' friends this process would have been much harder. Your friendship is treasured - Fatuma, Panos, Robert, David, Inde, Ben, Trish, Yun-Shun, Eric, Patrick and Antonia.

Words are not enough to thank you Andrew for your strength and love which has sustained me throughout the past 3 years - you are precious.
Abstract

The objective of this research is to examine the relationships between young people's sexual knowledge, sexual subjectivities and (hetero)sexual practices. It also aims to investigate how young people's articulation and experiences of their sexual knowledge, subjectivities and practices are gendered. A further goal is to re-examine what is theorised as a 'gap' between young people's knowledge and practice.

The research sample consists of 515 New Zealanders aged 17-19 years drawn from schools and community training programmes within the Auckland and Hamilton regions. A feminist research methodology is employed utilising a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods in order to explore different narratives produced in diverse research contexts. These contexts include 17 focus groups, 12 individual interviews, 6 couple's engaging in a specially designed 'activity', and the distribution of 411 questionnaires.

Contribution is made to the literature on sexuality education by re-visiting the 'gap equation' so that primacy is given to young people's own construction of the concepts of 'knowledge' and 'practice' and the perceived relationships between them. The research methods employed afford young people agency by enabling them to review this 'gap' from their own perspective. Young people's agency is also revealed by in-depth exploration of their sexual subjectivities and particularly how their subjectivities are constituted through dominant discourses of heterosexuality. How alternative sexual subject positions are negotiated by young people, and the contexts and factors which make this possible, are also investigated.

The research extends our understanding of sexual subjectivity by taking account of young people's 'materiality', as it is expressed in their talk about their experience of their bodies in relation to sexuality. The research thus reveals how the processes of embodiment and disembodiment are experienced differently by young men and women and identifies another bodily state known as dys-embodiment. The gendered nature of these corporeal states are explained through use of the concept of the 'imaginary body'.

On the basis of the sample, the findings suggest there is a difference between young people's construction of sexual knowledge and how it has been conceptualised by sexuality educators and academics. Young people's gendered relationships to knowledge and the implications these have for their (hetero)sexual practice are described. Subjects in this study talk about knowledge in two ways; as information derived from secondary sources such as sexuality education and knowledge gleaned from personal sexual experience. Hierarchies can be seen within and between such types of sexual knowledge in terms of the status young people afford, and interest they display, in them.

Sexual practice as conceptualised by young people appears not to simply involve 'correct' sexual behaviour and safer sex practices, but also a 'discourse of erotics'. The research illustrates this discourse by exploring what young people do and do not find pleasurable about sexual activity, along with details about their relationships. The 'sexualisation' of power within the context of a couple relationship is described and an analytic framework which traces 'equal', 'mediated' and 'coercive' power is devised.

Such findings have important ramifications for the future design of sexuality education programmes. They point to the need for further exploration of how such insights about sexual knowledge, subjectivities and practices might be translated into effective sexuality education programme design.
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Key For Contextualising Subjects

Type of Method

FG = Focus Group
II = Individual Interview
CA = Couple Activity
Q = Questionnaire

At School or Not At School Subject

AS = Subject is still at school at the time of the research
NAS = Subject is no longer at school at the time of the research

Age of Subject

17 = 17 years
18 = 18 years
19 = 19 years
mixed = Subjects whose ages are mixed but between 17-19 years old

Format throughout research

Example: (II, NAS, 18)

Source of narrative is the Individual interview.
The subject is no longer at school at the time of the research.
They are 18 years of age.
PART ONE

CONTEXTUALISING THE STUDY
PART ONE

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Chapter One

Contexts and Directions

1.0 Introduction

Many global problems such as the spread of deadly diseases such as HIV/AIDS\(^1\) to the economic and social problems that arise from unplanned pregnancy are seen to stem from issues of sexuality. The World Health Organisation has stressed the role of sex education in global development, calling for sex education in all schools as a legal requirement (WHO, 1984). Each country has responded to this directive differently, with some countries finding themselves in better circumstances to implement sexuality education programmes than others. The effectiveness of these programmes has hinged on the structure and approach of the national education system, its curricular and provision and the difficulties of incorporating diverse cultural practices in its implementation\(^2\). Because of economic recession, social/political turmoil\(^3\) as well as moral and cultural opposition in some countries, the comprehensive incorporation of sexuality education in the school curriculum has been uneven\(^4\). Subsequently the issue of programme inclusion and implementation is of continuing policy concern in these countries.

In nations like Britain, Australia and New Zealand, there is less of a problem introducing sexuality programmes into the school curriculum\(^5\) and more

---

\(^1\) The World Health Organisation and the U.S Centre for Disease control estimated that the number of AIDS cases worldwide is around 1.5 million (WHO, 1993).


\(^3\) Zarakhovich (1999) for example explores problems with implementing sexuality education in Russia.

\(^4\) Few countries have made sexuality education programmes at secondary school level compulsory. Some of the countries which have compulsory programmes at this level are Holland, Germany, Denmark, Britain and Sweden.

\(^5\) Although whether the time these programmes take up in the school curriculum is sufficient for their effectiveness is still a concern. See Education Review Office findings (1996) for a discussion of the effectiveness of sexuality programmes in the time they are currently allotted in schools.
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concern about issues of effectiveness and provision (Mellanby et al., 1996; Szirom, 1988; Cleland and Mackay, 1994). In these countries, emphasis is placed on how programmes can successfully attain goals such as reducing sexually transmitted diseases and unplanned pregnancies. There is also concern to meet the standards of sexual health as, 'the integration of the physical, emotional, intellectual and social aspects of sexual being, in ways that are positively enriching and that enhance personality, communication and love' (WHO, 1975).

The aims of this thesis reflect concerns about the effectiveness of sexuality education programmes in New Zealand. The thesis has specifically addressed the 'gap' between the knowledge that young people acquire in sexuality education and their sexual behaviour (Middleton et al., 1994; De Buono et al., 1990). A central focus of this research was a re-examination of this 'gap' in order to better understand why it might occur and what initiatives sexuality education in New Zealand could take to close it. Influenced by feminist politics, epistemology, theories and methodology, I was also primarily interested in how (hetero)sexual relations are gendered and what effect this has for the 'gap' equation. The empirical research therefore involved exploring the ways in which young women and men constitute/experience their sexual knowledge, subjectivities and practices as a result of their gender. The research subsequently examined young people's sexual subjectivities in depth, and extended this definition of subjectivity to incorporate concepts of the body as a means of opening the 'gap' equation to a new dimension of understanding. Such an exploration of corporeal sexual experience coincides with renewed feminist interest in the body.

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6 I have called the knowledge/practice 'gap' an equation because its underlying 'logic' is that correct knowledge equals correct sexual practice. This equation is of course flawed, the reasons for which are explored in the data chapters.

The aims of this thesis are outlined in more detail in the latter part of this chapter when I reflect upon the policy and academic justifications of the research. First however, I set the research in context by briefly discussing some of the key contemporary issues and policy surrounding sexuality education which inspired and enabled this work.

1.1 Sexuality Education: The New Zealand Context

Sex education has always been surrounded by controversy in New Zealand. Historically, debate focused on the place of the subject in schools, whether it should be a mandatory feature of the curriculum, who should deliver it and what should it most appropriately comprise. These controversies were, and still are, fuelled by a diversity of moral perspectives ranging from the sexually liberal to the sexually conservative, the latter consisting of a small but vociferous segment of New Zealand society.

The Education Amendment Act 1985 currently governs sexuality education in New Zealand rendering it a component of health education. Schools are required to teach sexuality education in accordance with the current health syllabus for schools, and the proposed National Curriculum Statement on

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8 For a history of sexuality education in New Zealand see Allen (1996).
9 The draft Health and Physical Education Curriculum (1998) makes a formal distinction between 'sexuality' and 'sex education' with the former 'encompassing the concepts of hauroa, health promotion, and socio-ecological perspective. "Sex Education" generally refers only to the physical dimensions of sexuality education.'
10 For this debate see the Ross Report (1973) which, while dealing with wider issues of personal relationships, proposed that sex education should be integrated into the primary school health syllabus and become a core subject in secondary schools. The Report created a furore with parents protesting against the erosion of their rights as the ones to communicate sexual knowledge to their children.
11 See controversy sparked by the Ross Report (1973) over the suggestion of compulsory sex education and also Johnson Report (1977) Growing, Sharing, Learning, which advocated sex education courses in secondary and primary schools. The report also suggested that these programmes be set up so as to enable parents to withdraw their children if they desired.
12 Ryan (1988) talks about the 'moral right' as a number of different interest groups, religious organisations and churches. She explains that although there is a diversity in their organisational base, membership strategies and objectives, their defining feature is their concern with the 'family' who they perceive should rightly teach children about sex. Groups who form the moral right in New Zealand are the 'Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child', 'Society for the Promotion of Community Standards', 'Family Rights Association', the 'Integrity Centre', 'Women for Life', 'The Concerned Parents Association', 'New Zealand Organisation on Moral Education', 'Kiwi Forum', 'Credo', 'Christian Alternative Movement' and
Health and Physical Well being. Sexuality education is not compulsory since a prerequisite for the inclusion of sexuality education in health programmes is that school Boards of Trustees\textsuperscript{13} rule on such decisions, following consultation with parents. School Boards of Trustees are expected to determine how and to what extent it is incorporated in their health education programme. The Education Amendment Act contains a section\textsuperscript{14} enabling parents to withdraw their children from any sexuality education component of the health syllabus.

In 1996, sexuality education in New Zealand received increased media and public attention initiated by the then Minister of Health, Jenny Shipley, who campaigned to inject more funds into sexuality issues. Her sexual and reproductive health strategy aimed 'to promote responsible sexual behaviour, to minimise unintended pregnancies, reduce abortion rates, and the incidence of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS' (Ministry of Health, 1997:1). This was to be achieved through several objectives, one of which was to encourage young people to delay the onset of sexual activity. The improvement of young people's access to contraceptive information and products through the reduction of cost barriers to contraceptive use was another objective, along with more comprehensive information about the delivery of sexual and reproductive health education in schools (Ministry of Health, 1997). The aims of this campaign clearly reflected Mrs Shipley's ambition to reduce the undesirable economic and social consequences associated with sexual activity.

A number of initiatives were established as a consequence of this sexual and reproductive health strategy. For instance, the government provided an additional 17 million NZ dollars to Regional Health Authorities to subsidise the cost of medical consultations and to increase the level of subsidy for oral

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\textsuperscript{1}Christians for Life' (Ryan, 1988:115). For an excellent discussion of the 'moral right' in NZ, their philosophies and implementation see Ryan (1988).
\textsuperscript{13}Boards of Trustees have control over the executive decision making of individual schools in New Zealand. Their members are made up of the school's principal, parents, teachers and interested members of the public.
\textsuperscript{14}Section 105D.
contraceptives\textsuperscript{15} (Ministry of Health, 1997). The Education Review Office also evaluated the current sexual and reproductive health component of the curriculum in a report which provided information for the Ministry of Health on how to develop a new draft curriculum (Ministry of Health, 1996). As a result of this report, a new National Curriculum Statement of Health and Physical Education was created (Ministry of Education, 1998). Discussion papers on Maori well-being and reproductive health (Public Health Group, 1996) as well as sexually transmitted diseases amongst the general population (Ministry of Health, 1996a) were prepared. The strategy also aimed to improve delivery of sexual and reproductive health services to Pacific Islands people\textsuperscript{16}. Finally, school-based peer sexuality training programmes in Northland were been established in a collaborative venture between the Health promotion Unit, Northland Health, Hauroa Hokianga and the New Zealand Family Planning Association.

The issues raised by the Education Review Office report have occupied the government agenda since its publication in 1996 (Ministry of Health, 1996). Of significance were the findings that few sexuality education programmes in secondary schools were as long as the 14 hours per year recommended by research as essential for effective education in this area, and that most school staff delivering such programmes were inadequately trained. In addition, it was found that few schools reviewed their reproductive and sexual health education programmes in order to increase their efficacy. Family Planning Education Director, Sally Hughes noted in 1996, this ‘reveals a majority of young people in New Zealand do not have access to adequate sexuality education’ (New Zealand Family Planning, 1996). Only half of the schools that were investigated in the Education Review Office report undertook the required consultation process with parents and guardians about reproductive and sexual health education.

\textsuperscript{15} This initiative is intended to last until 1999.
\textsuperscript{16} Pacific Islands pilot programmes started at the beginning of 1998. A full evaluation of the programmes will occur at the end of 1999.
At the same time these issues were grappled with at the policy level, in public and media debates, the war between moral conservatives and liberals was waged with renewed vigour. Angered by Jenny Shipley's 'radical' contraceptive reforms, conservative factions such as Family Life International and the Christian Heritage Party sought to discredit the work of New Zealand Family Planning (NZFPA) and blame sexuality education for inciting sexual 'promiscuity'(sic) amongst young people (Stirling 1998; Family Life International, 1997). These groups pursued their crusade through the media with a barrage of articles displaying anti-sexuality education and NZFPA sentiment. In turn, this motivated supporters of NZFPA and sexuality education to advocate the importance and necessity of their work (Stirling 1998; Ineson, 1996; Brown, 1996).

It was during 1996 that I applied to the Health Research Council of New Zealand (HRC) for a Post-graduate Scholarship. One of the HRC’s tasks is to, ‘advise the Minister on national health research policy’ (HRC 1993: section 3). The HRC was therefore able to offer support to this project investigating young people’s sexuality and heterosexual practice since one of its aims was to improve sexuality education programmes by providing information useful to their design. The Education Review Office Report (1996) had suggested that most reproductive and sexual health education in secondary schools had taken place at Form 4 level (age 14), and decreased as students progressed through the senior school. The report concluded that few 7th Formers (17 year olds) received sexuality education appropriate to their stage of sexual development. It is probable that part of the reason they are not receiving this kind of instruction is due to a lack of suitable programmes for this age group. This indicated the necessity of developing relevant curricula appropriate to the needs and interests of this age group. I took the view that, in developing such resources, it would be necessary to collect more information about the sexual

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18 On a visit to New Zealand this Easter (1999) I noticed criticism within the media of NZFPA and sexuality education by the moral right had subsided, perhaps in accordance with the lower profile of reform implementation. However, if the history of controversies over sexuality in New Zealand reveals anything, it is that this is just an ebb in the flow of the tide.
subjectivities, knowledge and behaviours of this age group. The aims of the project therefore were well in line with the government's agenda.

Just prior to the completion of this research there has been a further initiative in the area of sexual health with the partial release of a Ministry of Youth Affairs Report on young men's sexual and reproductive health (Ministry of Youth Affairs, 1999). In the comments attached to the release of the report, the Hon Tony Ryall (Minister of Youth Affairs) relayed the government's concern with 'unwanted pregnancies' (sic) and sexually transmitted diseases. Mr Ryall announced a three pronged goal for reversing these statistics by getting young people to 'delay sexual activity', 'use contraceptives and practice safe sex' and 'seek treatment for STD's'. He justified the concentration on young men in the report by the fact that 'I found out early on that our research and policy efforts have for years tended to focus almost entirely on young women' (Ryall, 1999:1). His comments reflect a growing trend for 'silencing demands for increased social justice for girls and women' and an increasing resistance to policies and practices focusing specifically on them19 (Weiner, Arnot and David, 1997:628). The danger of this position however is that while concentrating on young men's sexual attitudes and behaviours is essential, the marginalisation of young women in this equation is unlikely to reap the desired results.

1.2 Alternative Approaches to Sexuality

The 'gap' identified by sexuality and health researchers between young people's knowledge about sexual activity and their actual practice (Crawford, Turtle and Kippax, 1990) suggested that, although levels of knowledge about HIV/AIDS, condom use and sexually transmitted diseases were fairly high in this age group, such knowledge was infrequently practised (Rosenthal et al, 1990). This realisation motivated a number of researchers concerned with curbing the spread of HIV/AIDS to investigate the cause of this knowledge/practice 'gap'. (Dickson et al, 1995; Wilton and Aggleton, 1991;

19 For discussion of this issue within the UK context see Weiner, Arnot and David, (1997:628)
Hillier et al., 1998). These studies (discussed in Chapter 2) typically explore micro-social issues such as the buying, carrying and use of condoms within relationships (Wight, 1992). Alternatively, at a more practical level, research has focused on how sexuality education programmes might deliver safer sex messages more effectively (Bolton and Singer, 1992; Aggleton, 1989).

While research on sexuality has produced invaluable insights into sexual practices, it has also highlighted gaps in our knowledge about how sexuality works. For instance, research by Kippax et al. (1990), Rosenthal, Gifford and Moore (1998) has concentrated predominantly on understanding one of the elements of the 'gap equation'; For example, either knowledge or practice without necessarily exploring the relationship between them. Although we have learnt that young women may not carry and use condoms because of the stigma attached to being seen to be 'ready for sex' (Hillier et al, 1998), the relationship between what young women know and their sexual practice is only implied. Research by feminists has suggested that the sexual double standard may carry greater social power than discourses promoting safer sex, so that young women act out of concern for their sexual reputation rather than their sexual health. In privileging discursive power, this explanation has understood the teenage girl as living under an exclusively repressive (male) power without adequately taking account of her responses to such power.

A re-formulation of the 'gap equation' would need to conceptualise young people's agency, rather than positioning them as subject to discursive forces in which they are passive participants. This involves putting 'the subject' into the equation by acknowledging the existence of 'sexual subjectivities'. Weedon describes 'subjectivity' as, 'the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself and her ways of understanding her relation to the world' (Weedon, 1987:32). By drawing on this definition of subjectivity, the subject and their agency in relation to both knowledge and practice, could be acknowledged.
A re-conceptualisation of the terms 'sexual knowledge', and 'heterosexual practices' in light of how they are constituted by young people themselves should also be undertaken. This suggests that we need to ask questions like: What do young people count as sexual knowledge and how do they view themselves in relation to it? How do young people understand themselves as sexual and how do they view their heterosexual practices? How do they conceptualise the relationships between knowledge, subjectivity and practice? Such open-ended questions stand in stark contrast to those posited in previous studies which have relied upon how researchers have understood young people's knowledge and heterosexual practices. An alternative starting point is to discover how young people themselves constitute these relationships between knowledge, subjectivity and practice.

Further, what has also been neglected in previous explorations of the knowledge/practice 'gap' is the way in which the interaction of gendered subjectivities occurs within the context of heterosexual practice. When deciphering their sexual behaviours, attitudes and experiences, there has been a tendency for researchers to study young women and men as separate populations. Feminist research habitually focuses exclusively on women, and, on those occasions when both genders are participants, they are often interviewed separately (Thomson and Scott, 1991). When both women and men are included, findings are generally not used to understand how the interaction of gendered subjectivities influences practice, instead female and male perspectives are contrasted (Guggino and Ponzetti, 1997; Baldwin and Baldwin, 1997). I want to argue that in order to understand the relationship between heterosexual practices, knowledge and sexual subjectivities, it is necessary to analyse the dynamic between women and men's experiences. Heterosexual practice involves two individuals engaging physically and emotionally with one another, and examining this interaction effectively requires methods which attempt to tap such engagement.

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20 For examples of research in this area that have studied females and males as separate populations see Tolman (1994), Kitzinger (1995), Wight (1996), Waldby et al, (1993), Pleck et al, (1993):
Key to the 'gap' equation but again lost in the sexuality education literature and research, are issues of 'sexual pleasure' and 'desire'. Fine (1992) discovered what she called the missing discourse of female desire in the American schooling system. She found that recognition and validation of young women's desire and pleasure were absent in sexuality education, with discourses of danger, victimisation and fear taking precedence.

Similarly, Tolman and Higgins (1994) have argued for the importance of recognising that young women's knowledge and experience of desire and pleasure acts as a measure against which they can identify and perhaps subsequently resist unwanted sexual activity. Recounting the details of a rape case, these authors explained that the confused testimony of the young woman involved could be seen as a product of not being '...able to hold onto her knowledge, that she didn't want to have sex because her own desire has never been available as a guide to her choices' (Tolman and Higgins, 1994:11).

They argued that the 'cultural story' which sanctions 'good girls' as not sexual, and blames 'bad girls' for being either young women who have been active desiring sexual agents or who are the passive victims of boy's raging hormones, is therefore harmful to young women. Without a safe space for girls to express and experiment with their desire, know pleasure and assert themselves on the basis of this knowledge, Tolman and Higgins argued that this cultural story with its simplistic distinctions, 'may increase girl's vulnerability to sexual coercion and psychological distress and disable them from effectively seeking legal protection from sexual abuse' (Tolman and Higgins 1994:2). In view of such findings, the acknowledgement, investigation and legitimisation of young women's concepts of pleasure and desire within research appears an important endeavour.

Exploring young men's understandings and experiences of sexual pleasure and desire is also a valuable exercise although it has rarely provided a focus in studies of male sexuality (Rout, 1992; Redman, 1996; West et al, 1993). It
is likely that young men are trapped within the constraints of 'hegemonic masculinity' which constitutes only certain types of sexual activity as legitimately pleasurable. This may limit pleasurable sexual experiences for them, alienating or having a 'demasculising' effect for those who derive pleasure in ways that hegemonic masculinity does not sanction (For example, young men who are homosexual, or those who experience difficulties with erection). Learning about young men's sexual pleasure and desire also offers insight into heterosexual practice and the constitution of young women's sexual subjectivities.

Since the advent of the second wave of feminism, feminists have lobbied for women's right to control all aspects of their sexuality, including the expression of their sexual desire and their entitlement to the experience of sexual pleasure. Arguments have centred around heterosexuality as an institution which perpetuates the subordination of female sexual pleasure in the face of male sexual gratification (Rich, 1978). Previous research in Britain has tended to suggest that young women often do not experience sexual activity as pleasurable (Thomson and Scott, 1991; Thompson, 1990). Discovering if this is the case for young New Zealand women and what reasons might exist for such findings is an important undertaking.

The need to investigate young people's sexual desire and pleasure is apparent from its absence in curricular resources such as a leading New Zealand text, *Challenges and Change* (Mackay and Cleland, 1994). There is no discussion of what sexual pleasure is, or even that it exists and that it finds expression through physiological and emotional indications. There is, however comprehensive coverage of issues such as sexual pressure and date rape, sexually transmitted diseases, unplanned pregnancy and HIV/AIDS. Sue Ineson, Executive Director of FPA has argued that these are extremely important topics which deserve inclusion in sexuality education in order 'to give young people the information and skills to enable them to make responsible decisions about their sexuality' (Ineson, 1996). One might maintain however, that in order to make a 'responsible decision' about
sexuality, young people need to know what they desire and what they find pleasurable.

One of the difficulties in introducing material on pleasure and desire into curricula has been the moral backlash from schools and parents. Despite the secular nature of New Zealand society, pleasure and desire are uncomfortable subjects because moral discourses render these topics immoral, self indulgent, 'unspeakable' and instil a sense of unease (Hawkes, 1996). However, as I shall show the importance of the inclusion of desire and pleasure in sexuality education curricular was underscored by young people themselves throughout the current research. During interviews, several expressed a wish that sexuality education could teach them about the pleasurable aspects of sexual activity, as they felt this could have made their inaugural sexual experiences more pleasurable.

The ways in which young people's concept of pleasure and desire can be tapped involves focusing on young people's bodies and their attitudes towards and experiences of them, as sexual entities. Bodies are addressed in Challenges and Change but only in Level One\(^{21}\) in a section entitled, 'Feelings about our Bodies'. Activities in Level One cohere around 'body image' encouraging students to develop a 'greater acceptance of individual differences in adolescent physiological and emotional changes and of their own body image by conscientising them to the negative influence of the media' (Mackay and Cleland, 1994:2). While this acceptance is essential, missing from this concern with the body is a recognition of how sexual and sensual experience becomes 'embodied' (ie. listening to and recognising what and how their bodies feel) and how this contributes to a positive or negative sense of young people's subjectivity. For example, one of the activities in Challenges and Change proposes young people write down three things they like about themselves and offers possible answers like, 'clear skin, nice hair colour, muscular shoulders, attractive smile, kind eyes etc'. In this and most

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\(^{21}\) The programme is designed to be taught in 2 stages. Level One introduces junior secondary school students to key themes around sexuality which are revisited in greater depth at Level Two. (Mackay and Cleland, 1994:X)
other activities young people are being taught a separation between the body as aesthetic object and embodied sexual and sensual experience. In this way young people are not learning to 'embody' their bodies, that is, experience the (positive) sensations they offer, but rather they are perpetuating the objectification and disembodiment which already occurs through discursive fields like the media. This deficit in acknowledging and discussing the sexual and sensual experiences of the body is once again indicative of the discomfort we learn to feel about our bodies as a result of their social constitution.

Learning how young people experience their bodies sexually and sensually in embodied ways, or why this process does not occur, has important implications for young people's sexual satisfaction and fulfilment. Findings from the Women Risk and AIDS Project (WRAP) in the UK suggest that young women who were disembodied, (that is, they experienced their bodies through dominant perceptions of 'appropriate' female sexuality and 'attractiveness') were less likely to report positive sexual experiences (Holland et al, 1994b). In contrast, young women who were embodied or attuned to pleasurable sensations of their body found sexual activity more pleasurable. As yet minimal work has been conducted on young men's embodiment or disembodiment and what effect this has on their corporeal/emotional experiences of sexual activity. This would be important work enabling us to understand more comprehensively the relationship young men have with their bodies and the implications of this on their sexual activity and general mental/sexual health. In light of young people's desire to know how to engage in pleasurable and satisfying sexual activity, an analysis of what young women and men find jointly and separately corporeally pleasurable is also beneficial.

A final aspect of sexuality education warranting revision is the occurrence of what is commonly referred to as 'gender stereotyping' or the representation of each gender in accordance with beliefs about their character and abilities.
Once again, using *Challenges and Change* as an example, this resource endeavours to address such concerns under the heading ‘Gender Role Stereotyping’. This component of the syllabus aimed to ‘develop student’s awareness of sex role stereotypes, and in particular, the role of the media in reinforcing these’ (Mackay and Cleland 1994:45). One of the activities set out under this section requires students draw up two lists delineating how the media constructs women and men in terms of their personality and physicality. However, female and male sexuality and sexual behaviour are not explored in the activities. This denies one of the few opportunities available for young people to analyse dominant discourses (or stereotyped constructions) about female and male sexual subjectivities and recognise their power, a process essential in the attainment of gender equality.

In order to avoid such perpetuation of dominant meanings about female and male sexuality which are limiting for both genders, it is paramount to gain more information about young women and men’s ‘lived’ sexual behaviour and sexuality. This would enable curricular materials to draw upon examples of situations which, rather than being stereotypical, were representative of the diversity of young people’s sexual subjectivities. Data concerning young women and men who take up alternative positions within discourses of heterosexuality are especially useful.

1.3 Situating the research

The empirical research conducted for this thesis was motivated by a concern with the achievement of gender equality. It was premised on a belief in the value of democratising heterosexual relationships so that both partners have freedom of choice in their decisions and actions as well as protection from physical and mental coercion/violence. As such, it has been dedicated to

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22 Some of the work to date on men's embodiment includes (Seidler, 1997; Connell, 1995; Peterson, 1998)

23 In using *Challenges and Change* as an example here I am not discrediting it as a sexuality programme. In fact, I consider it one of the leading sexuality education resources in New Zealand and therefore use it as one of the best representations of other sexuality education curricular which may have more flaws.
understanding the operation of power relations between young women and men within heterosexual relationships as a first step in the struggle towards gender equity.

Consequently, the research has been informed by feminist theories and motivated by feminist politics. It has been concerned with finding spaces in which young women can exercise agency around expression of their sexuality and their sexual activity. As a result, the academic contribution of the research has been not just to the field of sexuality education, but also to feminist theories of sexuality. While theorising about heterosexuality and female sexuality have long occupied the thinking of feminists (See Chapter 2), addressing 'the body' and 'masculinities' as theoretical concepts comprise more contemporary interests. Feminists have historically concerned themselves with issues around women's bodies such as the right to abortion, contraception, body image, reproduction, pornography and sexuality. Theorising the body has largely been undertaken by a smaller group of feminists like Irigaray (1985), Kristeva (1986), Bartky (1988) and Young (1998) who have drawn on French psychoanalytic and/or post modern theories. My interest has been in contributing to this theorising of the body, by exploring young women and men's differential experiences of corporeal sexual pleasure.

Numerous studies, as I have pointed out, indicate that young women often experience difficulty in feeling desire and do not report that sexual activity is pleasurable as frequently as young men. Explanations for this have come from sexologists reporting biological sex differences which render men more quickly and easily aroused than women (Stopes, 1918). Similarly feminists have debated women's biological propensity to have vaginal orgasms, while others have claimed it is not female anatomy which curtails sexual pleasure, but rather the institution of heterosexuality which subordinates it in relation to men's sexual satisfaction (See for example Dworkin, 1981). These explanations have privileged either theories of social constructionism or biological essentialism without entertaining the possibility of a complex
engagement between the two. By contrast Grosz's (1994) work suggests a sophisticated interplay of material reality and discursive practice offering a theory with interesting implications for understanding young women and men's corporeal experience of desire and pleasure (See Chapter 2). In pursuing the line adopted by Grosz's theory, this research was able to explore the embodied experience of female and male desire and pleasure and the social/discursive processes by which this occurs.

Radical feminists such as Dworkin (1987) and Rich (1978) have represented heterosexuality as a repressive institution and elicited responses from other strands of feminist thought which have sought to depict a more positive portrayal (Hollway, 1996). Within the New Zealand context work by Gavey (1992) has demonstrated one of these oppressive features in the form of heterosexual coercion. However, there is a paucity of research on the more positive or pleasurable aspects of heterosexuality. In this study, I was interested in moving beyond the constraints of the concept of heterosexuality as an institution and examining what Duplessis (1997) has characterised as 'post-heterosexuality'. This is the notion that sexual practices are ambivalent and are only associated with heterosexuality if they are 'consistent with the articulation of heterosexuality as an institution' (Duplessis, 1997:10).

By taking this approach, it has been possible to acknowledge the pervasiveness of male power as it is exercised through heterosexuality, yet recognise sexual practices between women and men which actively resist elements of heterosexual normative discourse (Duplessis, 1997:11). This approach offers the means to develop a theory of agency rather than immobilising the subject within a web of oppression. It also acknowledges a more complex operation of power as simultaneously productive and repressive. Discovering what young women and men find pleasurable sexually and how they experience desire within the context of their

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24 These debates around heterosexuality as a repressive institution are addressed in the literature section.
25 This is with the exception of the work of Ryan (1988a) on pleasure and heterosexuality.
relationships has rarely been documented systematically. The attempt to collect such data is a first step in establishing how empowering and positive sexual experiences are made possible and by what means they might be feasible for others.

My interest in male as well as female sexualities was driven by a desire to understand the engagement of gendered subjectivities in sexual practice. That is, what happens to these subjectivities in the context of sexual practice and what effects do such practices have upon how young people understand themselves as sexual. The existence of this dual relationship between sexual subjectivities and practices has not been explored theoretically and would contribute to a theoretical understanding of the 'gap' equation. To understand this engagement, it is necessary to probe the interaction of sexual subjectivities within the context of heterosexual couple's sexual practices, an objective of this research that demanded the utilisation of unique methods.

Including male subjects in this study also formed part of my interest in exploring and contributing to masculinities theory about heterosexuality and male power in New Zealand. Specifically, I was concerned with analysing how male sexual subjectivities participate in the subordination of young women's sexual interests. While such work has been conducted extensively in Britain by the Men Risk and AIDS project (Holland et al, 1993), research into this area is sparse in New Zealand. The interest amongst those who have been occupied with issues of masculinities such as Rout (1992) and Phillips (1996), has centred on the construction of masculinities more generally, without special attention being given to young men's sexual practices in relationships. A key theme in my research was to determine whether young New Zealand men display the same vulnerabilities noted by Holland et al (1994a) which may 'reproduce the exercise of male power over women' (Holland et al, 1994a:112). A major concern has thus been identifying how, in the New

26 The 'post' in 'post-heterosexuality' denotes a notion of heterosexuality that follows after its conceptualisation as an exclusively repressive institution. The addition of 'post' is an attempt to escape this solely negative definition.
Zealand context, young men's articulation and experience of their sexual activities contributes to this operation of power.

The contribution to masculinity theory is not purely compensatory however. Social scientists have long been concerned with the way in which macro politics of power are played out at micro levels. ‘Male power’ has been characterised as operating through a system of ‘hegemonic masculinity’, a term established by Connell (1987) to describe how men’s power is socially sustained. Appropriated from Gramsci’s concept of ‘hegemony’ or rule by consent, hegemonic masculinity refers to a cultural ideal of masculinity which is socially supported and effects the subordination of women. As a macro societal force, recent research has attempted to disclose how it enters the subjective practices and every day lives of men and women (Segal, 1993; Skeggs, 1991; Mac en Ghail, 1996, Holland et al, 1998). Attention needs to be given to deciphering how hegemonic masculinity operates in young men’s sexual relationships. A greater understanding of how hegemonic masculinity infiltrates the sexual practices in which young people engage, and the sexual subjectivities young men take up, may suggest ways in which male power can be disrupted.

1.4 Thesis Structure

The thesis is divided into two parts. The first part contextualises the study within the relevant theoretical and method literature, whilst the second part describes the results of 12 months fieldwork in New Zealand from 1997-1998.

Part 1: Contextualising the Study

Part one consists of three chapters, each of which contextualise the empirical research. The current chapter is followed by a review of theories which have shaped the field of sexuality education, HIV/AIDS education and sexuality research. This review discusses the limitations of these theories within the field of sexuality and HIV/AIDS education research, feminist theories of sexuality and masculinity theory which this study will endeavour to investigate.
The methodology chapter then follows and describes the study in terms of the research methodology and design, ethical considerations, access, data analysis and implementation.

Part 2: Exploring the Data.
Chapters 4 to 7 report on data collected on 17-19 year old New Zealanders utilising both quantitative and qualitative methods such as questionnaires, focus groups, interviews and a uniquely designed couple activity. Chapter 4 reports on the data related to young people's sexual knowledge, what sexual knowledge they perceive they have, and how they have constituted it. The chapter also explores their conceptualisation of the relationship of their knowledge to practice. In the final section of the chapter, the way in which gender mediates the application of their knowledge in practice is examined.

Chapter 5 deals with sexual subjectivities and how these were constituted through dominant and alternative discourses of gendered sexuality, concentrating on how subjects negotiate these alternative positionings in terms of the contexts and factors which make taking them up possible. The chapter also argues that young people's conceptualisation of themselves as sexual was inextricably tied to their practical sexual experience. Chapter 6 extends the notion of sexual subjectivity by exploring young people's experiences of their bodies. I argue that young people's experiences of their bodies as embodied and disembodied were gendered and that these 'corporeal states' can be understood with reference to the concept of 'the imaginary body'.

The final data chapter is concerned with the (hetero)sexual practices of young people in the study as constituted and described by them. It reveals details of the average number and length of their relationships as well as the age of their partners and how they made the decision to have sexual intercourse. The chapter also documents the types of sexual activities they engage in and what they found pleasurable and not pleasurable about such activities. Young people's conceptualisation of the effect of their knowledge on practice is also
analysed. The way in which power is sexualised within the context of their relationships and can be seen within an analytic framework of 'equal', 'mediated' and 'coercive' power is then explored. Finally, in Chapter 8 the major findings of the thesis are examined along with its design parameters and the implications of these for theories of sexuality and sexuality education programme design in New Zealand.
Chapter Two

Theories of Sex Education and Sexuality

2.0 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to examine a variety of theories of sexuality, sex education and HIV/AIDS education research, to discover how sexual knowledge and practice have been conceptualised. The conceptual tools such theories have made available for the study of sexuality and their limitations, form the focus of this discussion. Starting with the practitioner knowledge of sex and HIV/AIDS education, the first section reviews the theories emerging in this field about the relationship between sexual knowledge and sexual practices. A primary focus here has been the conceptualisation of the ‘knowledge/practice gap’ and the reasons for its existence. I argue this conceptualisation is a theoretical construct contrived by researchers which has proved ineffective in aiding their objectives. This is because it fails to recognise young people’s agency and their own constructions of their sexual knowledge, subjectivities and practices.

Next, I review feminist theories of sexuality concerned with understanding the constitution of female sexual subjectivities and how these are experienced within the context of heterosexuality. This exploration discloses that within feminist theory, heterosexual women are constructed as lacking a positive sexual identity which acknowledges the operation and consequences of ‘male power’, as well as which offers them agency to celebrate and enjoy their own heterosexual desires and pleasures. Such an identity must be recognised as possible within theory and needs to be described through empirical evidence, if more young heterosexual women are to be encouraged to experience their sexuality as empowering.
Research on masculinity forms the focus of the last section in an endeavour to shed light on male sexual subjectivities and how they operate in the context of heterosexual relationships. Here, I argue some theorists reify the concept of 'hegemonic masculinity' and employ it in a dualistic way, suggesting that men either prescribe to it, or take up alternative masculinities without recognising the fluidity of these subject positions. The effect of this positioning is to consolidate male power and limit male subjectivities, by failing to recognise the fluidity and instability of hegemonic masculinity which is expressed in young men's own accounts of their sexual subjectivities.

2.1 Practitioner Knowledge: Sexuality Education and HIV/AIDS

These two fields of research on sexuality appear to stem from a similar type of motivation, that of evaluating sexual behaviour in order to change it. Both fields are more extensive than the following exploration suggests especially since for the purpose of this review, I concentrate exclusively on those studies which focus on the young heterosexual population. The theory and research into sexuality education and HIV/AIDS appears to be motivated by the desire to achieve 'prevention' in some form or another. In the case of sexuality education, research focuses on preventing sexually transmitted diseases and the occurrence of unplanned parenthood; in HIV/AIDS research there is a focus on strategies to achieve the prevention of the transmission of this disease. A common underlying theme of much of the relevant literature in the two fields is that knowledge is conceptualised when related to the notion of preventative action. Here knowing about the risks of sexual activity is seen as a first step in preventing its negative consequences.

1 The HIV/AIDS research I have reviewed is concerned with heterosexuals rather than the gay community. These studies have emerged with the panic of the spread of AIDS to/through the young heterosexual population. (Van de Ven et al, 1996; Crawford et al, 1990, Rosenthal and Sheperd, 1993; Holland et al, 1990). The sex education literature is confined to a focus on young people's sexual knowledge (which centred around STDS and avoiding pregnancy and more recently on HIV/AIDS) (Bruce and Bullins, 1989). The effectiveness of sexuality education in communicating its messages (Massey, 1990), and research that investigates young people's sexual behaviour in order to understand why such messages might not be effective (Middleton et al, 1994).
Much of the sexuality education and HIV literature examines what young people know about keeping themselves 'safe' (McGill et al, 1989\(^2\); Rodden et al, 1996\(^3\)). Research in the field of sexuality education concerns itself with attitudes and knowledge about STDS\(^4\) like genital herpes, asking questions about whether is it true or false that 'A woman who has genital herpes will become sterile because of the infection' (Bruce and Bullins, 1989:263\(^5\)). The HIV/AIDS literature also tends to conceptualise knowledge as being able to answer questions correctly about what AIDS is, how HIV is transmitted and what practices will inhibit its dissemination (Denman et al, 1996\(^6\)). For instance, researchers in Canada gave 1000 students a questionnaire asking them to determine whether the following statements were true or false; ‘AIDS can be spread by using someone’s personal belongings like a comb’; ‘Anyone who isn’t gay doesn’t really have to worry about catching AIDS’; ‘Having sex with someone with AIDS is one way of getting it’ (Maticka-Tyndale, 1991:50). Where gaps in young people’s knowledge are identified, the typical response of researchers is to suggest inclusion of, or greater emphasis on, these areas in health and sexuality programmes (Bury, 1991; Bruce and Bullins, 1989).

A second characteristic of sexuality education and HIV/AIDS research is its focus on ‘practice’. Issues of sexual practice are conceptualised in this research as concerning when young people have sexual intercourse (Dickson

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\(^2\) McGill et al, (1989) surveyed 207 sexually active teenagers attending a family planning clinic in America in order to assess knowledge, attitudes, and risk characteristics of this group. Results indicated young people were aware of the major modes of HIV transmission, but they had some misconceptions about the risk associated with casual contact. The survey consisted of 30 questions on knowledge of the cause of HIV, transmission, treatment, attitudes and beliefs about personal susceptibility, disease severity and need for AIDS education.

\(^3\) From 1988-1994 first year students (18-19 years) at Macquarie University completed a questionnaire regarding sexual practice, knowledge of HIV transmission and understandings of safe sex. The findings suggest there was normative change with regard to condom use over this period and this appeared to be attributable to sex education.

\(^4\) STDs = common usage for Sexually Transmitted Diseases.

\(^5\) Undergraduate students at the University of North Carolina and Wilmington (n=451) and the University of Georgia (n=157) completed surveys concerning their attitudes and knowledge about genital herpes. Students were generally knowledgeable about genital herpes but expressed fears and misconceptions about it especially in relation to interpersonal contact.

\(^6\) Participants comprised of 803, 14 year old pupils in 13 schools in Nottinghamshire. A self completion questionnaire was distributed on their knowledge, beliefs and attitudes in relation to HIV/AIDS. Knowledge of usual transmission routes were high but students expressed some confusion surrounding the safety of kissing, receiving a blood transfusion in the UK and blood donation.
et al, 1998)\(^7\), which young people are having sexual intercourse (Moore and Rosenthal, 1992)\(^8\), and why they have sexual intercourse (in terms of influences such as alcohol, drugs, peer pressure, gendered power relations) (Holibar, 1992; Critchlow Leigh, 1989) as well as whether this sexual practice is ‘safe’ (Brander, 1991; Coggan et al, 1997). This conceptualisation of ‘practice’ is inextricably tied to the ‘prevention’ aim of much sexuality education and HIV research. In such instances, it is perceived necessary to learn about young people’s sexual practice, in order to understand how incidences of unplanned pregnancy and disease occur and might subsequently be avoided.

Within sexuality education and HIV research this focus on ‘practice’ extends to a concern with the relationship of such practice to young people’s sexual knowledge. Although researchers have reported that some elements of young people’s sexual knowledge are lacking, they have found that generally, levels of sexual knowledge are high (Rodden et al, 1996; McGill et al, 1989; Denman et al, 1996). For example, many young people have been found to have excellent knowledge about methods of transmission and means of preventing HIV infection (Kraft, 1993\(^9\)). As a result, concern is now more likely to focus on whether young people put the knowledge they procure into practice. As correct condom usage is a major way in which STDS can be contained and pregnancy avoided, research has focused on young people’s use of such contraceptives during sexual activity (Kraft, 1993). Research by Rodden et al, (1996), West et al, (1993) and Pilkington et al, (1994) reveal that despite knowledge about safer sex practices, young people did not use condoms regularly during sexual activity.

\(^7\) Median age of first intercourse in this New Zealand birth cohort study was 17 years for men and 16 years for women.

\(^8\) In a qualitative study of 153 adolescents aged 15-18 years Moore and Rosenthal found that those who approve of pre-marital sex, one-night stands and the like are more inclined to engage in these behaviours, and conversely those who engage in these behaviours are more likely to align their attitudes in justification of such behaviour (Moore and Rosenthal, 1992:433).

\(^9\) A postal survey was distributed to 3000 17-19 year old Norwegians. Sexual knowledge was tested with a range of questions such as; ‘For a woman to get pregnant both ovaries must
Research into sexuality and HIV/AIDS reveals that a 'logical' progression from acquiring knowledge about safer sex to practising that knowledge in sexual relationships, does not always occur (Gatherer et al, 1979; Baldwin et al, 1990; Wilton and Aggleton, 1991; Robertson, 1995). Researchers have theorised this as the knowledge/practice gap and investigating why such a 'gap' might exist has become a preoccupation of the latest research on sexuality and sexual behaviour (Murphy et al, 1998; Chapman de Bro et al, 1994; Wyatt Seal and Palmer-Seal, 1996; Dickson, 1993). Two strands of criticism have emerged: one strand focuses on the failure of sexuality education programmes to deliver safer sex messages effectively, while another strand concentrates on contextual and subjective aspects of heterosexual relationships. For the first strand, a scepticism about the forms of knowledge that young people receive from sexuality education programmes and the effectiveness of the messages contained in such knowledge has led researchers to investigate these issues (Measor et al, 1996; Carter and Carter, 1993; Grunseit et al, 1997; Lees, 1994; Lupton and Tulloch, 1996; Bolton and Singer, 1992; Cleland and Mackay, 1990). Those adhering to the second strand of criticism are more likely to argue that while improving sexuality education is an ongoing objective, it is unlikely to be achieved without first gaining an understanding of the knowledge/practice gap as inextricably tied to the social/subjective experience of being in a sexual relationship.

Research concerned with the second line of inquiry has started to investigate the micro-social details of young people's heterosexual relationships, probing issues such as 'sex talk' (Crawford et al, 1994), 'self efficacy' (Rosenthal et al, 1991) and condom use (Holland et al, 1991). When reviewing the literature on impediments to safer heterosexual sex, Wight argued six themes were emphasised by British authors; 'the gender role expectations brought to a function'; 'Boys are not able to get an erection before puberty', 'Chlamydia is a sexually transmitted disease which may be transmitted to both men and women'.

In their findings on HIV-related sexual risk acts, social-cognitive factors and behavioural skills the authors state, 'As previous research has indicated, there is a 'gap' between what adolescents believe they can do and are physically capable of doing and what they actually do' (Murphy et al 1998:204-205). This type of statement is typical of research that asserts the knowledge/practice 'gap'.

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encounter; the primary function of condoms as contraceptives; problems buying, carrying and using condoms; gendered power relations and how a particular stage in the relationship affects behaviour’ (Wight, 1992:11). A large amount of important information has been generated from research in these particular areas (Hillier et al 1998; Pilkington et al, 1994; Miles, 1993; Abrams et al 1990; Wilton and Aggleton, 1991).

Although the above research generally recognises the interactive social aspects of sexuality and heterosexual practice, individual subjects rather than couples have been participants in most studies. The Women Risk and AIDS (WRAP) and Men Risk and AIDS (MRAP) projects for example, interviewed both genders, but the two studies were several years apart and the recruitment criteria was not aimed at attracting subjects on the basis of being in the same relationship (Holland et al, 1991a and 1993). In individual interviews, one person constitutes the lived reality of the relationship while the other is denied a contribution. Consequently, contradictions between each person’s depiction cannot be explored even though arguably this is where the most revealing insights could lie. As it is the specifics of ‘practice’, such as negotiation of condom use or the manifestation of gendered power relations which are focused upon, talking to a couple may produce a more comprehensive account.11

There is a danger too, that a concentration on the social determinants of young people’s heterosexual relationships may shift attention away from the need to theorise the relationship between knowledge and practice. Researchers draw our attention to a generalised realm of ‘context’ in which we now see how particular discourses shape action and what contexts inhibit young people from putting their knowledge into practice. Current thinking for example recognises that the knowledge/practice ‘gap’ is mediated by the

11 The use of heterosexual ‘couples’ has also occurred in research by Markman et al, (1993). In this study discussion between couples was videotaped in order to reveal how they dealt with conflict in their relationship. The interaction of the couple in this instance provided researchers with important information about modes of typical conflict resolution exercised by each gender. Findings suggest women use a pursuit model for conflict resolution while men prefer that of withdrawal:
operation of gendered and dominant discourses about sexuality and health (Aggleton, 1991; Warwick et al, 1989). While this revelation is extremely important, what is missing is a conceptualisation of 'knowledge' which takes account of subjective agency. The sense of an individual's knowledge is seen to work only in an ideological way through the power of dominant discourses. Subsequently, the subject is constituted without agency to manoeuvre within the constraints of discursive practices, because their own experience of knowledge is overridden by the powerful operation of dominant discourses.

By concentrating on structural factors and discourses of which subjects are integral to, but not directly in control of, the subject loses their agency. Their knowledge and subjectivity have been plucked from the picture, overpowered by the 'exterior' forces of discursive and material power. To envision this agency we need to reinstate into the 'gap' equation the subject, her/his knowledge and the relationship of knowledge and subjectivity to practice.

In order to fully comprehend the agency of the individual, a new conceptualisation of knowledge must be derived from the subject's own constitution of it. As shown above, sexual knowledge is traditionally viewed as factual information about sexual diseases, how they are contracted and what safer sex measures can be undertaken to avoid them. This construction which has been defined by adult sexuality researchers and educators may not reflect what young people constitute as their sexual knowledge. Discovering how young people constitute their sexual knowledge should enable a better understanding of the relationship of such knowledge to their subjectivities and practices.

2.2 An alternative approach to the study of sexuality: Feminist theories of sexuality

Second wave feminists\(^\text{12}\) have written prolifically about sexuality highlighting and challenging the regulation of women's sexuality that has occurred through

\(^{12}\) The term 'second wave feminism' refers to the Women's Liberation Movement which emerged in most Western countries at the end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s. "First Wave Feminism" generally means the feminism of the nineteenth and early twentieth century - although some would locate its origins earlier. Typically associated with the demand for
extensive discursive and material practices (Vance, 1992). For example, in their collection, Jackson and Scott (1996), organise the writing of second wave feminists into a series of themes about sexuality such as; the nature of sexuality as socially constructed or biologically determined; the questioning of the compulsory category of heterosexuality and its institutional operation; debates about sexuality as predominately pleasurable or dangerous, and issues around the commercialisation of sex. As the first two themes are the most pertinent to this research I discuss them only.

2.2.1 The Socially Constructed Body

There has been a considerable investment for feminists in the argument that female sexuality is socially constructed rather than biologically determined. A traditional approach would contend that a woman's place is in the home because of her biological capacity to give birth, therefore her 'natural role' is that of mother and homemaker (Tennant, 1986). Such appeals to biological determinism make it difficult for feminists to contest the social inequalities and restrictions that women face. One of the earliest attempts to argue that femininity and masculinity are socially constructed came from Oakley (1972) in her book *Sex, Gender and Society*. Using anthropological research on cultural differences in sexual behaviour Oakley argued that ‘...the psychology and personality of male, and female, largely depend on culture. In fact the role of anatomy in determining sexuality must remain a purely hypothetical one until some explanation is given on how the two connect’ (Oakley, 1972:38). This argument has been persuasive, encouraging a good deal of feminist research on sexuality to rely on the theory of social construction.

Feminists interested in the idea of the body as socially malleable have increasingly turned to the work of Foucault and his notion of a disciplinary
power that inscribes bodies (Foucault, 1979, 1980). This power is activated through the knowledges produced by professional, managerial and administrative institutions and managed through processes of surveillance, classification and normalisation. Foucault has explained how disciplinary power ‘infiltrates’ ‘social bodies’ by evoking the idea of its ‘capillary action’.

But in thinking of the mechanisms of power, I am thinking rather of its capillary form of existence, the point where power reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives. (Foucault, 1980:39)

The outcome of the operation of such power is the production of what Foucault called ‘docile bodies’ (Foucault, 1979:138). Although Foucault never explored the possibility of the gendered nature of this disciplinary power, feminists like Bartky (1998) and Bordo (1997) have extended his analysis in this direction. These feminists have described how, as a consequence of the operation of disciplinary power, women have internalised patriarchal standards of bodily acceptability which they perpetually ‘self police’ (Bartky, 1998:41). This process contributes to the (re)production of such patriarchal standards. Similarly, research into classroom practice by Middleton describes both how teachers’ and students’ embodied sexuality are regulated by the disciplinary power of knowledge (Middleton, 1998)15.

Young heterosexual women’s embodied sexuality has been addressed by WRAP, who examined the sexual attitudes and behaviours of 150 young women in London and Manchester (Holland et al, 1991). When theorising their findings the authors utilised the terminology, ‘embodied’ and ‘disembodied sexuality’ to describe how the institution of heterosexuality affects young women’s relationship with their bodies. They discovered that many young women in their study were disembodied, this was evident from their lack of talk about bodies and pleasurable feelings. Also:

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15 In this book Middleton examines the way in which ‘the body’ is experienced within the school setting. Using a Foucauldian analysis she reveals how students and teachers ‘police each other’s outward appearance, deportment, and behaviour’ in a way that suggests the capillary action of power flows through all parts of the school’s ‘corporate body’. Middleton links
Young women are under pressure to construct their material bodies into a particular model of femininity which is both inscribed on the surface of their bodies, through such skills as dress, make-up and dietary regimes, and disembodied in the sense of detachment from their sensuality and alienation from their material bodies (Holland et al, 1994a:4).

One young women (Tina) in WRAP's study had a 'critical consciousness of the embodiment of [her] sexuality' and in her relationships experienced pleasure and desire positively (Holland et al, 1998: 141). This young woman was not detached from the possibilities of her body through male definition of the sexual encounter. Instead, her sexual experiences could be interpreted as disruptive of this process. Other papers from WRAP demonstrated that this young woman was an exception to the rule and that on the whole, young women's experience of sexual intercourse was determined by what WRAP have theorised as 'the male in the head'16. (Thompson, 1991; Roberts et al, 1995; Holland et al, 1996, Holland et al, 1998). We know very little about how young women become disembodied or embodied and whether or not this is a gendered process. How these states are experienced by young women and what effect these states have on their corporeal pleasure within the context of heterosexual relationships are all issues which require further empirical investigation.

Work on the sexual inscription of bodies and a theorisation of female sexuality as embodied/disembodied is very useful in describing how discursive and material practices shape the body and its possibilities within a given context. What is missing from both types of work however, is a theorisation of the body as subject of discursive and material practices. That is a notion of the body as possessing an agency of its own. Both conceptualisations constitute the body as subject to discursive and material forces without defining the role of the body in this process. For instance, predominant educational, economical and political discourses of the period with the disciplining of sexuality and bodies within the context of schools.

16 'Male in the Head' is a theoretical concept WRAP employ to describe the 'asymmetry, institutionalisation and regulatory power of heterosexual relations' (Holland et al, 1998:171). 'Male in the Head' posits masculinity as heterosexuality so that it is 'male power' rather than a dualism of male/female engagement which dictates heterosexual relations.
Foucault’s proposition that the body is ‘inscribed’ and ‘docile’ insinuates that the body is life-less flesh, or raw material playing an inert role in the inscription process. This seems to deny the agency of the body and the way it may in fact engage with disciplinary power.

Evidence of the body’s agency might be seen in the way that ‘the physical manifestation of material bodies disrupts the disciplined disembodiment of femininity - it connects the disconnection between the ideal and physical - between what Adrienne Rich has called ‘the body’ and ‘my body” (Holland et al, 1994a:11). This was illustrated by one young women in the WRAP study who having regularly faked orgasms with her current boyfriend, suddenly experienced one (Holland et al, 1991). Despite her collusion in defining sexual activity in terms of men’s desires and satisfaction, her material body ‘betrayed her’ in snatching physical pleasure. The importance of theorising the body as a subject of disciplinary power resides in the possibilities it offers young women to experience physical desire and pleasure. For years dominant discourses of female sexuality have insisted the clitoris an inferior version of the penis. Lacan’s reference to the clitoris as ‘a little penis’ and his assertions about female frigidity as ‘...a definite symptomatic disturbance of sexual life in women’ have contributed to ideas about women’s physiological ‘lack’ (Mitchell and Rose, 1982:129). Only a theory of the body as subject of disciplinary practices which recognises the complex engagement of material bodies and discourse can avoid such essentialism, and consider what the potentials of women’s physical pleasure might be.

Grosz is one of the first feminists to reconceptualise the body and subjectivity in ways that suggest material agency. She argues that three main assumptions have underpinned writing by feminists about sexuality and the body, even if these assumptions have not been explicitly articulated. Feminists as diverse as Beauvoir (1953), Wollstonecraft (1982) and Firestone (1971) understood the body simply as biologically determined and as such, a burden which women must conquer in order to evade predetermined gender roles and attain equality with men (Grosz, 1994:16). In
contrast, contemporary feminists who have been influenced by ‘social constructionism’ argue that there is no ‘real’ biological body but only the ways in which social processes organise and give meaning to the body. Proponents of this view assume a pre-discursive body which ‘acts as the raw materials for inculcation and interpellation into ideology’ (Grosz, 1994:17). This set of assumptions is expressed by contemporary feminists like Irigaray (1985), Cixous (1990), Gallop (1988) and Butler (1990) who focus on the concept of ‘sexual difference’. They assume the body is not a neutral screen or tabula rasa onto which femininity and masculinity are haphazardly projected (Grosz, 1994:18). Rather the body is understood as ‘sexually specific, coding the meanings projected onto it in sexually determinate ways’ (Grosz, 1994:18). In this conceptualisation, the body is not simply raw material or pre-discursive biology but is comprised of a complex ‘cultural interweaving and production of nature’ (Grosz, 1994:18). Such assumptions seek to undermine the mind/body dichotomy and are cautious of the concept of a sex/gender system.

Grosz appears to have situated her evolving theory about the body in such contemporary understandings. A fundamental principle of her theory is the necessity of escaping the limitations of a Cartesian split, which posits a binary and hierarchical understanding of mind/body. For Grosz, the mind and body are best exemplified through the metaphor of the mobius strip:

....the mobius strip creates both an inside and an outside. Tracing the outside of the strip leads one directly to its inside without at any point leaving its surface. The depth, or rather the effects of depth, are thus generated purely through the manipulation, rotation, and inscription of the flat plane - an opposite metaphor for the undoing of dualism (Grosz, 1994:116 -117).

In this model, mind and body are not separate entities but flow indistinctly into one another, merging their two identities in a way that simultaneously creates surface area and an illusion of depth. This conceptualisation enables subjectivity to be understood as a material/bodily reality, which is inextricably tied to the interiority of a psychical world. This type of thinking has interesting implications for my own work which are demonstrated below. In order to
highlight these it is necessary to provide an account of how female physical
pleasure has previously been understood by some feminists.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the feminist movement called for women to
revel in their 'feminine sexuality' thus freeing them from the patriarchal
restraint preventing them from experiencing sexual desire and pleasure
(Segal, 1994). Implicit here was the idea women had been seduced by
patriarchal ideology\textsuperscript{17} into believing they were less desiring and easily
pleasured when the 'real' female body was none of these things. The
'solution' was women's increasing awareness or conscientisation of
processes of patriarchal domination and subsequently the discovery of their
'true feminine sexual selves'. In other words, if the mind could throw off the
chains of ideology, then the body could be experienced in its 'natural' and
uninhibited glory. However, 25 years later feminist research\textsuperscript{18} reveals
many young women still only experience minimal desire and pleasure in their
heterosexual relationships. This gives further support to the idea that more
complex processes are at work in affecting bodily desire and pleasure than
initially perceived.

Evidence from research seems to support Grosz's theory that mind and body
are not separate entities caught in a binary which privileges the latter over the
former. If this were so, then women's minds (armed with the knowledge of
'men's domination of their bodies) could have overcome 'the failure' of their
'repressed bodies' to experience desire and pleasure. It appears that
dominant discourses about female sexuality are not simply inscribed onto the
body and removed by new knowledge accessed by the mind. Instead it
seems the body plays an active part (inextricably bound with that of the mind)
in women's lived reality as seemingly less desiring and less easily pleasured
than men. The question left then is, what part does the body play in young

\textsuperscript{17} A literal translation of the term 'patriarchy' means 'rule of the fathers'. According to radical
feminism it is a system of male domination and women's oppression which structures all
elements of women's and men's lives (Jones, 1990:134).

\textsuperscript{18} Examples of research revealing young women do not find sexual activity particularly
pleasurable are Thompson (1990), Thomson and Scott (1991), Lees (1993), Hillier et al,
women’s experience of desire and pleasure and how does it play it? How is it that some young women experience their bodies as less desiring and easily pleasured than they might otherwise be?

The indistinguishability of mind and body and how they operate is only partially formulated by Grosz. In developing her ideas she draws on the work of phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty (1962) who has also adhered to the principle of the interrelatedness of mind and body. Rather than understanding the human subject as a mind housed within a body, Merleau-Ponty presented the body as the site through which the subject receives and perceives information about the world (Grosz, 1994:86). The world can only be known through the body’s interaction with it. It provides the situation or perspective through which information is received and meaning generated. As Grosz explains, it is ‘sense-bestowing’, and ‘form-giving’, providing a structure, organisation, and ground within which objects are situated and against which the body subject is positioned' (Grosz, 1994:87). As such, the mind and body are inextricably connected in the process of knowing and being. However, in talking about the body as producing knowledge in this way, Merleau-Ponty referred to a sexless/gender neutral subject, something which Grosz considers highly problematic. In response, she draws on the thoughts of feminists advocating a theory of sexual difference (such as those mentioned above) to extend this aspect of body theory.

In her book Volatile Bodies, Grosz argues that bodies are already encoded surfaces of inscription with specific modes of materiality that must be taken into account. She demonstrates this by claiming the same message ‘inscribed on a male and a female body will not usually have the same meaning or result in the same text (Grosz ,1994:156). This idea stands in direct contrast to the notion that bodies become sexed through differential social inscription. However, it is not clear what this theory might mean in terms of understanding experiences of young women’s and men’s desire and pleasure. If bodies are seen to be already encoded surfaces of inscription does this imply women and men’s bodies are equipped with particular types of potential response to
discursive inscription of desire and pleasure depending on their sex? As such, they could only give meaning to discourses about desire and pleasure in certain ways. Indeed, already there appear to be examples in existing research which support this view. For instance, work conducted by Lees (1993) described how dominant discourses of promiscuity have different meanings and consequences for young women and men. When a young heterosexual man is seen to be promiscuous, the implication is that he is 'a stud'. When a young woman is perceived as promiscuous however, this is more likely to carry a negative set of meanings and consequences. She may be constituted as a 'slut', insinuating a low level of morality and offering 'easy sexual access' for men. This inscriptive discourse has distinctly different consequences and produces varying meanings depending upon the sexed body with which it engages. What we need to know is whether there are other instances in which this transpires?

If sexed bodies only enable women and men to produce subjectively discursive meaning in a certain way, then there appears to be little agency or room for change in these experiences. Grosz does not explain the limit and potential of the encoded surface of sexed bodies and consequently constructs an unchanging and disempowered subject. The engagement of discourses with the body's encoded surface necessitates further exploration. If the body is, as Grosz proposes, 'resistant' then we need to understand this resistance in relation to discursive practices.

Another dimension of Grosz's evolving theory of the body entails a concept contrived by Lacan (1953) - the imaginary anatomy. The imaginary body is 'an internalised image or map of the meaning that the body has for the subject, for others in its social world' and for a culture (Grosz, 1994:39). This map is created by the ego and begins to emerge at the mirror stage when the child recognises itself as distinct from the (m)other. The ego represents an 'internal screen' on to which images of the body's outer surface are projected. These images are derived from both surface bodily sensations and interior (or psychical) intensities and affects. Such images are perceptual, causing the
ego to produce an imaginary outline or projection of the body which is not necessarily based on actual anatomy. The shape in which the imaginary line is drawn depends partly on the subject's libidinal investment in various parts of the body. Regions of the body that have greater libidinal intensity for the subject will be more prominent than those that do not. With the psychical and physiological change their body undergoes in everyday actions and performances, this body image shifts and alters.

Examples of the presence of the imaginary anatomy have been taken from medical practice. During the First World War doctors observed the phantom limb syndrome in nearly every amputee patient (excluding the intellectually handicapped and children under 7 years) (Grosz, 1994:70). The amputated limb continued to induce sensations of pain for the patient in the space it once occupied. This was seen to indicate that patients possessed a psychical image of their body which was capable of influencing their experiences of 'actual' anatomy. Similarly, a more contemporary example is that of the anorexic or bulimic who upon viewing her/his body in the mirror sees it as considerably larger than the body's real physical mass. The feeling of 'fatness' created by this perception and its inducement to reduce food intake implies the presence of a psychically invested 'imaginary anatomy' which has 'real' consequences for the material body.

Influenced by Lacan's work, Merleau-Ponty has extended the idea of an 'imaginary anatomy' to the notion of a corporeal or postural schema. This schema explains how the body 'knows' the field of its muscular and skeletal actions independently of a mental knowledge of the body's physiological functioning. For instance, subjects do not usually think about the detailed mechanical performance required by the body to give someone a hug, before they execute this action. The body performs this action because it has a schema or field of 'possible actions, plans for action and maps of possible movements the body 'knows' how to do'(Grosz, 1994:95). This schema is fluid and dynamic with its potential constantly expanding with the body's accommodation and incorporation of other objects and bodies.
The imaginary body offers a way of extending WRAP's analysis about young women's disembodiment by providing an explanation of the process by which this may occur. This requires we move beyond the realms of psychoanalytic theory in which the notion of the imaginary body is set out by Grosz in her book (1994). The imaginary body can be understood as an inextricable combination of elements of the subject's investment in the body and discursive/social inscription. Therefore young women's (and men's) imaginary bodies I want to argue, can be seen to be shaped by discursive practices in the exterior world. Thus, discourses which constitute women as less desiring and not as easily pleasured as men contribute to the formation of a subject's imaginary anatomy and their experience of their body as 'lived'. We require empirical investigation in order to find evidence of the imaginary body and what effect it might have on the corporeal experiences of pleasure for young people.

2.2.2 Compulsory Heterosexuality: Pleasure and Danger

I now turn to the second major theme of feminist research on sexuality - the analysis of heterosexuality. Du Plessis has argued that attention to theorising heterosexuality was marked by the controversies surrounding the special issue on 'Heterosexuality' put together by Wilkinson and Kitzinger for the journal Feminism and Psychology in 1993 (DuPlessis, 1997:3). In this volume, the editors questioned whether heterosexual women had a political identity (Kitzinger et al, 1992). They were responding to recent work which theorises heterosexuality as a structuring principal of society operating to 'naturalise' heterosexual experiences as 'the norm'. As Richardson (1996:2) explains, 'Heterosexuality is institutionalised as a particular form of practice and relationships, of family structure, and identity. It is constructed as a coherent, natural, fixed and stable category; as universal and monolithic'. As such, heterosexual identity is taken for granted or as Rich (1978) states, it is 'compulsory' so that the meaning of what it is to be heterosexual is rarely acknowledged or scrutinised.
To begin with, those most interested in defining a heterosexual identity were women who were not heterosexual. Amidst debates about the levels of oppression faced by women in the 1970s and how to define 'a feminist', lesbians drew attention to the assumption that women had heterosexual identities (Rich, 1978). Some described maintaining sexual relations with men and supporting the women's movement as incompatible goals, representing collusion with the (male) enemy (Jones and Guy, 1992). Dedication to women's causes meant being 'a woman identified woman' and this was seen by some to extend to sexual preference (Rich, 1978). In this context, heterosexual women were forced to reflect upon how having sexual relations with men defined their social and feminist identities.

The feminist interest in heterosexuality centred around how patriarchy operated in ways that made the sexual experiences of heterosexual women inherently inequitable. It was thought that as a result of sex-role socialisation, male sexuality was aggressive, violent, and preoccupied with self-gratification while women's sexuality was repressed into submissive reception of men's sexual dominance (Mackinnon, 1996). Some argued that men's violent sexual nature was apparent from the fact they were the primary perpetrators of rape and incest (Rich, 1978). Because of women's socialisation and the operation of patriarchy, heterosexual encounters were thought to be defined in ways that served and reproduced men's interests exclusively.

Within this framework of heterosexual activity, women are unlikely to experience sex as pleasureable, and if they do, this is a consequence of 'eroticised power difference'. According to Jeffreys, 'heterosexual desire is formed out of, and requires for its excitement and continuance, the subjection of women' (Jeffreys, 1996:76). It is the construction of 'gender difference' where by male dominance resides over female powerlessness which incites sexual excitement, and in so doing, contributes to the reproduction of patriarchy (Morgan, 1975). Feminists, like Mackinnon, have argued that sexuality does not merely contribute to women's oppression but 'sexuality is to feminism what work is to Marxism'. Sexual objectification was defined as
the primary process of women’s ‘subjection’ (Mackinnon, 1996:182). As a result of this analysis, research and writing focused on the dangers of sex and sexuality for women. This led to the production of a wealth of literature on sexual violence against women (Lees, 1997), sexual coercion (Gavey, 1992), degrading pornography (Dworkin, 1981) and the risks associated with prostitution (Jordan, 1991).

Other feminists have balked at this emphasis on danger and while acknowledging the negative, traumatic and often life threatening circumstances which women confront as a result of institutional heterosexuality, have sought to defend its pleasures. Vance encapsulates some of their diverse motivations when she cautioned that an ‘exclusive focus on sexual danger is’ (somewhat ironically) ‘perilous’.

It makes women’s actual experience with pleasure invisible, overstates danger until it monopolizes the entire frame, positions women solely as victims, and doesn’t empower our movement with women’s curiosity, desire, adventure, and success. The notion that women cannot explore sexuality until danger is first eliminated is a strategic dead-end (Vance, 1992a:xvii).

Similarly, Ryan argues that feminists who have focused exclusively on sexual danger prevent women’s exploration of sexual autonomy because ‘..women are trapped into confining their sex lives within ‘safe’ limits’ (Ryan, 1988:25). The discursive and political power of this is to (re)produce the same disciplinary effect as ‘male’ surveillance of female sexuality.

Those feminists who have researched and celebrated female sexual pleasure began their crusade in the mid 1980s (DuPlessis, 1997). Some of this early writing professed that the sexual revolution had enabled women to become more assertive in the expression of their sexual desires and more determined to secure sexual satisfaction (Ehrenreich, Hess and Jacobs, 1987)\(^\text{19}\). Ehrenreich, Hess and Jacobs were found to be amongst the earliest to claim women’s right to the recognition and expression of sexual desire and

\(^{19}\) Reservations about how much sexual freedom women actually had in the sexual revolution have been expressed by Jeffreys (1990) in her book *Anti-Climax*. 
pleasure. Vance’s collection, *Pleasure and Danger* (1992) also sought to contribute to a feminist politics of pleasure by comprising papers that explored ‘eroticism and taboo’ (Webster, 1989) and the pleasures of voyeurism for women (Gordon, 1989). Similarly Cartledge and Ryan’s book entitled *Sex and Love: New thoughts on Old Contradictions* drew attention to female pleasures in what they call heterosex. Typically this early work sought reparation for the strong emphasis placed by other feminists on sexual danger, concerning itself instead with acknowledging rather than theorising heterosexual pleasure.

Current feminist analyses of female sexual pleasure have pursued a theorisation of heterosexuality that avoids the tendency to constitute male power as essentially monolithic and repressive and in which heterosexual penetration signifies male dominance and female submission. Hollway (1993) for example, argues that pleasure for women in heterosex is not simply eroticised power difference and that feminists who claim this do not take account of the pleasure of:

the experience of having someone you love and want inside you. If there is safety, trust and love in the relationship, having the man’s penis inside your vagina can signify as the ultimate in closeness. It breaches the separation from another which is symbolized by the separation of our bodies......(Hollway, 1993:414).

Segal also argues the pleasures of safe sex which ‘move beyond conventional narratives’ of the active/possessive penis and receptive/submissive vagina (Segal, 1994). Articulating her arguments against the backdrop of so called ‘queer theory’20, Segal proposes we concentrate on a theory of gender that does not define itself in terms of the opposition between men and women but rather ‘the mutual recognition of (their) similarities and differences’ (Segal, 1994:317). Similarly, Duplessis (1997) argues for a shift in focus away from gendered identities which define

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20 ‘Queer theory’ is founded in ‘queer politics’ and is deconstructive of categories and subjectivities. It offers a critique of the heterosexual assumptions of some feminist theory. It is inextricably tied to rethinking concepts such as ‘sex’ and ‘gender’ as epitomised in the work of Butler (1990). As McIntosh (1997) explains the term ‘queer’ is ‘a form of resistance, a refusal of labels, pathologies and moralities. It is defined more by what it is against than what it is for. Its slogan is not ‘get out of my face’...but rather ‘in your face’... (McIntosh, 1997:365).
heterosexuality as the sexual practices which transpire between subjects. Citing Smart, she argues for 'the decoding of acts as heterosexual and the recording of (sexual) acts as ambivalent'. Penetration she argues 'should not be interpreted as inevitably symbolic of male activity and female passivity any more than penetration between women should be interpreted as inevitably imitative of conventional heterosexuality' (Duplessis, 1997:9). In this context it is not the person who one has sex with which is seen as important, but rather it is the practice itself which defines the encounter.

This kind of theorisation offers an escape from the limitations of understanding heterosexual practices as simply oppressive and negative for women. Instead it opens up possibilities for the exploration of pleasure and desire between women and men that is not detrimental to either party. The importance of examining this aspect of young people's heterosexual experiences has been highlighted by Tolman and Higgins (1994). Without this knowledge, some may be uncertain about what kind and how much physical activity they wish to engage in, and be coerced into something they did not want. These researchers argue that, when a young woman has a sense of her own desire and what she finds pleasurable, she is better equipped to determine sexual situations (Tolman and Higgins, 1994).

Despite this important finding and arguments for developing a politics of female pleasure, very little has been written about young women's pleasure (Holland et al, 1996). Research which focusses on the operation of male power has contributed to a tendency amongst feminist analyses to suggest heterosex is mostly not satisfying and disappointing for young women (Thompson, 1990; Thomson and Scott, 1991). Subsequently we know little

\[21\] While this has radical implications for destabilising all sexual identities and recognising the diversity of practices both subordinating or empowering, I have some reservations. How do we understand the relationship between gender and sexual practices? Moreover, how do we understand anatomically different bodies in relation to sexual practices? Although there is no inherent reason as to why materially different bodies are invested with particular meanings, such meanings adhere and have consequences for the experience of sexual practice. In addition, how probable is it that our society could undergo such a vast linguistic and social reconceptualisation of sexual practice?
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about what young women find pleasurable about sexual activity in any detail. While popular discourse informs us that adult women prefer emotional intimacy and foreplay to sexual intercourse, we do not know if this is true for young women. Neither do we know how young women experience corporeal pleasure, that is, what contexts and subjectivities are necessary for this experience? There is also little understanding of how young women constitute their experiences of pleasure, (or lack of it), how do they frame their articulation of pleasure and why? The importance of answering these questions lies in contributing to a feminist politics of sexual pleasure that at the very least offers young women a sense of the possibilities of their desire and pleasure and material satisfaction.

In order to explore sexual pleasure and desire between young women and men and recognise this positively, it is necessary to extend our understanding of gendered (hetero)sexual subjectivities which diverge from young men as sexual aggressors and young women their 'passive victims'. A recent shift in theorising heterosexuality has been to recognise it as encompassing a multiplicity of identities (Butler, 1990; Smart, 1996; Segal, 1994). In this vein, Hollway reveals the plurality and complexity of women and men’s heterosexual subjectivities by proposing subjects take up positions in three sexual discourses; the 'male sex drive discourse', the 'have/hold discourse' and the 'permissive discourse' (Hollway, 1984).

The first step in moving beyond a fixed heterosexual subject is to recognise the diversity within this identity and potential variance and complexity of sexual practices it can encompass. While we have ample evidence of

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22 Holland et al., (1996) is an exception here mentioning that some young women in their sample did experience sexual pleasure and desire in positive ways. They theorise this finding in Holland et al., (1994b) and Holland et al., (1998).
23 See next section for implications of exploration of sexual pleasure for young men.
24 These discourses represent the way in which people make sense of their sexuality. The 'male sex drive' discourse is based on essentialist views about men's biological 'need' for sex. Subsequently men are seen as sexually predatory while female sexuality is constituted as perpetually receptive. Within the 'have/hold discourse' sex is perceived as belonging in enduring relationships, with women's supposed lack of sexuality compensated by the relationship. Men still have an active sexuality in this discourse. The 'permissive discourse' makes subject and object positions equally available to each gender, so that sexuality is seen as 'natural' for both women and men. (Patten and Mannison, 1998). Hollway appeals to psychoanalytic theory and the influence of the individual's history of social and emotional relations as predictors of subject positioning within these discourses.
coercive (Patten and Mannison, 1998), violent (Koss et al, 1987) and unwanted heterosexual practices (Gavey, 1992) endured by women, we have no empirical evidence of heterosexual practices that are not exploitative and produce considerable pleasure for each gender. There is also little detailed understanding of the negotiation of pleasure in heterosexual relationships, nor how young women might exercise agency in this context (Stewart, 1995, Holland et al, 1996). I would argue therefore that before we can imagine a ‘post-heterosexuality’ and enjoy the agency it might offer, we need to explore more of the spectrum of ‘heterosexual’ subjectivities and practices. With positive and negative potentialities of heterosexual practice both acknowledged, we might then re-conceptualise those practices and subjectivities which are most pleasurable and empowering as ‘post-heterosexual’. That is, having meaning beyond a traditional conceptualisation of heterosexuality as an exclusively repressive institution.

2.3 Theorising masculinities

The third field of study that is relevant to my research is the sociology of masculinity. This research and writing has commonly been referred to as ‘masculinity theory’ and emerged in the 1970s in response to feminist and gay liberation movements which highlighted issues of ‘patriarchy’ and homophobia (Hearn and Morgan, 1990). This literature flourished with an explosion of publications on masculinity in the late 1980s25 which sought to problematise the concept of ‘masculinity’.26 Researchers were critical of previous representations of masculinity27 which constituted masculinity as monolithic and patriarchy as over simplifying gender structures (Connell, 1987). Masculinity theorists argue now that the early work did not take account of the way in which masculinity is constituted at the intersection of ethnicity, class, sexual preference and physical ability, and the differential access to

26 While generally such writing has emerged in alliance with feminist and gay movements a significant amount of it is anti-feminist and homophobic. For example, see the work of Farrell (1986).
27 The portrait of masculinity that emerged from some of this research constituted males as dominating, aggressive/violent, harassers who were emotionally hard and physically overpowering (Dworkin, 1987; Jackson, 1987; Mackinnon, 1996).
power afforded to various masculinities in particular contexts (Mac an Ghaill, 1994).

The rethinking of 'masculinity' by these theorists also involved a reconceptualisation of gender as mutable. That is, masculinities were perceived as socially constructed so that what it means to be masculine varies across any particular moment, historical period and culture (Connell, 1995; Segal, 1990; Brod and Kaufman, 1994). This conceptualisation enabled an understanding of masculinities as fluid and constantly subject to negotiation. Part of this process of negotiation was attributed to the operation of 'hegemonic masculinity' or '...the dominance within society of certain forms and practices of masculinity which are historically conditioned and open to change and challenge' (Hearn and Morgan, 1995:179). The struggle of particular masculinities for dominance in any situation is contingent upon the social power attributed to them. Hegemonic masculinity is the form of masculinity which attains this status. The operation of hegemonic masculinity works in such a way as to re(produce) this struggle so that masculinity is always something which young men must 'achieve' (Arnot, 1984).

The work of masculinity theorists has also revealed that masculinity is a relational concept, whereby understanding what it means to be masculine is inextricably tied to 'the other'. The 'other' being females and those who 'fail' to satiate the masculine 'ideal'. In order to be 'appropriately' heterosexual and masculine, males must distinguish themselves from 'the other', rejecting all that is feminine (and homosexual). Consequently, the characteristics of hegemonic masculinity represent the inversion of those associated with female heterosexual subjectivities (Chodorow, 1978). It is through this attainment of hegemonic forms of masculinity that researchers argue that young men exercise power over women (Holland et al, 1993).

This was demonstrated in the Men Risk and AIDS Project (MRAP) where the sexual attitudes and behaviours of young men in relationships were seen to be often organised around their struggle to attain an 'appropriate' masculine
identity. This 'achievement' can mean the difference between being popular with male peers and treated 'normally' by society, or experiencing ostracism and discrimination from these groups. Part of the struggle for 'appropriate' masculinity is not leaving oneself vulnerable to ridicule from others (usually peers), by failing to satisfy 'idealised male' standards. Consequently, talking amongst peers about sexual exploits as a means of displaying their sexual potency, or having sex with a young woman and then leaving her, were behaviours MRAP documented as enabling participants to conform to 'being a real man' (Holland et al, 1993). Entering into the realm of a sexual relationship leaves young men vulnerable to failure, yet their strategies for avoiding this 'reproduce and reinforce the exercise of male power over women' (Holland et al, 1993:32).

Research on young men's sexual subjectivities which incorporated the above insights from masculinity theory reveals how the young men's sexual behaviour and attitudes are tied to hegemonic masculinity. In a study of eight men aged 21-40 years, researchers uncovered the concept of 'sexual technique' as integral to men's constitution of their sexual subjectivities. For these men, having 'sexual technique' involved possessing sexual knowledge which would guarantee satisfaction for their partners during sexual activity (Waldby, Kippax and Crawford 1993:250). Being 'a good lover' offers another means for men to prove and affirm their sexual proficiency to themselves and others, and may have little to do with concern for a partner's pleasure. In fact, research into young women faking orgasm revealed that some felt pressured into implying sexual experiences were pleasurable, in order to foster a 'successful' heterosexual male identity (Roberts et al, 1995). This phenomenon supports MRAP's conclusion that young men's strategies for coping with vulnerability and their attainment of dominant forms of masculinity means that male power is exerted over and against women's interests.

Most contemporary literature concerned with male sexual subjectivities and heterosexual practice contributes to an understanding of the operation of hegemonic male heterosexuality (Rout, 1992; Holland et al, 1994; Redman,
1996; Kippax, Crawford and Waldby, 1994; Waldby et al, 1993; Crawford et al, 1994; Phillips, 1996). This has been essential work in understanding the micro-politics of heterosexual relationships and why men take up sexual subjectivities that give them access to power which has negative consequences for women (and often themselves). While within the operation of hegemonic masculinity, there is acknowledgement that alternative and subordinate masculinities exist, these have predominantly been explored in relation to homosexuality or in specific relation to educational settings (Mac an Ghail, 1994; Redman, 1996; Plummer, 1992). Such research has implied only a limited number of alternative expressions of male heterosexuality with little empirical evidence of how young men experience them and how power works to enable their existence. Examining this aspect of young men’s heterosexual masculinities offers a first step in challenging the operation of hegemonic masculinity.

As theory around hegemonic masculinity currently stands, although the possibility of alternative subject positions is acknowledged, research on youth reports that hegemonic masculinity’s operation is relatively stable. Apart from the work of Davies (1989) and Connell (1995) there is little indication of how alternative sexual subject positions are taken up or the nature of their existence. Typically within research, when a young man takes up a position of hegemonic masculinity within discourses of heterosexuality, this subject position is seen to remain fixed (Phillips, 1996; Rout, 1992). Young men who express traits of hegemonic masculinity are seen to speak from this subject positioning consistently. No theoretical possibility is offered that young men could take up alternative subject positions within the discourse of hegemonic masculinity in the same sentence/moment. In a sense, subject positions of hegemonic male heterosexuality have become solidified losing their fluidity.

28 Work on alternative masculinities in educational settings has been undertaken by Mac an Ghail who has identified student cultures of masculinity in terms of the New Enterprisers with their values of ‘rationality, instrumentalism, forward planning and careerism’ (Mac an Ghail, 1994:63) and the Real Englishmen who valued ‘honesty, being different, individuality and autonomy which they perceived absent from middle class culture’ (Mac an Ghail, 1994:66)


30 This is the case with research by Phillips (1996) where although different types of masculinities are offered men appear to take up one or another in different contexts but never in the same moment.
Without documenting and theorising the instability of hegemonic masculinity and the ability of male subjects to slip into alternative subject positions within and across particular moments, we lose the spaces in which both young men's agency against this hegemony and the possibility of harnessing male power might be realised (Mac an Ghail, 1994; Davies, 1989). For these reasons empirical research within the arena of sexuality, which captures the instability of hegemonic masculinity and its attendant subjectivities is imperative.

2.3.1 Men and embodying/disembodying masculinity

It is perhaps because women have traditionally been aligned with 'the body' and men with 'the mind' (Grosz, 1994) that, despite a burgeoning literature on women's bodies 31, a meagre amount of research focuses on men's bodies. This paucity might also be attributed to unwritten rules that govern the possibilities for men to experience embodiment, such as the 'homosexual connotations' attached to other men touching or looking at them. As Phillips has noted in his history of Pakeha 32 masculinity, the rugby field was the only site in which men could physically express their emotions for each other, without their actions being construed as 'homosexual' (Phillips, 1996). With men's embodiment restricted by discourses of hegemonic masculinity and subsequently not a poignant focus in their own lives, little theoretical analysis has been undertaken around their bodies.

Research which does exist appears to be concerned with the social discursive constitution of men's bodies. A popular theme here is examining the relationship between sport, gender and male bodies and the way in which sporting ideology and discourses of masculinity construct a notion of ideal masculine physicality (Parker, 1996; Kidd, 1987; Majors, 1990; Gilroy, 1989).

31 In addition to literature on the body traversed earlier in the chapter there is also a large amount of quantitative research on body image currently available. For this see Phelps et al, (1993), Bergeron and Senn, (1998), Cohn and Adler, (1992) and Wiederman and Hurst, (1997).

32 Pakeha is Maori for foreigner or white person. In New Zealand it is generally understood as a person from European heritage.
Jefferson, 1998). Other research describes the ways in which masculinity dictates that males maintain an aloofness to their bodies learning to treat them like ‘a machine that functions according to its own laws and principles’ (Seidler, 1997:186; Connell, 1995). Some argue that masculinity operates so as to discourage men from establishing contact with their bodies either by touching or by paying detailed attention to them, so that men do not know their bodies in a way that women are forced too (Seidler, 1997).

Research that deals with the subjective experience of the body or what otherwise might be called men’s embodiment is much rarer than the above studies. One of the few examples of this is work is by Corbett Robertson (1994) who has been concerned with the concepts of ‘embodied’ and ‘enfleshed’. His research explored 150 male undergraduates’ subjective experience and awareness of their bodies. Findings from the questionnaire data revealed overall levels of men’s dissatisfaction with their bodies was low (Corbett Robertson, 1994:72). Another finding revealed the men studied expressed an ‘overwhelming preference’ for an ideal body shape that was ‘hypermesomorphic’ or ‘muscular mesomorphic’, ‘characterised by a well developed chest, rippling arm muscles and a washboard stomach’ (Corbett Robertson, 1994:70). This finding mirrors research conducted in America about men and women’s perceptions of an ideal body shape (Lindner, et al 1995). In each of these studies, the body shape young men express a preference for, mirrors hegemonic masculinity’s concern with the exertion of male strength and power.

Contemporary research has shied away from how young men feel about their bodies as a result of the effective operation of hegemonic masculinity which renders this question ‘unimportant’. We need a more comprehensive explanation of the relationship between hegemonic masculinity and young men’s subjective experience of their bodies in terms of the way it works to keep them dys-embodied.33 Little is known about the material and discursive practices by which young men become dys-embodied or what consequences

33 Young men’s dys-embodiment is documented and explored in Chapter 6.
they might have, and how these may differ from young women’s experience. How is dys-embodiment detrimental or advantageous to young men’s understandings of their gendered and sexual selves? If we are to provide spaces which enable men to experience the full range of sensuality without guilt or fear of vulnerability we must also understand how those who reveal moments of positive embodiment successfully manage this ‘feeling’.

2.4 Reflections

This chapter has explored three fields of research on sexuality which have offered theoretical and conceptual insight into understandings of young people’s sexual knowledge, sexual subjectivities and heterosexual practices and the relationships between them. In this review I have argued that the theoretical construct of a knowledge/practice ‘gap’ posited by the study of Sex Education and HIV/AIDS fails to recognise young people’s agency and their own constructions of their sexual knowledge, subjectivities and practices. Subsequently, I have proposed a reformulation of the ‘gap’ equation which takes account of these factors.

While feminist theories of sexuality offer detail about men’s power over women in sexual encounters, they lack empirical evidence and theoretical exploration of a positive heterosexual identity for both women and men. This could enable a subjectivity where young women could celebrate and enjoy their own heterosexual desire and pleasure as well as experience sexual agency. For young men, this could involve a sexual subjectivity that allowed them to transgress the constraints of hegemonic masculinity. An exploration of this dimension of heterosexual subjectivity is subsequently required.

Feminist writing around the body has drawn attention to the limitations of Cartesian and essentialist views of corporeality, as well as identifying the bodily states of embodiment and disembodiment. As a comparatively new area of feminist thought however, much work is still required in terms of theorising the body. Further investigation into the processes by which young
people become embodied/disembodied and whether this is a gendered process is imperative. We also know little about the corporeal experience of pleasure for young women and men which constitutes essential information in an examination of their relationship with their bodies and sexual practice.

Hegemonic masculinity is a useful concept for theorising the operation and maintenance of male power. However in order to disrupt it, those spaces and contexts in which it falters, or appears weak, should be uncovered. Some contemporary theorists reify the concept of hegemonic masculinity neglecting the fluidity and diversity of male sexual subject positions it constitutes. Identifying and analysing how young men take up alternative sexual subjectivities will assist in greater understanding of their sexual person and sexual practices. In the next chapter I explain how the research was designed to investigate the issues raised by this review.
Chapter Three

Designing the Project

3.0 Introduction

This chapter describes how the research was designed and implemented. It is divided into four sections, the first of which tackles methodological considerations, locating the research within a post-structural and feminist tradition. The second section describes the research design in terms of the choice of methods, their design, implementation and an evaluation of their effectiveness in relation to the research aims. This section is followed by a consideration of issues of ethics and access, as well as the data analysis employed. The final section of the chapter reflects upon the lived reality of utilising a feminist and post-structural informed methodology and the way my positioning as a young New Zealand woman, of Pakeha heritage and feminist political persuasion, impacted upon data collection.

3.1 Research Methodology

Research on sexuality requires special methodological consideration because as Lee (1993) has noted 'studies of sensitive topics like sexual behaviour raise questions about the kinds of research regarded as permissible in society, the extent to which research may encroach upon people’s lives and the problems of ensuring data quality in dealing with certain kinds of topics' (Lee, 1993:1). To overcome some of these problems sexuality researchers have traditionally employed a diversity of methods. Surveys have been used by researchers wishing to record levels of sexual knowledge (McGill et al, 1989), types of sexual behaviour (Breakwell and Fife-Schaw, 1992) and attitudes to various aspects of sexuality (Denman et al, 1996). Other researchers like Holland et al, (1992) and Rosenthal et al, (1998) have undertaken in depth interviews, in order to provide detailed accounts of
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subject's sexual practices, beliefs and understandings. The latter researchers are interested in producing multi-layered narratives about sexuality in which the complexities of language, context and subject positioning are taken into account.

Feminist research methodologies in the area of sexuality have investigated gendered power relations with regard to issues such as sexual violence (Lees, 1997), prostitution (Hanson, 1996), sexist language (Spender, 1980), lesbianism (Epstein, 1994) and heterosexual relations (Gavey, 1992). A fundamental premise of such work is its commitment to women and the production of findings which will contribute to achieving sexual equality with men. The research methodologies employed in such work reflect a commitment to these objectives through the creation of research contexts which endeavour to promote greater equality between the researcher and researched.

Such feminist research has evoked major debates about the existence of a feminist methodology (Harding, 1987) and how feminist researchers might validate the knowledge produced by their investigations (Stanley, 1990). Standpoint theorists have argued narratives produced by their research, reveal a 'truer reality' because they are derived from women's position of lesser power (Stanley and Wise, 1983). By contrast, feminist relativists have refuted the existence of a 'truer reality' preferring to acknowledge the existence of subjective experiences and the importance of reflexivity in the process of eliciting them (Abbott and Wallace, 1990). This latter stance is informed by post-modernism which displays a scepticism about claims to universal truth/knowledge.

1 This occurs through the recognition that the researcher/researched relationship is potentially exploitative (Oakley, 1981) and that the researcher can attempt to surrender some of this power by trying to allow the researched greater control in the research context, and in the process of writing up the findings (Cotterill, 1992).

2 Harding has proposed a differentiation between the terms 'method' and 'methodology' where methods refer to 'techniques for (or way of proceeding in) gathering evidence' and 'methodology' is a theory of analysis of how research does or should proceed' (Harding 1987:2-3). Using this distinction, Harding has argued there is no such thing as a feminist method, but rather only feminist methodologies.
Increasingly feminist research on sexuality has drawn upon post-structural concerns about knowledge as 'socially constituted, historically embedded, and valuationally based (Lather, 1991:52). The idea that we cannot escape the effect our subjectivities have on our perceptions, nor the way in which particular subjectivities offer vantage points of 'ruling' (Walkerdine, 1984) is taken up by Holland et al, (1998) and Middleton (1998) in their research on sexuality. Middleton for example, uses a Foucauldian analysis of power to reveal how students and teachers 'police each others outward appearance, deportment, and behaviour' in a way that suggests a complex relationship between power and knowledge. Similarly Holland et al, (1994) identify complexity in the processes and mechanisms through which young people construct, experience and define their sexuality and sexual practices. Feminist research influenced by post-modern thought is occupied with questions of positionality, context, language, power and the complex intersecting of these in the production of a mutable social reality.

The stance adopted in this research draws upon the latter two traditions of feminism and post-structuralism but, using a multi-method approach. In order to recognise the contextually specific nature of young people’s narratives and capture their complexity, multiplicity and contradictions, the research employed both quantitative and qualitative methods. An anonymous self completion questionnaire was utilised as a way of overcoming possible feelings of embarrassment, fear and shame associated with issues of sexuality. This meant questions not conventionally asked by researchers could be addressed like, 'how sexy do you think you are?' and 'what parts of your body do you get the most pleasure from?'. One of the limitations of questionnaires however, is their inability to explore details or depth in respondents answers (Denscombe, 1998) and therefore it was necessary to employ other methods for this purpose.

3 Young women (and men) who read women's magazines are accustomed to such questions in the form of quizzes on sexuality which frequently feature in them. This may account for the fact that several young people remarked on the questionnaire's lack of explicitness saying; 'Actually I thought you were going to ask much more personal questions than that' (Q, NAS, Female, 17).
Qualitative methods such as focus groups and individual interviews were seen to elicit more comprehensive and quite different types of narratives from young people. Observation was a possible qualitative method I could have employed, however it was not easily adapted to sexuality research. As I was interested in couple negotiation around sexual decision making, an observational technique would have involved an invasion of privacy and element of voyeurism which I was not comfortable with. As a compromise, subjects were viewed participating in a couple activity and an individual interview. Another qualitative method, focus groups, were also conducted to produce more 'public' narratives about heterosexual relationships within a peer group setting. All of these methods were employed in an exploratory rather than systematic way, due to the impossibility of foreseeing what quality of data would be produced by them.

3.2 Research Design

The multiple method approach was employed in specific sequential form or 'building block' fashion where by each method informed the design of the next. For instance, the focus groups were used to assist the questionnaire design by enabling observation of the kind of language young people used to talk about their relationships. This language was then incorporated into the framing of questions in the questionnaire so that vocabulary was familiar and readily comprehended by young people from different backgrounds. Themes which emerged from preliminary analysis of the open-ended questions in the questionnaire were then used to identify possible topics for discussion within the couple activity and individual interview contexts. The advantage of this sequencing was that it enabled my accumulation of knowledge about young people's language, perceptions and 'culture' around sexual issues.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>ORDER</th>
<th>METHOD</th>
<th>No. SUBJECTS</th>
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| Phase One | Focus Groups | 92 | Schools and Training Opportunity Programmes | • Provided familiarity with youth culture.  
• Identified issues for discussion in other methods | Ability to see how sexual knowledge, subjectivities and practices were constituted in a ‘public’ context and what factors influenced these constructions. | Some topics like sexual pleasure and sexual desire difficult to traverse unless in single sex groups. More difficulty in probing alternative female and male sexual subjectivities. |
| Phase Two | Questionnaire | 411 | Schools and Training Opportunity Programmes | • Enabled identification of patterns across young people’s sexual knowledge, subjectivities and practices. | Provided anonymity so respondents may have been less inhibited about their responses. Efficient way of collecting large amounts of background data. | Did not allow extended exploration of respondent’s answers. The format of closed questions elicited a predictable response from respondents with little room for diversity. |
| Phase Three | Couple Activity | 12 | Schools and Training Opportunity Programmes + Magazine Advert and University Advert | • Observation of individuals as a couple. Their interaction together. | Enabled observation of couple interaction and how they constituted together their relationships, knowledge and practices within the context of the relationship together. | Was not as authentic a situation in which to witness negotiation as might occur outside of the research context. i.e. Decisions were not made in the context of sexual activity. |
| Phase Four | Individual Interview + Pleasure Sheets | 12 (Same participants as Couple Activity) | Schools and Training Opportunity Programmes + Magazine Advert and University Advert | • Opportunity for individual’s own constitution of relationship with out other partner.  
• Enabled individual’s explanation of couple activity.  
• Pleasure Sheet gathered information about young people’s desires for relationships and their experiences of sexual pleasure. | Subjects could elaborate on issues raised in the Couple Activity from their individual perspective. The absence of the other partner ‘freed’ interviewees to speak more openly. As the pleasure sheets were filled out individually they reduced embarrassment around topics of desire and sexual pleasure. | There was no guarantee interviewees said what they actually thought. For example they may have wanted to protect their own or their partner’s sexual reputation and so censored their talk. There was no opportunity to explore in more depth what young people had written on their pleasure sheets. |
This design relied on volunteers at each stage to participate in the focus groups, survey and couple activity and individual interviews. I attempted to tap a range of young people aged 17-19 years (see sampling below) in diverse New Zealand settings (urban/rural, ethnic, socio-economic groups). My aim was to explore the relationships between these young people’s sexual knowledge, sexual subjectivities and sexual practices as constructed by them. I was also interested to investigate how young people’s articulation and experiences of their sexual knowledge, subjectivities and practices were gendered. Below, I detail the research methods utilised in terms of four criteria (a) the purposes of each method in relation to the research aims (b) the method design (c) how the method was conducted (d) the success/limits of the method.

3.2.1 Focus Groups

The focus groups were exploratory on a number of levels. Firstly, they enabled an initial familiarisation with young people’s language and construction of sexuality and heterosexual relationships within a peer group setting. Secondly, they offered insight into themes young people raised in relation to their sexual subjectivities and heterosexual relationship practice which could then be probed more deeply in the individual and couple interviews.

Focus groups were first used by Merton (Merton et al, 1956) to examine the effectiveness of wartime propaganda and have more recently been employed in market research to determine consumer trends (Morgan, 1997:11). They offer a means of accessing in a limited period of time, the ‘breadth’ and ‘variation of opinions’ that a group possesses (Sarantakos, 1998:181). Focus groups are differentiated from more general group interviews by the ‘explicit use of the group’s interaction as research data’ (Kitzinger, 1994:103). As a group context causes subjects to react and respond to each other, focus group’s tendency to invite conflict, humour and debate sheds valuable light on what people think and why.
These elements of focus group discussion were attractive because they suggested a way of examining the place of sexuality in New Zealand youth culture by tapping a variety of opinions quickly. Interaction between subjects could also indicate a sense of what 'was cool' and 'not cool' to say in front of peers, highlighting how young people policed the boundaries of their speech about relationships and the constitution of their sexual subjectivities in a public context. This neatly complemented my methodological concern with exploring how particular narratives were produced in specific contexts and what factors influenced these constructions.

Focus groups were designed in two parts. The first section involved me facilitating discussion around a series of loosely structured open-ended questions about young people’s heterosexual relationships. These questions were asked in the following order:

1. What words or images come to mind when I say a ‘girlfriend/boyfriend’ relationship’?
2. Why do you think that people get involved in relationships?
3. What qualities do you think are important in relationships?
4. How would you describe the kinds of relationships young people get involved in?
5. What do you think young women and men want from sexual relationships?
6. What are some of the best things about being in a relationship?
7. What kind of problems do you think young people experience in sexual relationships?

The purpose of such questions was to obtain a sense of how young people in the sample perceived heterosexual relationships, what was important about them, what problems they experienced and how they constructed and articulated these in a group setting (See Appendix A for Focus Group Schedule).

In the second part of the focus group an activity was set up utilising media images of heterosexual relationships. These images were derived from
teenage magazines, greeting cards and books\(^4\) (See Appendix B). So that young people could relate to these images, care was taken to select pictures which reflected subject's own experiences as far as possible. The aim of the activity was for young people to choose a picture and determine whether or not the messages conveyed about relationships were true, in light of their own experience of relationships or what they knew about them.

This 'deconstruction' of 'media reality' also revealed what young people perceived their heterosexual relationships to 'really be like'. To foster the deconstructive element of the task, pictures were deliberately selected to illustrate both dominant and alternative discourses of heterosexuality. Images portraying dominant discourses of heterosexuality consisted of a couple dancing romantically (B:1); two young people laughing while riding a bicycle tandem (B:4); and, another displayed a couple in passionate embrace (B:6). Images offering alternative messages about heterosexuality revealed a woman reaching through a man and dropping his heart on the floor (B:3); two old age pensioners sitting on a park bench kissing (B:5); and a woman shown as initiator of an embrace (B:2). Offering these alternative representations was an attempt to interrupt conventional meanings which traditionally cohere around heterosexuality. I was also interested to learn how young people would 'read' these alternative texts. The fact that the alternative images took several months to locate is indicative of the structuring presence of normative prescriptions of heterosexuality in our society (Butler, 1990).

A draft schedule of the focus group was piloted with eight students from an inner city Auckland School who bore similar characteristics to those who would participate in the final focus groups (Table 3:6). These subjects commented on what was enjoyable, unclear, difficult or uncomfortable about

the session and revisions were undertaken to modify the delivery and structure of some questions.5

The final focus groups consisted of 5-10 young people (See Table 3:6) who were typically friends, as this was thought to make them feel more comfortable sharing intimacies about heterosexual relationships. With participant’s permission the sessions were tape recorded and anonymity guaranteed through a consent form young people signed before their participation (Appendix C). The sessions were conducted in a variety of settings depending upon available space. School groups usually retired to unused classrooms or unoccupied spaces around the school such as counselling rooms and unused offices. Training Opportunity Programme (TOPS) groups took place in more diverse settings with one session held in football club rooms, two in lunch rooms, several in conference rooms and another at the back of a restaurant. Typically these focus groups lasted for an hour, especially in schools where the day was more structured and students needed to move on to other classes. My role in these focus groups was to strike a balance between allowing subjects to discuss issues they found interesting, yet guiding the conversation in line with the research aims.

I initially stipulated to schools and TOPS that focus groups should be single sex in order to facilitate discussion that might be inhibited by the presence of the other gender. I had considered this methodologically important as several Pacific Islands community members I consulted advised me that young women would be unlikely to speak about sexuality in front of male peers, because of cultural protocols forbidding this.6 Consequently, I was surprised when my first focus group of young women of mixed ethnicities asked ‘Why do we have to be separated from the guys?’ They explained that they would prefer ‘if the guys were here too, because we want to hear what they’ve got to say about this stuff’. Contrary to much feminist work concerning young

5 For instance, it was evident that my initial idea to talk about the images generally was too messy, with everyone talking over each other and discussion flitting from one image to the other without any in depth exploration of issues raised. Subsequently, I modified this part of the session so that each person selected a picture that appealed to them to talk about.
women’s voice and the contexts necessary for its articulation, these young people did not view the presence of males as repressive or inhibiting for them, a mixed group presented the opportunity for assertive questioning (Duelli Klein, 1983). Consequently we held a mixed focus group session afterwards, and with each subsequent focus group I consulted subjects about how they would prefer the gender mix to operate. Without exception, if there was a combination of young women and men at the school or training programme they chose to conduct the discussion in a mixed setting.

An unanticipated benefit of the mixed gender session, which young women in the focus group above had requested, was the agency it appeared to offer them. Rather than this being a focus group in which ‘I’ as researcher studied them, young people utilised the research context as an opportunity to examine each other. The young women especially, wanted to discover what men really thought about relationships and appeared to ‘test’ them in terms of whether they took up subject positions within dominant discourses of male heterosexuality. When subjects reworked the purpose of the focus group in order to learn more about each other, they exercised greater autonomy over the direction of discussion allowing a more equitable share of power between us.

Focus groups served their purpose of highlighting themes in young people’s talk about relationships and revealing the kind of language and constructions they employed in relation to these. After conducting the focus groups I felt confident I had achieved sufficient familiarity with New Zealand youth culture and issues of sexuality, to progress with the other methods.

However, a difficulty which arose within focus groups sessions centred around the research focus on heterosexuality. As the research title and information sheet distributed indicated, participants would be asked to talk about their knowledge and experience of heterosexuality, I did not imagine young lesbians or gays would want to participate in the research. One young

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*For a discussion of issues of female sexuality within the Pacific Island context see Tupola*
lesbian woman did participate however and this excerpt from my research journal expresses some of the tensions and concerns I felt while conducting this session.

.......I was acutely aware of the heterosexual emphasis in this research as a consequence of one of the focus group members identifying herself as a lesbian. It concerned me that this young woman did not say much throughout. When we had finished I handed out a debriefing sheet giving her the opportunity to write down anything she felt she had not, or was not able to say during the discussion. She did not write much however. I felt it was important to talk at some length about why I was concentrating on heterosexuality and highlighting that this did not mean that homosexuality was not as valid or important a research topic. We talked explicitly about 'compulsory heterosexuality' in NZ society and how the images I was showing them reflected this. Emphasising the social constructedness of these images was of course part of the exercise, but I focused on their heterosexual bias in an attempt to affirm this young woman's identity.

Despite my efforts to expose heterosexuality as a 'regulatory fiction' and in doing so validate her lesbian identity, the young woman's relative silence could be interpreted as an indication of her continued unease in this situation (Butler, 1990). Simply exposing the heterosexual matrix which governs New Zealand society did not empower either of us to escape its repressive effects and was not an effective strategy for dealing with this situation. This situation highlighted the fact that I needed a better means of preserving the self esteem of young lesbians and gays who participated in the research, that would have minimised rather than contributed to the difficulties they are forced to negotiate.

Another unanticipated problem with focus groups was that I had not contemplated the possibility that subjects who were currently in a relationship would participate in them with their partner. In one focus group for example, there were two couples, one who having volunteered to take part in the research on Friday had decided to end their six month relationship over the weekend, so that by Monday when the focus group was conducted they were officially no longer a couple. Amazingly, this did not generate a negative or tension filled atmosphere and afterwards 'the couple' commented that the

(1996).
session had enabled them to discuss further their decision and consolidate it in their own minds.

Louisa: So how was it being in the focus group when you had just split up?

Bruce: I actually thought that it would be a bit harder but I've actually found it quite easy to explain. Maybe it's a good thing that...

Lori: You're not on your own.

Bruce: Talking about it and you know you can say those things and know that as soon as you walk out the door you're not going to have a big fight or anything because the other person can accept that... so it's a good thing, I don't think it's a bad thing.

Lori: Yeah.

(FG, AS, 17-18 years)

However, I was sensitised to the high potential for an explosive situation in this session and this made facilitating discussion stressful in a way which is not alluded to by feminists who explore stress as a consequence of research (Reinharz, 1992).

3.2.2 Questionnaires

Questionnaires enabled me to tap on a larger scale than focus groups young people's conceptualisation of their sexual knowledge, subjectivities and practices. Oppenheim (1992) argues that one of the strengths of questionnaires is their ability to collect large volumes of discrete information rapidly. As questionnaires can be distributed to large and diverse amounts of a population relatively quickly, they provided fairly fast and easy access to young people.

A survey enabled me to economically gather information about the average length of relationships, the age at which young people started dating, how many were sexually active and what kind of sexual knowledge they perceived they had. All of this data provided general background patterns about heterosexual relationships, sexual subjectivities and knowledge which could be used to contextualise findings from the in-depth couple interviews.
As Oppenheim (1992) has also noted, a limitation of surveys is that they are less efficient in exploring questions that require subjects to think deeply about their response. While open-ended questions were utilised to increase the likelihood of more thoughtful responses, answers from these were used to point to potential issues for greater exploration in the individual interviews and couple activity. By reviewing the answers to these questions I was able to fine tune questions to ask in the interview and couple activity.

The questionnaire (Appendix D) was divided into three sections, the first covering information about young people's sexual knowledge, the second their sexual subjectivities and the last their sexual practices. Sexual knowledge questions concentrated on aspects of knowledge not traditionally traversed by sexuality researchers such as; whether young people knew how to get what they wanted from a sexual relationship; sexual positions and techniques; as well as if they knew how to avoid unwanted sexual activity. The focus of the sexual subjectivity section was on how young people perceived themselves as sexual people and their perception of their bodies as an extension of this. These questions were aimed at investigating issues of embodiment/desembodiment\(^7\) in order to add empirical evidence to theoretical analyses in this area. Questions on young people’s practice sought to uncover how they negotiated their relationships, how they communicated their desires to a partner and, what their experiences of relationships were. The exact questions are shown under the appropriate headings in the table below.

\(^7\) For definition of these terms see Chapter 6.
### Table 3.2 Survey Questions Under Key Themes

| SEXUAL KNOWLEDGE QUESTIONS | Q.14 Place a T for 'True' or F for 'False' next to the statements according to what you believe.  
| Q.15 At what age did you first learn about sexual intercourse?  
| Q.16 Which things do you feel you are knowledgeable about in relation to sex?  
| Q.17 From which sources have you learned the most about sex?  
| Q.19 Do you think your level of sexual knowledge has affected your relationships or ability to have relationships? |
| SEXUAL SUBJECTIVITY QUESTIONS | Q.20 How would you describe your body? Choose 3 words from the following list.  
| Q.22 How would you describe your sexual desire?  
| Q.23 Circle the number appropriate to what you do least and most with your body.  
| Q.24 What parts of your body do you get the most pleasure from?  
| Q.25 Which best describes your attitude towards sexual activity?  
| Q.27 Choose 2 words that describe how you see yourself as a sexual partner. |
| SEXUAL PRACTICE QUESTIONS | Q.8 Approximately what age were you when you started going out with boyfriends/girlfriends?  
| Q.9 How many girlfriends/boyfriends have you had?  
| Q.10 Are your girlfriend/boyfriends usually older, younger the same age as you?  
| Q.11 How long was your longest/shortest/current relationship?  
| Q.12 Tick the box that applies to you. I have been sexually active with a partner. I have not been sexually active with a partner.  
| Q.28 Do you feel able to control the level and kinds of sexual activities that occur in a relationship with a partner?  
| Q.29 Which do you feel you have the most control over? 1. Kinds of sexual activity. 2. Contraception. 3. How often to have sex.  
| Q.31 What I find pleasurable about sexual activity is......  
| Q.32 What I do not find pleasurable about sexual activity is......  
| Q.33 What I want in a girlfriend/boyfriend relationship is......  
| Q.34 How would you express your desires to a partner you knew well?  
| Q.35 The kinds of disagreements likely to arise in your relationship(s) about sexual activity are...  
| Q.36 Do you practice safer sex?  
| Q.37 Do you use contraceptives? |

When designing the questionnaire I consulted various employees and researchers from Family Planning and Health organisations in New Zealand to determine its suitability for young people. These various experts^8^ offered comments on the questionnaire structure, age and cultural appropriateness of

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^8^ Those consulted also looked at the other methods. They were; two sexuality educators who work for New Zealand Family Planning Association in different regions in New Zealand. A colleague at the University of Auckland from the Pacific Islands who had conducted substantial research within this community. Sexuality educators from Family Life Education Pacifica, who are funded by the Health Funding Authority to work with Pacific Islands communities in South Auckland. Megan Tunks, Maori researcher for the Alcohol and Public Research Unit, Department of Community Health, Auckland School of Medicine.
the questions, vocabulary and question sensitivity towards marginalised
groups such as young homosexuals, bisexuals and lesbians. From these
discussions (and my experience during the focus groups) I realised that, by
concentrating on heterosexuality, I was reinforcing what has already been
described as a regime of 'compulsory heterosexuality' in our society (Rich,
1978). I wanted to acknowledge and validate homosexual relationships by
indicating the questionnaire's focus on heterosexuality did not mean this was
a 'more normal' or 'better' sexual preference. Consequently I drew attention to
this on the questionnaire cover page (Appendix D) and verbally explained to
groups in my introductory speech that the research's focus on heterosexuality
should not overshadow the importance and validity of homosexual
relationships.

The questionnaire was designed to be anonymous in order to contribute to a
sense of privacy offered by the fact it was a self completion exercise with 'no
audience'. This aspect of the survey was an attempt to overcome possible
embarrassment or fears young people might experience in expressing
thoughts about sexuality in the presence of others.

Due to having to seek additional ethics approval (See ethics section below) I
was not technically permitted to pilot the questionnaire myself at the time I
was ready to do so. It was therefore necessary to recruit someone with
access to 17-19 year olds who could legitimately conduct them on my behalf.
An expert working in the area of young people and sexuality agreed to do this
with students from a semi-rural co-educational school.9 After the pilot
completion we met and worked through the questionnaire, question by
question, discussing how each was understood, difficulties that were
encountered with vocabulary and the kinds of questions young people asked
in relation to it. We also discussed general impressions subjects offered
about its length and layout, and revisions were made appropriately.

9 I can not divulge further details as this person wished to remain anonymous for their part in
this research.
I oversaw the questionnaire distribution in most sites, by first arranging the room for private completion of answers, then explaining what the research and completing the questionnaire involved and finally reading the cover page out loud. When the questionnaires had been completed, I collected them and often informally asked young people how they found answering them. In three of the schools and one of the 'Not at School' groups, personal distribution was not possible because of a school's/TOP'S isolated geographical location or an overly congested training/school schedule. On these occasions the teacher/programme co-ordinator conducted the distribution, emphasising to young people that questionnaires would not be read by teachers and in some cases providing envelopes in which completed forms could be sealed. These were then posted to me for analysis.

A survey was especially useful for collecting large amounts of descriptive data from young people about their sexual subjectivities, knowledge and practices. Problems in the design of this method arose however around issues of anonymity.

While I had considered privacy as paramount for the successful conduct of this method, in actuality questionnaire completion was often an animated and interactive activity with groups of young women especially, discussing how they felt about their bodies, who they would and would not count as a 'real boyfriend' and what parts of their partners they found most sexually appealing. The nature of these discussions was not necessarily to confer, but questions appeared to elicit their interest and spark conversations that might transpire in peer groups.

On first encountering this lively reaction I was worried answers would be biased and 'invalidate' the research, and I toyed with diplomatically suggesting subjects move away from their friends. However, listening to these conversations I realised they provided rich data about young people's constitution of sexual subjectivities. For instance, one young man completing the questionnaire whispered to his friend 'Geez there aren't enough spaces
for me to write what bits of my partner’s body I like’ then they both sniggered and set about debating which were the three ‘nicest’ bits. This was an interesting insight into the constitution of male sexual subjectivities which did not feature prominently in focus group discussion perhaps because I was a young woman (See Section 3:5). I decided therefore not to stymie such conversation and instead recorded it informally in my journal as part of the research data.

Another problem around anonymity emerged when the teacher distributed the questionnaire. This may have caused some participants to censor what they wrote because within the school structure teachers exercise a status that can be intimidating or prohibitive of student actions. Some students may have been anxious that teachers would scrutinise their answers and that this would have negative consequences for them. For instance, in response to the question ‘what I find pleasurable about sexual activity’, one young woman from a school where the teacher had collected the questionnaire wrote, ‘nothing you are going to find out about’. No other subject expressed this kind of answer in any of the other questionnaires distributed by teachers, however there is no way of determining if others censored what they wrote in less explicit ways.

3.2.3 Researching Couples

The couple activity was aimed at understanding the interaction of individuals in the context of a heterosexual relationship. Its specific purpose was to reflect upon how they interacted together and how they portrayed their sexual decision making as a couple. This method was exploratory due to a lack of other research models involving couples which could be successfully adapted to this study. To elicit the information required, I settled on a combination of firstly, an activity which the couple participated in together, followed by an interview conducted with each partner separately.
The activity involved them sorting cards with a series of phrases about their relationship, sexual subjectivities and knowledge into piles under three possible headings: ‘Often happens or happened in our relationship’, ‘sometimes happens or happened in our relationship’ and ‘never happens in our relationship’. The card phrases centred around issues identified by young people participating in the focus groups as points of contention in relationships. These issues cohered around condom use, one partner not wanting to engage in sexual activity or particular kinds of sexual activity, communication and subjective feelings about knowledge and the body.

| Card A. | We don’t always agree about issues surrounding sexual activity. |
| Card B. | Decisions about sexual activity are made equally between us. |
| Card C. | Sexual activity is talked about before it takes place. |
| Card D. | One person wants sexual activity to take place and the other one doesn’t. |
| Card E. | One person wants to try a new sexual activity and the other one doesn’t. |
| Card F. | One partner doesn’t always find sexual activity pleasurable. |
| Card G. | Disagreement occurs over who is going to buy the condoms. |
| Card H. | Safer sex and contraception are talked about before we have sex. |
| Card I. | One person asks the other if they want to start a sexual relationship, the other person is unsure about wanting this. |
| Card J. | How each or one of us feels about our body, influences sexual activity in our relationship. |
| Card K. | One partner feels that the other partner knows a bit more about sexual activity than they do. |

Having them decide the placement of cards together provided an opportunity to see how they interacted as a couple and when indecision or conflict arose over placement of the cards, how this was negotiated. Recording this information did not involve systematic observation and was more of an

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10 I noted such things as who took the lead in the decision making process, who spoke more and handled the cards the most. What eye contact and body language occurred between them, who initiated it and at what times during the session? Did they confer together, or direct most of their conversation to me?
informal process, noted on scrap paper as the activity progressed. The main function of the activity was to see where couples placed the cards, an action which offered insight into their construction of negotiation and decision making around sexual issues in their relationship. It must be noted that viewing the couple's interaction in this setting was not the same as being present when a sexual decision was made in the course of the relationship.

The second element of the couple session consisted of an individual interview with each of the partners. The decision to interview each partner individually after the activity, aimed to provide an opportunity to revisit what they had said or had done in the activity context. This allowed them to explain why they agreed or disagreed with their partner, in a context where they were uninhibited by that person's presence. It also enabled exploration of those issues which arose in the activity that were not fully examined, or which I wanted to understand more comprehensively. Through comparison with the couple activity transcripts, the individual interview offered an analysis of how a subjects' representation/constitution of her/his sexual subjectivity was modified in the presence of the other partner.

Questions in the individual interview were designed to cover the three main themes of the research. After a warm up exercise (See Appendix E) the first set of questions concerned what sexual activity they had engaged in with their current partner, at what point in the relationship this had commenced, how they had made the decision to engage in it, their general feeling of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with such activity and the importance of it within the relationship. The next question set revolved around sexual subjectivity and how they perceived themselves as sexual people and their relationship with their bodies. Finally, in an endeavour to probe how they perceived the relationship between their knowledge and practice I asked about their perception of their sexual knowledge and what influence they felt this had on their sexual practice.

11 See Appendix E for Individual Interview Schedule.
A last element of this method was the completion of a ‘Pleasure Sheet’. This sheet was a checklist designed to obtain information about what young people found pleasurable about sexual activity (such as kissing, oral and anal sex, masturbation etc) and desirable in terms of relationship satisfaction (security, trust, support, honesty, sexual satisfaction etc). It aimed to provide data which would contribute to a missing discourse of desire which researchers such as Fine (1992) have identified as absent from most sexuality education programmes. While one partner was with me, the other completed a two page checklist, the first page of which asked them what they desired from their current relationship and whether these desires were being met (Appendix F). The next page inquired about types of sexual activity they currently and previously had engaged in and whether these were experienced as pleasurable.

I did not have the luxury of conducting a pilot in which to test and refine the couple activity and individual interviews schedules. This was due to difficulties in accessing young people for this part of the research. As I could only get six couples to participate and this number was considerably lower than I had anticipated, I could not ‘waste’ the participation of one couple for piloting purposes. Instead, I evolved my interviewing technique as I progressed through the first two couples transcribing and analysing the tapes in order to improve my interviewing skills and phrasing of questions before the next one. Fortunately, I found few revisions were needed and debriefing of couples often revealed they had enjoyed the opportunity to take part.

I conducted all of the individual interviews and couple activities. They took place in a variety of settings depending upon where couples felt comfortable and where it was feasible for them to travel in relation to their homes. These sessions were tape recorded with the prior permission of those participating.

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12 See next section on sample and access for explanations of this difficulty.
13 Two of the young couples who lived in my area came to my house. With another couple I went to them and the interview was held in the male partner’s bedroom, while all the other young couples were interviewed in a room that could be hired in the Auckland University Library.
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\(^\text{13}\) Two of the young couples who lived in my area came to my house. With another couple I went to them and the interview was held in the male partner’s bedroom, while all the other young couples were interviewed in a room that could be hired in the Auckland University Library.
Their length ranged between 2-3.5 hours, usually dictated by whether or not other people required the space we were occupying.

Although this method could not tap actual sexual negotiation within the course of the relationship it provided important insights into how each couple constituted their relationship as a couple and in turn how this differed from their portrayal of the relationship as individuals. The technique was exploratory rather than systematic and consequently the data produced needs to be read as insightful, but tentative.

Another positive effect of this method was that despite fears expressed by the Cambridge ethics committee about the potential for conflict between couples in this context (See section below) two subjects commented on its beneficial impact for their relationship. This was revealed when a young woman from one of the participating couples - Ngaire (who had been going out with her partner for 9.5 months), explained how she felt flattered her partner had agreed to take part in the research, as she saw this as indicating his deep felt feelings and commitment to her. She explained:

....I did learn that uhm.... oh the way he feels about me... Probably because uhm he's offered to do this interview. But I've just found it amazing that he's actually said you know oh I really care about her and things like that. Cause...He has said it to me but never to anyone around us you know.
(II, NAS, 19)

Becky, another one of the interviewees in a 3 year, 6 month relationship shared these sentiments, viewing her partner's involvement as a sign of renewed commitment to, and respect for her.

Rather than tension and conflict posing difficulties for the research, I encountered the opposite problem, where subjects were eager to represent their relationship as 'ideal' or 'difficulty free'. This phenomenon was highlighted in the individual interview when I probed how subjects had felt about the way the couple activity had proceeded.
Tim who had been going out with his girlfriend Emma for six months revealed how during the couple activity he had been wary of saying anything which would cause conflict.

Tim: ....yeah my main insecurity was saying stuff when Emma was here you know. Just in case we had a big disagreement (laugh). If I said let's put it here and she said let's put it here and it would be like ah oh (laugh) time for that relationship compromise!

(II, NAS, 19)

Similarly Chris who had been seeing Cam for 3 months disclosed how he had steered away from particular subjects in order to avoid uncomfortable confrontations.

Louisa: So how did you find the couple activity? Was it difficult to talk about or?
Chris: Ah no it wasn't because it was talking about Cam and yeah. I would have been more uncomfortable talking about other experiences. Uhmm....
Louisa: Other previous experiences that you've had before Cam?
Chris: Yeah.

(II, NAS, 19)

In fact, it appeared that Cam also monitored what she had said around the topic of previous partners because as she explained in the individual interview; 'It's kind of hard to say things like that. I find it hard to say like...things like that to him because he's very sensitive about stuff like that anyway...'. As an aim of the research was to explore how young people negotiated sexual activity, some couple's portrayal of their relationship as conflict free was not useful to me and it became necessary to restate the research objectives to them.

A further limitation of the method stemmed from the small number of couples recruited. Having to evolve my couple activity technique without a pilot, meant that some questions were created in reflection of earlier couple sessions and had not been posed to the first couple to participate. Subsequently data was missing from all couples on particular subjects. Another problem with the couple sample was that their motivation for volunteering was not recorded. I can only surmise that some took part out of curiosity, or because they wanted
to contribute to the improvement of sexuality education programme design, while others may have had problems they needed to resolve. What ever their reasons, this group were not representative of New Zealand's youth population and therefore findings cannot be generalised.

3.3 Researching Sexuality: Issues of Ethics, Access and Data Analysis.

In this section I highlight 3 major issues that have affected my research, ethics, access and data analysis. The experience of researching sexuality in New Zealand offered possibilities, dilemmas and limitations which will be addressed in each case.

3.3.1 Ethics

As a recipient of a New Zealand Health Research Council Post-graduate Scholarship the terms of this grant stipulated ethical approval had to be obtained before fieldwork commenced. I had acquired ethics approval for my fieldwork from the Cambridge Psychology Ethics Committee but unfortunately because they were not an ethics committee approved by my funding body, I also had to gain ethics approval from North Health Ethics Committee in Auckland (Appendix G). A difficulty that arose from this situation was having to comply with two sets of ethics committee regulations. For instance, while North Health stipulated the use of 'standard' information and consent forms for participants, those that I had already drawn up and was using in line with the Cambridge ethics approval did not meet their regulations. Waiting for North Health Ethics Approval meant halting the fieldwork, redesigning consent forms and re-collecting signatures which all threatened to delay my return to England. The one advantage of this New Zealand procedure was the research survived the rigor of two ethics committees and gaining their approval promoted its professional stature for some of the people I contacted about the research.
The stringency of ethics committee approval in New Zealand partly stems from the sensitive nature of this kind of research where researching sexual intimacies may be viewed as an invasion of privacy or morally abhorrent. For some religious groups asking about sex is equated with encouraging young people to be sexually active. There are also issues of cultural appropriateness with regards to New Zealand's ethnic populations to take into consideration (See below). Sexual activity and talking about sexual activity within a public arena have different meanings and different consequences for Pacific Islands, Maori, Asian and Pakeha (European) populations as well as particular groups within these populations. Fortunately, one ethical consideration which caused no dilemmas was acquiring parental consent for subject’s participation. This was because as the sample population were all 16 years or over, parental consent was not necessary.

An ethical dilemma which did arise however and which many researchers have grappled with (Hooks, 1994; Fine, 1994; Taylor et al, 1995) was whether to include subjects from minority or subordinated cultures, when I myself, was a member of the dominant group. As a Pakeha and member of the group which exerts hegemony in New Zealand it was imperative I

14 Regulations about the ethical rigor of research in New Zealand are stringent due to a well publicised court case involving researchers who acted unethically with subjects diagnosed with cervical cancer in the late 1980s (Coney and Bunckle, 1987).

15 Several feminist journals have dedicated issues to the subject of ethnicity, research and theory, they are: Feminist Review especially nos. 20, 22 and 25. Signs Special Issue called ‘Common Grounds and Cross roads: Race, Ethnicity and Class in Women’s Lives’ (1989). Feminism and Psychology. Special Issue. ‘Shifting Identities, Shifting Racisms’ (1994).

16 New Zealand’s history is one of the colonisation of Maori, not only in terms of land, resources, language and culture, but also of the mind (Simon, 1982). The failure of the Crown to honour te tiriti o Waitangi (The Treaty of Waitangi), and provide Maori with rangatiratanga (See end of footnote) as envisaged by Maori, has forced tangata whenua (the people of the land) to face as Walker (1990) has put it ka whai, whai tonu matou (a struggle with out end). This struggle extends into the realms of academic research where white feminisms have thrown into relief the complexities of our (Maori) oppressions but have, at the same time, come dangerously close to smothering us in various metatheories and to reconstructing our reality in ‘their’ metaphors’ (Smith, 1992:34). There are too many examples of ethnocentric research contributing to ‘a colonising discourse of Other’ by defining Maori in ways which reify a Pakeha view of reality. (Te tino rangatiratanga ‘ this was guaranteed in the Treaty of Waitangi to Maori meaning, not just notions of sovereignty and self-determination but real authority exercised by chiefs over the life and death of every member of the whanau (extended family), hapu (section of tribe), iwi (tribe).
reflected upon the implications of researching those members of ethnic\textsuperscript{17} groups such as Maori or those from the Pacific Islands who have traditionally been subject to/subjects of white hegemony. In an effort to gauge the support of Maori and Pacific communities for my work, and familiarise myself with pertinent issues in this area, I met with members who worked in the area of sexuality in these communities.

Younger members of these communities overwhelmingly expressed encouragement and interest in the study. However, two senior members of the Maori and Pacific Islands communities that I approached articulated some reservations. Their concerns centred around the fact that I could not produce a Maori or Pacific Islands 'world view' in relation to the interpretation of the data and therefore I might reproduce yet another ethnocentric version of findings which reinforced 'stereotypes' about each group. As these were worries I also shared, I subsequently decided to forego any cross-cultural analysis of the data (By comparing Maori, Pacific Islands or Asians with Pakeha). Instead I offer information collected in the thesis about Maori, Asian and Pacific Islands young people for analysis to any interested member of these communities who could use it for the benefit of their people. As a Maori woman speaker at the recent Women's Studies Association Conference in New Zealand said in her address concerning how Pakeha women might assist the causes of women from other ethnic groups; 'Let us deal with our people, making decisions based on an analysis of what is best for us from our world view' (WSANZ Conference, 1988). The implications of this consultation for the research analysis were very important as they shifted focus away from any cross cultural comparison to a concentration on gender.

3.3.2 Access

Recruiting a sample for a Ph.D is never easy because as a researcher you often have minimal status and control over who participates. All of the young

\textsuperscript{17} The term 'ethnicity' is generally used in New Zealand rather than 'race'. It is derived from a history of Maori resistance and activist politics which has endeavoured to ascribe rather than prescribe Maori Identity (See Pearson, 1990).
people who participated in this research were volunteers. It was not possible to distribute the questionnaire to a randomly selected sample of young people within schools and TOPs groups because of the sensitivity of the research topic. Issues of sexuality, could offend, embarrass or make young people feel uncomfortable if they did not want to participate.

If I had used a random sample population it would have been highly likely that schools and training programmes would not have been as receptive to the research. If young people were able to choose to participate, then the responsibility for their involvement rested with the individual and was less likely to cause problems for the school or TOPs programme co-ordinators. Due to the nature of the topic and social connotations attached to it, subjects who had been selected to participate would have been more likely to produce guarded answers. With a sample of volunteers who wanted to take part and felt comfortable doing so, it was more likely they would offer less censored responses.

As the sample were volunteers, they were not representative of the general youth population and therefore the results are descriptive and cannot be generalised. It is highly likely that those who took part in the research share particular characteristics which differentiate them from a general population. The findings reflect the opinions and characteristics of the young people in this study exclusively, and more research would need to be undertaken to indicate if they are mirrored in a larger sample.\(^{18}\)

Although I recognised I would not be able to generalise findings, I wanted as diverse a group of young people as possible. This sample diversity was achieved to some extent, with 515 young people involved across the 3 methods as follows.

\(^{18}\) A further consequence of the sample being comprised of volunteers was that I was not able to determine a non-response rate to the methods. Each school and training programme contained different numbers of young people that fitted the sample requirements and I had no way of knowing how many eligible young people had been approached and declined to take part in the research in each case. This was because teachers and facilitators controlled my access to young people in their classes, by selecting the groups to which I spoke when introducing the research.
Table 3.3 Total Research Sample by Method and Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>METHOD TYPE</th>
<th>YOUNG WOMEN</th>
<th>YOUNG MEN</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N = 331</td>
<td>N = 184</td>
<td>N = 515</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Group</td>
<td>(62) 67.3</td>
<td>(30) 32.6</td>
<td>(92) 17.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaire</td>
<td>(263) 63.9</td>
<td>(148) 35.0</td>
<td>(411) 79.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple Activity</td>
<td>(6) 50.0</td>
<td>(6) 50.0</td>
<td>(12) 2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>(332) 64.5</td>
<td>(183) 35.5</td>
<td>(515) 100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: ( ) = N

As the table reveals the gender balance was tipped towards young women at 64% while 35% of the sample were young men. The reasons as to why more young women than young men volunteered for this study are interesting in themselves. Data was not collected in this research on reasons for this phenomenon, however this issue would provide an interesting focus for further investigation.

As I wanted as diverse array of subjects as possible I hoped that accessing young people from community groups who had left education early, and who I presumed would have quite different life experiences to the school group would enrich the data. Approximately a third of the sample (See Table 3:4) came from Training Opportunity programmes (TOPS) which according to its course directory ‘are designed to help people who have low qualifications, or limited skills, to gain more independence’ (Training Opportunities Course Directory:4). Those who were eligible to attend these courses had either fewer than three school certificate passes\(^{19}\) and no qualification higher than sixth form certificate, they were long term unemployed, refugees, or had been identified by the New Zealand Employment Service as requiring training for a variety of reasons. TOPs programmes are designed ‘to assist trainees towards further training, employment and recognised qualifications, or credit towards them (TOPs course directory:4). Many of the young people on these

\(^{19}\) School Certificate examination is the first major examination at secondary school. Students sit it at around 15 years old (Form 5). Sixth Form Certificate follows the year after.
programmes were long term unemployed and forced to deal with the emotional and financial pressures that accompany this.

TOPs programmes usually specialised in specific kinds of training to match employment needs within industry, such as agriculture/horticulture, business office and computer skills, outdoor recreation, tourism and hospitality, engineering and metal trades as well as community and child care. To increase the likelihood of young people with different backgrounds, interests and perspectives participating I contacted programmes from diverse training fields that were situated in various localities in the Auckland area (low soci-economic, middle class, urban/rural).

Table 3:4 Total Sample of ‘Not at School’ Subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme Pseudonym</th>
<th>Skills Taught</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farming</td>
<td>General Agriculture</td>
<td>Rural Northland</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Care</td>
<td>Care giving</td>
<td>North Shore</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitness</td>
<td>Outdoor and recreation</td>
<td>Central Auckland</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business 1</td>
<td>Office Skills</td>
<td>North Shore</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>Hospitality / Catering</td>
<td>Semi-Rural Auckland</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business 2</td>
<td>Business Administration</td>
<td>Central Auckland</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>Office /Clerical</td>
<td>Central Auckland</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office</td>
<td>Business Administration</td>
<td>South Auckland</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanics</td>
<td>Automotive Engineering</td>
<td>South Auckland</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computing</td>
<td>Information technology</td>
<td>North Shore</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>Retail / Tourism</td>
<td>South Auckland</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business 3</td>
<td>Computing</td>
<td>Semi-Rural Auckland</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catering</td>
<td>Introductory hospitality</td>
<td>West Auckland</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>Animation</td>
<td>Central Auckland</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>Business Skills</td>
<td>Central Auckland</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Central Auckland</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer teachers</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>South Auckland</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College teachers</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Central Auckland</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couples NAS</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Various</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>101</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sixty-six percent of the sample were derived from secondary schools predominately in the Auckland area (one Hamilton school participated). In terms of accessing diversity, I saw the school context with its incumbent structures as potentially producing a different set of responses from subjects.

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20 See Table 3:5 of schools which participated in the research.
Ideally I hoped for a group of schools exhibiting a diverse range of characteristics and student compositions. For instance, an equal number of co-educational and single sex, lower and middle socio-economic status, urban/rural schools with alternative and traditional pedagogical applications. In the end I secured participation from seven schools, one of which was single sex, the rest co-educational and accorded various socio-economic ratings on the Ministry of Education’s secondary school league table (NZ Herald, 1997). Two of the schools had ‘a reputation’ for being ‘alternative’ in their approach to students, curriculum and administrative issues.

Table 3:5 Total Sample of ‘At School’ Subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCHOOL PSUEDONYM**</th>
<th>TYPE</th>
<th>RATING*</th>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KIWI COLLEGE</td>
<td>Co-educational</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>North Shore</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TUI COLLEGE</td>
<td>Co-educational</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>North Shore</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KEA COLLEGE</td>
<td>Single Sex (Girls)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>West Auckland</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RURU COLLEGE</td>
<td>Co-educational</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>South Auckland</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOA COLLEGE</td>
<td>Co-educational</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>North Shore</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KAHU COLLEGE</td>
<td>Co-educational</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Central Auckland</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HUIA COLLEGE</td>
<td>Co-educational</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Hamilton</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>220</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>342</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* This is known as a ‘decile rating’ and is given to schools by the Ministry of Education to denote socio-economic status. 1 = poorest school; 10 = most well-off school. These decile ratings were released in the annual report of schools in the New Zealand Herald (1997) Saturday, September 27.

** Schools are named after Maori words for New Zealand birds.

One of the disadvantages of a school population was my reliance on the teachers I had contacted to provide me with a sample of students. Quite often the students I was presented with had been chosen for their ability to represent the school favourably. This was especially so with those who participated in the focus group discussion. In some cases I felt as if I was not working with ‘typical’ students and therefore the sample was not representative of what young people in this context actually thought and did.

The pattern of participation of young people in each method was different. To recruit the focus group and questionnaire sample I first contacted the school or TOPs programme by letter explaining who I was, the research objectives and what participation would involve (Appendix H). Accompanying this letter
was an information sheet designed for those considering taking part in the research, offering them details about what was involved (Appendix I). In the case of schools, also enclosed was a Board of Trustees\(^{21}\) consent form asking for signed permission to conduct the research and a letter endorsing the research and my professional conduct from my New Zealand supervisor Sue Middleton (Appendix J).

After two weeks I made a follow up call to gage the programme or school's interest in participating. If they were interested I often arranged to speak to staff about the research objectives and details of participation. The final step involved speaking to those of appropriate age at school assemblies or during class time in a training session. In the end there were 17 focus groups, 10 of which comprised ‘At School’ subjects and 7 containing participants ‘Not at School’. Although predominately Pakeha, 8 of the groups contained subjects from ethnic minorities with numbers of total participants in each focus group ranging from 3-10. While numbers of women only (7), and mixed focus groups (8) were comparable, unfortunately only 2 exclusively male groups participated\(^{22}\).

Table 3.6 Description of Focus Group Composition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>No. in Group</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Ethnic Composition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ruru Girls</td>
<td>At School</td>
<td>17 - 19</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Women Only</td>
<td>P, P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruru Boys</td>
<td>At School</td>
<td>17 - 19</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Men Only</td>
<td>P, M, A, P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruru Mixed</td>
<td>At School</td>
<td>17 - 19</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Mixed Gender</td>
<td>P, M, A, P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moa Girls</td>
<td>At School</td>
<td>All 17</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Women Only</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moa Mixed</td>
<td>At School</td>
<td>17 and 18</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Mixed Gender</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kea Girls</td>
<td>At School</td>
<td>All 17</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Women Only</td>
<td>M, P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tui Mixed</td>
<td>At School</td>
<td>17 and 18</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Mixed Gender</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiwi Girls</td>
<td>At School</td>
<td>17 and 18</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Women Only</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiwi Boys</td>
<td>At School</td>
<td>17 and 18</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Men Only</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kahu Mixed</td>
<td>At School</td>
<td>All 17</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Mixed Gender</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farming</td>
<td>Not At School</td>
<td>17-19</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Mixed Gender*</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Care</td>
<td>Not At School</td>
<td>17 and 18</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Women Only</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitness</td>
<td>Not At School</td>
<td>18 and 19</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Mixed Gender</td>
<td>P, M, P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers to Be</td>
<td>Not At School</td>
<td>All 17</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Women Only</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business 1</td>
<td>Not At School</td>
<td>17 - 19</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Mixed Gender</td>
<td>P, M, P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>Not At School</td>
<td>17 and 19</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Mixed Gender</td>
<td>P, M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>Not At School</td>
<td>17-19</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Women Only</td>
<td>P, M</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{21}\) Equivalent to Board of Governors in Britain.

\(^{22}\) This was a consequence of the gender imbalance in the sample where more young women than young men volunteered.
Drawn predominately\(^ {23} \) from the 7 participating schools and 15 Training opportunity programmes 411 subjects completed the questionnaire. Of these 63\% were young women while 36\% were young men, once again signalling young women’s greater participation in the research. Two thirds of the questionnaire sample were ‘At School’ (69\%), a number larger than ‘Not at School’ participation (30\%) because, the school context made it easier to access large numbers of young people at one time. Many of the TOPS programmes for instance only had a handful of subjects who matched the sample requirements in one location.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GENDER</th>
<th>AT SCHOOL</th>
<th>NOT AT SCHOOL</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Young Women</td>
<td>73.3% (n=193)</td>
<td>26.6% (n=70)</td>
<td>63.9% (n=263)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Men</td>
<td>63.5% (n=94)</td>
<td>36.4% (n=54)</td>
<td>36.0% (n=148)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>69.8% (n=287)</td>
<td>30.1% (n=124)</td>
<td>100% (n=411)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The ethnic composition of the questionnaire sample was comparable but did not exactly reflect the general population of youth (12-25 year olds) in New Zealand. In 1996, 66.8\% of New Zealand’s youth were European, and 19.9 percent were Maori, with 6.4 percent in each of the Pacific Islands and Asian groups (Ministry of Youth Affairs, 1999:2). As the graph below indicates the proportion of young people who identified themselves as from the Pacific Islands and Asia is much higher than general population statistics, while the European and Maori youth populations were under represented in this study.

\(^ {23} \) A small percentage of school leavers in the research came from community groups other than the TOPs programmes. Three young women who completed the questionnaire and participated in a focus group session were at the time pregnant and resident in a centre dedicated to supporting young mothers. Another three young people were peer sexuality educators in organisations established to support and educate young Maori and young people from the Pacific Islands. Six other subjects were connected with institutions for higher learning, currently embarking on their first and second years of study in the sciences, arts, and teacher training. The inclusion of these young people was aimed at maximising subject diversity and increasing the research sample.
As the questionnaire was voluntary and anonymous no prior written consent was required from subjects completing it, as long as they were over 16 years of age. Anyone participating in a focus group was required to sign a form outlining among other things that they had consented to participation and that their identity would be protected in writing up the research (Appendix C).

Six couples took part in the Couple Activity and Individual Interview session (Table 3:8). All couples who participated signed a consent form which stipulated they were aware of the potential for disagreement between them during the activity session (Appendix L). All but one of them was in the 17-19 age group. George (Ngaire's partner) was 21 and as a consequence I have only included excerpts from his transcripts as data when they illustrate the sentiments of the rest of the 17-19 year olds in the study. As I was desperate for participants for this component of the research, and the tendency for young women to go out with older men is usual, I decided to include this couple in the sample.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Couple</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Amy and Peter</td>
<td>Amy is 17 and Peter is 18. They had been going out for over 3 years. They met at school where Peter asked Amy out. Both were virgins before they slept together. There was some discrepancy over when they first had sex, but this seemed to be 6-12 months into their relationship. Their relationship appeared fairly stable, although Amy expressed interest in meeting other potential partners. Both were still at school when I first met them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Becky and Ashby</td>
<td>Both were 17 years old and still at school. They had been going out for 3 years and 6 months. They met at a school social and Ashby contacted Becky to ask her out the next day. It was 8 months before they slept together and this was the first time either had experienced sexual intercourse. The first time they had sex Becky fell pregnant and she had an abortion. They had broken up several times during the course of the relationship and both times Ashby said he had slept with someone else at this time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Nina and Neil</td>
<td>Were both unemployed and currently undertaking a TOPs programme. Nina in secretarial work, and Neil in car mechanics. They had been going out for two years and initially met when Neil shouted something out of a car at Nina on her way to the beach. They had sex one year after meeting and both were virgins. Their relationship was as Neil put it ‘not calm’ and they argued even in my presence. They had broken up once in this period.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Emma and Tim</td>
<td>Emma was 17 and still at school, while Tim was 18 and in his second year at university. They had been going out 6 months after meeting for the first time at a secondary school ball. Sexual intercourse occurred a few months into their relationship. While it was Tim’s first sexual experience, Emma had several previous sexual partners. While Emma described the relationship as ‘Bliss’, Tim appeared to feel less satisfied.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Ngaire and George</td>
<td>Ngaire was 18, George was 21. Both were working. They had been going out 9.5 months after they meet at a party of Ngaire’s Aunty. Although Ngaire had wanted to have sex on the night they met they did not have intercourse until some weeks later. Both had experienced sexual intercourse before this encounter. They appeared to be extremely happy together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Cam and Chris</td>
<td>This couple were both 19 and at University doing an Arts and Science degree consecutively. They meet through mutual friends in the university halls of residence and had been going out 3 months. Both had experienced intercourse with other partners before sleeping together - this occurred on the first night they met. Their relationship appeared stable and they were contemplating moving in together next year.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Gaining access to students for the individual interview and couple activity sessions proved difficult. The first technique I applied was placing an advertisement in the back of the questionnaire for those interested to provide details so I could contact them.\textsuperscript{24} Around 20 people did this however, trying to get hold of subjects proved difficult, with me leaving endless messages and rarely having calls returned. Due to the poor response rate I had encountered by March 1997 I decided to undertake alternative recruiting methods.

Firstly, I advertised in two magazines\textsuperscript{25} renown for their extensive readership of people in the desired age group (one couple, Cam and Chris, were drawn from this technique). I also drafted a poster advertising the research which colleagues posted in Sexual Health Clinics and Youth Centres around Auckland. However, nobody who contacted me mentioned having seen the posters. After visiting the local youth centre near where I lived and the Auckland University Counselling Service, as well as contacting Auckland College of Education and still requiring one more couple, I decided to try one final avenue. This was displaying an overhead transparency about the research to students before an undergraduate lecture in education at Auckland University. Once ethical approval to do this had to be sought from the university, the last couple were recruited.

3.3.3 The issue of 'class'

When I initially designed the questionnaire I had envisaged 'class' as being one of the indices by which I would talk about the findings. Unfortunately I had underestimated the complexity of determining 'class' in New Zealand society. The survey question I devised to tap 'class' asked what each parent's job title was and for a description of the work they did. An analysis of answers revealed that many young people didn't know how to describe what their parents did and the job title often gave no clues as to whether this was manual labour, a managerial position or if the business was self owned. In

\textsuperscript{24} The sheet was detachable and could be handed in separately from the questionnaire so that it remained anonymous.
addition it was revealed that many young people did not and never had lived with their parents. This was especially true of Maori and Pacific Islands young people who had grown up with cousins or Aunties and Uncles. Subsequently, this separation from parents and their income had no bearing on young people's own experience of 'class'. Other young people reported their parents were retired which might have suggested a more modest set of living conditions, however this depended upon whether a superannuation scheme had been set up, in which case they may have lived quite comfortably. As the question did not ask about superannuation or retirement benefits nor for the parent's job before retiring, 'class' could not be determined.

I felt my question was inadequate to 'get at' class in a way that truly represented young people's 'working' or 'middle class' experience. To satisfy myself that I really had tapped their class would have required many more questions which I did not have space for in the questionnaire. My other concern was that because it was likely that a large proportion of the so-called 'lower class' would comprise young people who were Maori or from the Pacific Islands, I would be reproducing exactly the kind of analysis these communities had been afraid of.

3.3.4 Data Analysis

As this study involved the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods, data analysis involved a combination of different techniques. The focus group and couple activity/interview data required an analysis which was sensitive to the nuances of subjectivity and research context, while the survey findings involved a more conventional analysis.

For the focus groups, individual interviews and couple activity, I transcribed each of the 35 tapes myself which involved listening them to 3 times. From doing this I acquired a strong sense of the themes emerging from each transcript and realised that because of the volume of data I would need to use

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1 These were Tearaway Magazine which is distributed throughout New Zealand to over
the qualitative software package NUD*IST.26 I decided to use NUD*IST solely as a categorising system, enabling me to organise and access data with greater ease than the cut and paste function in Microsoft Word. This was because I did not feel the indexing, searching and theorising capacities of NUD*IST suited the epistemological underpinnings of the research27 where I wanted to maintain as much control over the data and its construction as possible.

Instead, I used the concepts which emerged from transcribing the tapes as a basis for primary categorisation. These were then ordered under the main research themes, ‘sexual knowledge’, ‘sexual subjectivity’ and ‘sexual practice’ and anything from the transcripts pertaining to them placed under these headings. I then searched for patterns of what young women or young men had said in order to get a sense of any gender differentiation in their talk. Similarities between young women and men’s narratives in these three areas were formulated into nodes28. The next step was to explore the relationships young people conceptualised between their knowledge, subjectivity and practice. To do this, nodes were created that represented the points at which young people’s talk about for example ‘knowledge and practice’ or ‘subjectivity and knowledge’ intersected. In this way the relationships young people made between such concepts could be seen. These nodes were again systematically analysed for gender differences. With those subjects who had participated in the couple activity and individual interview it was possible to explore these ‘themes’ within the personal context of their lives more deeply. For instance, young women’s talk generally about not liking their bodies (dys-embodiment) could be analysed and contextualised in terms of the personal experience of an individual interview participant. The final stage

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10,000 teenagers and Craccum which is Auckland University's student magazine.
26 NUD*IST is an acronym for Non-numerical Unstructured Data, Indexing, Searching and Theorizing. It was developed by two Australians and was used to help qualitative researchers organise, search and theorise their data.
27 An issue here for example, was that the function which enables you to identify key words across transcripts was only useful if subjects employed the same words to describe what they were explaining. In my transcripts it was obvious young people were talking about similar issues but there was a diversity of expression, the intricacy of which NUD*IST could not detect.
28 A node is a place in the NUD*IST index system that allows you to categorise and code data.
of the analysis was to compare the research findings on the main themes with existing theory and research in this area, thinking about how the current findings differed or were similar, and what they might offer to existing theories in this area.

For the quantitative data which emerged from the questionnaire I used the software package SPSS\textsuperscript{29}. What was extremely useful about SPSS was that it enabled me to handle large volumes of figures with ease and to conduct statistical analyses in seconds. The aim of the quantitative data was to provide some general background patterns about young people’s sexual knowledge, practices and subjectivities. I used fairly standard chi-squares and T-tests to establish gender differences in young people’s sexual knowledge, subjectivities and practices. I then read the questionnaire findings in relation to the qualitative material using them to explain or support findings in each, or to highlight discrepancies between them and possible explanations for these.

3.4 The researcher/researched relationship.

Fine argues that researchers need to ‘work the hyphen between Self and Other’ (Fine, 1994). By this she means acknowledging and examining the researcher/researched relationship in terms of the multiple subjectivities and contexts in which we are constituted and ‘constitute’ ourselves. Reworking the hyphen challenges traditional research objectives of neutrality and authoritative authorship by asking the researched/researcher to consider:

.....what is, and is not, “happening between”, within the negotiated relations of whose story is being told, why, to whom, with what interpretation, and whose story is being shadowed, why, for whom, and with what consequence’ (Fine 1994:72).

To do this involves exploring positionality, or the social position of the knower and recognising this as both fluid and contextual (Rhoads, 1997). In her paper on cross cultural research with Pacific Islands students, Petelo (1997) argues that we examine our positionality by asking ourselves the following questions:

\textsuperscript{29} Otherwise known as the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences.
‘How do I construct others? How do participants position me? How do I see participants positioning themselves? How would I like to be positioned by the participants?’ (Petelo, 1997:6). It is to this issue of positionality and its impact upon the knowledge produced in this research that I now turn.

I saw myself as having taken up and been constituted by a range of different subjectivities which framed interaction in the research. These subjectivities were inextricably interrelated, finding prominence at various times and in different contexts during the course of the research, but always manifesting at the intersection of my engagement with other subjects.

3.4.1 Being a Young New Zealander.

When I embarked on this research colleagues explained that being young (23 years old at the time) would be advantageous as it was likely subjects would feel they could share things with me that I would understand. As someone only a few years older than those I was working with, I found I was familiar with the ‘in’ words used in conversation, I listened to the same kinds of music, went to the same movies (Independence Day, Men in Black and Titanic at the time) and knew of the television programmes/adverts, magazines, latest crazes that they referred to. My year in England had also made me conscious of my status as a New Zealander who didn’t have a different accent or who was perceived as a foreigner. Growing up in New Zealand meant I shared many of the experiences and knowledges familiar to those other young people living there. All of these factors made me an ‘insider’ which subjects acknowledged when they made references to youth culture in New Zealand assuming I knew what they meant. Their positioning of me as a young New Zealander was also apparent when I disclosed my age to one of the focus groups and they said with disbelief, ‘We thought you were 19’.

Being seen as young was a subjectivity that I enjoyed and to some extent cultivated. Focus groups and interview sessions were run in a very relaxed manner, where humour and enjoyment were encouraged and their academic element underplayed. Our ‘shared’ knowledge as young people enabled a
rapport where laughing, teasing and telling jokes occurred easily. For example, sometimes when I would bring out the media images of heterosexual couples in focus groups I would say "I've now got some pictures here for you of couples" and then looking round to read their faces I'd say "not those kind of pictures, this research has been approved by an ethics committee" at which point they would burst out laughing. This kind of familiarity assisted in yielding an environment where intimacies could be shared especially during the couple interview and activity sessions.

3.4.2 Outsider Positionings.

While being young and a New Zealander enabled me to take up a subject positioning as 'insider' this positioning was precarious. Naples has argued that "Outsiderness" and "Insiderness" are not fixed or static positions, rather they are ever-shifting and permeable social locations that are differentially experienced and expressed by community members' (Naples, 1997:71). Subsequently, while I was able to share the experience of being a young New Zealander with subjects, I was simultaneously 'othered' from some of them by subjectivities which differentiated us. For me, this was most notably in my positioning as an academic/researcher from Cambridge University, a subject position which none of the others had access to take up. In relation to some, although not all subjects, my political convictions as a feminist, my gender and my ethnicity also positioned me as 'outsider'.

The letter that acted as first contact with the groups I approached, bore the School of Education, University of Cambridge header and university shield. I had deliberately brought a bundle of this stationary out to New Zealand to write the letter introducing my research on. I perceived the Cambridge name as authenticating my research, enabling it to ride on the status of being conducted at one of the worlds most prestigious universities. In many cases the Cambridge name was beneficial as when I was introduced with, 'This is Louisa Alien, a researcher from Cambridge University' in a way that sought to contribute to the research's integrity and importance. This positioning, and my
conscious taking up of this subjectivity, enabled me to use my 'outsiderness' to advantage in pursuing the research objectives.

There were other instances however where I felt that being from Cambridge University was not an asset because of the way it 'othered' me from subjects and had the potential to make them (and me) feel uncomfortable. Young people from TOPs programmes had often not 'achieved academically' in formal schooling structures and left with few or no qualifications. Here was I, working my way through a doctorate, viewed by academics as the 'ultimate' of scholastic qualifications and at a highly renowned academic institution. I felt that knowing this might alienate subjects from me, inhibiting them from feeling capable of answering the questionnaire or articulating themselves in focus groups. Subsequently, sometimes I played down my 'academicness', only disclosing if asked that I was from Cambridge and that the research was being conducted in fulfilment of a doctorate.

3.4.3 Pakeha/Palagi\textsuperscript{30} woman and feminist.

Feminist researchers have described the tensions of conducting research with men in terms of a dilemma about 'putting energy into men' and being subject to hegemonic masculinity in the course of the research process (Layland, 1990). In my own research I found I was caught in a contradiction between adhering to its methodological concerns of not imposing my authoritative accounts, but at the same time being a feminist who would not tolerate sexist put downs and who wanted to expose and critique gendered inequality. I also did not want to impose my feminist ideas on young men (or young women) in a way that might alienate them from expressing what they believed, if this were contrary to my own convictions. For this reason, I never overtly stated my feminist politics, although this would have been evident to some subjects who were conscious of the types of questions directed at them.

\textsuperscript{30} Pacific Islands term for European.
Before embarking on the research I was interested to discover how young men would position me and react to my facilitating discussions and interviewing them. I wondered whether young men would answer questions differently if the facilitator was male. I addressed this question directly to some of the focus groups and one young man revealed that a different environment would produce other responses from him. He conceded that ‘with the guys you do the guy thing’ so it is ‘sort of like you have a split personality kind of thing’ (FG, AS, 17). The nature of the research and my being a female facilitator may have encouraged many young men to constitute themselves in ways that they deemed appropriate to these factors. This meant that instances where they took up alternative subject positions in discourses of hegemonic male sexuality were more frequent and visible (See Chapter 5).

My being female did not produce what McMahon has termed a ‘sensitive new age guy’ response from all subjects however (McMahon, 1998). Some young men took up subject positions that offered a blatant display of hegemonic masculinity such as speaking in ways that sexualised, objectified and were derogatory to women. In the course of discussion one young man said ‘Females are nagging bitches sometimes...they do, they nag at you, too’ (FG, NAS, 17). This young man seemed to forget I was female, positioning me as someone who was asexual or perhaps prescribing me an insider status as someone ‘who knows’ and ‘understands how women can be’. Another young man coyly suggested that I was asking him questions about his relationships because I was interested in having a relationship with him! This was a rather thinly disguised ‘come on’ which endeavoured to position me as its initiator.

As a Pakeha/Palagi I was positioned as ‘outsider’ or ‘other’ to members of Maori and Pacific Island communities, especially by those elders I consulted before conducting the research for the reasons I have described above. At particular times during the fieldwork I felt my ethnic ‘otherness’ more acutely. For instance, one of the focus groups contained predominantly Pacific Islands

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31 Sensitive New Age Guy (SNAG) McMahon (1998) has argued that ‘New Man’ rhetoric is saturated by images of the New Father, who is said to be highly active in the daily routine of child care, especially the care of new babies and infants.
and Maori subjects. The group banter pertaining specifically to cultural knowledge was inaccessible to me, and because of this I felt I lost subtleties of information about heterosexual relationships which it offered. Not being able to join in with the laughter and share in the obvious pleasure it elicited brought my Pakeha identity to the fore.

3.5 Conclusion

This research has employed a multi-method approach using qualitative and quantitative instruments in order to elicit different narratives from young people about their sexual knowledge, subjectivities and practices and the relationships between them. The research methodology can be described as exploratory drawing on a feminist post-structural epistemology to capture and explain complexity, contradiction and multiplicity in young people's articulation of their experiences of the research's main themes. Methods such as focus groups, questionnaires, individual interviews and a specially designed couple interview provided the contexts to generate and explore this multiplicity and complexity. As part of the feminist post-structural underpinnings of the methodology the chapter has reflected upon the lived reality of doing this research. This has revealed how the interaction of my own and the young people's subject positionings have shaped our encounter and the knowledge/findings this has produced.

In part two of the thesis, the data collected from the implementation of this research design is explored.
PART TWO

EXPLORING THE DATA
Chapter Four

Constructing Sexual Knowledge

4.0 Introduction

The reasons why young people often do not put their knowledge into practice may be better understood by explaining how young people themselves conceptualise ‘knowledge’. Surprisingly, the conventional explanation of a ‘gap’ between knowledge and practice fails to take account of young people’s perception of ‘knowledge’ (Crawford et al 1990; Rosenthal et al, 1990). Yet as I shall show in the second part of this chapter, the perception of knowledge of young people in this study is wider and more complex than supposed. It suggests that they discriminate between different types of sexual knowledge placing them in a hierarchy, in which knowledge gained from practice holds the highest status. In the third part of the chapter I demonstrate that, for some young people, knowledge is not a prerequisite for practice, but rather practice is a means to knowledge. Contrary to traditional thinking, for these young people in the study there is no ‘gap’ between knowledge and practice, a finding that has important implications for how educational messages might be formulated.

In the fourth part of the chapter the research findings demonstrate that sexual knowledge is gendered. That is, how young people think about their relationship to knowledge is contingent upon discourses concerning ‘appropriate’ femininity and masculinity. Being knowledgeable about sex is integral to young men’s achievement and maintenance of hegemonic masculinity, while young women walk the precarious line of being knowledgeable, but not too knowledgeable lest they gain a negative sexual reputation. This chapter describes empirically how for young women and men in this sample, being knowledgeable about sexual activity had different consequences for their experience of sexual practice.
To begin however, in the first section of this chapter, I offer the descriptive data concerning the sexual knowledge of young people in the research. This information is drawn from the questionnaire and describes when young people first learned about sexual intercourse, from what sources, and what kind of knowledge they reported having.

### 4.1 Young People's Sexual Knowledge

The questionnaire revealed the most commonly reported age which young people claimed to have learned about sexual intercourse was between 8 and 10 years old (43%). While 20% of young women declared they learned about sex at age 10, the majority of young men (18%) claimed for them it was two years earlier. There were also significant differences amongst ‘At School’ and ‘Not at School’ groups with those ‘Not at School’ more likely to learn about sex at age 8, while for those ‘At School’ it was age 9.

#### Table 4.1 Age When Young People First Learned About Sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Young Women N = 251</th>
<th>Young Men N = 138</th>
<th>Total N = 389</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>(0) 0%</td>
<td>(2) 1.4%</td>
<td>(2) 0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>(0) 0%</td>
<td>(0) 0%</td>
<td>(0) 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>(0) 0%</td>
<td>(3) 2.1%</td>
<td>(3) 0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>(2) 0.8%</td>
<td>(3) 2.1%</td>
<td>(5) 1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>(14) 5.4%</td>
<td>(8) 5.6%</td>
<td>(22) 5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>(18) 6.9%</td>
<td>(10) 6.9%</td>
<td>(28) 6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>(19) 7.3%</td>
<td>(13) 9.0%</td>
<td>(32) 7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 years</td>
<td>(33) 12.5%</td>
<td>(26) 18.1%</td>
<td>(59) 14.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 years</td>
<td>(32) 12.4%</td>
<td>(11) 7.6%</td>
<td>(43) 10.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>(53) 20.5%</td>
<td>(21) 14.6%</td>
<td>(74) 17.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 years</td>
<td>(26) 10.0%</td>
<td>(11) 7.6%</td>
<td>(37) 8.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 years</td>
<td>(21) 8.1%</td>
<td>(12) 8.3%</td>
<td>(33) 7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 years</td>
<td>(17) 6.6%</td>
<td>(8) 5.6%</td>
<td>(25) 6.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 years</td>
<td>(6) 2.3%</td>
<td>(5) 3.5%</td>
<td>(11) 2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 years</td>
<td>(4) 1.5%</td>
<td>(0) 0%</td>
<td>(4) 0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 years</td>
<td>(5) 1.9%</td>
<td>(2) 1.4%</td>
<td>(7) 1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 years</td>
<td>(1) .4%</td>
<td>(2) 1.4%</td>
<td>(3) 0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 years</td>
<td>(0) 0%</td>
<td>(1) .7%</td>
<td>(1) 0.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: ( ) = N
The source of sexual knowledge young people in the study found the most useful was 'friends', with 44% of young women and 37% of young men naming this. A T-test revealed that significantly more young women than young men found friends a 'very useful' source (sig. 030). There was also a significant difference between 'At School' and 'Not at School' groups on this item, with 'Not at School' subjects finding friends less useful than 'At School' participants. Sexuality Education was the second most 'very useful' source of information, with 28% of men and 34% of women naming it. This is likely to be because the schools in this research had particularly comprehensive sexuality programmes in operation.

Table 4:2 Preferred Sources of Sexual Knowledge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information Source</th>
<th>Never Consulted (%)</th>
<th>Not Useful (%)</th>
<th>Useful (%)</th>
<th>Very Useful (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Internet</td>
<td>93.8</td>
<td>75.7</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romantic novels</td>
<td>39.8</td>
<td>73.2</td>
<td>37.8</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School sexuality education</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational books about sex</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>21.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pornographic magazines</td>
<td>74.5</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>31.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>34.5</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>22.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Family members</td>
<td>31.7</td>
<td>47.9</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>21.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magazines for women</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>47.2</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>22.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>20.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Totals table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information Source</th>
<th>% Never consulted</th>
<th>% Not Use</th>
<th>% Useful</th>
<th>% Very Useful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Internet</td>
<td>87.3</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romantic novels</td>
<td>51.6</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School sexuality education</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>50.6</td>
<td>32.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational books about sex</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pornographic magazines</td>
<td>57.8</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>29.1</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>23.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Family members</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magazines for women</td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>28.2</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>47.8</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>41.1</td>
<td>41.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* N = 402, Female = 258, Male = 144.

Parents were the third most useful source of sexual knowledge cited overall by young people in the study (23%). However, it seemed that young women

\[1\] I have determined significance at the 5% level. This means that all figures under p< 0.05 are significant.
found them more useful than young men (sig. 034). Young women chose 'Friends' first, 'sexuality education' second and 'parents' third as the most useful sources of sexual knowledge. While young men also chose 'Friends' and 'Sexuality Education' first and second, their next most useful source was television (20%) followed by pornographic magazines (20%) indicating a gender difference here (these results are discussed in depth later in the chapter). Further research is necessary to determine exactly what information young people draw from, or look for, in sources like friends, television and pornography.

The least consulted source of sexual knowledge for young people in the sample was the 'Internet', with 93% of young women and 75% of young men reporting never having used this source. This may be due to issues of access, such as the expense incurred and the level of skill required to use the Internet. While for young men the next least consulted source was 'romantic novels' (73%), young women were least likely to have turned to pornographic magazines for sexual information (74%)².

Traditionally, researchers interested in young people's sexual knowledge have asked them factual questions about the transmission of diseases, correct safer sex practice and the legal regulations governing sexual behaviour³ (Denman et al, 1996; Bruce and Bullins, 1989). A small number of these kinds of questions were asked in the questionnaire, with subjects required to place a 'T' next to statements they thought were 'true' and an 'F' by those they believed 'false'. In terms of these traditional measures of young people's sexual knowledge, it appeared those in the study were most knowledgeable about how a woman becomes pregnant and condom safety, with 94% of the sample answering each of these items correctly. Young people were also knowledgeable about issues of homosexuality and the legal age for sexual intercourse with 90% getting these questions right in each case. A chi-square revealed there were no significant gender differences on

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² This gender difference with reference to pornographic material is addressed later in the chapter.
any of the questions except for, 'Men have greater sex drives than women', where more women (63%) than men (49%) thought this statement was false.

Table 4:3 Correct and Incorrect Responses to 'Traditional' Sexual Knowledge Items by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>True or False Statement</th>
<th>Young Women N = 265</th>
<th>Young Men N = 147</th>
<th>Total N = 412</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Right</td>
<td>Wrong</td>
<td>Right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A woman will not become pregnant if she has sex standing up</td>
<td>94.3%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>94.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You can get AIDS from kissing</td>
<td>90.9%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>87.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A condom is 100% safe</td>
<td>94.3%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>94.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men have greater sex drives than women</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>50.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual activity can only occur between women and men</td>
<td>92.8%</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>87.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual intercourse under 16 is illegal</td>
<td>92.8%</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>87.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When the sum of correct responses to items involving traditional types of sexual knowledge were calculated, a T-Test revealed more young women than men were likely to get them all right (sig. 018). Young women’s mean score was 18.7231 while young men's was 18.9559.

Chart 4:1 Sum Total of Traditional Knowledge Items.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All correct</th>
<th>Half Right</th>
<th>All Wrong</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Similarly, ‘At School’ subjects were more likely to get these traditional knowledge items correct than ‘Not at School’ subjects (sig. 000)\(^4\). This is probably because all those ‘At School’ students had undertaken

---

\(^3\) This conceptualisation of young people’s sexual knowledge by researchers is discussed in section 4.2.

\(^4\) ‘At School’ student’s mean score was 18.6931 while ‘Not at School’ student's mean score was 19.0588.
comprehensive sexuality programmes in their respective schools, while those 'Not at School' may not have had this opportunity.\(^5\)

In addition to traditional knowledge items, another survey question included less traditional sexual knowledge items. Young people were asked to place a tick against items in this question they felt knowledgeable about. The non traditional knowledge items asked whether subjects felt knowledgeable about sexual positions, sexual pleasure, prostitution and how to avoid unwanted pregnancy. The majority of young people perceived themselves as most knowledgeable about conventional sexual knowledge items, with approximately 9 out of 10\(^6\) indicating they knew how they could contract HIV/AIDS and, slightly less than 9 out of 10\(^7\) reporting they knew how to put on a condom. A higher percentage of males (93% compared with 85% of females) indicated they were knowledgeable about the latter (possibly because it is young men who have to wear condoms). The only other significant gender difference on these conventional knowledge statements was that a higher percentage of young women (74% compared to 58% of males) felt they were knowledgeable about 'the stages and process of conception'.

The items that the subjects felt they knew the least about were those that involved more unconventional sexual knowledge. Forty two percent of young people reported they had no knowledge of 'sexual positions and techniques', while 40% of the sample also disclosed they did not perceive themselves as knowledgeable about getting what they wanted out of a sexual relationship. A significant gender difference (sig. .039) was found here with more young women reporting they were knowledgeable about this.\(^8\)

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5 Data on whether 'Not at School' subjects had experienced sexuality education was not collected. However, as schools that participated in the research all had comprehensive sexuality education programmes all 'At School' subjects can be presumed to have gone through these.  
6 92% indicated they knew how a person can contract HIV/AIDS.  
7 88% reported they knew how to put on a condom.  
8 Young women in the sample had more relationship experience than young men (See Chapter 7) and this may explain why they felt they had more knowledge about how to get what they want out of a sexual relationship.
Table 4:4 What Young People Think they are Knowledgeable about Inclusion of ‘Non Traditional Items’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items subjects believe they are knowledgeable about</th>
<th>(%) Young Women N = 263</th>
<th>(%) Young Men N = 148</th>
<th>(%) Total N = 411</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How to put on a condom</td>
<td>85.7 No K 14.3 K</td>
<td>93.2 K No K 6.8</td>
<td>88.4 K No K 11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What turns a partner on</td>
<td>74.3 K 25.7 No K</td>
<td>68.9 K 31.1 No K</td>
<td>72.4 K 27.6 No K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting what you want out of a sexual relationship</td>
<td>63.8 K 36.2 No K</td>
<td>53.4 K 46.6 No K</td>
<td>60.0 K 40.0 No K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual positions and techniques</td>
<td>55.8 K 44.2 No K</td>
<td>60.8 K 39.2 No K</td>
<td>57.6 K 42.4 No K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How you can contract HIV/ AIDS</td>
<td>93.2 K 6.8 No K</td>
<td>91.2 K 8.8 No K</td>
<td>92.5 K 7.5 No K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What lesbianism is</td>
<td>89.4 K 10.6 No K</td>
<td>83.8 K 16.2 No K</td>
<td>87.4 K 12.6 No K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What homosexuality is</td>
<td>89.9 K 10.2 No K</td>
<td>83.8 K 16.2 No K</td>
<td>87.7 K 12.3 No K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The stages and process of conception</td>
<td>74.0 K 26.0 No K</td>
<td>58.8 K 41.2 No K</td>
<td>68.5 K 31.5 No K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What STDS are and how they are caught</td>
<td>87.9 K 12.1 No K</td>
<td>81.1 K 18.9 No K</td>
<td>85.5 K 14.5 No K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to avoid unwanted sexual activity</td>
<td>83.0 K 17.0 No K</td>
<td>77.7 K 22.3 No K</td>
<td>81.1 K 18.9 No K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What prostitution is</td>
<td>87.5 K 12.1 No K</td>
<td>82.4 K 17.6 No K</td>
<td>85.7 K 14.0 No K</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

KEY
K = Knowledgeable
No K = Not Knowledgeable

When scores on this knowledge question were added together and a T-Test performed, young women perceived themselves slightly more knowledgeable (with a mean of 13.1475) than young men (13.6486).

Chart 4:2 Sum Total - Inclusion of ‘Non Traditional’ Sexual Knowledge Questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extremely Knowledgeable</th>
<th>Knowledgeable</th>
<th>No Knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While young men claimed to have learned about sex earlier they appeared to have acquired slightly less knowledge in this time than young women. Recently there has been a flourish of media and government interest in New Zealand concerning young men’s lower levels of ‘sexual knowledge (Stuart, 1996; Ryall, 1999). So far, this has been attributed to not having access to the equivalent types of sexual information young women find in sources such as
teen magazines, and the way sexuality education is seen as not catering for their interests (Measor et al, 1996). The reasoning here is that a concentration on issues which are conventionally assumed to primarily affect women (such as menstruation and pregnancy) leave young men bored and alienated from sexuality education (Measor et al, 1996; Stuart, 1996).

4.2 Young people's construction of sexual knowledge

In the current literature on the knowledge/practice gap,9 'knowledge' is constituted as 'official' information about how to recognise, avoid and protect yourself against unwanted consequences of sexual activity. Typically, research about young people's sexual knowledge refers to their ability to demonstrate correct answers and understandings about, contraceptive use, STDs, sexual abuse and pregnancy prevention, as well as the clinical processes of conception and puberty with special emphasis on menstruation. See for example; (Kraft 1993; Lungley et al, 1993; Rosenthal and Shepherd, 1993; Bruce and Bullins, 1989). This type of knowledge is valued within sexuality programmes as it aims to confront social and economic problems arising from sexual activity by informing young people about how their bodies work and dangers to be avoided concerning them. The use of sexuality/sex education as a means of curbing 'undesirable' social and economic effects is well documented (Haywood, 1996; Reiss, 1993; Thomson, 1994).

The forms of knowledge valued in most sexuality education programmes are those which prescribe appropriate behaviour rather than knowledge which reflects young people's actual experiences. In its bid to arm young people with information that will keep them 'safe', sexuality education necessarily prioritises its own construction of sexual knowledge, rather than reflecting the actual sexual experiences of young people. The effect is to create a chasm between what young people know and the forms of 'official' prescriptive knowledge which are legitimated through the curriculum and thus represented

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9 This literature and explanation of the knowledge/practice 'gap' has been described in Chapter 2. Researchers referring to the knowledge/practice 'gap' are (Crawford, Turtle and Kippax 1990, Rosenthal et al 1990).
as more important. This prioritising of prescriptive knowledge without
reference to, and acknowledgement of, young people's own sexual
knowledge/practice has the potential to make young people feel alienated
from the messages of sexuality education.

This separation between prescriptive knowledge about sexuality and young
people's own knowledge/practice was especially evident in some of the
responses to a question concerning sexual knowledge during the couple
activity. I asked young couples to decide whether it 'sometimes', 'often' or
'never' occurred in their relationship that 'one partner felt the other knew more
about sexual activity'. What often transpired in deciding the answer to this
question was contestation over what counted as being 'knowledgeable'. In the
process of determining this, subjects constructed sexual knowledge in two
ways. The first was to constitute knowledge as any information about sexual
activity gained from sources other than personal experience such as friends,
television, sexuality education, books, magazines etc. In this definition 'to be
knowledgeable' about sexual activity meant having an intellectual grasp of
things sexual, obtained through secondary sources rather than primary/personal experience. Here are some examples of this knowledge
drawn from secondary sources.

In the following extract Peter and Amy (who had been going out for over 3
years) were debating who was the most sexually knowledgeable. Although
both were initially virgins, Amy had several boyfriends before Peter, while
Amy was Peter's first girlfriend. Making reference to her previous experience
Amy said:

Amy: ..Although to begin with you thought that I knew a little bit more
than you did.
Peter: Oh it depends I read a lot (laugh).
Amy: He reads a lot okay (Sceptical tone. Laugh)....well
(CA, AS, 18)
Similarly Ngaire and George who were both sexually experienced before their relationship of nine and a half months, spoke about secondary knowledge in the form of information from friends.

Louisa: So where do you get your knowledge about sex from?
George: ...just like talking about it with friends and stuff like that.
Ngaire: Yeah I would too...I spoke about it at school with my friends.
(CA, NAS, mixed)

Also faced with the question of who was most knowledgeable Becky and Ashby who had been together three years and six months had difficulty deciding. In their situation Ashby had slept with two other people, while Becky only had experience of her current relationship. However, Becky had extensive sexual knowledge from her role as a peer sexuality educator at school.

Ashby: I think she might know a bit more than me because she’s been on a course and stuff (laugh).
Becky: I know more practical stuff but only, not to the extent of positions and stuff (laugh) but to the extent of what’s safe and what’s not and how to protect myself in different situations and you know that’s sort of what I know from like Family Planning and sexual health cause you know we went on a big hui and they did all their different programmes.
(CA, AS, 17)

Elaborating on a sense of his sexual knowledge as it emerged in deciding who was most knowledgeable in the couple activity session, Chris, (Cam’s partner), explained in his individual interview how such knowledge was derived from secondary sources.

Chris: Like uhm I was sort of I always was interested in stuff. Like uhm I was sort of, I always watch the news and everything and I sort of knew of some sexual diseases but not others you know like uhm AIDS and uhm stuff like that but nothing much else.
(II, NAS, 19)

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10 Hui, Maori word for meeting, gathering, assembly.
In contrast, the other form of sexual knowledge, that derived from personal experience, is illustrated below. Here, being knowledgeable about sex meant having practical sexual experience, typically stemming from a history of sexual activity with one or more partners. In answering the question about who was most knowledgeable in their relationship, the couples introduced above described this practical form of knowledge.

(To her boyfriend Ashby)
Becky: I think that you might know a bit more than me because you’ve been with more people than me.
(CA, NAS, 17)

(About his girlfriend Cam)
Chris: Cam has had a lot more sexual relationships than I have.
(CA, NAS, 19)

(In front of her boyfriend Tim who she had been seeing for 6 months)
Emma: I am probably a bit more experienced because I’ve had more partners.
(CA, AS, 17)

(To her boyfriend Neil who she had been going out with for 2 years)
Nina: You knew that I didn’t know anything. You knew that I’d only like kissed two people before. He knew I just hadn’t done anything other than kissing and holding hands.
(CA, AS, 17)

For most subjects, these distinctions were implicit within their narratives. Only two of the couples made this distinction in an explicit and reflective way. Both were contemplating or involved in tertiary education and were articulate about their experiences. Peter and Amy, when negotiating the question of who was most knowledgeable about sex, could identify for themselves these two distinct constructions of sexual knowledge.

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The other couple who explicitly talked about primary and secondary knowledge were Cam and Chris. (See Table 3:8)
It depends on how...if you define that as in they know more as in they've done more, or they know more as in they've read lots about it or something like that. It depends.

I think that you probably had read a bit more than I had but, I'd been out with more people so I sort of was a bit more clued up about...

On what?

On the what and where sort of thing but not, not actually having done anything. I mean I knew how to snog and that which is what you didn’t really have any idea about, but you’d read more than I had and definitely had more ideas (laugh) in that little head.

(CA, AS, mixed)

An initial reaction for some of the couples was to immediately assume that the other partner had more knowledge than them regardless of their sexual experience or formal sexuality education training. Chris and Cam, Ngaire and George as well as Becky and Ashby displayed this kind of lack of confidence in their own sexual knowledge. Some partners were also hesitant to assert that one type of knowledge was more valuable than the other. This was the situation for Emma and Cam (who were both more sexually experienced than their male partners) and may have felt this fact would have made their partner's feel inferior. However, when couples finally conceded that one partner was more knowledgeable, it was the partner who had more practical sexual experience who was deemed as such. This strategy was evident in Becky and Ashby’s situation. Despite being a virgin, Becky had extensive experience and training as a peer sexuality educator. Although her boyfriend Ashby had never had sexuality education at school, he had experience of a ‘one night stand’, which Becky perceived as making him more sexually knowledgeable.

Similarly, in Tim and Emma’s case, while Tim explained he was ‘a very imaginative person’ who would ‘just see something on TV’ and ‘put images together’, he was a virgin before meeting Emma whom he described as ‘very, very experienced’. Despite his ‘imaginativeness’, both partners agreed that Emma had slightly more knowledge through virtue of her previous sexual encounters. During the couple activity they explained how only through
gaining practical sexual experience had Tim’s knowledge been placed on a more equal par with Emma’s:

Tim: I mean at first she knew like heaps more than me, but now we know the same amount, but she’s done a lot more so she’s more I dunno.

Emma: Yeah it was like that to begin with but its not quite so much more now.

(CA, Emma AS, Tim NAS, mixed)

Similarly in Nina and Neil’s situation, Nina was initially perceived as less knowledgeable than Neil because, as she revealed, ‘I was a Christian and I didn’t believe in sex before marriage’. Her Christian convictions meant her practical sexual experience had been limited (although she had experienced sexuality education at school). While Neil was also a virgin when he met Nina, he had more experience of girlfriends leaving him to conclude, and Nina to agree, that, ‘She didn’t really know anything (laugh)’ and that he had been more knowledgeable. Inherent in this constitution of two types of sexual knowledge is a hierarchy in which these young people perceived knowledge acquired through practice as having greater status and being more useful.

Further, not only did young people in the sample make distinctions between knowledge derived from personal practice and secondary sources, but also between types of knowledge drawn from secondary sources. In speaking about knowledge derived from secondary sources, two conceptualisations of knowledge emerged. The first made reference to knowledge that informed about sexual dangers such as STDS, unplanned pregnancy, AIDS and sexual violence. A sense of officialdom surrounded this construction, as a type of sexual knowledge that was clinical, scientific and morally sanctioned. For example, when Chris talked about this type of knowledge in the extracts already quoted, he referred to ‘the news’ as one of the sources he obtained it from, endowing it with a reputability and ‘truth’. Similarly, Becky spoke about her secondary knowledge as emanating from Family Planning, an organisation trusted to provide reliable, impartial and expert advice on sexual
matters. In addition, Peter explained his secondary knowledge was derived from educational books, whose authority is achieved through publication.

The second conceptualisation of knowledge derived from secondary sources, described the 'lived' experience of sexual activity and details of this interaction. Rather than knowledge about STD's, contraception and the mechanics of conception, this information centred around a more personal discourse of emotional and bodily feelings, concerning desire and attraction and how these were acted upon, as well as what sexual activity was like and how it was engaged in. I have conceptualised this sexual knowledge as a 'discourse of erotics' where erotics means 'of, concerning, or arousing sexual desire or giving sexual pleasure' (Sinclair, 1995). For young people in this study it also included details about how to initiate or co-ordinate interaction that involved or might lead to sexual activity, such as how to ask someone they were attracted to out, or the logistics of how to engage in sexual activity. This discourse emerged across several of the methods.

For example, in the couple activity Ngaire spoke about her need to know about what sex 'felt like'.

Ngaire: So when I had my chances at school I'd speak to er my friends that weren't virgins and were virgins. I was really nosey and I was like are you a virgin? And sometimes I'd get a 'yes' and sometimes I'd get a 'no' and uhm (laugh) and I'd just say 'oh how'd it feel'?..and you know 'did you tell your mother'? (laugh) (CA, NAS, 19)

In 15 of the 17 focus groups a discourse of erotics emerged around a variety of subjects such as how sexual activity develops in a relationship, how to ask someone out and what different sexual partners were like. In the following extract it appeared when young women relayed conversations they

12 The two focus groups in which a discourse of erotics did not arise comprised subjects who were 'Not At School'. One was an all female group, the other predominately male (1 female). Both these groups appeared more reserved in their responses than other young people generally, communicating what I interpreted as a shyness. This may be why this discourse did not appear in their discussion, as it demanded an ability to talk about the intimacies of sexual activity that they might not have been comfortable with.
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Ngaire: So when I had my chances at school I'd speak to er my friends that weren't virgins and were virgins. I was really nosey and I was like are you a virgin? And sometimes I'd get a 'yes' and sometimes I'd get a 'no' and uhm (laugh) and I'd just say 'oh how'd it feel'?...and you know 'did you tell your mother'? (laugh) (CA, NAS, 19)

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had with their friends about sex, concerning whether particular male sexual partners were ‘good’ at sexual activity.

Louisa: Do you ever talk about sex?
Helen: Yeah...well our whole group of friends are like that I mean we sit around and have nights where that’s all we discuss....
Anabella: And we talk about sex and go ‘oh there was this one guy and he was really, really bad’ and that sort of thing.

(FG, AS, mixed)

A discourse of erotics also emerged in two all male focus groups around techniques of attracting and asking a potential partner out. As conversation was similar in each group only one is quoted here.

Peter: ...it takes a lot of guts just to go up to somebody and say ‘hey do you want to go out’. Because there is always a thought that, that could blow up in your face or what ever...in a group you know you can be with them and then you can say to other people ‘do you think she likes me sort of thing?’...
Dean: ...well a few situations that I have been involved in where people get friends to test the water for them, like maybe ring the person up or uhm or just ask questions about them.
Louisa: Would you prefer the girls to come and ask you out?
Jeremy: Yeah (laugh)
Louisa: Why?
Robin: Well, I dunno, it’s just like, it’s just so much easier for us to like, like ‘oh she’s nice’ and then if she comes to you, then you feel much...very, very good.

(FG, AS, mixed)

Another all female focus group expressed a discourse of erotics in their discussion of the importance of sexual activity in a relationship.

Julie: But I guess it is hard finding that mix, I mean when you first start going out with someone it’s pretty physical, physical, physical and then you sort of..
Kuni: Gets a bit boring though.
Julie: ...yeah it does sort of after six weeks or something you either sort of level out or you become a bit more emotional or it just stops pretty much there after a while...
Becky: It’s the opposite for me. It would be emotional first for at least six weeks you know cause, I’ve gotta, I couldn’t sleep with someone that I didn’t love you know.

(FG, AS, 17)
Young people's talk in focus groups did not appear to be dominated by 'official' discourses about sexual activity. In only 3 of the 17 focus groups did this official discourse emerge, with one group mentioning HIV/AIDS, another unplanned pregnancy and a final group STD's, each time in relation to the question, 'What problems do young people face in relationships'? Rather, young people discussed topics such as the sharing of experiences/knowledge about sexual partners and what sexual activity was like.

In the questionnaire, a discourse of erotics was also apparent in answers to a question asking subjects to complete the sentence, 'The kinds of disagreements likely to arise in your relationship(s) about sexual activity are....'. While some of the disagreements young people raised made reference to official discourses of sexuality such as contraception, STDs and pregnancy, (13% young people who answered this question in questionnaire mentioned this, these were overshadowed by a predominance of disagreements over issues such as where and how often to have sex (almost 40% mentioned this) as well as positions and types of sexual activity they engaged in (almost a quarter mentioned this). Some examples of subject's answers were:

- What positions to have sex in (Kiwi, 16, Male)
- Who goes on top (Tui, 28, Female)
- Wanting to experience different positions (Catering, 1, Male)
- When to have it, when not to have it and whether both of us feel comfortable with it. (Business 1, 11, Male)
- Where you have sex, eg. Not wanting to in parents house. (Kahu, 2, Female)

There was a significant difference between 'Not at School' and 'At School' groups in terms of expressing this discourse of erotics, with more 'Not at School' subjects reporting 'where and how often to have sex' and that

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13 33 out of the 248 young people who answered this question.
14 The actual percentage was 38% with 96 mentions from young people.
15 The actual percentage was 22% with 54 mentions from young people.
deciding 'positions and types of sexual activity' were problems. However, 'Not at School' subjects also reported significantly more problems to do with STD's and pregnancy which comprise an 'official discourse' of sexuality.

Despite mentioning and appearing to talk more frequently about/through a discourse of erotics many young people revealed in the questionnaire that they felt they lacked knowledge in these areas (See Table 4:4). This was demonstrated in their assertion that they knew least about 'sexual positions and techniques' and how to get what they wanted out of a sexual relationship (See section 4.1). This sense of a lack of 'erotic' knowledge might also explain why they reported more problems arising around issues of sexual positions and pleasure in their relationships.

Not only did young people feel they lacked this knowledge of 'erotics' but they also identified such a discourse as missing from sexuality education. Although I did not ask directly for an evaluation of sexuality education, young women and men in the couple activity and individual interviews often provided one. For example, over half of the young people\(^{16}\) who took part in the couple activity spoke about sexuality education and identified a missing discourse of desire and pleasure.

Peter and Amy described how the technicalities of how to have sex were skipped in their sexuality education classes in favour of 'menstruation education'.

Peter: This is a penis, this is what you do with it...that just never came up [in sex education].

Amy: Yeah a lot of the stuff they cover in sex education is like, this is a pad, this is a tampon, the menstruation stuff...well I mean we covered all that in Intermediate School,\(^{17}\) in Intermediate School sure, I mean that's a good place to cover menstruation...but once you hit, I mean they are still talking about it at 16 and by that stage you've sort of had a few [periods] and...you don't really want to know about that sort of thing..(CA, AS, 18).

\(^{16}\) 7 out of the 12 young people who took part in the couple activity.
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16 7 out of the 12 young people who took part in the couple activity.
Another couple explained how one partner wasn’t even taught about sex at school, while the other had only learned about its negative consequences in sexuality education programmes.

Tim: But at guys schools they don’t teach you that [about sex]. Not at my school anyway.

Emma: We learned a lot about what was going to go wrong rather than the actual thing. Like sometimes we would learn more about that, cause they would focus on the STDs and that not other stuff (CA, AS, mixed).

During the couple activity, Neil described how he had found the knowledge transmitted in sexuality education programmes irrelevant to his needs.

Neil: Yeah I think they underestimate what they think kids know aye. Like you go, we, like sex ed when I was at school it was like nothing it was a period where you sat and just blooming lazed around and made jokes with friends. Cause you knew everything and it was just pointless. (CA, AS,17)

Ngaire explained how sexual health classes never provided the information about sex she sought, forcing her to seek this knowledge elsewhere.

Louisa: So what would you do if you wanted to know about sex?
Ngaire: You had to go to the library and look it up yourself *(laugh)* so. Even in the health classes they never brought it up and that amazed me… I can recall doing it at Intermediate you know and I was 13 or 14 and then I thought as you get older like 17/18 like more or less 15 and up students want to know about sex not you know. (CA, NAS, 18)

Those who identified this ‘erotic’ discourse as missing also expressed an interest in having greater access to information about sexual feelings, sexual positions, and sexual pleasure within sexuality education programmes18.

17 Intermediate follows primary school and comes before secondary school in New Zealand. Students are aged 11 and 12 years at this stage.
18 This dissatisfaction did not arise in the questionnaires because there was no opportunity for young people to comment on sexuality education. In the focus groups it was unlikely to arise because I did not ask any questions about sexual knowledge and its sources. For the ‘At School’ groups an added difficulty would have been criticising school structures.
During the couple activity Emma described how she had wanted sexuality education to explain what sex felt like.

Louisa: So what stuff would you have wanted to be included?
Emma: ...a lot more focusing on..not so much the outcome but more what it what it involves and how it feels....
(CA, AS, 17)

In Peter and Amy’s case, they had felt being told more about how to initiate a sexual relationship and have sexual intercourse, would have made their first sexual experience together, more pleasurable.

Peter: The stuff you want to know is like how, is the best way to go about, maybe obtaining condoms or how to approach a girl and say 'hey do you want to have sex', or even how to do it, like just the basics, like positioning or whatever or something like that I mean...

Amy: What makes it, you know with regards to positioning what makes it easier for both you know sexes...If you’ve got absolutely no idea, you’re just going to stuff around for ages and you know most times it’s painful, if you don’t know what you are on about....
(CA, AS, mixed)

Another couple, described how they would have preferred less emphasis on the dangers of sexual activity in their sexuality education lessons. While they felt it was important to detail safer sex practices, they also wanted recognition of the more pleasurable aspects of sexual activity.

Neil: They make it out to be always they put all these negatives at you that you know, there’s so much chance that you’ll get pregnant and then your life will be stuffed up and then you can get STD’s and that...I think it’s to put you off actually and to shock you out of it. They don’t sort of, I'm not saying they should encourage all the younger people to go around and have sex like in the 1970s. But they shouldn’t make it out to be such a bad thing.

Nina: ...I reckon that even the school nurse should have them [condoms]....in sex education you should actually get some or something or...and be taught how to use one and how sex is not like necessarily a bad thing but if you don’t use them it can end up in problems and that.
(CA, AS, 17)
Young women and men's narratives in this research about sexual erotics appeared to take priority over 'official discourses' in their constitution of sexual knowledge. The young couples I interviewed who identified this discourse as missing from (and their subsequent calls for its inclusion in) sexuality education revealed their interest in and desire for this information. In addition, when young women and men talked about sexual erotics in focus groups they became much more animated, with greater numbers contributing to the discussion which flowed more easily. While this occurred in all 17 of the focus groups where this discourse emerged, for brevity I have chosen one representative extract to demonstrate this. In the following focus group the young women described how they 'rated guys' on a scale of 1 to 10 in terms of their sexual desirability.

Louisa: So what does the rating consist of?
Lita: Ah of 1 to 10 you know so like personality...but that's once you have known the guy for so long, say like 2 years.
Georgia: If you get a whole load of girls together and you get them to talk about their ex boyfriends they will rate them on things like how romantic they were.
Lita: Looks.
Sandra: Physique.
April: Muscles (laugh).
Georgia: Whether you can have a conversation you know and just things like that..
Lita: Yeah and you'd say things like, you know, 'he was horrible but he had nice abs' (all laugh).
Georgia: He had a really good body...but he was so dumb
April: What about that butt? (all laugh).
(FG, AS, 17 and 19 year olds)

This animation in talking about bodies and their attractiveness which are included in young people's discourse of erotics was not mirrored in discussions of condoms, sexually transmitted diseases or what might be seen as 'official' discourses of knowledge. In fact as already described, 'official' discourses of knowledge rarely featured in focus group discussion. This

19 Young people's patronage of sources like women's magazines, television and film which supply this type of sexual knowledge might provide further evidence of their interest in and desire for this information.
suggested young people were more interested in and motivated to contribute to discussions of sexual erotics.

Another indication that this sort of knowledge about sexuality was perceived as particularly interesting or 'useful' to young people in the sample was seen in their preferred sources of sexual information. The survey data revealed that both young women and young men found 'friends' a 'very useful' source of sexual knowledge (See Table 4:2).

It is possible that friends are consulted on sexuality matters because they provide this missing information about sexual erotics. Friends may not necessarily engage with the moral crusade that sexuality education often symbolises for young people, so that discussing questions such as, 'what feels physically good about sexual activity' is not saturated with social discourses that render sexual physical pleasure 'bad'. Intimacy between friends also means that such issues are likely to be less embarrassing to talk about.

Five of the six young women in the couple interviews mentioned how they turned to friends to obtain details about sexual activity that were not available from other sources or how they relied on friends for support with sexuality issues. Amy was the only exception here, revealing that at the time she started having sexual intercourse 'I wasn't a very popular person, I didn't have many friends', which she could turn to. Ngaire, as we have already seen, asked her friends at school who were and weren't virgins about what 'sex felt like'. Emma and Cam got their friends to accompany them for support to the local pharmacy and sexual health clinic to buy condoms. For empathy, Becky turned to a friend who had been in long term sexual relationship because she felt she was the only person who understood Becky's similar relationship experience. In addition, Nina explained her need to turn to her friend in order to know 'how to have sex'.

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20 'Friends' are also reported in other New Zealand research as a major source of information on sexuality issues, see for example Elliot (1997).
Nina: ..you know you don't actually get told how to have sex and stuff. It's just like you're already supposed to know sort of thing and I think that part was all right cause all I had to do was kind of lie there (laugh). But you know like other things, like I said before going down on him. I had to, I just had to find out first. I'd talk to my friend cause she was like what other people would call a slut, but she isn't. She is a bit more experienced than me so I go to her for consultancy (laugh) like on this particular matter...

(II, NAS, 17)

Questionnaire findings revealed that a significant gender difference was found in this consultation of friends with more young women reporting them slightly more useful than young men (sig. 0.030). An explanation for this could be found in focus group discussion with the participants from three of the groups concluding it was more likely young women would talk about sexual issues together. Marcel captured this consensus when he said, 'I don't know...I mean I think...girls were probably better...I don't...I'm not saying that guys couldn't be but, they (girls) just seem to be better at being able to talk about intimate stuff together' (AS, 18 years). Mac an Ghail (1994) has described in his research on male adolescents, how hegemonic masculinity works to create competition between young men for attainment of socially constituted 'appropriate masculinity'. This competition means young men cannot appear feminine or vulnerable to each other least they forfeit their achievement of this masculinity. As young men are supposed to be already knowledgeable about sexual activity, and talking about the intimacies of having sex is constituted as a feminine endeavour, friends may have served as a less important source of information for them.

If young men did not consult friends as much as young women to access information about sexual pleasure, how to have sex, what to do or what to expect, it is possible that they were deriving this knowledge from other sources. As already indicated, an analysis of the questionnaire data revealed that other sources of ‘very useful’ information for young men were ‘television’ and ‘pornographic’ magazines. There was a highly significant gender difference (sig. .000) between young women and men who found

21 Only three of the groups spontaneously raised the issue of men finding it more difficult to talk about sexuality issues. This was not a question in the focus group schedule.
pornographic magazines 'very useful', with only 3% of young women reporting this\textsuperscript{22}. In fact, almost three quarters of young women had never consulted pornographic magazines, while almost three quarters of young men had\textsuperscript{23}. This suggests that young men could be turning to these magazines as a potential source of these other forms of knowledge about sexuality and sexual activity\textsuperscript{24}.

Anti-pornography feminists have written prolifically about the effects of pornography. They describe the exploitation and objectification of women and some assume that if 'pornography is the theory; rape is the practice' (sic) (Coward, 1987:307). Mainstream pornography is a major way by which male sexual subjectivities are constituted and this construction is deleterious for sexual equality. As Jackson and Scott have argued, pornography:

...helps to circulate and perpetuate particular versions of these narratives such as the mythology of women as sexually available, deriving pleasure from being dominated and possessed and a model of masculinity validated through sexual mastery over women. A man does not rape as a direct reaction to a pornographic stimulus; rather pornography contributes to the cultural construction of a particular form of masculinity and sexual desire which make rape possible... (Jackson and Scott, 1996:23)

Pornography as a source of information about sexual desire and pleasure arguably can reproduce oppressive male sexual subjectivities that sustain inequitable sexual politics and misogynist values (Dworkin, 1981). Thus, the absence of knowledge about sexual erotics including sexual desire and pleasure\textsuperscript{25}, constructed in a positive, empowering and gender equitable manner within sexuality education, may mean that no alternative discourses were available to these young men to contest detrimental discourses of male pornography.

\textsuperscript{22} There were no significant 'At School' or 'Not At School' differences on pornography as a 'very useful' source of information.
\textsuperscript{23} The actual percentages were 74% of young women and 73% of young men.
\textsuperscript{24} The actual percentages were 74% of young women and 73% of young men.
\textsuperscript{25} Critics of sexuality education have argued that a discourse of female desire and pleasure is missing from sex education programmes (Fine, 1988; Jackson, 1978; Lenskyj, 1990). As a consequence these researchers argue that sexuality education is 'reduced to imparting 'facts' within a 'de-eroticized' instructional repertoire (Gagnon and Simon, 1974:112).
4.3 Exploring young people's relationship to knowledge and practice

In this section I want to reconsider the ways in which the study constituted sexual knowledge in light of the concept of the knowledge/practice 'gap'. In particular, I focus on how young people understood the relationships between their sexual knowledge, subjectivities and their sexual practice.

One of the survey questions asked young people to indicate whether or not they felt their sexual knowledge affected their relationships or their ability to have relationships. The question was designed to probe how subjects constituted the relationship between their sexual knowledge and their practice. Sixty percent reported they did not feel their level of sexual knowledge affected their relationships or ability to engage in them. A significant gender difference (sig. 0.037) was apparent here with more young men indicating that their level of sexual knowledge did not affect their sexual practice. According to these young people, possessing or not possessing sexual knowledge was seen as irrelevant to their ability to forge or conduct relationships.

Table 4.5 Do Subjects Think their Level of Sexual Knowledge Affects their Relationships or Ability to have Relationships?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>Yes it does effect relationships % ( ) = N</th>
<th>No it doesn't effect relationships % ( ) = N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Young women</td>
<td>(113) 43.0</td>
<td>(150) 57.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young men</td>
<td>(47) 32.4</td>
<td>(98) 67.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>(160) 39.2</td>
<td>(248) 60.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* N = 408, Female = 263, Male 145.

Another question, exploring the relationship of sexual knowledge to sexual subjectivity, was addressed to those who took part in the interviews. It asked what sorts of things came to mind when they thought about their sexual knowledge and how they perceived themselves as a sexual person. In

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26 Forty percent felt that knowledge did affect their relationships and ability to conduct them. These results are discussed in Chapter 7.  
27 There were no significant 'At School' or 'Not at School' differences here.
accordance with knowledge/practice ‘gap’ ‘logic’, I had formulated this question presuming there was a direct relationship between on the one hand, young people viewing themselves as knowledgeable and on the other hand, experiencing themselves positively as sexual partners confident in their sexual practice. The fact that 10 out of 12 young people in the interview had difficulty answering this question might suggest their conceptualisation of knowledge and sexual subjectivity did not conform to this framework. Each of the following extracts were individual’s immediate responses in the interview to my question about how they saw their knowledge relating to their sense of themselves as sexual people. They revealed that while some could talk about their level of sexual knowledge with ease, they often failed to mention or did not/could not connect such knowledge with how they viewed themselves as sexual people.

Peter: Uhm sexual knowledge, uhm well I’d like to think that I know a fair bit, like I said when I was younger and a kid I didn’t have a lot of friends so I read a lot of, went to the adult section of the library sort of quite early so I read lots of stuff through that, uhm watching movies on TV gives you an idea but uhm yeah I’d like to, I mean I think I know, know quite a bit about sex through reading and stuff like that...
(II, AS, 18)

Chris: Oh I don’t know, I think ..from like then [primary school] I was ahead of everybody else and then there was this point where everyone starts to fool around and experiment and stuff and I never did that. And just, I just because I felt that I knew quite a bit I didn’t want to, really want to experiment cause you know...
(II, NAS, 19)

In Amy’s case she was able to talk about her sexual subjectivity as sometimes expressing itself in ‘tiger’ form but did not relate this back to her perception of her sexual knowledge.

\[^{28}\text{Cam and Emma were the only ones able to successfully integrate their perception of their sexual knowledge and a sense of how this effected their sexual subjectivity. Their responses are explored in Chapter 5.}\]
Amy: Uhm...well I think, I think in some ways everyone has got their own little thing, you know hidden tiger I suppose you can call it (laugh) you know it only sort of comes out every so often (laugh).

One possible explanation of such responses is that the young people in the study viewed being knowledgeable about sex as independent of how they viewed themselves as sexual people. That is, formal knowledge about sex is not necessarily associated with being a sexual person. Taken together the findings from these two questions albeit tentatively suggest knowledge may not be seen by young people in the study as central to their sexual subjectivities or practice. It would appear then that one of the reasons that some young people do not put their knowledge into practice is because they do not perceive knowledge as necessary for sexual practice. This is quite a different constitution of the knowledge/practice 'gap', which presumes a logical progression between firstly having knowledge and then acting upon it. In these young people's constitution of the relationship between knowledge and practice, knowledge appears not to be perceived as a prerequisite to practice, in fact knowledge may not enter the equation at all. Clearly, more research is needed to confirm exactly how young people conceptualise this knowledge/practice relationship.

An inability/failure to connect sexual knowledge to their sense of themselves as sexual people may be the result of two different influences. Firstly, heterosexual relationships are socially constructed as 'natural'. As supposedly 'natural' phenomena, specialised knowledge is not required to engage in them because they are seen to evolve along lines that are already preordained. Evidence that some young people constructed sexual activity in their relationships in this way is found in their descriptions of how they knew the time was right to have sexual intercourse. Some of the young people who had taken part in the couple activity talked about their current relationship during the individual interview thus:

Tim: ...you know once we started kissing and got close and stuff like that it was just like a logical sort of progression. (I1, NAS, 19)
Peter: I don't know it just like seemed like, I don't know if you'd call it the next step in the relationship...but like we'd moved on we had been kissing and cuddling and touching each other and...you know I love her and this is what people do when they are in love. (II, AS, 19)

Emma: ...things had just been like progressing along naturally they were like taking their natural course and getting more and more involved and it just seemed like that was going to be the next step up from what it was before like evolution in a way...
(II, AS, 17)

The notion that sexual activity was a 'natural' and 'expected' phenomenon in heterosexual relationships was also suggested by some young women and men in the focus groups discussions. For example, in one focus group where participants were female and still at school, subject's talked about how sexual intercourse was an expected element of teenage relationships.

April: Well at our age everyone has sex
Lita: At our age it is something that you do....
Georgia: Cause like uhm with teenage relationships it's not about discovering the other person, it's discovering the opposite sex. (FG, AS, Mixed)

Similarly, a mixed gender focus group where participants were training to become fitness instructors, also raised the issue of sexual intercourse as inevitable in teenage relationships.

Louisa: So why is 'sex' the first thing that comes into your mind when I say 'girlfriend/boyfriend' relationships?
Melinda: Uhm cause that's what most relationships do our age.
Vete: Cause that's how Mummy and Daddy made me (All laugh) (FG, NAS, Mixed)

Another mixed gender focus group where subjects were still at school, talked about sexual relationships as socially expected, yet also as biologically determined because of a need to reproduce (sic).
Louisa: So why get involved in sexual relationships then?
Rosalind: Just kind of expected of you...experimenting or what ever
Rodney: Feel like you have got to...you might hear what society is saying, this is what you do and stuff.
Annalise: mmm...find a mate
Tracy: But also it's natural as well
Annalise: yeah
Roy: It's animal instinct as well....yeah cause the whole idea of boyfriend/girlfriend relationships is pretty much based around one and one sex wanting to be with another or what ever you know, it's just basic hum instinct.

(FG, AS, 17)

The words young people selected here like 'natural course', 'logical progression', 'the next step', 'animal instinct', 'it's expected', reveal their sense of a natural order about sexual activity and heterosexual relationships as a context for them. Such 'naturalisation' of heterosexual intercourse was also documented by Gavey et al, (1999) in her investigation of the norms which govern it. She writes;

If something is natural, it tends to be thought of as beyond question, it is 'just the way things are'. As Tiefer (1997) has argued, the language of the natural evokes the kinds of biological explanations which imply something is 'universal, pre-social and essential' (Gavey et al, 1999:40).

The biological element Gavey refers to suggests that knowledge about sexual activity is instinctual, it is something which the body was born knowing and, therefore, does not need to be learned. Subsequently, for some young people in the research having sexual knowledge additional to that which is 'instinctual' was seen as unnecessary as it is 'inevitable' that relationships will develop and sexual activity will ensue within them regardless.

Another explanation of why young people in the study appeared not to perceive knowledge as a prerequisite for practice was that for them practice is knowledge, or put another way practice is a means to knowledge. This was demonstrated in the answers young people gave in focus groups to the question 'Why do you think young people get involved in girlfriend/boyfriend relationships'? In their responses young women and men described how engaging in a relationship was a means of finding out about sexual activity
and their sexuality. Discussion in over half of the focus groups (12\textsuperscript{29} out of 17) referred to the fact that “experience” was a main reason for entering into heterosexual relationships. For example, one focus group held with young women who were still at school described how:

Jane: There’s an element of lust uhm and discovering sexuality etc of people our age.
Nada: Yeah I think discovering sexuality is a big one.

(FG, AS, 17)

This sentiment was echoed by a mixed gender focus group of young people who were training for sporting professions;

Melinda: Because we are young.
Pepe: Yeah you want to experiment.
Kiri: Yeah go and explore.

(FG, NAS, 19)

The following comments were made by a young woman participating in an all female focus group at school.

Becky: Experience.
Louisa: What kind of experience?
Becky: Well just experiencing different people. I mean I know a lot of religious people would say no (laugh) you know but they reckon like, that not only sexual experience but just different kinds of people to see what sort of person you know that you’re attracted too that you can have a long relationship with but uhm and they reckon that if you don’t have sex before marriage you can not be compatible, you might not be compatible to your long term partner so that’s another reason probably just experience.

(FG, AS, 17)

Crystal and Laurele who were pregnant at the time the focus group was conducted, also described their desire to experiment sexually.

Crystal: To find the right partner I reckon.
Laurele: Experiment before you get married.

(FG, NAS, mixed)

In a mixed focus group of young people who were training in business skills entering relationships for sexual experience was also mentioned.

\textsuperscript{29}The responses of the other 30\% of focus group participants are explored in (Chapter 7) in relation to issues concerning what young people want out of a relationship.
Experience I suppose. Sex I suppose. Curiosity, that's what it is. You sort of see it [sex] on the television and you think 'oh that looks like fun' (others laugh). Well it does, the music and everything. And your eye starts straying and you think well how can I try this out? (FG, NAS, mixed)

For these young people engaging in heterosexual practice was a means of gaining experience/knowledge of relationships and sexual activity. In this way practice acted as a means to knowledge. The way these young people constructed relationships between knowledge and practice inverted the 'gap' equation so that what was most important was 'practice' because it enabled knowledge. Unlike proponents of the knowledge/practice 'gap', 'practice' rather than (formal) 'knowledge' is prioritised.

4.4 Gendered Sexual Knowledge

A reformulation of the knowledge/practice 'gap' also involves an understanding of the mediating role of gender in this equation. Knowledge is not automatically translated into practice as the logical progression of the 'gap' equation theoretically proposes, because gendered sexual subjectivities intervene. Other researchers have demonstrated how a context of gendered power relations can inhibit execution of knowledge about safer sex practices (Holland et al, 1990; Hillier et al, 1998; Maxwell, 1995). This data suggests a complex set of gendered relationships between sexual knowledge, subjectivities and practices where young people’s gendered relationship to knowledge has implications for how they apply their knowledge in practice. In the following section I explore how young women and men portrayed a gendered relationship to knowledge and practice.

Despite the findings cited above that reveal young men appear to know slightly less about sexual issues than young women, young men did not describe themselves as lacking in sexual knowledge (at least not outwardly). As the questionnaire results showed, although there was a slight gender difference (sig. 045), all young people perceived themselves as 'very
knowledgeable'. Being perceived as sexually knowledgeable is inextricably tied to the maintenance of appropriate male sexual subjectivity. Hegemonic masculinity works to perpetuate discourses where 'the male is regarded as the knowing sexual agent and the actor, the woman is unknowing and acted upon' (Holland et al, 1993:8). Many young men in the research displayed an investment in being knowledgeable in the way they worked to appear so to their partners. Nina who was part of a couple who participated in the research, explained in the couple activity how her boyfriend (Neil) told her he wasn't a virgin when they first had sexual intercourse, when in reality he was. In the individual interview I asked Neil why he had said this and he replied 'I can’t really say why I told her that. I was just young and trying to impress a girl and you know just uhm...I was just being a show-off or all macho and bull shit really'. As Neil felt he lacked sexual experience he endeavoured to cover his feeling of inferiority by cultivating an identity that fitted more aptly with hegemonic masculinity.

Chris, also part of a couple who participated in the research, sought to present himself as more sexually experienced than he was during his first sexual encounter with girlfriend Cam. He wanted to make sex pleasurable for her in order to prove his own sexual expertise in light of few and unsuccessful previous experiences. Describing this feeling, he explained in the individual interview that it was, 'to see if like I can, if I could make sex good and like I wanted to make her feel good as well' (II, NAS, 19). His efforts at appearing knowledgeable paid off because Cam recounted in the couple activity '..I thought that he was more experienced than what he was'.

The operation of hegemonic masculinity creates a complex relationship between sexual knowledge and practice. The possession of knowledge which, in the examples above, is derived from practice, is not perceived by young men in this study as having a significant impact upon practice. This was seen in the survey where more young men, two thirds, reported that their level of sexual knowledge did not affect their relationships or ability to have relationships (sig. 037) (See Table 4:5).
This is possibly because regardless of the sexual knowledge young men possess, they enter into heterosexual practice by taking up a subject position of 'knower'. In this way hegemonic masculinity mediates the knowledge/practice relationship by offering them a sexual subjectivity that renders young men knowledgeable, whether or not this is true. In other words, it does not matter what sexual knowledge young men possess because they are constituted as knowledgeable within dominant discourses of heterosexuality. Subsequently their actual sexual knowledge has little significance for their sexual practice.

This relationship between actual knowledge, dominant subject positions and heterosexual practice has particular implications for young men's experience of sexual activity. The research findings showed how taking up this subjectivity in the absence of real knowledge could be harrowing, causing some young men's first experiences of sexual practice to be anxious, disappointing, tense and like 'a performance'. Speaking about their first sexual experiences in this way, young men who participated in the couple activity, revealed these feelings in the intimacy of individual interviews.

Peter: Well it was very nerve racking...like I said Amy didn't really enjoy it at all the first time....it made me feel pretty bad, because I thought maybe I'm doing something wrong... (II, AS, 18)

Chris: ...like sex for me it wasn't worthwhile before it doesn't give you anything like you, it didn't make you, it didn't make me feel particularly good or anything... (II, NAS, 19)

Neil: I hated it because it was hurting her so badly and she kept wanting me to go on....it made me feel like shit, cause you know I didn't want to hurt her... (II, NAS, 17)

Tim: ..I guess at first that was a big problem like, I'd sit there afterwards and like go 'hey I really, really sucked didn't I'?... (II, NAS, 19)
When a dominant subject position as 'knower' is taken up in the absence of 'real' sexual knowledge, young men's experience of sexual practice can generate negative feelings of anxiety and failure. For instance, in the above extracts when Peter said 'it made me feel pretty bad, because I thought maybe I was doing something wrong' or when Neil explained, 'I hated it because it was hurting her so badly...it made me feel like shit'. These young men appeared to feel inadequate and subsequently vulnerable, and some took up dominant male sexual subjectivities in order to maintain appropriate male sexuality (as seen earlier when Neil and Chris tried to appear more sexually knowledgeable to their girlfriends than they actually were). In their research involving young men Holland et al, (1994a) found that in doing this young men simultaneously 'reproduce and reinforce the exercise of male power over women' (Holland et al, 1994a:113).

Young women's relationship to sexual knowledge appeared to have a different effect on how sexual knowledge was put into practice. In young women's situation what seemed to be at work were dominant discourses of appropriate female sexuality constituting them as the passive, unknowing receptacles of male action. Transgressing these discourses by appearing too knowledgeable about sexual activity meant they risked being socially constituted as 'sluts' or 'whores' (Lees, 1993; Thomson and Holland, 1996). As explained above, findings from this research reveal young women not only perceive themselves as having more knowledge, but on traditional measures of sexual knowledge demonstrate themselves slightly more knowledgeable than young men. This knowledge requires careful management when engaging in sexual practice, something which many young women in this study acknowledged. Responses to a survey question asking them to explain how they perceived their level of sexual knowledge affected their relationships, indicated this recognition. In the following responses to this open ended question, young women explained the potentially damaging effects of their sexual knowledge.
By knowing about sex, people I like sometimes get the wrong impression, like maybe she sleeps around because she knows about sex. (Huia, 31)

Because it means that if you've had sex before, guys expect you to have sex with them. (Huia, 32)

Because I am scared that my future boyfriends will use me for sex. (Tui, 28)

If guys know that a girl has experience then he can be too scared to get involved cause he thinks he has to live up to something. (Huia, 70)

Guys get kind of scared off because I know more than them usually. (Business 1, 23)

These young women appeared to want to manage their sexual knowledge in the context of heterosexual practice in particular ways. If they did not want to 'scare guys off', 'be used for sex' or be 'expected to have sex', their sexual knowledge had to be reconstituted in practice.

Evidence of this reconstitution occurring was found in the narratives of young women who participated in the couple activity, in relation to securing sexual satisfaction with a new partner. Even young women with previous sexual experience were unanimous that sexual activity was more satisfying and pleasurable later in the relationship. This was attributable to knowing their partner more intimately, accompanied by a feeling of being freer to express what they desired sexually and subsequently achieving greater sexual satisfaction. There was a sense in which once young women got to know someone better, it was safer to reveal their sexual knowledge without this being perceived as 'slut like'. Discussing the experience of raunchy satisfying sex, young women in a focus group where participants were training in business skills, agreed with Lynette who said 'I think that comes after you get to know the person. Like not the raunchy...I think that sex might come but the raunchy side you have to learn to trust them before...' (FG, NAS, 18).

The need to trust their partner before feeling they could actively engage in varied sexual activities (which might indicate sexual knowledge/experience)
was also mentioned by Ngaire in the couple activity. Ngaire explained that it was only in the last two months of her nine month relationship, that she felt able to engage in and explore different kinds of sexual activity which she found pleasurable.

I'll try something on him I'll say to him 'oh can I try this on you'? and uhm he'll say 'yes'...it hasn't been until now that I've got, like I've had the courage to say 'oh yes I'd like to try that' and he has and I've actually enjoyed that'.

(II, NAS, 18)

For young women like Ngaire to express and put into practice sexual knowledge, an environment of trust and safety had to be established in their relationship. Because dominant discourses of female sexuality constitute subject positions in which young women are passive and unknowing, those who do possess sexual knowledge are encouraged not to reveal and thus act upon it. In order to preserve an appropriately female sexual subjectivity such knowledge is left out of practice, especially early on in relationships. As a result knowledge becomes (at least for a time) redundant in terms of young women's practice in exactly the opposite way it does for young men. While young men must appear more knowledgeable than they may actually be, in order to fulfil an 'appropriately' female sexual subjectivity, young women must deny their knowledge and initially take up subject positions as 'lesser knowers'.

Clearly the consequences of this for understanding the knowledge/practice 'gap' are that gender can be seen to mediate young people's relationship to sexual knowledge and the constitution of their sexual subjectivity as it is played out in (hetero)sexual practice. In terms of the 'gap' equation dominant discourses of gendered sexual subjectivity either prevent the activation of knowledge into practice as in young women's case, or set up for young men a phantom relationship between sexual knowledge, subjectivity and practice.
4.5 Conclusion

The data presented here suggests that young people differentiated between two types of sexual knowledge; that derived from secondary sources such as sex education, friends, magazines etc. and that obtained from personal experience. In deciding who was most knowledgeable in their relationship, couples in the sample prioritised sexual knowledge derived from personal experience relegating the partner with more practical experience the most knowledgeable. This suggested young people's construction of a hierarchy between these two kinds of knowledge where knowledge gained from practice held greater status.

The data also indicated young people perceived knowledge derived from secondary sources as comprising of two discourses. One of these was an 'official' discourse of knowledge, while the other was what I have conceptualised as a 'discourse of erotics'. Young people in the sample displayed greater interest in a discourse of erotics, revealed by the way they spent more time talking about it, identifying it as missing from sexuality education and suggesting it needed to be included in these programmes. The findings also suggested that young people in this study did not view knowledge as a pre-requisite to practice. In fact 60% of young women and men did not believe their level of sexual knowledge had any impact upon their relationship practice. Instead, practice could be seen as a means to knowledge where engaging in sexual activity was considered as a way of acquiring knowledge about it. This emphasis on practice has important implications for a reformulation of the 'gap equation' (See Chapter 8).

The research revealed that young people's relationship to knowledge is mediated by their gender. Being seen to be knowledgeable about sex, has different meanings and consequences for young women and men and subsequently effects their sexual practice in the way it is shaped by dominant discourses of femininity and masculinity. In the next chapter, I explore in more detail how young women and men negotiate their sexual subjectivities with/in these dominant heterosexual discourses.
Chapter Five

Sexual Subjectivity

5.0 Introduction

In the previous chapter I examined young people's constructions of sexual knowledge and the relationship they perceived between such knowledge, and their sexual subjectivities and heterosexual practices. I argued this relationship has repercussions for theorising the knowledge/practice 'gap' and making sexuality education messages more effective. This chapter develops this analysis by investigating in more depth the nature of young people's sexual subjectivities. In particular I explore how young people's sexual subjectivities are constituted through dominant discourses of gendered sexuality, concentrating for example, on how young people negotiate these positionings. As the previous chapter showed, dominant discourses which position young women and men in traditionally gendered ways mediate the application of their sexual knowledge into practice. If such subject positions inhibit the likelihood of knowledge being put into practice, it is probable alternative sexual subjectivities offer greater space to enable this. Subsequently, this chapter offers insight into how such alternative sexual subjectivities could be achieved.

The chapter is divided into two sections. The first section examines how young people in the study constituted their sexual subjectivities in relation to their sexual knowledge. It argues that their conceptualisation of subjectivity was closely tied to their experience of knowledge derived from personal practice.¹ This is followed by an analysis of how these sexual subjectivities are gendered. The way in which young people in the study, drew upon dominant discourses of female and male heterosexuality reveals the potency of these discourses. In the second section however, I argue that the power of
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these discourses was not unproblematic, since some young people in the sample successfully negotiated them in order to take up alternative sexual subjectivities which offered them a greater sense of agency.

5.1 Recognising Sexual Subjectivity

Thinking about oneself as a sexual person can be an uncomfortable experience as it forces an acknowledgement of feelings and knowledge often associated with the private, inappropriate, dirty and/or deviant (Tolman, 1994). This is a result of the pervasiveness of what Foucault has identified as the ‘disciplinary power of sexuality’ which works to legitimate some expressions of sexuality while ‘perverting’ others (Foucault, 1976). As a consequence of the operation of discourses supporting this disciplinary power, thinking about themselves as sexual presented a challenge for many of the young people in the research. Recognising oneself as 'young' and 'sexual' necessitated a reconstitution of the sexual subjectivities of young people that are typically constructed by conservative discourses as 'teenage promiscuity' and 'deviance'. The operation of these moral discourses prohibiting the construction of young people as sexual in a positive way, meant that many had never thought of themselves in this way before. Subsequently, my asking young people in this research to describe themselves as a sexual person was sometimes difficult for them. This was seen in the following extracts of feedback I requested from subjects after having completed the questionnaire\(^2\). These young people had just completed the questionnaire and were about to participate in a focus group discussion:

Louisa: How did you find filling out the questionnaire?
Kiri: That was uhm, I’d never thought about half those questions before.
(FG, NAS, 18)

\(^1\) This idea was explored in the previous chapter and denotes the perception of some of the young people in this research that practice is a means to knowledge.

\(^2\) Asking about the experience of filling out the questionnaire was part of informal questioning I undertook as young people handed their completed questionnaires to me, or in the case of the extract above, just before a focus group session began.
Some of the questions that you come across like what do you think of your body, it’s like skinny, fat, overweight, sexy, it’s like uhm…..? (as if thinking….laugh).

Like rate your sexiness (laugh) Uhm I dunno (all laugh).

So how do those questions sort of make you feel?

Some of them made you have to think.

Yeah, yeah like and you just don’t know what to answer.

(FG, NAS, mixed)

It might be deduced that the struggle described by these young people is the result of them not having a clear sense of their sexuality. However, despite their expressed difficulty, response rates to questions about subjectivity in the questionnaire indicated young people constantly constituted and reconstituted themselves as sexual. Nearly all subjects answered the questions; ‘Rate how sexy you think you are’ (97%) and ‘How would you describe your sexual desire? (98%) revealing their possession of a sense of themselves as sexual.

Table 5:1 How Sexy do Subjects Think they are?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Very Sexy ( ) = N</th>
<th>Sort of Sexy ( ) = N</th>
<th>Not Sexy ( ) = N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Young Women</td>
<td>(21) 8.1%</td>
<td>(185) 71.2%</td>
<td>(53) 20.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young men</td>
<td>(20) 13.9%</td>
<td>(89) 61.8%</td>
<td>(35) 24.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>(41) 10.1%</td>
<td>(274) 67.8%</td>
<td>(88) 21.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* N = 403, Female = 259, Male = 144.

Table 5:2 How would Subjects Describe their Sexual Desire?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Very Strong</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Weak</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Young Women</td>
<td>(72) 27.5%</td>
<td>(148) 56.5%</td>
<td>(30) 11.5%</td>
<td>(12) 4.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young men</td>
<td>(51) 34.9%</td>
<td>(83) 56.8%</td>
<td>(11) 7.5%</td>
<td>(1) 0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>(123) 30.1%</td>
<td>(231) 56.6%</td>
<td>(41) 10%</td>
<td>(13) 3.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* N = 408, Female = 262, Male = 146.

Most subjects described themselves as ‘sort of sexy’ (67%) rather than ‘very sexy’ (only 10%). A large minority of young people described themselves as ‘not sexy’ at all (21%). The only significant gender difference (sig. 047) within these items was that more young women reported they were ‘sort of sexy’ (71%). In terms of conceptualising their sexual desire, the majority of young people reported they had ‘average desires’ (56%) with no significant gender differences on any of the items. The results indicated a larger percentage of
young people were able to describe their sexual desire as ‘very strong’ (30%) rather than view themselves as ‘very sexy’ (10%). This might be because seeing yourself as sexy involves a social perception of ‘sexiness’ while ‘desire’ is more likely to be experienced subjectively as a feeling that emanates from within.

What also indicated young people’s sense of sexual subjectivity was that they were readily able to answer a survey question that asked them to choose two words from a word bank which described how they saw themselves as a sexual partner. The most frequently chosen descriptor was ‘fun loving’ (31%) followed by ‘caring’ (29%) and ‘romantic’ (27%). These words portrayed a sample not of ‘social deviance’ or ‘promiscuity’ (very few young people chose words that were overtly sexual like ‘raunchy’, 4%), ‘kinky’ (11%) or ‘lustful’ (10%), but a group of young people who might be more likely to sustain longer term relationships. More young men were likely to describe themselves as ‘gentle’ and ‘lustful’, while young women were more likely to report they were ‘affectionate’ sexual partners.

Table 5:3 How do Young People See Themselves as Sexual Partners?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>% Young Women N = 213</th>
<th>% Young Men N = 120</th>
<th>% Total N = 333</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fun loving</td>
<td>(69) 32.4</td>
<td>(38) 31.7</td>
<td>(107) 32.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lustful*</td>
<td>(16) 7.5</td>
<td>(19) 15.8</td>
<td>(35) 10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lazy</td>
<td>(4) 1.9</td>
<td>(2) 1.7</td>
<td>(6) 1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raunchy</td>
<td>(12) 5.6</td>
<td>(4) 3.3</td>
<td>(16) 4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominant</td>
<td>(6) 2.8</td>
<td>(3) 2.5</td>
<td>(9) 2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affectionate**</td>
<td>(68) 31.9</td>
<td>(19) 15.8</td>
<td>(87) 26.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spontaneous</td>
<td>(31) 14.6</td>
<td>(10) 8.3</td>
<td>(41) 12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loving</td>
<td>(48) 22.5</td>
<td>(28) 23.3</td>
<td>(76) 22.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gentle*</td>
<td>(30) 14.1</td>
<td>(29) 24.2</td>
<td>(59) 17.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impatient</td>
<td>(6) 2.8</td>
<td>(4) 3.3</td>
<td>(10) 3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humorous</td>
<td>(23) 10.8</td>
<td>(16) 13.3</td>
<td>(39) 11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selfish</td>
<td>(2) .9</td>
<td>(0) 0</td>
<td>(2) .6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assertive</td>
<td>(11) 5.2</td>
<td>(3) 2.5</td>
<td>(14) 4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring</td>
<td>(63) 29.6</td>
<td>(35) 29.2</td>
<td>(98) 29.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romantic</td>
<td>(57) 26.8</td>
<td>(35) 29.2</td>
<td>(92) 27.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinky</td>
<td>(24) 11.3</td>
<td>(13) 10.8</td>
<td>(37) 11.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The word bank was created during the piloting stage of the questionnaire. Originally young people were asked to provide 3 words that described them as a sexual partner. The words most frequently chosen by young people were then put in to the final version of the questionnaire for them to choose from.
What stood out in young people’s recognition of themselves as sexual, was the way that within the couple interviews they articulated their sexual subjectivity as inextricably tied to being ‘sexually active’. There was a sense in which these young people perceived what defined them as sexual as being the sexual activity and sexual relationship they had engaged in. In this construction being a sexual person appeared to occur once they had become sexually active with (an)other. I could not identify any talk, in which subjects expressed an embodied feeling of sexuality that was not derived from engaging in sexual relations with a partner. When young people talked about themselves as sexual this was often⁴ in relation to engaging in sexual activity with someone else. This was evident in the following responses where young people in relationships described how they perceived themselves as sexual partners during the individual interview.

Here, Ngaire drew upon her boyfriend’s reaction to sexual activity with her as an indicator of whether or not she was a good sexual partner.

Ngaire: I think I’m good…..because he’s [her boyfriend] always got a smile on his face when he goes to sleep (laugh). Yeah I’ve never seen him go to sleep with no smile on his face. The day that happens then I’ll start worrying (laugh).

(P, NAS, 18)

Similarly, Peter explained that his sense of himself as a good sexual partner was dependent upon whether his girlfriend Amy, was satisfied with his sexual performance.

Peter: Oh I’d like to think that I am all right. I mean I know, I’m not Casanova or anything like that but, I mean, I, I give her [Amy] pleasure so that’s all you can really hope for.

(P, AS, 19)

⁴ The other ways in which young people in this study tended to talk about themselves as sexual people were in relation to dominant discourses of heterosexuality which are explored later in the chapter.
Ashby, Becky and Amy also described how their sense of themselves as sexual people was dependent upon whether or not their partners found sexual activity with them pleasurable.

Ashby: ..I'd say it varies like sometimes I think you know, oh yeah she had a good time and other times I think uhm you know I'm not really pleasing her [His girlfriend]...
(II, AS, 17)

Amy: ...sometimes I sort of think oh that was, I didn't particularly perform very well there...I mean Peter will usually say afterwards 'oh you know that was okay, that was good, I enjoyed that', something like that which makes me feel okay, he did enjoy that, it's okay you know he's given me pleasure, okay that's cool I've given him something too....
(II, AS, 18)

Becky: ...I don't really know how he [her boyfriend] views it but I sort of have to think that it can't be bad for him otherwise he wouldn't be with me and he wouldn't have come back to me twice you know what I mean. If it was bad for him then I am sure that he wouldn't be there.
(II, AS, 17)

A distinct picture of how different relationships influenced young people's sense of themselves as sexual partners could be seen in Cam and Nina's narratives. These two young women revealed that how they thought about themselves as sexual, varied from one relationship to another.

Cam: I feel confident in mine and Chris's relationship with everything. I think I feel more confident because he isn't, and I think if we were fairly insecure (laugh) it would be really terrible. But uhm I think that I am more confident with him than I have been with other people.

Louisa: So you have a positive feeling about yourself as a sexual partner?

Cam: Yeah, yeah.
(II, NAS, 19)
So how do you see yourself as a sexual partner then? Well I think that ah, we have both kind of developed together...I think we are both good for each other kind of thing. Like if I had another, say if I broke up with this, with Neil and went into another relationship I wouldn't feel the same.

Different how?

Well first of all I wouldn't go into another relationship and start having sex straight away sort of thing and then even when I did..I would probably feel kind of like I did with Neil inexperienced sort of even though, even though like being right there and you know....

(II, NAS, 17)

The idea that sexual practice with a partner provided the reference point for conceptualising oneself as a sexual person, is tied to young people's hierarchalisation of sexual knowledge described in the previous chapter. With knowledge derived from practical experience held in highest esteem, this is the knowledge that has the power to bestow the status of a 'sexual person'. Without practical sexual knowledge and only an intellectual grasp of sexual activity, young people in sexual relationships were less likely to conceptualise themselves as being 'truly' sexual.

5.2 Constructing sexual subject positions within dominant discourses of heterosexuality

Jackson argues 'we all learn to be sexual within a society in which 'real sex' is defined as a quissentially heterosexual act, vaginal intercourse, and in which sexual activity is thought of in terms of an active subject and passive object' (Jackson, 1996:23). The dominance of heterosexual identity and associated discourses which support an active male and passive female sexuality are deeply embedded within social and political participation and perceived as normative. These discourses have been historically shaped by fields such as religion, medicine, law, media and academic disciplines (Hawkes, 1996).

One such discursive field in which the construction of female sexuality has been traced historically in New Zealand\(^5\) is the literature disseminated about sexuality. The construction of female sexuality in this literature was one of

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\(^5\) Other historical accounts of femininity in New Zealand can be found in Brookes et al, (1992); Brookes et al, (1986); Openshaw and McKenzie, (1987).
passivity and vulnerability where women were perceived as having less desire and achieving sexual pleasure less easily than men (Allen, 1996). Phillips (1996) has traced the historical construction of Pakeha masculinity since New Zealand’s colonial past, where male sexuality was described as heterosexual, active, easily gratified and unbridled.

While these discourses might appear old fashioned in light of New Zealand’s contemporary social and political climate, some researchers maintain ‘New Zealand sexual mores are relatively conservative’ (Davis, Lay Yee, Jacobson, 1996:49). Verification of this can be found in the sex advice offered by Dr. Rosie King in New Zealand’s Woman’s Day on ‘Good loving, Great Sex’ (August, 1997). In this highly popular women’s magazine, Dr King explains women’s turn-ons as ‘romantic gestures’, ‘communication’, ‘non-demand affection’ and ‘quality time with partner’, while what excites men is ‘erotica’, ‘pornography’, ‘varied love making’, ‘lingerie’ and ‘female nudity’. Such discourses construct dichotomised sexual subjectivities in which women are positioned as lacking erotic desire, voyeuristic tendencies and corporeal pleasure, while men are disconnected from their emotional and mental needs and desires.

5.2.1 Young men and dominant discourses of male heterosexuality

As dominant discourses that are historically entrenched within New Zealand society, conventional definitions of male and female sexuality are imbued with a power that can easily effect young people. Indeed, a number of young people in this study drew upon such discourses in constituting themselves as sexual in the research. Young men from both ‘At School’ and ‘Not at School’ groups took up positions in discussions, within such discourses as sexually assertive, emotionally detached, with a voracious sexual desire and a body that guaranteed them satisfaction.

One of the many instances in which young men demonstrated this understanding of sexual activity was when I asked Ashby who had
participated in the couple activity, how he knew he wanted to have sex with his girlfriend Becky and he explained 'Uhm I was horny (laugh). That was about it (laugh)' and he later added ‘....cause see like I didn’t care, I could have done it at the start of the relationship I didn’t need time. I’m a guy’ (AS, Il, 17). Most of the examples of young men taking up these dominant subject positions were found in focus group sessions or individual interviews rather than in front of their female partners who may have curbed this display of ‘machoism’6. The first three extracts from young men construct male sexuality as perpetually ready for sex, virile and potent.

Micheal represented his sexuality in terms of traditional masculinity during participation in a mixed gender focus group where participants were training for employment in the hospitality industry.

Micheal: Guys are basically always ready. (FG, NAS, 19)

The following two subjects were still at school and made these comments in a mixed gender group session.

Anabella: I heard some statistics...and guys supposedly think of sex, six times an hour on average.
Darren: Oh it’s heaps more than that (all laugh). (FG, 17, AS)

Barnaby made this remark in a mixed gender focus group where trainees were aiming to become involved in the fitness industry.

Tina: ..I have some female friends who are pretty ready to go [have sex]
Barnaby: (Cheekily) Can you introduce me? (all laugh) (FG, 18, NAS)

6 There were several occasions when girlfriend’s appeared to rebuke their boyfriends for ‘macho’ comments. Two of these instances occurred when a couple participated in a focus group. On one occasion Anabella gave her boyfriend a scowling look and warned him that he was ‘this close’ to being in trouble with her when he suggested that ‘experience’ was one of the reasons young people get involved in relationships.Gabby gave her boyfriend Theo, a smack on his leg during a group discussion when he suggested that girls were ‘catty’ while ‘blokes’ were unconcerned with gossip. Similarly, at one point during the couple activity, Amy thought that her boyfriend Peter had said the word ‘Bitch’ and she interrupted him to ensure he hadn’t used this word.
In the next three extracts young men represented themselves as disinterested in emotional attachment within relationships, and in Theo's case, more interested in the relationship's sexual benefits.

Young men's emotional detachment was communicated by one young man participating in a focus group 'At School'.

Louisa: What does it mean to be committed for a guy in a relationship?  
Tawa: Ball and chain (all laugh).  
(FG, 18, AS)

Another young man training for work in the sports industry, implied during a mixed gender focus group, that the best thing about relationships was their financial, rather than emotional advantages.

Louisa: What are some of the best things about being in a relationship?  
Vete: Source of income (all laugh).  
(FG, NAS, 19)

A preoccupation with sexual attractiveness in a partner rather than other attributes like personality, was revealed by one young man in a display of hegemonic masculinity during a mixed gender focus group conducted at school.

Debbie: If you see a really ugly girl you are not going to bother finding out if she is nice or not.  
Louisa: Is that true?  
Theo: Yeah to a certain extent that's fair enough.  
(FG, mixed, AS)

Tim and Chris who had participated in the couple activity, represented their sexuality as traditionally masculine by portraying their bodies as 'pleasure machines' during the individual interview.

Tim: ...if I wanted to ejaculate I could probably just do so in less than a minute.  
(II, NAS, 18)
Chris: ....a guy is sort of almost guaranteed to feel good [having sex] you know, feel the same in the end anyway so.

(II, NAS, 19)

'Sexuality is a central site in men's struggles to become masculine' (Holland et al, 1993:1). This struggle is evident in the above extracts where young men strove for its achievement by constituting themselves as 'always ready' for sex, able to ejaculate in 'less than a minute' and professing no emotional investment in relationships by likening their commitment in them to 'a ball and chain'. Publicly, taking up dominant subject positions in these discourses is a means of establishing themselves as 'appropriately' masculine within/through the realm of (hetero)sexuality.

The reason these expressions of masculinity take the particular form they do is attributable to the production of heterosexual masculinity. Mac an Ghail (1994) argues that 'differentiated heterosexual masculinities are produced and inhabited through the collective actions of boys as they 'handle' or 'negotiate' their concrete social environment, and through relations of similarity with and opposition to other groups within that social environment' (cited in Redman, 1996a:174). Heterosexual masculinity then, is a relational concept produced in opposition to homosexual and feminine identities, both of which young men must separate themselves from in order to achieve full masculine status. In the quotes above, young men were positioning themselves in opposition to female sexuality in their assertion of themselves as all those things female sexuality is traditionally portrayed as not, 'virile' (Barnaby, Michael), 'sex obsessed' (Darren, Theo), easily physically pleasured (Chris, Tim) and emotionally detached (Vete, Tawa).

A few of the young men in the sample were able to admit that producing these sorts of comments formed part of 'being a man'. Hegemonic masculinity is a term masculinity theorists have employed to describe '...the dominance within society of certain forms and practices of masculinity which are historically conditioned and open to change and challenge' (Hearn and Morgan, 1995:179). Hegemonic masculinity works so that hegemony 'often involves the creation of models of masculinity which are quite specifically
fantasy figures' (Connell, 1987:184). Hegemonic masculinity then is not so much a 'type of masculinity' as much literature presumes, but a form of power which sustains gendered inequality because of the way it achieves the consent of a majority of men who support it. The following are examples of young men’s recognition of hegemonic masculinities which were frequently voiced in the focus groups without prompting. The quotes were drawn from both ‘At School’ and ‘Not at School’ focus groups:

This first extract came from a predominately male group (one female) who were learning farming skills. Angus acknowledged that what he said to male peers had to be censored.

Angus: Sort of if you say something about something....like...I dunno what. They [blokes] could think don’t like him any more and that so you don’t want to tell them that, but you’d tell your girlfriend she doesn’t really matter.
(FG, NAS, 17)

This acknowledgement was also expressed in the following focus group which consisted of exclusively male participants who were still at school.

Louisa: So why can’t you say whatever you are thinking to your mates?
Tawa: Because boys you can tell some things but you know there are some things that you have to keep to yourself.
Tern: That’s a forbidden place.
Vaughn: You can get yourself in trouble.
Tawa: You can get into trouble if you say it wrong....but if you say it right then it’s okay.
(FG, AS, mixed)

One young man in a mixed gender focus group at school, described his recognition of the operation of hegemonic masculinity in terms of the limited topics he could raise in discussion with male peers.

Marcel: Because me and my mates can talk about this and the other, cars, this that and the other, and we can even say you know ‘how’s your girlfriend how’s things going’ kind of stuff. But you don’t say you know, ‘what’s sex like for you guys kind of thing’?
(FG, AS, 18)
A young trainee farmer in a predominately male focus group described his recognition of the need to appear appropriately masculine in front of their male friends;

Richard: Everyone's [all the guys] real worried about being themselves aye... just don't know... like when they are round their mates they're different and yeah and they find it hard to be different as well.
(FG, NAS, 17)

Acknowledgement of this pressure to appear appropriately masculine was also raised by young people in a mixed gender focus group of trainee fitness instructors.

Rangi: Guys are more aggressive they don't like showing their
Melinda: Emotions.
Rangi: They want to be 'the man'.
Vete: Yeah they want to be 'the man' (laugh).
(FG, NAS, mixed)

Similarly, one young man who was still at school and had participated in a mixed gender discussion revealed his recognition of this pressure.

Darren: Guys have got a lot to prove. There's a lot...there's a lot for guys to live up to like uhm gotta be all macho and gotta be cool and all this sort of stuff, gotta score nice chicks or if you have got one chick, you have got to score often...
(FG, AS, 18)

A recognised need to present oneself as appropriately masculine was explicitly detailed by two young men training in business skills during a mixed gender focus group.

Pita: Like uhm guys will be guys, boys will be boys.
Rangi: Like uhm when they are around their mates and stuff like they want to be all staunch and stuff like that, but when they are around their girlfriends that's when they want the loving and stuff like that.
(FG, NAS, 19)

From their comments, these young men appeared to recognise the pressure to conform to certain expressions of masculinity. As in the first three extracts above, some realised they had to censor what and how they said things in
front of their male peer group. Others acknowledged that being masculine meant portraying a particular persona which was ‘aggressive’, ‘cool’ and ‘staunch’ as indicated by the last three extracts. Still others, recognised that certain performances of masculinity were called for in particular contexts as when Rangi and Richard mentioned how men need to act appropriately masculine, around their ‘mates’. This recognition of ‘appropriate’ forms of masculinity did not mean that young men in the study did, or could, oppose hegemonic masculinity’s operation. These comments illustrated that it was precisely the *hegemonic* element of these dominant forms of masculinity that sustained them.

5.2.2 Young women and dominant discourses of female heterosexuality.

Young women in discussion were also found to define themselves as sexual in relation to dominant discourses of female heterosexuality (at least some of the time). Taking up these subject positions meant constituting oneself as sexually vulnerable and less easily pleasured⁷ than young men, victim to male sexual gratification and more interested in the emotional aspects of physical intimacy. As the subordinate partner in dominant heterosexual discourse, they represented themselves as ‘acted upon’, rather than ‘acting’. In the following extracts from focus groups and individual interviews, young women revealed such conventional female sexual subjectivities.

One young woman in a mixed gender group at school, stressed the importance of emotional intimacy and her apathy with regard to sexual activity in her relationship.

Caitlin:  …but to me it’s really the emotional side which is important and that’s why I like to cuddle and that rather than have sex…like sometimes I just can’t be bothered and just want to get it over and done with…I guess that sounds quite odd but like we have been together for 3 years now. (FG, AS, 18)

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⁷ By ‘less easily pleasured’ I refer to the idea generally perpetuated (by the traditional discourses already mentioned) that women are seen to find sexual activity less pleasurable than men. Women supposedly find it harder to orgasm (or be sexually satisfied) by sexual activity.
In another mixed gender focus group where participants were learning business skills, one young woman spoke about female sexuality in terms of traditional notions of vulnerability where women's romantic ideas of love made them susceptible to exploitation by their male partner.

Alex: I think like the girls get more vulnerable like being....
Leanne: They fall into it more....
Alex: Yeah being in love with the fact of being in love sort of thing and they'll do anything for their man, and the man sort of goes 'oh yeah, take advantage of this'....
(FG, NAS, 17)

During an individual interview, Cam drew upon conventional perceptions of female sexuality where women are seen to be less easily sexually aroused and more likely to be stimulated by foreplay, than sexual intercourse.

Louisa: Is there anything about the sexual part of the relationship that you would change if you could?
Cam: It's like uhm, just like, guys don't really need as much foreplay as women do to feel satisfied and like sometimes Chris's really good with stuff like that but other times he's not and...
(II, NAS, 19)

Four of the six young women who participated in the couple interviews, when talking about their decision to have sexual intercourse with their partner for the first time, conveyed an image of traditional female sexual passivity. Through the expression of their anxieties and fact that it was their partners who approached them about having sex, these young women constructed sexual subjectivities in which they were not necessarily in control of events. This is demonstrated in the following extracts.

Amy and Emma indicated their anxiety about engaging in sexual intercourse with their partners in terms of worries about pregnancy, what others might think and feelings of insecurity within the relationship. These anxieties implied a reluctance to engage in such activity, even though both young women eventually did.
Louisa: So how did you feel about having sex?

(A) I was worried about my parents finding out. (B) I was worried that it was going to hurt and (C) I was worried about pregnancy and it was really worrying me and it was like well you know I don’t know if I really want to do this…..

(CA, AS, 17)

Amy: I’m a bit more wary about, okay very wary about being used and I was still worried okay is he using me than leaving me. Cause I am very dependent on feeling loved and if I was going to enter into that sort of level of relationship [sexual intercourse] ….I was thinking right I don’t want to be used again, I want to really know that he loves me….

(II, AS, 17)

Emma: In the couple activity, two couples revealed how the suggestion to have sexual intercourse was initiated by the male partner, who attempted to convince the young woman to engage in it.

Chris: …I wanted to have sex with her and Cam said ‘no’ and then we talked for another two hours maybe (laugh) and uhm uhm and then Cam said ‘yes’.

Louisa: (To Cam) The first time when you said ‘no’ what were you thinking?

Cam: It was just like uhm, about a month and a half before I had just got out of a relationship which uhm like a short relationship and I didn’t want the same thing to happen again. So I kind of wanted to make sure about what was going to happened and stuff like that.

(CA, NAS, 19)

Nina: The first year was different because that’s when you (to Neil) wanted to have sex and I didn’t.

Neil: Yeah

Nina: Cause I was kind of like a Christian and I didn’t believe in sex before marriage…and he would make all these moves on me and I would say ‘no I don’t want to’…..

(CA, NAS, 17)

By taking up dominant subject positions in these discourses young women and men in the study participated in the reproduction of gendered inequality whereby sexual power is distributed unevenly. These dominant sexual subjectivities aid in the inactivation of gendered knowledge because as described in Chapter 4, young men are constituted as the ‘active knowers’
(who in reality may have less sexual knowledge than females) and young women 'lesser knowers' who are acted upon. Subsequently, such dominant sexual subjectivities might be seen to intervene in the application of knowledge into practice.

5.3 Negotiating 'alternative' (hetero)sexual subjectivities

5.3.1 Young women's experiences

Evidence that young women had access to alternative discourses of female sexuality and were able to take up sexual subject positions in opposition to dominant discourses of femininity can be found in the study.

When asked in the questionnaire what aspects of sexual activity in their relationships young women felt they had control over most (53%) replied they had 'lots of control' over the kinds of sexual activity they engaged in. There was a significant gender difference (sig. 013) with more women (58%) than men (44%) reporting this. A majority (71%) also reported they had 'lots of control' over 'contraception' with more young women\(^8\) once again reporting this (sig. 001). Similarly, a majority (53%) perceived themselves as having lots of control over 'how often to have sex', however still more young women (66% compared with 33% of young men) indicated this (sig. 000)\(^9\).

| Table 5:4 What do Young People Feel they Have the Most Control Over? (Total Responses) |
|---------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| **Type of Activity**                       | (% Control) N   | (% Some Control) N | (% No Control) N |
| Kinds of sexual activity                   | (176) 53.2     | (139) 42.0       | (16) 4.8        |
| Contraception                              | (226) 71.5     | (73) 23.1        | (17) 5.4        |
| How often to have sex                      | (171) 53.9     | (122) 38.5       | (24) 7.6        |

\(^8\) 78% of women said they had lots of control over contraception while 60.3% of young men reported this.

\(^9\) There were no significant differences between 'At School' and 'Not at School' groups on any of the items here apart from 'control over contraception' with more 'Not at School' subjects more likely to report they had 'some control' over this (sig. 040).
Table 5:5 What do Young People Feel they have the Most Control Over? (by Gender)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Activity</th>
<th>Young Women (%)</th>
<th>Young Men (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>Some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinds of sexual activity</td>
<td>(122)</td>
<td>(80)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>58.4</td>
<td>38.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contraception</td>
<td>(156)</td>
<td>(34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>78.0</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often to have sex</td>
<td>(132)</td>
<td>(58)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>66.0</td>
<td>29.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* N=317, Female = 200, Male = 117.

Young women in this sample felt they had more control than young men over all of the elements of sexual activity named. Seventy-eight percent of young women felt that they had control over contraception, indicating a particular sense of agency in this aspect of sexual activity. These statistics imply the presence of more active, rather than passive, female sexual subjectivities amongst young women in the questionnaire sample.

Alternative female sexual subjectivities were also seen in the way some young women (re)produced dominant discourses of female sexuality, by reflecting on the subjectivities they offered. Even though they repeated notions of female passivity and to some extent reinforced them, these young women also disrupted the power of such discourses by recognising that they failed to represent accurately all sexual experience. Rosalind for example, was one of these young women and enrolled at a school renown for its alternative pedagogy where it was more likely she would gain access to alternative frameworks. What enabled her to take up an alternative subject position was access to a set of meanings which she named as ‘stereotypes’. Talking about gendered sexual subjectivities, Rosalind said, ‘I mean you have got your stereotypical, women want commitment and love and guys just want a fling, but I think that girls are pretty much like that as well (laugh)’ (FG, 17).

Young women’s negotiation of conventional female sexual subjectivities could also be seen in their reworking of discourses of the sexual double standard. Lees (1993) has described this phenomenon in Britain noting the social
processes by which young women who have many sexual partners are labelled 'slags' or 'sluts', while young men displaying equivalent behaviour gain the status of 'studs'. In an example of negotiating dominant sexual subjectivities two of the young women in the focus groups, Shona and Anna, spoke about this sexual double standard in such a way as to both negate and embrace the subject position of 'slut'.

Lindel: My friends every weekend they're with someone different...
Shona: I'm one of them...nah I'm not at the moment though [Shona was about to have a baby in 3 weeks time]

(FG, NAS, 17)

Here Shona positions herself as 'slut', but her comment about 'I'm not at the moment though' indicates this is not an understanding she has of herself while pregnant. The inclusion of, 'at the moment' suggests this is a subject position she may take up again at some later stage. She defies the negative social constitution of her as a pregnant 17 year old, by seeing herself as legitimately 'a mother to be', yet at the same time maintains her sexual agency by suggesting being sexual (ie. sexually active) is something she can return to later. Similarly, Anna took up a position in relation to the sexual double standard discourse in such a way as to subvert the 'slut' label and rescue her sexual desire as legitimate and 'normal'.

Anna: I was called a slut when I cheated on someone and I was called a slut.....but a slut is supposed to be someone who sleeps around I don't sleep around.

(FG, NAS, 17)

She distinguishes herself from someone who acts like a 'slut' by redefining this subjectivity so her own actions are not recognised within it. She makes her desire for one other person outside of the relationship she was in appear normal and legitimate against the subject position of someone who 'sleeps' with many people. This negotiation of labels was a technique employed by a significant minority of young women constituting their sexual subjectivities, in ways that enabled them to express desire and experience pleasure, yet simultaneously maintain a sense of 'appropriate' female sexuality.
It is possible that what enabled these two young women to negotiate their subject positioning within dominant discourses of gendered sexuality was a special set of circumstances. Both Shona and Anna were pregnant and at the time of the research, living in accommodation for young women adjusting to unplanned pregnancies. In this environment, they were given excellent support, counselling and advice about their pregnancy and future life with their babies and spent considerable time reflecting upon their lives and their unplanned pregnancies. As a consequence of their social constitution as ‘young pregnant women’ and the reflections this evoked within a progressive and sympathetic context, Anna and Shona were able to negotiate alternative meanings about themselves as sexual people.

Another example of young women negotiating dominant sexual subjectivities was seen in their readings of an image presented in the focus groups advertising a brand of lingerie called ‘Hey Sister!’ (Appendix B:3). The image of a young woman reaching through a man and dropping his heart while clad in ‘Hey Sister’ underwear evoked contradictory reactions from participants. While some interpreted the model’s minimal clothing as degrading to women, ‘She’s in her underwear...that’s kind of putting her down, she’s just a body you know no mind or something’ (FG, NAS, 18), others thought the image was empowering for women. Jane explained, ‘She’s just chucking his heart away saying ‘I don’t want that, ha (laugh). See that is fantastic! I don’t think that is demeaning to women, ‘I don’t want your heart’. That’s great (Laugh)’ (FG, AS, 17). Those young women who viewed the model as powerful drew upon a ‘femme fatale’ discourse, in which a woman’s power lies in her abilities of seduction. What appealed to some young women about this construction was the control it afforded over men. As Gabby put it, ‘He’s putty in her hands because he has seen her in her underwear...she’s got the control now’ (FG, 17, AS). Part of the attractiveness of this image of female sexuality was the sense of agency it offered to young women in comparison to that provided by

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10 As part of their programme at this centre for young mothers these young women told me they had taken part in a number of courses which involved self reflection about themselves and their lives. Anna for example said that in a workshop she had attended the day before the facilitator had asked them to think about and discuss female and male sexuality and its stereotypes.
traditional discourses about female sexual passivity. While many of the young
women in different focus groups felt that they lacked this ‘allure’, they
expressed a desire to possess it. For example:

Louisa: Would you like to be able to do that?
Laurele: Yeah it would be cool (laugh).
(NAS, FG, 19)

Louisa: Does it appeal to you?
Anthea: Mmm because it has guys going after you yeah.
Katie: Because you get the power if you wear the underwear (laugh).
(AS, FG, 18)

Georgia: It appeals to me because I would like to be that sort of assertive
but I know that I wouldn’t be so it is a bit of a fantasy sort of
thing.
(AS, FG, 17)

April: She’s got the body, she’s got the looks, she’s got the
confidence.
Ruth: I envy people like that.
April: Doesn’t everyone?
(AS, FG, mixed)

While for some young women, taking up a subject position which represented
them as a ‘femme fatale’ was, as Georgia coined it, ‘a fantasy’, others
appeared to be able to do this. These young women’s explanations of how
they capitalised on their sexual power, indicated this was something they had
experienced:

Louisa: Do you think that women have a kind of sexual power or control
then?
Claudine: They can do.
Trisha: Mmmm.
Delwyn: Even my friends say to me it’s like you could walk out of here
tomorrow and get as many guys as you want, and me I can walk
around and hunt (laugh) and can’t find one to show any interest
in me.
(FG, NAS, mixed)
Louisa: .....Would you use that power or not?
Ella: Yeah.
Lita: Oh definitely, put on a nice little dress.
Ella: The optimum word being little (all laugh).
Kate: Yeah, it depends how guys have been treating me like....like I go clubbing and uhm like if a guy is acting like a real jerk and stuff and I think he likes me than I'll just be a real bitch to him and I'll just lead him on and give him nothing.
(FG, AS, mixed)

Access to this subject positioning was partially governed by its discursive association with dominant meanings of ‘female beauty’. Having men at your feet means possessing aesthetics that they will be ‘mesmerised’ by, an aesthetics which young women perceived as requiring the emulation of dominant standards of female attractiveness. As the questionnaire data revealed, a majority of young female respondents felt negatively about their bodies with over half (53%) reporting they occasionally hate them, this subject position is subsequently closed to them (See Chapter 7).

Young women were able to access only limited power in the expression of their sexual subjectivities. Firstly, this was because such power was only accessible to young women who imitated dominant forms of appropriate female sexuality. Delwyn’s final comment (see above) is illustrative of this when she narrates how her friends recognise they do not possess the ‘attractiveness’ she projects which enables her to ‘get a man’. Secondly, the power that this subjectivity affords may only be superficial, instilling a false sense of control, as inequitable material social circumstances remain unchallenged. As Holland et al, (1998:194) have noted, agency can only be achieved through resistance/change at a discursive, embodied, relational, institutional and individual level of heterosexuality.

Within dominant discourses of female heterosexuality, women are constituted as less desiring and less easily pleasured than men. As the narratives of young women in section 5.2.3 indicated), the circulation of discourses supporting this construction of female sexuality are prevalent in contemporary society. Yet despite this, a few young women articulated their desire and
experiences of sexual pleasure during the research. Their words contested the image of young women as sexually passive, uninterested in sexual contact and unable to enjoy corporeal pleasures. Instead, their talk described passion and pleasure as normal expressions and experiences of their female sexuality. This is revealed in the following discussions within focus groups and the couple activity.

One of the couples Nina and Neil, explained how traditional gender norms which construct the male as active and the female as passive, were reversed in their relationship.

Neil: Cause like most of the time I can go without it, where as Nina can't (Neil laughs).
Nina: yeah it's kind a like, we always hassle that it's kind of like, do you watch Married with Children? And I'm Peggy Bundy and he’s like Al (laugh) I think that's actually quite a good way to describe it (laugh).
(CA, NAS, mixed)

Unconventional expressions of female sexual pleasure and desire also emerged in focus groups such as this all female group who were at school.

Louisa: .....Yeah because as you say there is that kind of stereotype where it's the guy who always wants the physical activity.
Kuni: Yeah but it's sometimes opposite. Heaps sometimes (all laugh)
Louisa: In your experience?
Kuni: Yeah.
(FG, AS, 17)

One young woman who was at school and took part in a mixed focus group talked about the importance of the physical side of her relationships in an unconventionally feminine way.

Caitlin: I reckon that like the physical part of the relationship is really important to me like I wouldn't be able too, you know even if I loved someone I wouldn't be able to stay with them for the rest of my life if the physical side wasn't good you know.....
(FG, AS, 18)

In another single sex focus group at school, Lesley openly articulated her feelings of desire and need to act on them.
Lesley: ..this is just from my experience but, if I feel lust for someone then I...I have to do something about it...
(FG, AS, 17)

Similarly during a mixed focus group, Rosalind portrayed an active female sexual subjectivity when she explained how she had decided to ask someone out.

Rosalind: I was a bit nervous about asking someone out...but the last time I approached someone it was okay...It was okay I obviously don't have a problem with it.
(FG, AS, 17)

Because of the sexual double standard and young women's need to safeguard their sexual reputations, talk about female desire and pleasure seemed to occur mainly in environments where young women felt they would not be negatively stigmatised. Exclusively female groups where the risk of reputation was equal for all participants, or mixed sex groups where trust between peer members was established, provided examples of 'safe' spaces. It was evident from some young women's comments and behaviour, that articulating and expressing desire was an activity that young women perceived as risking sexual reputation. One group of young women for example, explained how 'not being so obvious' about their sexual desire was a calculated undertaking:

Louisa: When you say 'discover the opposite sex' what exactly do you mean?
Georgia: Physical *(laugh).*
April: Not much mental really *(laugh).*
Sandra: Yeah.
Georgia: Who cares about intelligence *(laugh).*
Sandra: Just use them to gain pleasure.
Louisa: Do you think that is true? *(to Ruth)*
Ruth: Oh definitely, yeah.
Louisa: That's kind of what you would imagine guys would say 'you use girls to gain pleasure'.
April: Well it's the same for us, but we are not as obvious about it. Like we don't want to say how shallow we are so...
(FG, AS, mixed)

Similarly in another single sex focus group, Anthea described young women's caution in expressing their sexual desires:
Anthea: I think that probably though that girls are more careful though. Like, you know they don't like to...like they do have that lust and stuff but they don't like...always go around, sleep around everywhere, well they do but like guys it's like...better for guys to do it they think it is cool as well.

(FG, AS, 18)

In another instance where young women were aware that expressions of sexual desire and physical gratification could damage an appropriately feminine sexual reputation, they actively struggled to portray their sexual subjectivities in an appropriate way. At one point during a discussion amongst young women at Kea College, it was apparent that some of the group held different attitudes about engaging in an 'open relationship'. Kuni for example explained that, '.....you can always get with him [a long term boyfriend] but it doesn't matter if you go to a party and get with someone else' (FG, AS, 17). While Kuni and Aroha admitted that they felt comfortable with such relationships, they were careful to differentiate their behaviour from those of 'sluts', thereby endeavouring to protect themselves from this label. Kuni did this by stating 'it's not sleeping around though', and supporting her, Aroha added 'No it's not [it's] just enjoying someone else's company as well as theirs [the long term boyfriends]'. Recognising the need to safeguard their reputations so that other group members would not interpret their behaviour as 'sluttish', Kuni and Aroha engaged in a complex process of negotiating sexual subject positions. Like Shona who was quoted earlier, they reworked the definition of 'slut' so they fell outside of it, legitimating their own actions and providing themselves with a space in which to engage justifiably in such actions.

It was apparent throughout this focus group session that Aroha and Kuni had a definite sense of themselves as sexual people. They knew what they did and didn't like, what they would and wouldn't do and what their opinions were on various sexual issues. One of the instances in which this was demonstrated was during a conversation about heterosexual coercion and how decisions about when and how to have sex were made. The young women student's talk developed as follows:
Anthea: I think that probably though that girls are more careful though. Like, you know they don't like to...like they do have that lust and stuff but they don't like...always go around, sleep around everywhere, well they do but like guys it's like...better for guys to do it they think it is cool as well.
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Louisa: Who decides what sexual activity you do, when you do it and where?
Kuni: Me.
Aroha: I decide (laugh).
Louisa: You decide. How do you decide? Do you tell him or what?
Aroha: Yeah, if I don't want to 'get out'.
Lucinda: You go girl!
Louisa: And how does he react?
Aroha: He leaves (laughs).
Julie: Cause he has no choice huh (laugh).
(FG, AS, 17)

This narrative stands in opposition to the prevalence of social discourses which constitute young women as 'acted upon' rather than themselves 'sexual actors'. There is an abundance of research reporting that sexual coercion and rape are experienced by high proportions of women, and which construct them as the powerless victims of male sexual aggression. However, Aroha's and Kuni's clear sense of their sexual agency in terms of asserting 'no' or initiating sexual activity indicated their strong conceptualisation of their sexual subjectivities. Similarly, Shona and Anna, whose pregnancies and the supportive environment they were in, had encouraged them to reflect on themselves and what they wanted (especially in terms of their futures as mothers). For these young women, a definite sense of their sexual selves appeared to facilitate access to alternative sexual subjectivities. This data suggests more research is needed to determine what other subjective characteristics and circumstances are necessary to enable access to alternative sexual subject positions.

5.3.2 Young men negotiating alternative (hetero)sexual subjectivities

In the earlier discussion about dominant discourses of male heterosexuality it appeared that achieving appropriate masculinity for young men depended upon cultivating a sexual subjectivity in which sexual intercourse was understood to offer peer status, and was therefore a principal reason for entering into a relationship. In this context, Holland et al, (1993) found that

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12 Shona and Anna were in special accommodation for young women adjusting to unplanned pregnancies.
successful male sexuality means ‘sexual conquest over women and separation from emotional involvement with them’ (Holland et al, 1993:17). Yet I also found young men both ‘At School’ and ‘Not at School’ who took up subject positions in opposition to this discourse. These young men denied sexual intercourse as a primary motive for entering into, or remaining in relationships and as such stripped it of its status. This is revealed in the following discussions where young men explained that sex was not the most important aspect of their relationships.

This young man was in a predominately male focus group (one female) of participants training to be farmers.

Louisa: Is the sex an important part of the relationship?
Richard: Yeah it’s part of it aye but it’s not you know just what you are there for.
(FG, NAS, 17)

Marcel made this comment while at school in a mixed gender focus group.

Marcel: It’s different for, I mean you watch TV and it’s just sex you know, yeah, sex, but it’s not just about that really.
(FG, AS, 17)

Darren was also at school and participated in a mixed gender group.

Darren: It’s [sex] it’s not the be all and end all really.
(FG, AS, 18)

As a way of emphasising that sex was not of primary importance in their relationships, the following four young men who participated in the couple activity, described how they would remain in their current relationships even without sexual activity:

Peter: Yeah, yeah I mean sex is good, it’s nice but it’s not, it’s not essential. I’d still love her, I’d still want to be with her. So you know I mean that it’s nice but I mean if it had to stop then it would, and I would still go out with her.
(IL, AS, 18)
Chris: ...I don't actually think that the sex part affects uhm the relationship. If I couldn't have sex with Cam, well I would still be with Cam cause she makes me really happy.... (II, NAS, 19)

Tim: ..I'm certainly not staying in the relationship for sex. (II, NAS, 19)

Louisa: Like if there was no sex in the relationship you'd still be in the relationship?

Neil: Yeah..yeah, yeah. It's not a, not a big thing. (II, NAS, 17)

The conditions which enabled young men to describe their decentring of the importance of sexual intercourse were also partly attributable to the production of a 'safe' research environment. Most of these comments were offered in individual interviews, where the absence of others meant the young men could admit that sex was not overly important to them, and that it had less of a potentially detrimental effect to their masculine identity. Young men's vulnerability appeared to be reduced in a context where I, as a female researcher, did not feature as a contestant in the competition to achieve masculinity.

In addition, all of the young men quoted above described themselves as currently in, or having previous experience of relationships. It is possible that the experience of being in a relationship influenced their perception of the importance of sexual intercourse in comparison with other aspects (for example, security, commitment, love, increased self-esteem and companionship\(^\text{13}\)). Chris explained why he stayed with Cam was not because of sex, but because she 'makes me happy'. He later went on to describe, 'I was sitting in the park the other day with Cam and we were just messing around wasting hours and I just couldn't believe how good I was feeling, just being there with her'. Similarly one of the couples, Peter, also participated in a focus group and spoke during this session about what was so fulfilling about his relationship with Amy.

\(^{13}\) These types of benefits of a relationship were mentioned in responses from focus group participants to the question 'Why get involved in a relationship'?
Peter: Just being with somebody and knowing somebody just so well that, you know you can guess what they are thinking and what they are thinking all the time, it's just, yeah it's like, I feel like when we are together we are a whole person, when I am apart I am half a person.

(FG, AS, 18)

The responses of young men to an open ended survey question which asked them to complete the sentence, 'what I want in a heterosexual relationship is...' also indicated many young men in the sample desired more than just sex from relationships. Responses could be coded into themes, with young men mentioning 'love' (30%) as the thing they most wanted in a heterosexual relationship. The next greatest number of mentions was 'trust, honesty, respect' (29%) followed by 'commitment' (27%).

Table 5:6 What I Want In A Heterosexual Relationship Is...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of things young people want</th>
<th>% of mentions</th>
<th>% of mentions</th>
<th>% of mentions</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Young Women</td>
<td>Young Men</td>
<td>Total</td>
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<tr>
<td>Love</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>(48) 23.4</td>
<td>(29) 27.6</td>
<td>(77) 24.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring, Support, Understanding**</td>
<td>(90) 43.9</td>
<td>(20) 19.0</td>
<td>(10) 35.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust, Honesty, Respect**</td>
<td>(106) 51.7</td>
<td>(31) 29.5</td>
<td>(137) 44.2</td>
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<td>Romance</td>
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<td>(4) 3.8</td>
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<td>Fun</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sexual activity/sexual attraction*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Equality of feeling**</td>
<td>(10) 4.9</td>
<td>(6) 5.7</td>
<td>(16) 5.2</td>
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<td>Individual Space</td>
<td>(7) 3.4</td>
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<td>Specific characteristics in a partner</td>
<td>(29) 14.1</td>
<td>(7) 6.7</td>
<td>(36) 11.6</td>
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<td>Good communication</td>
<td>(28) 13.7</td>
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<td>Similar Likes and Dislikes</td>
<td>(10) 4.9</td>
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<td>(17) 5.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>To be wanted by someone else</td>
<td>(18) 8.8</td>
<td>(6) 5.7</td>
<td>(24) 7.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>To feel comfortable</td>
<td>(6) 2.9</td>
<td>(3) 2.9</td>
<td>(9) 2.9</td>
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Key
** Significantly more young women mentioned this.
* Significantly more young men mentioned this.
N = Number of mentions. This means that an answer could potentially have more than one theme.
Total N = 337, Female = 214, Male = 123.

14 To have someone love you as much as you love them.
While previous research has documented these kinds of relationship qualities as important to young women, they are not typically described as such to young men (McRobbie, 1991). In contrast, young men whether at school or attending out of school courses wrote in the questionnaire of wanting what I refer to as a 'happily ever after discourse', where romantic notions of 'love', 'commitment', 'honesty' and 'caring' prevailed. The flavour of some of these replies can be seen in the quotes below:

Love and close friendship. (Professional, 5)

Honesty and loving care. Consideration and understanding about your needs. (Professional, 4)

Long term love and friendship. Someone to settle down with. (Fitness, 8)

Having someone to love all the time and someone who loves you back. (Mechanics, 3)

A caring, understanding, honest and loving relationship. Stuff that will make both people feel good while respecting their wants and needs. (Business 1, 11)

Understanding, patience, being open and truthful about feelings. (Design, 5)

Young men also referred to the importance of 'friendship', 'communication' and 'equality' within a relationship.

Honesty, trust, commitment and a friend. (Ruru, 3)

Communication. Sharing. (Fitness, 10)

To be able to talk to each other and be truthful. (Farming, 1)

To be equal, romantic, fun loving. (Kiwi, 29)

Intimacy, love, friends partner. (Ruru, 32)

To have fun, be wanted, to enjoy myself, and be myself and be loved for that. (Kiwi, 37)
Only those who reported engaging in sexual activity, (but not necessarily sexual intercourse) and who described themselves as having had experience of relationships (although these may not have been enduring) were asked to complete this question. Their responses support the idea that experience of sexual relationships may effect young men’s priorities about a relationship’s benefits. It might be that for some young men (hetero)relationships appeared to offer a context in which alternative expressions of their sexuality could be played out. A relationship may have provided some of them with space to express and enjoy this alternative sexual subjectivity, without fear of negative repercussions for their masculine identity.

In addition, the findings from this question revealed more traditional male sexual subjectivities, with more young men (24%) than young women (10%) reporting they wanted sexual activity and sexual attraction in a heterosexual relationship (sig. 001). Significantly more young women than young men also reported ‘caring, support, understanding’ (sig. 000) and ‘trust, honesty, respect, (sig. 000) as what they desired from relationships. Such results reveal complexity and fluidity within the operation of hegemonic masculinity.

As Connell points out, ‘hegemony does not mean total cultural dominance, the obliteration of alternatives’ but rather ‘ascendancy achieved within a balance of forces, that is, a state of play’ (Connell, 1987:184). This ‘state of play’ was evident in some of young men’s narratives where they sometimes vacillated between hegemonic masculinity and alternative subjectivities in any conversation. It seemed as if a constant battle were being fought as they shifted from one subject position to the other. This contestation can be seen in the following conversation between a group of young men at school.

Louisa: What does it mean to be committed for a guy in a girlfriend/boyfriend relationship?
Tawa: Ball and Chain (*Vaughn and Tem laugh*).
Vaughn: Not that far but getting close to it.
Tawa: (*Voices changes to serious*) Oh being committed that’s just uhm dedicating time aye to your girlfriend.
Vaughn: Yeah, yeah.
(FG, AS, mixed)
The initial remark Tawa made was supportive of hegemonic masculinity, where young men are expected to be uninterested in commitment and emotionally removed from relationships. When Vaughn checked Tawa’s comment with the remark ‘not that far’, Tawa then took up an alternative subject position in the next sentence. Changing his tone of voice and focusing his attention on the question in a more serious vein, he took up an alternative subject position in relation to the hegemonic discourse. He mentioned ‘making time’ for a girlfriend and in so doing conceded commitment was something he could think about and that relationships required some input from him. The shift in subject positions was incited by Vaughn’s reaction to Tawa’s first response to the question. Vaughn’s subject position was less ‘staunchly’ hegemonic than Tawa’s, in a sense providing an opening for Tawa to also take up a more alternative positioning. In the next example the opening and closing of spaces in which to take up alternative subjectivities occurred in reverse. Young men in this predominately male focus group were training in agricultural studies:

Louisa: What reasons would guys have for perhaps not wanting to have sex?
Angus: Scared that it’s not going to be good enough (some of the others laugh here).
Richard: Or if they don’t do it right probably (laugh).
Louisa: So is there any pressure then for guys to feel like they have to perform?
Angus: Not me.
Richard: Oh you’re just a studly15 (laugh).
(FG, NAS, mixed)

From the outset, Angus took up an alternative subject position in his answer to my question by divulging young men might be worried about their sexual performance. In terms of hegemonic masculinity, he risked his masculine identity by appearing vulnerable as a result of admitting young men (and by implication himself) may not be sexually ‘good enough’. This disclosure goes against the operation of hegemonic masculinity, where vulnerability must be guarded against. When I asked him directly about performance pressure however, he immediately shifted subject positions constituting himself as

15 Another name for a ‘stud’.
'studly' by insisting he did not suffer from this insecurity. A possible reason for this sudden repositioning was the mocking laughter of other focus group members which may have caused him to experience a sense of vulnerability. In order to salvage his identity as appropriately masculine and diffuse the feeling of vulnerability, he endeavoured to divorce himself from the sexual subjectivity he has just described.

What this limited data has indicated was the precariousness of hegemonic masculinity. Because it operates so that appropriate masculinity must constantly be achieved, its power is far from monolithic. Spaces opened and closed for alternative subject positions to be taken up through the reactions of others, especially the reactions of other men. In Tawa's case, Vaughn's partial disagreement that being committed meant 'ball and chain' evoked a less macho response in his following statement. Similarly, the mocking laughter of other male participants caused Angus to deny any experience of performance anxiety after he had initiated this conversation. The implications of this suggest that other men may be a key (and lock) enabling access to alternative sexual subjectivities. If this is the case, the presence of male facilitators and educators within sexuality education in order to create spaces for alternative sexual subjectivities for young men becomes imperative.

5.4 Conclusion

The findings from this chapter indicate that the young people in the sample were able to conceptualise themselves as sexual. They conflated being sexual with being sexually active, prioritising practical sexual knowledge in determining themselves as sexual people. The data also revealed how the young people in the study constituted their sexual subjectivities in relation to dominant discourses of female and male heterosexuality. The data collected in the survey, focus groups and couple activity demonstrates the complexity of sexual subjectivity and its relationship to knowledge and practice. Young women for example are shown taking up subject positions in which they appear sexually passive, less desiring and less easily pleasured than young
men. Within the same dominant discourses of heterosexuality, young men constitute themselves as sexually virile, emotionally detached and the perpetually ready for sex.

At the same time, the power of dominant discourses of sexuality are not monolithic. Some young people successfully negotiated such discourses in order to take up alternative sexual subjectivities which offered them a greater sense of agency. Young women did this by reworking dominant sexual subjectivities so they were 'empowered' and positive about their sexuality. The data suggests one of the contexts that enabled some young women in this study to engage in this 'reworking' was a clear sense of themselves as sexual people. Some young men also negotiated alternative subject positions when they spoke about de-centering sexual activity in their relationships. This kind of narrative was more likely to be expressed by those who had relationship experience, implying that this was a factor in accessing such alternative expressions of male sexuality.

The ways in which young men in the study took up particular subject positions of male sexuality in the research, suggested that they vacillated between dominant and alternative positions even within single conversations, implying the fluid and shifting nature of these subject positions.
Chapter Six

The Body

6.0 Introduction

Traditionally 'the body' has not featured in mainstream analyses of the relationship between young people's sexual knowledge and practice. Surprisingly, most sex education literature does not query its role in the construction of sexual identity and practice. One of the aims of this chapter is to extend such thinking about sexual subjectivities by acknowledging and incorporating an understanding of how young people's experience of their bodies impacts upon their (hetero)sexual practice. The chapter reveals young people's experiences of their bodies can be described as embodied/disembodied. I argue that the concept of the 'imaginary body' offers a way of understanding the discursive and material constitution of young people's corporeal sexual experiences. In terms of rethinking theory, this concept allows us to escape the Cartesian dualism of 'a mind' housed in a body (See Chapter 2). At the same time, by focusing on the gendered dimensions of such processes, the chapter explains that we can begin to see how young women and men's experiences of embodiment/disembodiment are shaped.

The chapter is divided into three sections with the first section concerned with young people's experiences of embodiment. I examine examples from my research of the embodiment of young women in terms of their experiences of sexual pleasure and what circumstances enable them to be 'embodied'. The experiences of embodiment of the young men in the study are also explored along with the way these produced a qualitatively different sexual experience for them. In the second section, I look at examples of young women's
disembodiment and another corporeal state which I call dys-embodiment\(^1\) in relation to some young women’s perceived lack of sexual pleasure during sexual activity. Young men’s narratives demonstrating dys-embodiment are then analysed drawing on Lacanian theory. The third and final section employs the concept of the ‘imaginary body’ as a way of understanding how these three states of dis/dys/embodiment are achieved and their effect on the material consequences of sexual activity.

### 6.1 Embodiment

Despite the abundant use of the term ‘embodied’ in recent literature\(^2\), there is a paucity of explicit definitions of what the concept means. In some instances, ‘embodied’ is used simply to refer to possessing a ‘bodily’ form. This is apparent in William’s discussion of illness and the relationship this forces subjects to have with their body where there is ‘...a shift from an initial state of embodiment, one in which the body is largely taken-for-granted in the course of everyday life’ to what he calls dys-embodiment (Williams 1996:23). While to be ‘embodied’ within this definition does not require the subject’s conscious acknowledgement of their body, for other theorists, this process of recognition is integral to their use of the term. For example, Holland et al, (1994b) talk about the importance for young women of recognising the difference between what Rich (cited in Fuss 1989) has described as ‘the body’ and ‘my body’. It is only by recognising the difference that they are able to experience an embodied sexuality. Holland et al, argue that it is a lack of critical consciousness in distinguishing between dominant conceptions of ‘appropriate’ feminine bodies and their own corporeality, leaves young women living a ‘disembodied’ femininity (Holland et al, 1994:12). Young women’s recognition of their bodies (as opposed to simply possessing it), is necessary if feminist goals of achieving gender equality are to be met. Young women’s bodies and their discursive and material construction is a crucial aspect of an empowering form of embodiment. In fact it could be argued that, for a person

\(^1\) **Dys-embodiment** is a different concept to disembodiment. **Dys-embodiment** is explained in Section 6.2.3.
to be embodied without a sense of the presence of their body is an impossibility for young women, since women's bodies are continuously on display, exploited, sexualised and objectified in Western society (Bordo, 1993).

Arguably, an empowering embodiment for young men also requires their acknowledgement of the discursive construction of their bodies. Dominant discourses supporting hegemonic masculinity construct the male body as an 'unfeeling machine' which men use to demonstrate power and subsequently attain successful masculine identity (Seidler, 1997). Being embodied for young men, therefore, could require them to transgress dominant discourses of masculinity by acknowledging their own bodies and the range of their unrealised sensual potential in unconventional ways. While there is no research to indicate that young men don't find sexual activity corporeally pleasurable, it could be argued their sexual satisfaction is limited by the restrictions implied by the operation of hegemonic masculinity. For example, this may cause some young men to feel as if they have to 'perform'.

In this chapter I use 'embodied' to mean recognition of the presence and sensuality of the body, where 'sensuality' pertains to the corporeal experience of pleasureable sensation induced by sexual activity.

6.1.1 Young women's narratives of embodiment

Despite prohibitions re(produced) by 'cultural stories' that deem 'good girls' not to be sexual (Tolman and Higgins, 1994) and which make talk about bodies and pleasures 'dangerous', a few young women in this study offered examples of narratives about embodied sexual pleasure. Because of the constraints upon young women's talk however, experiences of embodied sexual pleasure were predominately divulged during the individual interviews or the questionnaire, contexts offering greater intimacy than the focus groups.

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or couple activity. In these narratives young women made reference to feeling sexual pleasure and in some cases they isolated the bodily sensation which produced this experience (see extracts in this section).

I judged their 'embodiment' by their recognition and insertion of their bodies into depictions, and through evidence of them 'inhabiting' their bodies during the experiences they described. The latter part of this distinction became necessary when one young woman told me orgasms felt like 'tingling all over your body', yet later expressed confusion over whether she had experienced them. While acknowledgement of bodily sensations were present in her description, a sense of her physical presence during this experience was lacking, perhaps marked by her use of 'your' rather than 'my body' in her response. The following are examples of discussion from women during the individual interviews, that revealed a sense of the recognition and the 'lived' experience of corporeal female sexual pleasure.

Emma not only spoke about corporeal sexual pleasure, but located the region of pleasurable sensation in her body, indicating that embodiment was something which she had experienced.

Louisa: So how do you know what you find pleasurable sexually?
Emma: It's like it feels really good in there [points to her lower abdomen] like I'm not here, like I'm floating somewhere ten feet in the air, that's when I sort of know that it feels nice.
(II, AS, 17)

Ngaire's description of the feeling of her naked body next to her partner's and the 'amazing' experience of having someone she loved inside of her, demonstrated her sexual embodiment.

\[3 \text{The pressure young men experienced to 'perform' will be explored in section 6.1.1. See also Chapter 5.}\]
Ngāire:  ...it’s just a feeling of oh wow this guy is lying next to me and I’ve got no clothes on and ....it’s just bodies twisted together...uhm I feel close to him, I love that yeah. I think that it is really nice to have someone you care about inside you, it’s just really, it’s amazing, it’s beautiful (laugh).
(II, NAS, 18)

Similarly, Cam’s description of sexual satisfaction which she experienced ‘all through her body’ indicates her embodiment.

Cam: I would just feel it you know, it’s like, for me it’s like uhm like I can feel it all through my body that I feel satisfied......
(II, NAS, 19)

Embodied narratives were also produced in answering a survey question that required young women to complete the sentence, ‘what I find pleasurable about sexual activity is....’ Embodiment in these narratives involved explicit statements of particular corporeal ‘feeling’ such as ‘naked skin together’, ‘the penis going in and out’ as well as descriptions of an inextricable mix of bodily and emotional sensation. The following illustrate this combination of corporeal and emotional sensation in young women’s talk:

The feeling in my stomach and everything else disappears.
(Moa, 7)

The feeling of the penis going in and out of me and him touching me all over and feeling me. (Community Care, 5)

Foreplay, holding, nakedness....(Fitness, 21)

Being touched in places I find pleasurable, breast, genitals etc. (Moa, 15)

The feeling of touching someone and being touched. (Kiwi, 14)

Kissing, being kissed, exploring, having a guy go down on you (lick you in your vagina). Massage. Touching breasts. Physical contact.
(Kiwi, 13)
Along with explicit corporeal detail some young women's embodied narratives revealed that bodily sensations intensified emotional feelings of 'closeness' and 'love' as seen in the following extracts:

The feeling of having my partner inside my body. The closeness of both bodies together. (Moa, 16)

Being touched in a loving way. (Community care, 3)

The closeness involved, the feeling of naked skin together. (Business 1, 6)

I enjoy lots of foreplay with him. I love kissing and touching. I like the excitement during. Being in my partner's arms afterward. (Tui, 34)

Being loving, feeling embraced, kissing, embracing my partner. (Kahu, 2)

Other researchers have noted young women and men's accounts of sexual activity diverge in terms of the emphasis women place on 'relating to their partners' and the feelings of 'closeness, nurturance, belonging and being cared about' that sexual activity offers (Hillier et al, 1999:81). While such emotional elements were also present in the talk of young women in the study, in addition they described how their bodies 'lived' these emotions in sexual and sensual ways. This was evident from their depictions of the feeling of 'naked bodies twisted together', 'someone you care about inside of you' (Ngaire) and a lower abdomen sensation that lifts you to the ceiling (Emma). Although it was unusual in all of the methods, except the questionnaire, for young women to explicitly name their erogenous zones, as Emma (see above) demonstrates in avoiding the word 'vagina', the recognition of pleasurable corporeal sensation in these women's narratives was unmistakable.

Interestingly, only three of the six young women who took part in the individual interviews were able to produce embodied descriptions of sexual pleasure, and no young women in any of the focus groups (even the single sex female ones) were able to do this. Deciphering how some young women were able to speak in embodied ways is an important undertaking if more
young women are to experience sexual activity positively. As the questionnaire was anonymous I could not ask young women who had provided embodied descriptions to elaborate further on their responses. Subsequently, I scoured the focus group and couple activity transcripts and identified two young women who appeared to display embodiment in their talk about themselves as sexual beings. I selected Ngaire who was in a long term relationship and no longer at school, and Emma⁴ who had been seeing her boyfriend for six months and was in the seventh form.⁵ My aim was to analyse their talk more closely to identify how they were able to describe the process of embodiment, and how it might differ from those in the research who emerged as more disembodied.

While both young women admitted they sometimes felt insecure about their bodies, with Emma disclosing how she used to think she was ‘pale’ and ‘fat’, while Ngaire worried about her body being attractive to her boyfriend, they demonstrated a general positiveness about their corporeal selves. Ngaire, for instance, was one of the few women interviewed individually to declare openly that she liked her body, claiming ‘...yep, I’m vain (laugh) yep (laugh) I've got a nice body’. She maintained this positive stance during the couple activity with her partner George, explaining no issues relating to her body had arisen in her relationship because as she stated ‘I'm quite happy with my body’. Emma also revealed that while previously occupied with her body image, now ‘it doesn’t matter to me’. In addition, in his individual interview, her boyfriend Tim revealed that to help him maintain an erection (with which he was having difficulty) Emma ‘just went round the corner leaving me in the room, took all her clothes off and just walked into the room’. This is an action associated with someone who is confident about and comfortable with their body. In comparison with other young women’s comments about their bodies these young women appeared fairly positive indicating a possible relationship between being comfortable and accepting their body, and an ability to experience its corporeal sexual pleasures.

⁴ For a more detailed description of these young women and their relationships see table 3:8.
What also distinguished Ngaire and Emma was the amount of autonomy they held in their relationships and the positive feedback they received from others about their bodies. At the very beginning of the couple interview, Emma’s boyfriend described that he was the one typically to ‘concede’ in their relationship and from both their accounts of the history of the relationship, this appeared to be true. Similarly, Ngaire emerged as the force in her relationship, with a personality that was energetic and articulate in comparison to George’s easy going and quieter character. She took the lead during the interview demonstrating behaviour that appeared consistent with her descriptions of how she made decisions within/for the relationship. These young women seemed to ‘hold the reins’, taking up subject positions which offered them relative agency, in all aspects of their relationships.

Also noticeable was the positive reinforcement they received and mentioned acquiring from others about their bodies. The couple activity presented an opportunity to witness the exchange of such positive reinforcement from their partners or at least for the young women to mention things their partners had said to them. Emma’s boyfriend commented on several occasions he thought she had a ‘beautiful’ and ‘amazing’ body while Ngaire explained how George reassured her about her body anxieties. This affirmation from (an)other seemed to aid in the creation or maintenance of a positive body image, which may have assisted in the experience of embodied sexual pleasure. It seems logical to deduce that feeling positive and comfortable about your body will increase the likelihood of pleasurable corporeal sensation during sexual activity with a partner.

6.1.2 Young men’s narratives of embodiment.

Young men’s embodiment diverged from young women’s in that their embodiment was not about an ability to feel corporeal sensual pleasure, because corporeal pleasure was something all of the young men felt they could achieve easily. As Tim put it ‘..I mean if I wanted to ejaculate I could

5 Last year of secondary school (17-18 years).
probably just do so in less than a minute' (II, NAS, 19). Being embodied for young men was more about escaping dominant discourses of male sexuality in which sexual activity was experienced corporeally as 'self-gratifying' or as a 'release'. In dominant discourses young men's bodies are represented as machines that simply 'do sex' in order to achieve orgasm, but are not experienced sensually by them⁶. Embodiment in relation to masculinity therefore involved the intensification of male corporeal pleasure through recognition of sensual experience. Sensuality could be accessed through emotional feelings which heightened bodily satisfaction in sexual activity. In the following extracts young men in the study illustrate this connection between emotional and bodily satisfaction. Chris, George and Ashby (all involved in relationships) described in the individual interviews how causal sex was differentiated from sex in more enduring relationships.

Here, Chris talked about his first sexual experience with his girlfriend Cam as better than other casual sexual experiences he'd had, because of the emotion he felt for her.

Louisa: So what was sex like the first time with Cam?
Chris: ...it went well, it was like astounding, wow it was good you know uhm *(laugh)*.
Louisa: Better than previous times?
Chris: Yes.
Louisa: So better than the one night stands?
Chris: It was better, it was just like it made sex worthwhile, like sex for me it wasn't worthwhile before it doesn't give you anything like you, it didn't make you, it didn't make you feel particularly good or anything and like sex with Cam is really good.
Louisa: So what's different?
Chris: I'm sure there must have been much more emotion in there, like there was real caring like there wasn't like this isn't because of sex this was because, just because I feel good with her it wasn't the idea was not to have sex just to be with her [Stabs finger into table for definition]...Yeah sex for sex sake isn't worthwhile. (II, NAS, 19)

Speaking about why sex with his girlfriend Ngaire was 'fun' and 'better' than a one night stand, George explained:

⁶ See section on young men's dys-embodiment for examples of this.
George: ...You know that you really know them, like before [with one night stands] it was like turned on but you never get to know them or who they were or how they felt about such and such a thing ...it’s best if you can get to know them that’s the fun...the sex is better yeah.
(II, NAS, 19)

Ashby described how sexual intercourse with his long term girlfriend Becky was more 'intimate' and 'comfortable' because of his feelings for her, where as in a 'one night stand' for him, sex was simply about lust.

Ashby: Uhm it's more intimate generally [in a long term relationship] uhm...yeah....yeah, yeah cause like I care about her and stuff like that...I'm just more comfortable with Becky (small laugh). It's like uhm with the others it's just more lust yeah.
(II, AS, 17)

The link between emotions and a heightened corporeal sensation is apparent in each of these interviews. For Chris, the presence of 'much more emotion' in his current relationship made sex as he described it 'astounding'. Similarly for Ashby, caring about Becky made his sexual experiences more 'intimate' and 'comfortable' than with 'a one night stand'. Sex was 'better' for George because 'getting to know someone' is what produces 'the fun'. The embodiment these young men displayed was enabled by taking up alternative subject positions to those which construct male bodies as separated from emotion and machine-like in their procurement of gratification. Instead the embodiment of these young men comes from the way an acknowledgement of their emotions enables them to draw greater pleasure from their bodies. In a sense their emotions are a source of increased physical pleasure for them.

Embodied narratives were also revealed in answers to a survey question which asked subjects to complete the sentence, 'what I find pleasurable about sexual activity is.........'. Young men's embodiment was revealed in their reports of pleasurable corporeal feelings that were inextricably bound with emotional 'intimacy', 'closeness' and 'the thought of being with someone you love'. Below are some descriptions of what these young men found pleasurable about sexual activity:
The intimacy and the stimulation. (Huia, 64)

Talking and being touched by my partner. (Tui, 27)

Close feeling, orgasm. (Kahu, 5)

The presence (physical and mental) of a female. Being physically stimulated. (Kahu, 4)

The intimacy and the pleasure. (Tui, 26)

Making love to the person that you love. Not just getting satisfied physically but the whole being. (Teach, 1)

Intercourse and oral sex. The thought of being with someone you love. (Kiwi, 3)

Here the links between emotion, 'the intimacy', 'love' and physical pleasure 'orgasm', 'getting satisfied physically' are made. Because these answers were anonymous, I could not explore this relationship further. However, the answers suggest that by connecting physical pleasure with their feelings, these young men appeared to experience embodiment.

This data also suggests there were other complex processes at work. In describing their sexual experiences young men in this study appeared to avoid direct references to particular parts of their bodies. They described corporeal feeling in a generalised way like 'getting satisfied physically', 'orgasm' and 'pleasure' or they described the action which produced this feeling such as 'oral sex', 'being physically stimulated' or 'being touched' without localising the body parts or describing the feeling of the body to the stimulus. Yet they were still able to experience corporeal sexual pleasure, possibly because the discourses which constitute male sexuality construct corporeal pleasure as an inevitability. The notion of male embodiment then, is not necessarily about being able to experience corporeal sexual pleasure (as it was for young women). Rather, it was about recognising male bodies as more than machines which experience sexual pleasure. It was about treating the body as connected with emotions which are not constituted as 'appropriately masculine' and allowing those emotions to intensify pleasurable corporeal sensation.
In thinking about what enabled the young men in the individual interviews to speak in embodied ways while other young men did not, it is apparent the former group shared a common experience. Each had been in a long term relationship in which they professed having some emotional investment. Both George and Chris for example, proclaimed that they 'loved' their girlfriends while Ashby explained 'I just like being around her, and she's really good to me and that's what I like about it [the relationship]'. Entering into relationships often forces a recognition of young men's feelings since, as Holland et al, (1993:2) argue, negotiation sexual encounters can engage their emotions, connect them to their need for affection, and render visible their dependence on women. Being in a relationship provided some young men with a context in which they could legitimately connect to their feelings, enabling them to experience the relationship between their bodies and such feelings.

As we have seen sexual embodiment for young women also necessitates finding a connection with their bodies over and above the discourses of male power that distance them from it. This involves viewing their bodies positively, despite the barrage of media portrayals of the 'ideal' feminine form which set standards which most young women will 'fail' and that subsequently feed negative perceptions of themselves. The research also suggests some contextual features may aid in their embodiment, such as positive reinforcement of their body image from others and a sense of agency in their sexual relationships.

6.2 Disembodiment and Dys-embodiment

In this next section I explore the data findings concerning another two corporeal states; disembodiment, and what I have called dys-embodiment. Only young women in my sample appeared to experience disembodiment. This was because what I had originally identified as disembodiment in young men, was actually better described by the concept of dys-embodiment. In this section I define and explore these concepts in relation to the experiences of

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7 This experience is traversed in section 6.3.1
young women and men in this study. The fluidity in young people's experiences of dys-embodiment and disembodiment as well as embodiment are emphasised.

6.2.1 Defining disembodiment

Logically, 'disembodiment' is the antithesis of embodiment and is generally used by theorists to denote a subject's detachment from the sensuality of their body (Holland et al, 1994b). This definition suggests subjectivity is made up of two distinct facets, the body and the subject (or the 'I' which is socially constructed), a notion echoing Cartesian separations of mind and body. As indicated in Chapter 1, I wish to draw upon Grosz (1994) to rethink the distinction between biology/nature and the social/cultural subject in a way that undermines this dualistic constitution of subjectivity. I have reformulated the general understanding of this definition in a way that reconceptualises the notion of the body. By the body I do not mean only its flesh, blood, bone or raw materials (its biology), as separate from the socially constructed subject/mind but a necessary interrelation of physiology and culture. Here what is knowledge and what is physiology is inseparable in the sense that the body is 'naturally social' (Grosz, 1987:7).

Drawing on the work of phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty, it is possible to see the body as a threshold between nature and culture, as the condition and the context through which we are able to have a relation to objects (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). The body is not an object detached from other objects and subjects, or as Grosz terms it 'a mind somehow cut off from matter and space' (Grosz, 1994:87). Instead Merleau-Ponty would argue, we are 'subjects being-to-the world' (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). It is having and being a

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8 The idea of the subject being 'naturally social' suggests the inextricability of biology from the socially constructed subject. With this concept there is no separation between nature/culture whereby culture works on the raw materials of biology. Biology and culture are undifferentiated, one can not exist with out the other to the extent that nature and culture are not a dualism but rather they can be encompassed by one concept - the 'naturally social'. The difficulty in communicating this idea is that language immediately constructs a discourse of separation and opposition when the words 'nature' and 'culture (or any associate of them like 'social' or 'natural') are employed.
body that enables all information and knowledge to be perceived and to have meaning for us. In this conception of the body, disembodiment subsequently means the loss of sensuality from the body without this involving a splitting of 'I' from physiology. Disembodiment can be expressed as a kind of numbness or confusion, a potentially recognisable absence of 'corporeal' sensuality, although sometimes the subject does not register this. In using these insights to formulate a definition of disembodiment to guide this research, I take disembodiment as not the separation of the subject from their body, but in young women's case the body's lack of recognition of its sensuality, the body being inextricably cultural/biological. For young men, disembodiment comprises an absence of acknowledgement of the body and its corporeal potential beyond the constitution of hegemonic masculinity.

6.2.2 Narratives of disembodiment

While examples of embodiment emerged within the narratives of a few of the young women in this research, instances of disembodiment were more readily identifiable. In some instances disembodiment was expressed as the absence of any reference to the body and or/pleasurable sensation during sexual activity. Disembodiment of this kind has been well documented by other research where young women speak (or do not speak) about their sexuality (Tolman, 1994; Lees, 1993; Hillier, 1999; Holland et al, 1994). In my study, such disembodiment was most commonly revealed in the focus groups where there was a silence about the body and its pleasures amongst female participants. It is therefore difficult to describe young women's experiences of disembodiment, however along with the noted silence about the body from some young women in focus groups, some insights could be found in answers to questions within the survey to which I will now turn.

One of the survey questions endeavoured to probe the issue of disembodiment (and embodiment) by asking young people what they did least and most with their bodies.

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9 For example, when young people in the research failed to refer to their bodies in their
Table 6:1 What Young Women and Men do most and Least with their Bodies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What subjects do with their bodies.</th>
<th>% Always (N)</th>
<th>% Regularly (N)</th>
<th>% Occasionally (N)</th>
<th>% Never (N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Think it is nice</td>
<td>(11) 4.2</td>
<td>(6) 4.1</td>
<td>(43) 16.4</td>
<td>(30) 26.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hate it</td>
<td>(24) 9.2</td>
<td>(5) 3.4</td>
<td>(64) 20.6</td>
<td>(23) 15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criticise it</td>
<td>(47) 18.0</td>
<td>(15) 10.3</td>
<td>(85) 32.6</td>
<td>(28) 19.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Touch it</td>
<td>(20) 7.8</td>
<td>(20) 14.1</td>
<td>(41) 16.0</td>
<td>(33) 23.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ignore it</td>
<td>(12) 4.6</td>
<td>(2) 1.4</td>
<td>(46) 17.8</td>
<td>(33) 22.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hide it</td>
<td>(42) 16.1</td>
<td>(9) 6.2</td>
<td>(58) 22.2</td>
<td>(36) 24.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worry about it</td>
<td>(74) 28.1</td>
<td>(19) 13.1</td>
<td>(84) 31.9</td>
<td>(22) 15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoy it</td>
<td>(24) 9.4</td>
<td>(36) 24.7</td>
<td>(64) 25.0</td>
<td>(32) 21.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*N = 409, Female = 262, Male = 147

By assigning a score to each of the items (in the table left hand column) in terms of whether an answer indicated a positive or negative perception of the body, I was able to create a total score of each individual’s answers for this question. When a T-Test was conducted on these scores there appeared to be no significant gender differences between young women (11.7809) and men (12.8429). Scores indicated young women’s feelings about their bodies were negative with most having a mean value that indicated a ‘negative’ or ‘neutral’ approach to them which may indicate their disembodiment (Appendix O)10.

The findings from this question also revealed that there were significant differences between young women and men on some of the items. More young women than men reported always ‘criticising’11, ‘hiding’12, ‘worrying’13 and ‘hating’14 their bodies. In contrast, significantly more young men reported always ‘touching’15 and ‘enjoying’16 their bodies. These results clearly indicate narratives and this absence was not deliberate or recognised by them.

10 There were no significant ‘At School’ or ‘Not at School’ group differences.
11 (Sig. 040), (18% compared with 10%).
12 (Sig. 004), (16% compared with 6%).
13 (Sig. 001), (28% compared with 13%).
14 (Sig. 032), (9% compared with 3%).
15 (Sig. 045), (14% compared with 7%).
16 (Sig .000), (24% compared to 9%).
that young women in the study had a more negative relationship with their bodies than the young men who participated. I argue later in the chapter that these negative perceptions of the body may provide a context for young women’s experience of disembodiment.

6.2.3 Narratives of young women’s dys-embodiment

Disembodiment is a more extreme form of another corporeal state identified in young people’s experiences of their bodies in this study. Another form of disembodiment that young women displayed, involved the recognition of the body but in a way that blocked or inhibited its pleasurable sensations (NB. Disembodiment involved a total lack of recognition of the body and its sensuality). In this sense young women were dys-embodied not through a lack of awareness of their bodies, but through the inhibition/absence of the body’s pleasurable sensual and sensory capacities. Williams utilises the term dys-embodiment to describe ‘embodiment in a dysfunctional state’ (Williams, 1996:23). He takes ‘dys’ from the Greek prefix signifying ‘bad’, ‘hard’ or ‘ill’ as it is present in words such as ‘dysfunctional’ and applies it to the bodily state chronically ill patients often encounter; ‘...the painful body emerges as ‘thing-like’; it ‘betrays’ us and we may feel alienated and estranged from it as a consequence’ (Williams, 1996:27). I would argue that dys-embodiment is an appropriate term to describe the situation of subjects in the excerpts below. Whilst aware of their bodies, these young women’s relationship to them was distorted by dominant discourses of appropriate femininity which render them strongly dissatisfied, embarrassed and ashamed.

Such negative forms of dys-embodiment were evident in young women’s descriptions of what they thought and felt about their bodies during sexual activity. These feelings were perhaps negative, because they were derived from an anxiety about their bodies which failed to emulate dominant ideals of ‘bodily beauty’ and would therefore be distasteful to their partners. The following extracts are from all six of the young women who participated in the individual interviews.
What sometimes crossed Ngaire’s mind during sexual activity was whether she would be perceived by her partner George, as having a too big ‘butt’ and ‘thighs’ and ‘too small breasts’.

Ngaire: Okay...what’s in my mind...is, if we are having sex is my butt too big, are my breasts too small (laugh) uhm little things like that...are my thighs too fat (laugh) and do I have stretch marks all over my body? (laugh)
(II, NAS, 17)

Similarly, Becky explained that she also worried that her boyfriend Ashby would think she was too fat, and this subsequently made her feel ‘ugly’.

Becky: ...it does effect me feeling fat and stuff cause sometimes when he’s on top and I can see my stomach you know and I hate that and my thighs you know, it’s not sort of my upper body or uhm..
Louisa: And so what are you thinking about...do you feel about that at that particular time?
Becky: That he must just think that I look so grotts (laugh) and gross.
(II, 17, NAS)

Nina explained how she thought her boyfriend would be put off by seeing her naked, and that this made her feel self conscious during sexual intercourse.

Nina: ...I used to be so self conscious. Like I'm not really anymore and same with like him seeing me with no clothes on and stuff...I just used to think I was really fat and stuff and that like if he saw me he would just be put off totally kind of thing
(II, 17, NAS)

Another young woman admitted she experienced ‘fat days’ when she felt dissatisfied with the size of her ‘buttocks’, ‘thighs’ and ‘stomach’. Although she remarked that such feelings did not influence the sexual activity she engaged in with her boyfriend Chris, she conceded that they had the potential too.

Cam: Uhm I have a few hang ups about my body and stuff...
Louisa: What kinds of things do you worry about?
Cam: I have fat days. Just the bloaty feelings and uhm my stomach and my buttocks and thighs and small breasts and stuff like that.
Louisa: Do you think how you feel about your body affects sexual activity?
Cam: It could if I let it...like wanting to keep like sheets on and stuff like that, to like cover things up like having the lights off all the time or something like that. (II, NAS, 19)
Amy disclosed that negative feelings about her body did effect sexual activity with her boyfriend Peter, whom she consequently tried to prevent from seeing her body.

Amy: ....sometimes it does effect the sexual activity because I'll sort of be embarrassed and shameful...I'll sort of be a bit sort of like this [puts her hands over her body]. And he'll be it's okay get the arms away and I'm like I don't really want him to look at me..... (II, AS, 17)

The insecurities and dissatisfactions these young women expressed appeared to stem from a fear that their bodies wouldn't be considered attractive enough by their boyfriends. This fear appeared to be derived from their sense of not being attractive enough in relation to dominant perceptions of female bodily beauty. Their claims that parts of their bodies were too fat or in the case of their breasts, not big enough, indicated this comparison and the reason for their subsequent feelings of insecurity about their bodies.

During focus groups and interviews it was evident that young women in the study constituted their sense of their bodies through dominant discourses about female sexual attractiveness. This was especially apparent in their reactions to images of women's bodies they were shown. Often young women made immediate comparisons between themselves and the bodies depicted, in direct and indirect ways. For example, by stating the image made them feel inferior or by indicating that the body represented was unrealistic and/or unobtainable. All of the following were young women's responses to the 'Hey Sister' image (Appendix B:3) which was shown to the focus groups. These comments reveal how young women felt insecure about their body weight in comparison to the model in the picture.

Trisha: ...that definitely makes me think oh well 'going to have to lose some weight'. (FG, NAS, 17)

Georgia: Can I just ask the guys if they think that, that girl is too skinny? (FG, NAS, 17)
Let's be true would you really buy it [the lingerie] if the guy [in the picture] weighs less than you?
(FG, AS, 17)

She's one of those waif super models [speaking about the model in the picture].
(FG, NAS, 18)

There's this chick with this anorexic body.
(FG, NAS, 17)

I'm tall but now I feel like a big fat slob (all laugh) [following a discussion about media images of women].
(FG, AS, 17)

As a consequence of constituting their sense of their bodies in relation to dominant images of female 'beauty', young women in the study appeared to feel negatively about the inability of their bodies to live up to these dominant standards of female attractiveness. It might be argued that this produces a distorted relationship with their bodies in the form of a dys-embodiment. This negative relationship between young women and their bodies, is also indicated by the questionnaire findings described above, where young women had a more negative perception of their bodies. As we have seen in the previous section, if positive body perception is linked to embodiment it is likely that the reverse is also true, where a negative body image can contribute to the state of dys-embodiment. The way in which this occurs will be explained with reference to the imaginary body in the final section of the chapter.

In making these claims about dys-embodiment I do not mean to suggest that the state of 'disembodiment' may not also be associated with the operation of dominant discourses of appropriate femininity. However, the consequences of such discourses are more severe in the case of disembodiment where an almost complete disregard of the body is involved. Dis/dys/embodiment then might be seen as a continuum ranging from disembodiment where an awareness of pleasurable corporeal sensation is absent to dys-embodiment where there is a distorted (that is negative) recognition of the body which may or may not induce a lack of pleasurable corporeal sensation. At the other end
of this spectrum lies embodiment which involves a positive sensual awareness of corporeal pleasure.

**Chart 6:1 Spectrum of Dis/dys/embodiment for Young Women**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disembodiment</th>
<th>Dys-embodiment</th>
<th>Embodiment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Absence of awareness of pleasurable corporeal sensation</td>
<td>Distorted (that is negative) recognition of the body. May or may not induce lack of pleasurable corporeal sensation.</td>
<td>Positive sensual awareness of corporeal pleasure.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**6.2.4 Deconstructing Young Women’s Dis/dys-embodiment**

In order to explore the processes of dis/dys-embodiment it is useful to concentrate on just one young woman’s talk offered across three methods in the research. Becky’s narratives about her body reflect those of other young women’s experiences in the study, and I have selected her to represent these because of her ability to articulate her feelings. Becky participated in the focus group, individual and couple interviews and, by piecing together her narratives produced in each of these settings it is possible to reveal her experiences of sexual disembodiment and dys-embodiment.

Becky had been going out with her boyfriend Ashby for just over three years and he was the only person she had slept with, although she admitted having sex with him had not really been that pleasurable until recently. During her participation in the focus group session, she spoke about her experience of sexual activity with him in a way that indicated the level of her sexual disembodiment.

I might feel a bit shamed saying this but anyway, but if you are having sex like I get to the stage where I am like, okay that's enough and I often don’t say it until he’s ready, you know till he’s finished you know as such.

(FG, AS, 17)
Disembodiment occurs here when Becky ignores the loss of her corporeal sensitivity during sexual activity, and endures the absence of pleasurable feeling rather than bringing the sexual encounter to an end. She becomes 'deaf' to her body's lack of pleasure instead prioritising the sexual gratification of her partner. Other research records young women's subordination of their own satisfaction in the face of their partner's as common place, with faking orgasm a prime example of this (Roberts et al, 1995; Holland et al, 1998).

Several months later in an interview, I asked Becky to recall why sexual activity became unpleasant and why she didn't ask her partner to stop. She replied that during these times she would be thinking about the other women her boyfriend had 'cheated' with and be wondering whether he thought sex with her was as satisfying as with these other girls; 'it's hard to think that you know he has been with other people and you know he's probably thinking about the difference between us. Cause that must happen, I'm sure. And uhm, and so that's hard' (II, AS, 17).

Becky's rather negative responses to her bodily pleasure were also revealed, when I asked her about her experience of satisfaction and pleasure in relation to orgasms. In response, she declared she had orgasms during sexual activity with her partner about 60% of the time. However, when pressed further she divulged 'It's hard to say. Sometimes I don't even really know what's happening (laugh) you know it's like I'm not sure what's happening'. It seemed that Becky had difficulty determining what her body felt and, as such, whether or not she had experienced intensely pleasurable sensations. She displayed considerable confusion about what an orgasm felt like, and her sense of being 'out of touch' with her body's lived experience again signified her disembodiment. Becky's experiences of disembodiment appeared to be different from dys-embodiment because disembodiment involved her lack of bodily feeling or awareness and understanding of corporeal sensuality.

In addition to her talk indicating disembodiment Becky also revealed periods of dys-embodiment during sexual activity suggesting her experience of these
was mutable. Like other women in the research she explained having negative thoughts about her body which appeared to be derived from a sense of it not living up to the ‘ideal’ female body size perpetuated by the media.

In feeling fat and yeah. Just about feeling fat that’s all that it is and sometimes I feel that way and sometimes like I look at myself while we are having sex and feel like absolutely huge and disgusting......

(I, AS, 17)

As described above these sorts of comments about feeling fat were made by all of the young women in the interviews. Yet when asked if such feelings influenced their experiences of corporeal sexual pleasure, Becky, Ngaire, Cam, Emma, and Nina all responded with a resounding ‘no’. However, in light of Becky’s disclosure about feeling inferior to the other women that her boyfriend had slept with, (physically and in terms of her ‘sexual performance’), such thoughts may well have intruded.

What Becky’s and other young women’s experiences of their bodies suggest is a continuum of dis/embodiment as set out in Table 6:12 above. Experiences of the body may oscillate along and between points on this line depending upon particular contextual specificities. This enables us to account for Becky’s claim that sexual activity is sometimes pleasurable and more embodied (as she described it being at the time of the couple activity) relative to those other experiences she described. In addition, this continuum also assists in explaining the differentiation in young women’s experiences of dis/dys/embodiment. While all young women interviewed spoke in ways that revealed they were dys or disembodied, some experiences were momentary while others were more enduring.

6.2.5 Young men’s narratives of dys-embodiment

Dys-embodiment was also a state which most accurately described the majority of young men’s relationship with their bodies. It was more difficult to identify than young women’s dys-embodiment because from an initial reading
of young men's narratives it appeared they were not dys-embodied but disembodied. This was because when asked to think about how their feelings about their bodies might influence their sexual activity young men denied being consciously aware of their bodies. The response typically provided was 'I don't really think about it' or they immediately took up the subject position of their girlfriend offering what she thought of their body. In this way these young men distanced themselves from subjective feelings and thoughts about their bodies implying they were disembodied. Three quarters of the young men who participated in the individual interviews provided this seemingly disembodied response by claiming they were not concerned with their bodies:

Ashby:  
Uhm I don't know. As far as sex goes I don't really think about my body.  
(II, AS, 17)

Tim:  
How I feel about my body?...no I feel....she's fine with my body and that's all that really matters. I'm like not having sex with myself so I don't really care how I look (laugh), so I mean if she is happy with my body then there is no problem.  
(II, NAS, 18)

Neil:  
No, no, I don't feel, I just don't feel anything about it, sort of over cocky you know 'oh I've got a good body' so I just don't care. My body's just there and it doesn't worry me you know.  
(II, NAS, 17)

Chris:  
I don't think that it matters, I mean I don't really care what my body looks like. I do care what Cam thinks my body looks like (stabs the table with his finger for emphasis). Like so I always ask Cam, I, I, I oh not always but I do on occasion ask Cam you know 'Am I good enough for you'?  
(II, NAS, 19)

This sense of not really caring about their bodies was also communicated in the questionnaire. When scores were calculated on all items to the question 'what do you do most and least with your body'? answers indicated young men generally took a neutral stance on their bodies (Appendix O). That is, they were highly unlikely to say they either always think their body is 'nice' or they always 'criticise it'. This absence of a tendency towards a positive or
negative perception supports young men's claim that "I do not really care what my body looks like".

However, despite alleging when asked directly about their bodies that they 'don't think' and 'don't care' about them, the six young men in the interviews revealed they did in fact think about them and these thoughts centred around anxieties about their bodies. From these sorts of comments it seemed that what appeared to be disembodiment could be a state of dys-embodiment. In these instances young men spoke of their body's inadequacies, making a mental comparison with dominant conceptions of the 'perfect' male body. Their references to 'small biceps', 'lack of muscle' or not being 'toned' and being 'short', all indicated a comparison of themselves with a socially constituted 'ideal' model generally 'characterised by a well developed chest, rippling arm muscles and a 'washboard stomach' (Corbett Robinson, 1994:70). The following extracts come from the individual and couple interviews with men who were currently in a relationship.

Tim explained that before he met his current girlfriend;

Tim: ......I thought my body was ugly.
(II, NAS, 18)

Giving an appraisal of his body Peter said:

Peter: Well my biceps aren't that big and (laugh) and you know I'm not well toned.
(II, NAS, 18)

Chris described how his insecurities about his body meant that:

Chris: .....some days I just don't, I just don't want her to see me [referring to his girlfriend seeing his body].

A little further into the interview Chris explained explicitly that this was because:
Chris: Just uhm a feeling of inadequacy because like, you know like I feel that, I feel that Cam [his girlfriend] is so amazing that I'm not really good enough, like that's just like a I dunno it's probably irrational but you know it's like you really really, really want to make the other person happy and like if you don't have say Carlos Spencer's\(^\text{17}\) body (laugh)....Cam has a huge crush on Carlos Spencer. (II, NAS, 19)

Indicating some insecurity regarding how attractive his girlfriend found his body, Neil described how he thought she wanted him to be more stereotypically masculine.

Neil: I mean sure there's different things that you want on everyone. I mean I am sure Nina wishes that I was a bit more muscular or what ever else..... (CA, NAS,17)

After saying he didn't care about his body, Ashby revealed his concern about being 'too short' and the feeling that he had to compensate for this with extra muscle in order to 'look good' and be a good sportsman.

Louisa: So going to the gym and doing weights and stuff like that is to make you feel better or...why do you do it?
Ashby: Really it's for sports but uhm it does have, it does make you look better and stuff like that. But uhm my basic uhm motivation uhm is just for sport cause I'm a bit on the short side so I've got to you know I've got to try and make myself bigger. (II, AS, 17)

Holland et al, (1994a) have documented the feelings of vulnerability that young men in the UK experienced in intimate relationships, but examples of other research in which the male body is a source of their anxiety in sexual situations is relatively rare. It may have emerged in this research because of New Zealand's culture of 'sports', 'fitness' and outdoor pursuits (such as going to the beach) which places additional pressure on young men (and women) to have an 'appropriately' sculptured body.

The fact that some of the young men in the study thought and worried about their bodies, even though when questioned directly they maintained they did

\(^{17}\) New Zealand rugby icon known for his 'good looks'.
not, offers an explanation for how such dys-embodiment occurs. Hegemonic masculinity involves young men denying or protecting their own ‘vulnerability’, where vulnerability entails their failure to achieve dominant perceptions of masculinity (Holland et al., 1993). For young men to admit their ‘inadequacy’ is to expose their vulnerability, where within the operation of hegemonic masculinity successful men are constituted as ‘invincible’ with strong imposing bodies that match this image. In the data collected from all three methods of investigation, it was evident that young men struggled to attain this identity as successfully masculine (See Chapter 5). Any reference to their bodies bar in relation to sport\(^{18}\), or drawing attention to worries about them, threatened to sabotage their achievement of an appropriately masculine identity. Young men appeared dys-embodied in their narratives then, because the operation of hegemonic masculinity required a ‘neglect’ of their body. It is the operation of hegemonic masculinity which dys-embodies young men and subsequently why dis/dys/embodiment can be seen as gendered processes.

Chart 6:2 Spectrum of Dis/dys/embodiment for Young Men

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disembodiment(^{19})</th>
<th>Dys-embodiment</th>
<th>Embodiment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Absence of awareness of corporeal sensation.</td>
<td>Limited recognition and sensual experience of the body. (As dictated by hegemonic masculinity)</td>
<td>Positive sensual awareness of the body beyond confines of hegemonic masculinity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{18}\) It might be argued that hegemonic masculinity produces an embodied male subject because of its encouragement of the celebration of male sporting prowess and the physical awareness and strength this involves (Connell, 1995). However, my argument is that, while hegemonic masculinity might be seen to produce embodied young men in fact they are dys-embodied. This is because of the way the operation of hegemonic masculinity limits young men’s experience of embodiment in line with ‘appropriate’ forms of masculinity. This is not to suggest there is a truer or better way for young men to be embodied, but that the potential for them to be so is much wider than the confines that hegemonic masculinity permits.
6.3 ‘Imaginary’ Bodies

In order to understand these processes of dys/disembodiment, in this next section I draw on the concept of the ‘imaginary body’. As explained in Chapter 2, the term ‘imaginary body’ was contrived by Lacan to denote an ‘internalised image or map of the meaning the body has for the subject, for others in its social world, and for a culture (Grosz, 1994:39) (See Chapter 2).

6.3.1 Young women’s and men’s ‘imaginary’ bodies

The manifestation of the imaginary body can be seen in the examples of young women’s perception of themselves as ‘fat’, having a ‘big buttocks’, ‘wide hips’, and/or ‘small breasts’ and their descriptions of feeling ‘bloated’, ‘grotts’, ‘ashamed’ and ‘shy’ as a result of these perceptions (see section 6.2.3). It was evident from some of the accounts of young women participating in the study, that their sense of their bodies was shaped in relation to dominant discourses about ‘ideal’ female beauty and as a consequence they often felt they failed to emulate these standards. What was particularly puzzling for me were young women who explained how they thought they were fat, yet appeared indistinguishable from other young women their age. This might be explained by the fact that the constitution of young women’s imaginary body is influenced by the work of dominant discourses of ‘ideal femininity’. Once young women realise that their own bodies fail to correspond with those socially esteemed, the anatomical parts which do not ‘match’ take on a distorted negative meaning in the internalised imaginary image of the body. For Becky, this meant internalising a sense of herself as ‘fat’ and not attractive enough and this formed her experience of her body, even though her actual appearance did not reflect such adjectives.

Just as dominant discourses of femininity appeared to construct imaginary bodies for young women in the research, so the operation of hegemonic

19 In this study I did not find examples of young men’s disembodiment. That is, an extreme example of young men making no reference to their body and its sensuality at all. This does not preclude, however, that some young men may experience this state.
masculinity informed the imaginary bodies of young men. In line with dominant discourses of appropriate masculinity, young men's imaginary bodies appeared to be removed from their 'real bodies'. The dominant constitution of male bodies is that they are invincible and thus muscular and guaranteed pleasure from sexual activity because dominant forms of masculinity are premised on potency and self-gratification. That these bodies were imaginary can be seen in young men's anxieties that their bodies did not conform to these traits and instead they perceived themselves as having 'small biceps' not being well toned and/or too short (see section 6.2.5). Another clear example of this was when three of the six young men who took part in the individual interviews expressed concern about not being able to 'last long enough' or get and maintain an erection during sexual intercourse.

Tim: I couldn't get it up long enough and stuff which I'm guessing was, well now I'm fine but...I'm just guessing that it was my first time and stuff.
(II, NAS, 18)

Chris: Uh like when I said I couldn't have sex with that girl, I couldn't have sex with that girl. Like I never felt like I could get, I couldn't be turned on by her cause she was too abusive and uhm, uhm....and I've been really drunk and not been able to have sex before.
Louisa: Not been able to get it up?
Chris: Yeah...couldn't have sex...
(II, NAS, 19)

Explaining his reactions to the fact that his girlfriend didn't enjoy the first time they had sexual intercourse Peter said;

Peter: Oh it made me feel pretty bad, because I thought maybe I'm doing something wrong, so yeah, and I wasn't very long, it didn't last very long.
(II, AS, 18)

The fact that young men perceived their bodies as not working like they should in these situations (ie. as hegemonic masculinity dictates) was testimony to the presence of an 'imaginary' body.
Chapter 2 explained the way in which the ‘imaginary body’ works is to posit the internalised image or map as a true reflection and indication of the potential of the body. Because, as I have argued, young women and men’s imaginary anatomies are constituted through a plethora of dominant (and subordinate) discourses about their bodies, they ‘live’ them in these particular ways. The internalised image of the body, (which is discursively constituted) becomes in the subject’s experience inseparable from the biological body, and therefore experienced as the body, or indistinctly from it. There is no binary of ‘imaginary’ and ‘real’ bodies, whereby discourse overlays or inscribes biological ‘raw’ materials, because as Grosz has noted ‘biology is always already social’. In a sense the imaginary body is not really imaginary because it is experienced as ‘real’. It is imaginary only in so much as it reflects social collective fantasies about what women’s and men’s bodies should look like, be able to be achieve and experience.

6.3.2 Reflections on an imaginary body

In thinking further about the implications of this ‘imaginary anatomy’ for young women’s experience of sexual pleasure it is useful to turn to Schilder’s (1978) work. He describes the imaginary body or corporeal schema as an ‘anticipatory plan of (future) action incorporating knowledge of the body’s current location in space and potential for movement). Psychoanalysts would argue this schema ‘unifies and co-ordinates postural, tactile, kinaesthetic and visual sensations’ and enables the performance of ‘wilful’ action for which a body schema must be present. Schilder describes his schema as pre-conscious because it is not entirely conscious or unconscious, but has the potential to become conscious. So within the confines of the corporeal schema as constituted by dominant discourses about female sexuality, the subject may or may not be conscious of her/his corporeal potential determined by these discourses. It might be that those who are more conscious of this schema are more likely to be sexually embodied.
If, as my findings suggest, the corporeal schema is partially informed by dominant discourses about female sexuality and bodily possibilities, then young women’s corporeal schema is limited by these. Feminist theory has documented discourses that have served to constitute female sexuality as less desiring and easily pleasured than male sexuality (Hollway, 1984; Smart, 1992; Forbes, 1996). By informing the corporeal schema, these discourses severely limit the plans of possible action for young women’s bodies. They prescribe a female body with inhibited potential to experience sexual pleasure through a physiology they construct as ‘inadequate’ and which is subsequently experienced as such. Evidence of this was seen when Becky described not finding sexual activity pleasurable with her boyfriend because of her feelings of inadequacy about her body. With this imaginary body, the lived experiences of corporeal sexual pleasure are muted, perhaps explaining why so many young women do not encounter them regularly or in some cases ever.

It is likely that young men’s corporeal schema is also partially informed by dominant discourses of male sexuality so their lived experiences of their bodies are shaped by these. Because these discourses constitute sexual pleasure as a right and inevitable consequence of sexual stimulation of their bodies, there is no issue of an absence of corporeal gratification for young men. This is verified by the lack of research documenting corporeal pleasure as missing from young men’s sexual experiences. However, young men may experience limitations on their corporeal schema in terms of what it is appropriate for them to find pleasurable. Some of the young men in this research described how emotional investment in a relationship improved the quality of their sexual experience with a partner (see section 6.1.2). Subsequently, it is possible that the dys-embodiment the operation of hegemonic masculinity produces can restrict intensified corporeal sexual pleasure gleaned from emotional investment in a relationship.

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20 This is an issue which I did not have the opportunity to explore through this research. But it is likely that young men’s corporeal sexual pleasure is limited by dominant discourses that
What is an issue for young men is that, while embodiment provides young women with greater likelihood of corporeal sexual pleasure, it potentially connects young men with vulnerability in the face of hegemonic masculinity’s operation. Acknowledging the presence of their bodies, speaking and focusing on them in ways that transgress dominant discourses of masculinity risk their achievement of successful masculinity. Yet being embodied suggests creating space within the discourses of dominant masculinity which (re)produce male power and have negative consequences for young women. It appears that being embodied involves empowerment of young women and potential ‘disempowerment’ for young men.

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter has argued that the states of dis/dys/embodiment are gendered and therefore experienced differentially by young women and men. The data reveals that dis/dys/embodiment have the potential to leave young women devoid of corporeal pleasure, while young men’s corporeal experiences of sexual activity are defined in a restricted way.

In broadening our understanding of embodiment and disembodiment, the data also offers evidence of what I have coined dys-embodiment. This is distinguished from disembodiment in the way that young women can be aware of their bodies but have a negative relation to them which has the potential to inhibit pleasurable corporeal sensation. For young men, dys-embodiment involves a relationship with their body defined by the operation of hegemonic masculinity and which may limit the potential range of pleasurable corporeal experiences their bodies could encounter.

In the next chapter, I extend this exploration of gendered corporeal experience by bringing young people’s bodies and subjectivities more centrally into the realm of practice.

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constitute only certain sexual activities as appropriate from which to gain corporeal pleasure from. For example, penetration by a woman.
Chapter Seven

(Hetero)sexual Practices

7.0 Introduction

While the previous chapter explored young people's corporeal experiences of sexual activity, this final data chapter establishes the context for these experiences, that is (hetero)sexual practices. The first section is concerned with documenting the sexual practices young people in the study described. It focuses on the number, length and types of relationships they reported and how they made the decision to engage in sexual activity. This section also draws on the finding discussed in Chapter 4, that for many young people the type of sexual knowledge that holds most status and interest for them, is that which involves sexual desire and pleasure. Taking this into account, this chapter argues for an extension of the meaning of young people's practices so as to incorporate what was conceptualised in Chapter 4 as a discourse of 'erotics'. It does this by documenting what young people in the study found pleasurable (and not pleasurable) about sexual practices.

In the second section of the chapter, I analyse how young people in the study saw their knowledge affecting their sexual practice. It builds on earlier findings (See Chapter 4) by describing knowledge in practice from the perspective of these young people. Additional support is given to young people's differentiation of high and low status knowledge\(^1\) by reporting on the various effects which such knowledge had on their feelings about their sexual practice and subjectivity. In the third section of the chapter I continue the argument that young people are sexual actors and not simply 'docile' within the 'gap' equation, by considering the ways in which sexual subjectivities are worked out in practice. I examine how these couples negotiated sexual activity in their
relationships and the way in which power itself is sexualised within such relationships. I argue that an analytic exploration of power reveals three types in operation: equal power in which power is shared between partners; mediated power where young women carve out limited agency within the exercise of ‘male power’; and coercive power in which young men exercise repressive power over young women. Finally, the chapter suggests that there maybe a contradiction between how these young couples constitute power relations and negotiation in their relationships, and how these are played out in reality.

7.1 Young People’s (Hetero)sexual Practices

It was demonstrated in Chapter 2 that traditionally research on young people’s relationship practice has been concerned with their experience of sexual intercourse in terms of when, with whom and why they engage in it (See Chapter 2 section 1). In order to produce a more complex narrative about young people’s sexual practices, the findings discussed below offer insight into what young people in the study counted as ‘sexual practice’. That is, what young people perceived as a relationship, its length and whether it involved sexual activity, etc.

Given this emphasis on young people’s own construction of concepts, I provided a very loose definition of what ‘a relationship’ was in the questionnaire. Question 7 asked, ‘Which applies to you’? One, I am currently in a girlfriend/boyfriend relationship; Two, I have had a girlfriend/boyfriend relationship, but I am not currently in one; Or three, I have never had a girlfriend/boyfriend relationship. A note to this question explained that ‘a girlfriend or boyfriend is someone you have ‘gone out with’/had a relationship with - for any period of time’². This meant that young people’s

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¹ This differentiation in status between types of sexual knowledge was discussed in Chapter 4, section 2.
² The limitation of including young people’s own conceptualisation of a relationship is that it did not provide as systematic data on relationships as other more traditional quantitative research might have. However, as explained in Chapters 1 and 2 the emphasis in this research has been on young people’s own conceptualisation of the concepts ‘knowledge’ and ‘practice’ and potential relationships between them.

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conceptualisations of relationships could have potentially ranged from brief relationships in which there was minimal contact or commitment between parties, to long term relationships in which sexual intercourse occurred. Results from the questionnaire revealed the majority of respondents (50%) perceived themselves as having had a relationship at the time of questionnaire distribution, while forty-one percent were currently in one.

Table 7:1 Relationship Status by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship Status</th>
<th>Young Women N = 263</th>
<th>Young Men N = 148</th>
<th>Total N = 411</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Currently in one</td>
<td>(120) 45.5%</td>
<td>(49) 33.1%</td>
<td>(169) 41.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have had one</td>
<td>(121) 45.8%</td>
<td>(87) 58.8%</td>
<td>(208) 50.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never had one</td>
<td>(22) 8.3%</td>
<td>(12) 8.1%</td>
<td>(34) 8.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

KEY
( ) = N

Chart 7:1 Relationship Status by 'At School' and 'Not at School' Groups.

Those most likely to be in a relationship at the time of the questionnaire distribution were 'Not at School' (sig. 0.27) while those 'At School' were more likely to report having had a relationship (sig. 0.039).
Only 8% of the sample reported never having been in a relationship, while those who described themselves as religious were more likely to be in this category (sig. 049). The results indicated most young people felt they had relationship experience of some description.

A chi-square revealed that more young men reported they had been in a relationship (sig. 012), while more young women described themselves as currently in one (sig. 015). The phenomenon of young men reporting more relationships is common within sexual practice research (Robertson, 1995; Dickson, 1993; Rodden et al, 1996). One explanation posited for this is that the pressure of masculinity to demonstrate virility and potency leads to an overestimation of relationship experience (West et al, 1993). This was the explanation offered for such 'over-reporting' in research on 18 year olds heterosexual behaviour in Glasgow, where young men were perceived as striving to attain the Glaswegian male's 'macho image'.

The mean age for first dating experience was reported by the majority of young people in the study to be 13 years old, with no significant gender or 'Not at School' and 'At School' differences.

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3 While in West et al's, (1993) research partner was defined as sexual partner, in the current research 'partner' included someone with whom young people may or may not have, had sexual intercourse.
The range of first dating age was wide however, with subjects reporting this anywhere between 5 and 19 years old. A possible explanation for this diversity is that the question asked, ‘Approximately what age were you when you started going out with boyfriends/girlfriends’? Young people used their own definition of what constituted a ‘girlfriend/boyfriend’, so that all varieties of a relationship, not just those that were stable, long term or committed were included.

A T-test conducted on responses to the question, ‘How many boyfriends have you had?’ revealed there were no significant gender differences, with a mean number of partners for young women of 5.8021, and 5.8374 for young men. There was a significant difference between ‘Not At School’ and ‘At School’ groups with those ‘Not at School’ more likely to have had more partners, on average 7, as opposed to the 5 of those ‘At School’\(^4\). Although they formed a small minority, six young women and four young men reported 20 or more partners.

\(^4\)Those ‘At School’ had a mean number of relationships of 5.1051 while for those ‘Not at School’ it was 7.4429.
Table 7:2 Age of First Dating Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age in years</th>
<th>Young Women</th>
<th>Young Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>(2) 0.8%</td>
<td>(1) 0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>(2) 0.8%</td>
<td>(2) 1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>(1) 0.4%</td>
<td>(2) 1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 years</td>
<td>(1) 0.4%</td>
<td>(1) 0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 years</td>
<td>(4) 1.7%</td>
<td>(2) 1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>(11) 4.6%</td>
<td>(8) 5.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 years</td>
<td>(19) 8.0%</td>
<td>(13) 0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 years</td>
<td>(44) 18.5%</td>
<td>(20) 14.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 years</td>
<td>(46) 19.3%</td>
<td>(18) 13.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 years</td>
<td>(41) 17.2%</td>
<td>(24) 17.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 years</td>
<td>(32) 13.4%</td>
<td>(19) 14.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 years</td>
<td>(23) 9.7%</td>
<td>(13) 9.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 years</td>
<td>(7) 2.9%</td>
<td>(7) 5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 years</td>
<td>(4) 1.7%</td>
<td>(4) 3.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 years</td>
<td>(1) 0.4%</td>
<td>(0) 0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key
( ) = N

The range of first dating age was wide however, with subjects reporting this anywhere between 5 and 19 years old. A possible explanation for this diversity is that the question asked, 'Approximately what age were you when you started going out with boyfriends/girlfriends'? Young people used their own definition of what constituted a 'girlfriend/boyfriend', so that all varieties of a relationship, not just those that were stable, long term or committed were included.

A T-test conducted on responses to the question, 'How many boyfriends have you had?', revealed there were no significant gender differences, with a mean number of partners for young women of 5.8021, and 5.8374 for young men. There was a significant difference between 'Not At School' and 'At School' groups with those 'Not at School' more likely to have had more partners, on average 7, as opposed to the 5 of those 'At School'. Although they formed a small minority, six young women and four young men reported 20 or more partners.

4Those 'At School' had a mean number of relationships of 5.1051 while for those 'Not at School' it was 7.4429.
A reason for these high mean figures might be that the question asked about partners generally, and not just sexual partners as is the tendency in other studies of this type (Dickson et al., 1993; Carroll et al., 1985; Holibar, 1992). Research on sexual relationships of this age group in New Zealand indicates for example, that young women's mean number of sexual partners is 1.5, while young men's is 1.7 (Dickson et al, 1993). This data could be used to shed light on my own findings and would suggest that of the 5 partners named by young people in the current research, most were probably not partners they had engaged in sexual intercourse with.

**Table 7:3 Numbers of Partners**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NUMBER OF PARTNERS</th>
<th>YOUNG WOMEN</th>
<th>YOUNG MEN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N = 235</td>
<td>N = 123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 - 3</td>
<td>(86) 36.1%</td>
<td>(42) 32.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 - 6</td>
<td>(67) 28.1%</td>
<td>(39) 29.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 - 9</td>
<td>(34) 14.2%</td>
<td>(11) 8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 - 12</td>
<td>(30) 12.6%</td>
<td>(18) 13.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 - 15</td>
<td>(10) 4.2%</td>
<td>(5) 3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 - 18</td>
<td>(2) 0.8%</td>
<td>(4) 3.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 - 21</td>
<td>(6) 2.5%</td>
<td>(3) 2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 - 23</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>(1) 0.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key ( ) = N

Most young people who answered the questionnaire stated that they went out with partners who were a mixture of ages, or with those who were older than themselves. Those 'Not at School' were more likely to go out with partners who were older, than those in the 'At School' sample (sig. 0.017) (Table 7:4). Highly significant gender differences (sig. 0.000) were found in this data, with more young women likely to go out with older partners. This finding reflects a trend in other survey research in New Zealand (Dickson et al., 1998) conducted with this age group and a general perception many young women

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5 In contrast to my own research that gathered information about relationships that both do and do not involve sexual activity, Dickson's research asked respondents specifically about sexual partners, and not relationships that did not involve sexual intercourse.
prefer to date men older than themselves. American research on 122 college women in their twenties who completed questionnaires on their inaugural coital experience revealed similar findings with their ‘first sexual partners’ significantly older than young men’s (Guggino and Ponzetti, 1997).

Analysis of the data from the current study shows another significant difference between young women and men’s age of partner, with more young men dating partners younger than themselves (sig. 000) or of the same age (sig. 000). This finding supports a New Zealand survey of subjects aged 13-20 years, which indicated that young men were more likely to be the same age or older than their first sexual partner (Dickson, 1998:31).

**Table 7:4 Age of Partners by Gender**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partner Age</th>
<th>Young Women</th>
<th>Young Men</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N = 241</td>
<td>N = 136</td>
<td>N = 377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older</td>
<td>(110) 45.6%</td>
<td>(22) 16.2%</td>
<td>(132) 35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Younger</td>
<td>(10) 4.1%</td>
<td>(17) 12.5%</td>
<td>(27) 7.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same Age</td>
<td>(33) 13.7%</td>
<td>(42) 30.9%</td>
<td>(75) 19.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixture</td>
<td>(88) 36.5%</td>
<td>(55) 40.4%</td>
<td>(143) 37.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The length of sexual relationships is a detail which is seldom systematically recorded with regard to young people’s sexual behaviour. A common perception is that 17-19 year olds have experimental rather than enduring relationships and subsequently they are not significant enough to document. Findings from this study reveal diversity in relationship length with a majority of young people reporting their current relationship being between 6 and 12 months. A gender analysis of the length of ‘current relationships’ indicates young women in the study were more likely to have been in one for 1-2 years (sig. 004) while young men only 1-3 months (sig. 049). Consequently young women had been in a current relationship for a longer time period.
Table 7.5 Length of Current Relationship by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship length</th>
<th>Young Women (N = 123)</th>
<th>Young Men (N = 47)</th>
<th>Total (N = 170)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under a month</td>
<td>(15) 12.2%</td>
<td>(5) 10.4%</td>
<td>(20) 11.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3 months</td>
<td>(20) 16.3%</td>
<td>(14) 29.8%</td>
<td>(34) 20.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-6 months</td>
<td>(16) 13%</td>
<td>(13) 27.7%</td>
<td>(29) 17.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-12 months</td>
<td>(27) 22%</td>
<td>(11) 23.4%</td>
<td>(38) 22.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 years</td>
<td>(29) 23.6%</td>
<td>(2) 4.3%</td>
<td>(31) 18.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-5 years</td>
<td>(16) 13%</td>
<td>(2) 4.3%</td>
<td>(18) 0.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key
( ) = N

The only significant difference between 'At School' and 'Not At School' groups with regards to 'length of current relationship' occurred between those reporting a response of '1-2 years'. 'Not At School' respondents were significantly more likely (sig. 0.003) to report their current relationship to be of this length.

Chart 7.3 Length of Current Relationship by 'At School' and 'Not at School' Groups

In terms of the average length of the longest relationship for young people in this study, this was 6-12 months, while 30% of the sample reported this to be between 1 and 5 years. This is a substantial time frame for this age group, going some way to dispel myths of a lack of stability in most relationships. However, there were significant gender differences here with more young men revealing a longest relationship of 1-3 months (sig. 0.003). Because this
was the same time frame as the length of young men’s current relationship, it would suggest their current relationship was their most enduring so far.

Table 7:6 Length of Longest Relationship by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship length</th>
<th>Young Women</th>
<th>Young Men</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total N = 230</td>
<td>Total N = 133</td>
<td>Total N = 363</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under a month</td>
<td>(8) 3.5%</td>
<td>(7) 5.3%</td>
<td>(15) 4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3 months</td>
<td>(34) 14.8%</td>
<td>(37) 27.8%</td>
<td>(71) 19.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-6 months</td>
<td>(48) 20.9%</td>
<td>(28) 21.1%</td>
<td>(76) 20.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-12 months</td>
<td>(64) 27.8%</td>
<td>(27) 20.3%</td>
<td>(91) 25.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 years</td>
<td>(50) 21.7%</td>
<td>(22) 16.5%</td>
<td>(72) 19.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-5 years</td>
<td>(26) 11.3%</td>
<td>(12) 9.0%</td>
<td>(38) 10.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key ( ) = N

In terms of young people’s shortest relationships, figures correspond with dominant expectations of relationship brevity, with no significant gender or ‘At School’/‘Not At School’ differences in a one week to one month time frame.

Table 7:7 Shortest Relationship by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship length</th>
<th>Young Women</th>
<th>Young Men</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N = 227</td>
<td>N = 129</td>
<td>N =356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Several hours</td>
<td>(7) 3.1%</td>
<td>(9) 0.7%</td>
<td>(16) 4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 night</td>
<td>(21) 9.3%</td>
<td>(15) 11.6%</td>
<td>(36) 10.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 hours (1 day)</td>
<td>(12) 5.3%</td>
<td>(10) 7.8%</td>
<td>(22) 6.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 days to 1 week</td>
<td>(66) 29.1%</td>
<td>(32) 24.8%</td>
<td>(98) 27.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 wk to 1 month</td>
<td>(82) 36.1%</td>
<td>(40) 31.0%</td>
<td>(122) 34.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-6 months</td>
<td>(28) 12.3%</td>
<td>(15) 11.6%</td>
<td>(43) 12.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-12 months</td>
<td>(5) 2.2%</td>
<td>(2) 1.6%</td>
<td>(7) 2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 years</td>
<td>(6) 2.6%</td>
<td>(4) 3.1%</td>
<td>(10) 2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-5 years</td>
<td>(0) 0.0%</td>
<td>(2) 1.6%</td>
<td>(2) 0.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key ( ) = N

The only significant difference between ‘At School’ and ‘Not At School’ groups on this question was that more subjects ‘At School’ were likely to have a shortest relationship of ‘2 days to 1 week’ (sig. 028). See Table 7:8 below.
Table 7:8 Shortest Relationship by ‘At School’ and ‘Not at School’

Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship length</th>
<th>At School N = 245</th>
<th>Not at School N = 111</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Several hours</td>
<td>(10) 4.1%</td>
<td>(6) 5.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 night</td>
<td>(20) 8.2%</td>
<td>(16) 14.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 hours (1 day)</td>
<td>(13) 5.3%</td>
<td>(9) 8.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 days to 1 week</td>
<td>(76) 31.0%</td>
<td>(22) 19.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 wk to 1 month</td>
<td>(85) 34.7%</td>
<td>(37) 33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 - 6 months</td>
<td>(27) 11.0%</td>
<td>(16) 14.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 - 12 months</td>
<td>(6) 2.4%</td>
<td>(1) 0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 - 2 years</td>
<td>(7) 2.9%</td>
<td>(3) 2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 - 5 years</td>
<td>(1) 0.4%</td>
<td>(1) 0.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key
( ) = N

Interestingly there were no significant gender differences in numbers of one night stands, a finding that contradicts other studies that report young men have more of these (Rodden et al, 1996). For example, an Australian self administered questionnaire for 18 and 19 year olds, reported that young women were less sexually experienced with regard to casual partners than young men (Rodden et al, 1996).

There were no significant gender differences with regard to the occurrence of sexual activity in these relationships, with 88% of young people in the study reporting they had engaged in sexual activity. These figures appeared high because of the broad way in which I defined ‘sexual activity’ in the questionnaire. In an attempt to disrupt dominant discourses which equate sexual activity with sexual intercourse, the definition I gave was ‘...engaging in petting (hugging, kissing) or sexual intercourse with someone’. This meant all forms of sexual activity (not just sexual intercourse) were taken into account. It also meant it was impossible to tell who of the 88% had engaged in sexual intercourse. Research conducted on 18 year olds by Dickson (1996:227) in New Zealand however, has revealed that 58% of young men and 68% of young women reported sexual intercourse in the previous 12 months. This
indicates that a large proportion of this age group have experienced sexual intercourse.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATUS</th>
<th>YOUNG WOMEN ( ) = N</th>
<th>YOUNG MEN ( ) = N</th>
<th>TOTAL ( ) = N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engaged in Sexual Activity</td>
<td>(213) 88.0%</td>
<td>(120) 89.6%</td>
<td>(333) 88.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Sexual Activity</td>
<td>(29) 12.0%</td>
<td>(14) 10.4%</td>
<td>(43) 11.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>(242) 100.0%</td>
<td>(134) 100.0%</td>
<td>(376) 100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It would seem that most of the young people in the study felt they had relationship experience of some description. Although further research is needed to decipher the exact nature of these relationships (For example, whether they involved sexual intercourse and how the relationship was perceived by young people in terms of commitment, etc.). It appears that young women in this research had as much, if not more, relationship experience in terms of numbers of partners, length and types of relationship. This finding contrasts with traditional constructions of female sexuality as passive and less experienced than male sexuality.

While the mean age for inaugural dating experience was 13 years, there was diversity within the length of young people's relationships, although interestingly 30% of the sample had been going out between 1-5 years. This suggests, that despite traditional perceptions about the brevity of young people's relationships a significant minority (typically not at school) were currently in enduring relationships. While most young people went out with partners who were a mixture of ages, more young women in the sample reported they went out with older partners. This finding confirms conventional perceptions of gender preference in partner age.

A possible explanation for the gender difference here, could be that these young women were in longer term relationships in which sexual intercourse was more frequent.
7.1.1 Deciding to have sexual intercourse

In this next section, I focus more specifically on sexual activity within young people’s relationship practice, and how those in the study described their decision to engage (or not engage) in it.

Insight into how young people come to make decisions about when to have sexual intercourse was gleaned from each of the methods. Young people spoke of a plethora of considerations they took into account (such as contraception and the effect of sexual intercourse on their relationship) before sexual activity occurred, suggesting a sense of their premeditation. This was especially apparent within the context of established relationships when contemplating intercourse for the first time together. Five out of the six couples who participated in the interviews planned and talked about sexual activity extensively in advance. Apart from Ngair’s account of losing her virginity to an older man she hardly knew, there was little evidence the decisions to have sex for the first time were impromptu (although other studies have noted this especially when alcohol or drugs are involved, for example, Hollibar, 1992).

From discussion in the focus groups, it emerged that whether to have sexual intercourse was a ‘personal matter’ contingent upon ‘personality’ and adherence to religious or moral principles. Young people revealed diverse motivations for engaging in sexual activity, ranging from preferring to wait until they were married, postponing until they were in a loving but not necessarily married relationship, to feeling they wanted to experiment and find out what sexual activity was like. Waiting until marriage was mentioned by one group of young men training to be fitness instructors, who deemed this the only appropriate context in which sexual activity should occur:

Louisa: How do you know you are ready for sexual activity?
Vete: When you are married.
Rangi: When you are married.
(FG, NAS, 19)
At the other end of the spectrum, other young women and men talked about being ‘curious’ and ‘experimenting’ in order to discover what sexual activity involved, a reason named as most common by participants aged 13-21 in a New Zealand computer administered survey (Dickeson et al, 1998:31). Along these lines young women in one single sex ‘At School’ focus group expressed their desire to ‘find things out’ and ‘to discover’ sexual activity through a relationship:

April: Well at our age everyone has sex.
Lita: At our age it is something that you do with sex but you know...
Georgia: Cause like uhm with teenage relationships it’s not about discovering the other person, it’s discovering the opposite sex.
April: Yeah it’s more like lust.
Georgia: When you are older you tend to sort of fall in love more and you learn more about the other person where as when you are our age or younger you just learn about guys.
Sandra: It’s because you know its like, we’re starting off relationships like that, it’s like our first lot of relationships when we actually have sex so...aye? (to the others)
(FG, AS, mixed)

For those young people in an established relationship, some kind of emotional feeling such as love, commitment or ‘being comfortable’ was necessary before they felt sexual intercourse (particularly) could take place. In the following extracts from focus groups where participants had relationship experience, young women expressed feelings of love and comfort as a prerequisite for sexual intercourse.

Trisha: I made my boyfriend wait four months...we’d been going out four months and I made sure that he loved me before I said ‘yes’ cause like he was the first person I had slept with so I had to be real sure (laugh) and he waited.
(FG, NAS, 17)

Pepe: Cause it feels right.
Melinda: Cause you feel comfortable.
Pepe: And you’ve talked about it.
Melinda: You’ve discussed all the matters that could happen and.....
Tina: And you are in love.......or you think you are in love.
(FG, NAS, mixed)
Becky: ...I can’t even comprehend having sex with someone that I don’t love or didn’t love you know.....  
(FG, AS, 17)

One of the young women who participated in the individual interview explained that 'feeling loved' was an important factor in her decision to have sexual intercourse with her current boyfriend Tim.

Emma: ...I was still worried okay, is he using me and then leaving me. Cause I am very dependant on feeling loved and if I was going to enter into that sort of level of relationship with Tim I was thinking right I don’t want to be used again, I want to really know that he loves me and uhm he, I sort of felt that I was loved so yeah.  
(II, AS, 17)

All of the above extracts are from young women and subsequently suggest that young men did not feel correspondingly. In fact, other survey research conducted in America with 249 college students supports this, describing female motives for intercourse as including ‘love’, ‘commitment’ and ‘emotion’, while men’s more often include ‘pleasure’, ‘fun’ and ‘physical reasons’ (Carroll et al, 1985:136). While one or two young men in the focus groups mentioned ‘emotion’ or ‘commitment’ like Barnaby who said, ‘when you get to know that person well...when both of them uhm boy and girl are ready to commit you know’, (FG, NAS, 18) most did not raise the issue of deciding when to have sex or comment on it. However, young men may have been reluctant to express these kinds of thoughts in the focus group context, within the individual interviews they seemed to be more ready to refer to emotional feelings. Apart from Ashby whose decision for having sex rested upon his claim that ‘I knew I wanted it’, three of the young men in couples alluded to ‘love’ and emotions as reasons for having sex in their current relationship.7

Tim: ....it seemed normal to have sex when you are in love and in a relationship so I figured there was no reason not too.  
(II, NAS, 19)

7 I did not ask the other two young men who took part in the individual interviews about their decision to have sexual intercourse in their current relationship because our discussion took us in other directions. Asking this question would have broken the flow of what participants were saying.
Peter: ...you know I love her and this is what people do when they are in love....
(Il, AS, 19)

In Chris's case he and his girlfriend Cam had sex on the first night they met and when I asked him why he decided to do this he explained:

Chris: ...it wasn't like a physical attraction it was just I liked her, she made me feel good just talking to her so that was it.....
(Il, NAS, 19)

It is possible that young men in the focus groups tended not to mention these kinds of intimacies because it may have threatened the constitution of their masculine identity as 'emotionally detached' and primarily concerned with 'sexual intercourse'. Speaking about emotions and feelings would have necessitated young men take up alternative subject positions in dominant discourses of male sexuality, a stance which is particularly risky in front of male peers who make no challenge to these dominant discourses. As others have argued 'male peer group networks are one of the most oppressive arenas for the production and regulation of masculinities' (Haywood and Mac an Ghail, 1996:54).

What ever influenced their decision to engage in sexual activity (See Table 7:9), it seemed that alcohol induced sex was not the main reason as it was mentioned only fleetingly by single individuals in three of the seventeen focus groups and once in a couple interview. Instead young people constituted themselves as active agents, not simply subject to forces undermining this agency, as they are sometimes portrayed in sexual decision-making (Wight, 1992).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUPLE</th>
<th>BASIS FOR YOUNG WOMAN'S DECISION</th>
<th>BASIS FOR YOUNG MAN'S DECISION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Couple 1 - Amy and Peter</td>
<td>I was a little apprehensive about it….A. I was worried about my parents finding out B. I was worried that it was going to hurt. C. I was worried about pregnancy</td>
<td>‘I don't know if you’d call it the next step in the relationship...’ ‘I love her and this is what young people do when they are in love’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple 2 - Becky and Ashby</td>
<td>‘I can’t even comprehend having sex with someone that I don’t love or didn’t love you know.....</td>
<td>‘Cause like I wanted it’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple 3 - Nina and Neil</td>
<td>‘...he would like make these moves on me and I would say ‘no I don't want to and then one day he stopped hassling me for a while..and cause like he let me have my own sort of decision one day I just said ‘yep’ I want to...’</td>
<td>Did not ask him this question. However he did put pressure on Nina to have sex at first and described this as a consequence of ‘oh just a big sex drive’ and being a ‘Randy little Rabbit’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple 4 - Alison and Tim</td>
<td>Cause I am very dependant on feeling loved and if I was going to enter into that sort of level of relationship with Tim I was thinking right I don't want to be used again, I want to really know that he loves me and uhm he, I sort of felt that I was loved so yeah.</td>
<td>‘It seemed normal to have sex when you are in love and in a relationship so I figured there was no reason not too’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple 5 - Ngaire and George</td>
<td>‘I just really wanted to have sex with him’. ‘I asked George could I please have sex with you that night we actually met. He said ‘no’...</td>
<td>Did not ask Geoge this question but he did refuse to have sex with Ngaire the first time she asked him although due to shyness he did not explain why.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple 6 - Jess and Jay</td>
<td>‘..at that stage I was treating it as if it was a one night stand just incase it didn't develop into anything else.</td>
<td>‘It wasn’t like a physical attraction it was just I liked her, she made me feel good just talking to her so that was it.....’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7:10 Couple’s Decision Making with Regards to First Sexual Intercourse in their Relationship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUPLE</th>
<th>BASIS FOR YOUNG WOMAN’S DECISION</th>
<th>BASIS FOR YOUNG MAN’S DECISION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Couple 1 - Amy and Peter</td>
<td>I was a little apprehensive about it....A. I was worried about my parents finding out B. I was worried that it was going to hurt. C. I was worried about pregnancy</td>
<td>'I don't know if you’d call it the next step in the relationship....’ ‘..I love her and this is what young people do when they are in love'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple 2 - Becky and Ashby</td>
<td>‘cause like I wanted it’</td>
<td>‘cause like I wanted it’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple 3 - Nina and Neil</td>
<td>‘...he would like make these moves on me and I would say ‘no I don’t want to and then one day he stopped hassling me for a while...and cause like he let me have my own sort of decision one day I just said ‘yep I want to...’</td>
<td>Did not ask him this question. However he did put pressure on Nina to have sex at first and described this as a consequence of ‘oh just a big sex drive’ and being a ‘Randy little Rabbit’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple 4 - Alison and Tim</td>
<td>‘It seemed normal to have sex when you are in love and in a relationship so I figured there was no reason not too’</td>
<td>‘It seemed normal to have sex when you are in love and in a relationship so I figured there was no reason not too’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple 5 - Ngaire and George</td>
<td>'I just really wanted to have sex with him'. 'I asked George could I please have sex with you that night we actually met. He said ‘no’...'</td>
<td>Did not ask Geoge this question but he did refuse to have sex with Ngaire the first time she asked him although due to shyness he did not explain why.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple 6 - Jess and Jay</td>
<td>‘..at that stage I was treating it as if it was a one night stand just incase it didn’t develop into anything else. ‘It wasn’t like a physical attraction it was just I liked her, she made me feel good just talking to her so that was it....’</td>
<td>‘It wasn’t like a physical attraction it was just I liked her, she made me feel good just talking to her so that was it....’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7.1.2 Pleasure and Sexual Activity: Constructing a Discourse of Erotics

This section incorporates a central concern of the research with young people's own conceptualisations of practice. By discussing practice in direct relation to pleasure, I attempt to cater to young people's interest in this as an area of sexual knowledge. As Chapter 4 indicated young people in the study felt that knowledge communicated through sexuality education was removed from their interests and as such, held lower status than knowledge gained from their first hand experience. Such knowledge incorporated desire and pleasure as they were experienced by young people in practice. Information about the sexual activities of 17-19 year old New Zealanders has never been collected, although such data has been compiled from other populations (Breakwell, 1992; Rodden et al, 1996; Brander, 1991). In collecting information about (hetero)sexual practices and pleasure I endeavour to contribute to a discourse of erotics which might inform sexuality education programmes.

Data on what might be constituted as a discourse of 'erotics' could be found in the 'pleasure sheet' completed by couples who participated in the activity session (Appendix F). While one partner was with me during the individual interview, the other filled out a sheet naming particular sexual activities they had engaged in during their present and previous relationships. From these sheets the most common sexual activities engaged in were hugging, kissing, sex, oral sex, mutual masturbation, sexual touching and sharing sexual fantasies. Although not referred to by other subjects Ngaire added she also enjoyed 'talking dirty'. Participating in research where you divulge intimate details of your sexual relationships implies the young people who answered these sheets had liberal attitudes about sexual behaviour and therefore may have been more experimental in their activities. The least practised activity was 'anal sex' with only one young woman having engaged in this during a

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8 All but the first couple filled out these sheets. This was due to my deciding to include the sheets after transcribing and analysing the first couple and individual interview transcripts and realising I had not obtained any information on specific practices engaged in. I decided to acquire this information in written format as this was likely to be more comfortable for the subject.
previous relationship. Anal sex among young heterosexuals appears to be scarce with only 5% of 18 -19 year women and men in an Australian study also reporting this practice (Rodden et al, 1996). Most of the activities were found to be pleasurable by all subjects, although two young men mentioned they did not find oral sex so.

Information which might also comprise a discourse of erotics was also found in an open-ended question in the questionnaire asking young people to complete the sentence, 'What I find pleasurable about sexual activity is......'. I coded answers to this question into a series of major themes displayed in the table below. For examples of young people's actual responses under each of these themes refer to Appendix M.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What young people find pleasurable about sexual activity</th>
<th>Young Women *( ) = N</th>
<th>Young Men *( ) = N</th>
<th>Total *( ) = N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activities other than sex</td>
<td>(24) 12.4%</td>
<td>(16) 17.0%</td>
<td>(40) 13.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desiring someone</td>
<td>(2) 1.0%</td>
<td>(2) 4.2%</td>
<td>(4) 1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being desired</td>
<td>(16) 8.2%</td>
<td>(4) 4.3%</td>
<td>(20) 6.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being in control</td>
<td>(5) 2.6%</td>
<td>(3) 3.2%</td>
<td>(8) 2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive feelings associated with body</td>
<td>(41) 21.1%</td>
<td>(27) 28.7%</td>
<td>(68) 23.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning / Experimentation</td>
<td>(10) 5.2%</td>
<td>(2) 2.1%</td>
<td>(12) 4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutual Activity</td>
<td>(20) 10.3%</td>
<td>(0) .0%</td>
<td>(20) 6.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleasure / Enjoyment</td>
<td>(70) 36.1%</td>
<td>(41) 43.6%</td>
<td>(111) 38.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleasurableness of emotional intimacy</td>
<td>(13) 6.7%</td>
<td>(13) 13.8%</td>
<td>(26) 9.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relief / Relaxation</td>
<td>(4) 2.1%</td>
<td>(2) 2.1%</td>
<td>(6) 2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Togetherness / Closeness</td>
<td>(67) 34.5%</td>
<td>(18) 19.1%</td>
<td>(85) 29.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Touching someone else</td>
<td>(11) 5.7%</td>
<td>(4) 4.3%</td>
<td>(15) 5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Way of increasing emotional intimacy</td>
<td>(20) 10.3%</td>
<td>(4) 4.3%</td>
<td>(24) 8.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Pertains to the number of mentions young people made of these themes. One answer could potentially contain more than one theme.
** N = 336, Female = 214, Male = 122

The pleasure and enjoyment gained from sexual activity was mentioned most consistently (38%) with subjects commenting what was most pleasurable was that it was ‘Satisfying’ and ‘Enjoyable’ (Community Care 5, Female). A chi-square revealed there were no significant differences between young women and men in referring to this. The feeling of ‘togetherness and closeness’
sexual activity invoked was another popular specification for both genders (29%), with one young man describing, 'It is fun and a loving and caring thing and how two people can display their love for each other' (Design 2, Male). There was a significant gender difference here however, with more young women than young men reporting this (sig. 007). Positive feelings associated with the body was named overall as the third most pleasurable thing about sexual activity (23%) with no significant gender differences. While young men named this as the second most pleasurable aspect of sexual activity (28%), for young women this came third (21%) after 'togetherness and closeness'. These findings reveal that young women and men in the study had very similar feelings about what was most pleasurable about sexual activity.

Those aspects of sexual activity which were mentioned least by young women as pleasurable were 'desiring someone' (1%), 'being in control' (2%), 'relief, relaxation' (2%), 'learning experimentation' (5%) and 'touching someone else' (5%). These low results might be explained by traditional prohibitions around young women expressing desire ('desiring someone'), being sexually assertive ('being in control', 'touching someone else', 'learning experimentation') and experiencing sexual pleasure ('relief and relaxation'). Fewer mentions were made by young men about pleasure being derived from 'learning / experimentation' (2%) and 'relief and relaxation' (2%). The fact that young men who answered this question mentioned 'togetherness/closeness' as more pleasurable than these latter items, could indicate a maturity gleaned from relationship experience. Indeed, only young men who perceived themselves to have had a relationship answered this question.

No young men reported that sexual activity was pleasurable because it was a 'mutual activity' indicating a significant gender difference here (sig. 001). The higher prevalence and potential threat of experiences of sexual violence and abuse for women may mean they more greatly appreciate their absence in sexual activity. Research on sexual coercion and violence indicates females are considerably more likely to be the recipients of these violations than men (Gavey, 1991; Patten and Mannison, 1995). This research also indicates
nearly two thirds of all incidents of sexual coercion reported by women occur within heterosexual relationships and are perpetrated by boyfriends, husbands, de facto partners, 'dates', and lovers (Gavey, 1991:466).

As well as asking young people what they found pleasurable about sexual activity another open-ended survey question asked them to complete the sentence, 'What I do not find pleasurable about sexual activity is....' As with the previous question their responses could be coded into main themes in the table below. (For a sample of their exact responses under these themes see Appendix N).

**Question 7:12: What I do not Find Pleasurable about Sexual Activity is........(by Gender)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What young people do not find pleasurable about sexual activity</th>
<th>Young Women N = 213</th>
<th>Young Men N = 120</th>
<th>Total N = 333</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coercion / Force *(53) 31.9%</td>
<td>(5) 6.2%</td>
<td>(58) 23.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Particular types of sexual activity *(27) 16.3%</td>
<td>(6) 7.4%</td>
<td>(33) 13.4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of sexual activity *(6) 3.6%</td>
<td>(10) 12.3%</td>
<td>(16) 6.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unpleasant emotional feelings *(24) 14.5%</td>
<td>(19) 23.5%</td>
<td>(43) 17.4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unpleasant feelings associated with the body *(30) 18.1%</td>
<td>(6) 7.4%</td>
<td>(36) 14.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risks associated with sexual activity eg. AIDS *(15) 9.0%</td>
<td>(13) 16.0%</td>
<td>(28) 11.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condom / Contraception hassles *(9) 5.4%</td>
<td>(2) 2.5%</td>
<td>(11) 4.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of privacy *(4) 2.4%</td>
<td>(5) 6.2%</td>
<td>(9) 3.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How far to go *(4) 2.4%</td>
<td>(0) .0%</td>
<td>(4) 1.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nothing *(15) 9.0%</td>
<td>(12) 4.8%</td>
<td>(27) 10.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know *(0) .0%</td>
<td>(2) 2.5%</td>
<td>(2) .8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Messiness of sexual activity *(16) 9.6%</td>
<td>(7) 8.6%</td>
<td>(23) 9.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Pertains to the number of mentions young people made of these themes. One answer could potentially contain more than one theme.

The issue specified most frequently was 'coercion and force' (23%) with subjects commenting that 'being told or expected to do certain activities that I don't want to' was not pleasurable (Computing 1, Female). Many more young women than men referred to this (Sig. 000), suggesting that it was an experience they were more worried about. Also described as not pleasurable by high numbers of young people, were what I have called 'unpleasant emotional feelings associated with sexual activity' (17%). These ranged from guilt and shame to hurt and regret, with no significant gender differences in
Unpleasant feelings associated with the body was also mentioned frequently (14%) with comments like, ‘Sometimes it can hurt’ (Huia 70, Female) and ‘The naked bit’ (Tui 2, male).

For young women, ‘coercion and force’ (31%), was mentioned most frequently followed by ‘unpleasant feelings associated with the body’ (18%) and then ‘particular types of sexual activity’ (16%). A significant gender difference was found in responses referring to unpleasant feelings associated with the body and sexual activity (sig. 0.026). More young women than men mentioned this with comments ranging from physical pain or discomfort to feelings of embarrassment about their bodies. Typical answers from young women were ‘when it hurts’ (Tui 9, Female), ‘getting thrush - I get it real easy’ (Community Care 3, Female), ‘sometimes feeling self-conscious about my body’ (Kahu 7, Female). Young women’s greater reference to negative feelings associated with their bodies lends support to findings in Chapter 6 about how such feelings contribute to their dys-embodiment and dis-embodiment. Unpleasant corporeal sensations prevent sexual activity from being a pleasurable bodily experience.

For young men ‘unpleasant emotional feelings’ (23%), was mentioned most followed by, ‘risks associated with sexual activity’ (16%) and ‘lack of sexual activity’ (12%). The issue of risks associated with sexual activity such as HIV/AIDS, STDS and unplanned pregnancy were named equally by both genders with comments like, ‘Worrying about contraception - is it safe’ (Business 1. 22, Female). However, significantly more young men than young women (sig. 0.012) reported that a lack or sexual activity or not getting enough of it was not pleasurable, with typical remarks being, ‘When I’m not getting any’ (Design 8, Male) and ‘When it is finished’ (Ruru 8, Male). This male interest in obtaining as much sexual activity as possible is analogous with dominant discourses of masculinity where always ‘being ready’ and ‘able to last’ are attributes of appropriate masculinity (Holland et al, 1993).
Despite these numerous allusions to aspects of sexual activity that are not pleasurable a fairly high proportion (10%) of young people answered 'nothing' to this question - 'I don't find anything not pleasurable' (Mothers 2, Female) indicating for many young people sexual experiences were pleasurable.

While in Chapter 6 findings elucidated the subjective corporeal experience of sexual pleasure within heterosexual relationships, this section has endeavoured to outline the actual (hetero)sexual practices which elicit (or do not elicit) this pleasurable bodily response. It is these practices which might be seen to provide part of the context for the corporeal states of dis/dys/embodiment.

7.2 Knowledge in practice

In this next section while still focusing on practice I move away from sexual pleasure and towards an understanding of how young people conceptualise the relationship between their knowledge and practice. This is in line with the research’s central concern with re-examining the knowledge/practice ‘gap’. In Chapter 4, I documented and theorised, the finding that a majority of young people (60%) who answered the questionnaire reported their sexual knowledge did not effect their sexual practice. In this chapter, I explore what the other 40% reported, and how they perceived there was a direct relationship between their knowledge and practice. It is their conceptualisation of the direct relationship between knowledge and practice (as opposed to the other 60% who did not perceive one) that warrants inclusion of this discussion in this chapter.

As explained in Chapter 4 the question I asked in the survey was, 'Do you think that your level of sexual knowledge has affected your relationships/or your ability to have relationships'? Young people's responses could be divided into three possible 'knowledge effects' - 'positive', 'negative' or 'neutral'.

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Despite these numerous allusions to aspects of sexual activity that are not pleasurable a fairly high proportion (10%) of young people answered ‘nothing’ to this question - ‘I don’t find anything not pleasurable’ (Mothers 2, Female) indicating for many young people sexual experiences were pleasurable.

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As explained in Chapter 4 the question I asked in the survey was, ‘Do you think that your level of sexual knowledge has affected your relationships/or your ability to have relationships?’ Young people’s responses could be divided into three possible ‘knowledge effects’ - ‘positive’, ‘negative’ or ‘neutral’.
Table 7:13 How do Subjects Feel their Level of Knowledge Effects their Relationships by Gender?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>Positively ( ) = N</th>
<th>Negatively ( ) = N</th>
<th>Neutral ( ) = N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Young Women</td>
<td>(68) 63.0%</td>
<td>(30) 27.8%</td>
<td>(10) 9.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Men</td>
<td>(20) 50.0%</td>
<td>(16) 40.0%</td>
<td>(4) 10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>(88) 59.5%</td>
<td>(46) 31.1%</td>
<td>(14) 9.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* N = 408, Female = 263, Male = 145

The majority of subjects felt that their level of sexual knowledge had a positive effect on their relationships. A chi-square revealed there were no significant gender differences in relation to the answers.

7.2.1 Positive Effects of Sexual Knowledge

Unfortunately this open-ended question did not ask young people to specify what they thought their level of sexual knowledge was, so determining if they perceived a 'low' or 'high' level of sexual knowledge to produce the effect they named was not possible. However, for those who saw their knowledge as having a positive effect they perceived such knowledge as enabling them to 'know their boundaries' and make what they felt were assertive decisions about their sexual practices. This sentiment was expressed in the following responses from young people:

Know how far you want to go with someone. (Male, AS, 18)

I didn't have sex until I was ready. (Female, AS, 17)

Knowing the right time for me. (Female, NAS, 18)

Such knowledge was seen to instil a sense of knowing what they did (and did not) want in terms of sexual activity in their relationships, this is demonstrated in the responses below:

I know what I want and I feel that I can be sexually active with my partner because of it. (Female, AS, 19)
I am more confident when I am in relationship and I know what I want and don't want. (Female, AS, 18)

It has affected our relationship because we know how to wait, so we are not having sex. (Female, AS, 17).

In Chapter 4, I described how young people in this study conceptualised sexual knowledge derived from secondary sources in terms of two discourses: official discourses of sexual knowledge and a discourse which involved sexual desire and pleasure (which I have conceptualised as a discourse of erotics). The kind of knowledge young people appear to be speaking about here, is that derived from official sources such as sexuality education.

Thinking about whether or not you want to engage in sexual activity is an issue sexuality education programmes in New Zealand present young people with. This informs part of the philosophy of New Zealand Family Planning Association programmes which aim to provide young people 'with comprehensive sexuality education which gives them information and skills to enable them to make responsible decisions about their sexuality' (Ineson, 1996). As all of the schools involved in the research had sexuality programmes co-ordinated by dedicated sexuality educators, it is not surprising young people's sense of the effect of their knowledge on relationship practice was that it enabled them to make sexual decisions more confidently and decisively.

In addition to knowing what kinds of sexual activity they did and did not want to engage in, sexual knowledge was also seen to have a positive effect on how young people saw themselves as sexual actors and an indirect positive effect on their relationship practice. Sexual knowledge imbued them with confidence and a sense of autonomy which consequently created an atmosphere of greater ease in the relationship. This was seen in the following extracts:

Made me more confident, able to relate to partner. (Male, AS, 17)
I'm more confident of myself, and that makes me and my partner feel good. (Female, AS, 18)

You feel more at ease knowing things. Know how to handle a situation. (Female, NAS, 18)

I am able to feel confident enough to be honest, truthful and talk freely about anything at all. (Male, NAS, 19)

You know more so you're more confident in what you are doing. (Female, NAS, 17)

For some of these young people confident sexual subjectivities and the sense of ease they felt in relationships improved the pleasure reaped from sexual activity. It is difficult to know without further questioning, whether young people perceived their own knowledge gained from experience or information gleaned from secondary sources to cause these effects. As issues of 'how to give pleasure' and 'positions and stuff' (see quotes below) are not usually covered in sexuality education, it may be that the knowledge referred to here, has been obtained from other secondary sources such as books about sex and women's magazines or personal experience:

I understand how to give pleasure and how to talk about what I enjoy. (Female, As, 17)

It has helped my partners and I enjoy our sexual activities. (Female, AS, 18)

Well knowing about sex has helped my sexual relationships know about positions and stuff has helped me and my partners enjoy sex. (Female, AS, 18)

At the moment my partner and I have a very intimate and fulfilling sexual relationship and he was a virgin (practically) so I like to think my knowledge did a lot to help us get where we are. I'm very open about sexuality issues. (Female, NAS, 18)

I am not so insecure with myself and I am a lot more confident about saying what I like and what I don't like instead of just going with the flow and thinking this is how it is always done. (Female, AS, 18)

As the extracts reveal young women cited 'increased pleasure' as a consequence of sound knowledge, perhaps because sexual activity is supposed to be pleasurable for young men with or with out sexual knowledge.
Dominant discourses of male sexuality constitute men's bodies as usually able to achieve gratification, therefore, it would be redundant to suggest that knowledge makes sexual activity more pleasurable.

Some young men and women viewed their level of sexual knowledge as alerting them to the dangers inherent in sexual activity. This was seen in comments such as:

It has allowed me to be safer in sexual situations. (Female, AS, 18)

Because I know about what diseases etc. there are, I am more careful about it and who I have relationships with. (Female, AS, 18)

Knowing about HIV/AIDS has made me think twice whenever I've wanted to have sex with a girlfriend. (Male, AS, 19)

I know enough about sex and the consequences of it to avoid it unless I really love the woman it would be with, and plan to be with her for a long time. (Male, AS, 18).

Here knowledge served as a warning about what was not safe to engage in, or what precautions must be heeded when undertaking various sexual activities. This is the kind of 'official' information found in most comprehensive sexuality education programmes taught in New Zealand Schools. These young people are the sexuality educator's 'dream', because they appear to put the knowledge they learn about safer sex into practice. The 'gap' theorised by sexuality researchers between knowledge and practice is not applicable in their case, because these young people apply what they learn to their lived reality.

7.2.2 Negative Consequences of Sexual Knowledge

While the young people above conceptualised knowledge about dangers associated with sexual activity as having a positive influence, such as protecting them, others felt it contributed to a sense of fear. Knowing what could go wrong, made some feel anxious and apprehensive about sexual activity and sexual intercourse even in relationships. The following women
expressed what Fine (1992) describes as the prevailing discourses of female sexuality in schools. The first of these discourses is 'sexuality as violence', where heterosexuality is equated with violence and coercion, while the other 'sexuality as victimisation' where young women are constituted as the actual and potential 'victims' of male desire (Fine, 1992:32-33). These discourses contribute to a feeling that sexual activity and sexual expression is dangerous. Such discourses constitute subject positions exclusively for women, so it is not surprising that young women in the study mentioned such fears in their responses:

Because I am scared that my future boyfriends will use me for sex. (Female, AS, 18)

I guess I'm too scared to have sex with my boyfriends, I hear it hurts the first time. (Female, AS, 17)

...I am scared of having a sexual relationship right now (pregnancy, etc) so I try to keep away from guys especially if I know they want sex. (Female, AS, 17)

While knowledge of sexual danger from secondary sources caused anxiety for some young people, personal experiences of such danger had negative implications for the practice of others. An especially traumatic example of how knowledge of sexual activity can impact negatively on young people's perception of sexual relationships, appeared in the answers of two subjects who had survived sexual abuse. These young women explained how sexual knowledge acquired from personal experience without their consent, had made them cautious and frightened of entering relationships:

I have been molested when I was young and never talked to anyone about it. I hate being touched by any guy, especially this person at work. (Female, AS, 17)

From past experiences of sexual harassment, molestation, a married man having feelings, friends (boys) having feelings...this is why I can never be in a relationship and why I am slow in relationships. Past experiences, I suppose. (Female, NAS, 18).
No young men in the sample referred to the experience of sexual abuse and its negative impact, possibly because they are much less likely statistically to experience it. For example, in Dickson et al.'s, (1998) study of 13-21 year old New Zealanders only 0.2% of young men in the study compared to 7% of young women, reported their first sexual experience was 'forced'. These patterns are also supported by the responses to another question in the survey which explored young people's experience of unwanted 'sexual type touching'. Forty-one percent of young women, compared to 16% of young men reported experiencing such touching.

This exploration of the ways in which young people conceptualise 'knowledge in practice' reveals their different constructions of knowledge. For some young women and men, their knowledge enabled them to make decisions about what kind of sexual activity they engaged in and also recognise and protect themselves from the dangers associated with it. This group of young people have assimilated the best aims of sexuality education, revealing there is no necessary 'gap' between its messages and young people's practice. At the same time, for other young people (especially young women), messages about 'sexual danger' made them anxious and scared of entering sexual relationships. Frightening young people out of engaging in sexual activity has also been described as an aim of some sex education programmes, especially those focused exclusively on delaying sex until marriage (Jackson, 1978).

The extracts from survey responses from young women quoted above indicated that knowledge about sexual pleasure and the 'erotics' of sexual activity could also instil a sense of subjective confidence which, in turn, benefited the relationship by making it easier and increased sexual pleasure particularly for young women. As one 18 year old woman who was at school wrote, 'I am not so insecure with myself and I am a lot more confident about saying what I like and what I don't like instead of just going with the flow and thinking this is how it is always done'. This may indicate that a discourse of erotics, (as discussed in relation to knowledge in Chapter 4), could have
advantages for some young people's sense of self confidence, the smoother functioning of their relationships and sexual pleasure, especially for young women. As Fine has argued, 'A genuine discourse of desire would invite adolescents to explore what feels good and bad, desirable and undesirable, grounded in experiences, needs, and limits' (Fine, 1992:35).

Having explored young people's conceptualisation of their sexual knowledge in practice, in the next section I turn to another main concept which has concerned this research - subjectivity. Investigating the relationship between young people's sexual subjectivities and (hetero)sexual practices is a principal concern of this study, and my re-conceptualisation of the 'gap' equation.

7.3 Subjectivities in the couple context

In this section, I concentrate on the couple activity and interview data in order to examine the relationship between sexual subjectivity and practice, in terms of how such subjectivities are played out in a (hetero)sexual relationship. To begin however, it is necessary to identify those contexts in which subjectivities and power are engaged most visibly. These are points of tension or disagreement in a relationship, where problems arise and elicit a reaction from each partner. Such points were revealed in an open-ended survey question which asked young people to complete the sentence, 'The kind of disagreements likely to arise in your relationship(s) about sexual activity are......'. Answers were coded into main themes in the table below.
Table 7:14 The Kinds of Disagreements Likely to Arise in Your Relationship(s) about Sexual Activity are......

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of disagreements likely to arise in young people's relationships</th>
<th>Young Women N = 210</th>
<th>Young Men N = 121</th>
<th>Totals N = 331</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unequal sex drives</td>
<td>(33) 9.3%</td>
<td>(6) 7.8%</td>
<td>(39) 15.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positions / types of sexual activity</td>
<td>(34) 19.9%</td>
<td>(20) 26.0%</td>
<td>(54) 21.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pregnancy / Contraception</td>
<td>(24) 14.0%</td>
<td>(9) 11.7%</td>
<td>(33) 13.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fidelity / Ex-partners</td>
<td>(11) 6.4%</td>
<td>(2) 2.6%</td>
<td>(13) 5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Issues</td>
<td>(12) 7.0%</td>
<td>(3) 3.9%</td>
<td>(15) 6.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Things that turn them off a partner</td>
<td>(1) .6%</td>
<td>(4) 5.2%</td>
<td>(5) 2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First time sex</td>
<td>(9) 5.3%</td>
<td>(15) 19.5%</td>
<td>(24) 9.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being found out</td>
<td>(4) 2.3%</td>
<td>(0) .0%</td>
<td>(4) 1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No disagreements</td>
<td>(31) 18.1%</td>
<td>(5) 6.5%</td>
<td>(36) 14.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where / how often to have sex</td>
<td>(55) 32.2%</td>
<td>(37) 48.1%</td>
<td>(92) 37.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key
() = N

The most prevalent answer was dissension over where and how often to have sex (37%) with significantly more mentions from young men (48%) than young women (32%) (sig. 017). In relation to this problem young people typically wrote, 'When, where, how often' (Fitness, 8 Male) or, 'Not wanting or feeling like it when they want to' (Business 24, Female). Another area of conflict was what 'positions/types of sexual activity' to engage in - 'Arguments over positions', (Computing 5, Female) 'Who wants to do what' (Design 4, Male). There were no significant gender differences apparent here however.

A third most frequently reported altercation involved problems associated with 'unequal sex drives' with significantly more women (9%) than young men (7%) mentioning this (sig. 021). Other disagreements centred on contraceptive issues such as, 'wearing a condom' (Ruru 39, Female) or 'the type of contraception to be used' (Kiwi 60, Male). Three of the six couples participating in the couple activity also spoke at some length about how they chose or were choosing a particular form of contraception indicating this was a common tension for young people in the sample.

Disagreements over 'first time sex' revealed a highly significant gender difference with more mentions from young men (19%) than young women...
This finding is consistent with data about the young couples explored in Chapter 5, where Neil, Tim, Chris and Peter were eager to initiate a sexual relationship, while their female partners were more reluctant.

Couples who participated in the couple activity explained their negotiation of the above conflicts by describing how communication and being respectful of the other person's desires enabled them to work out these situations. When asked how they negotiated sexual activity in relationships, they revealed that talking to the other person before, during and/or after sexual activity was a means of ascertaining what a partner had or had not found pleasurable.

Ngaire who had been going out with George for 9.5 months (see Table 3:8) revealed that they had handled sexual negotiation around new sexual activities as follows:

Ngaire: Uhmm I'll try something on him I'll say to him, 'oh can I try this on you'? and uhmm he'll say 'yes', he usually says 'yes' and if he doesn't like it he'll say 'stop, stop...I don't want to do that'. And I'll stop and yeah and then uhmm yeah he'll say 'can I do this to you'? A few times I've said 'no'. And uhmm, only because I've been scared that it hasn't been until now that I've got, like I've had the courage to say 'oh yes, I'd like to try that'.
(II, NAS, 18)

Similarly, Cam described how she communicated with her partner of three months Chris, about whether or not a sexual activity was pleasurable.

Cam: Uhmm I'd ask him to like if, if he's going too fast or too slow I tell him and if it's hurting offer a suggestion for changing so that it feels better and he does the same...like a lot when we are having sex we ask if each other's okay.
(II, NAS, 19)

In the following extract during a couple activity, Nina and Neil who had been seeing each other for two years explained how 'straight' talk was the means by which they decided whether or not to have sexual intercourse:
Neil: I'd say that it's a mutual thing that we both agree about it.
Nina: mmmm.
Neil: It's pretty, we're pretty straight out now, we don't sort of muck around you know.
Nina: Yeah.
Neil: ...it's just 'do you want to have sex?' 'yes' (Nina laughs). It's not you know there is no shyness or no mucking around.
Nina: No, not saying the 's' word because that's shameful.
(CA, NAS, 17)

Similarly, during the couple activity Tim and his girlfriend of six months spoke about how they jointly came to the decision to have sexual intercourse in the first few months of their relationship:

Louisa: So you said you talked about it beforehand?
Tim: Uhm a long time before hand like a couple of days you know saying this is going to happen some time soon so let's talk about it ...
Louisa: So what did you talk about in those two days before hand?
Emma: Uhm how it would sort of change us. Whether it would change us.
(CA, Emma AS 17, Tim NAS 18)

This kind of communication appeared to be sustained as their relationship progressed with Tim explaining in the individual interview how sexual pleasure was negotiated between them.

Tim: ...she'll tell me, she's very open, she'll just say, she'll tell me what she does like and what she doesn't and stuff like that.
(II, NAS, 18)

Amy also revealed during the couple activity that she and her boyfriend Peter who had been together for over 3 years, talked things through in order to ensure sexual decisions were made equally between them.

Amy: We usually... we have a discussion about it, I mean we don't sort of just jump straight in at the deep end so to speak you know, I mean we plan exactly what is going to happen. But we sort of before hand sort of say well you know, 'I better go and get that before hand' and then he might say well you know I think we might want to do something like that tonight and I'll say 'yeah that's okay' you know.
Peter: I don't think you can just sort of walk into a room and jump on the bed, you gotta talk about it.
(CA, AS, 18)
This finding diverges from other New Zealand research which reports young people believe it highly unlikely partners will discuss sex before engaging in it the first time (Holibar, 1992:48). However, subjects in Holibar’s study were younger (15-16 years) implying ‘talk about sex’ is more likely to take place between slightly older couples. Being in a long term or ‘steady’ relationship may also influence the occurrence of such talk, with young people experiencing less inhibitions in a situation where they have forged a bond with a familiar partner.

Another way couples described their negotiation of sexual conflict was through decisions made at the outset of sexual activity which then remained unspoken throughout the relationship’s progression. These decisions most often concerned buying condoms, obtaining contraceptives and the procedure for employing these, such as who puts the condom on, who carries them, etc. These decisions were not always explicitly decided by the couple when beginning to have sexual intercourse, and sometimes fell into a pattern due to circumstances. For example, for Neil and Tim, it had been convenient for their girlfriends Nina and Emma, to purchase condoms at a reduced rate from the Family Planning Centre when collecting their birth control pill and as a result this became normal practice for them. The following quotes are examples of couples who also described this level of agreement when looking at the cards in the couple activity:

Louisa: So card ‘G’ ‘Disagreements occur over who is going to buy the condoms’?
Emma: Never.
Tim: Never.
Louisa: And why is that?
Emma: Uhm cause when I get my pills from the Family Planning Centre they give you a prescription and you get like about 12 boxes for $3.
(CA, AS, 17)

Tim also explained that the mechanics of putting the condom on were predetermined in their relationship.
So what’s the scenario with the condoms?

Well it is just ah, it’s easier uhm like, I get the condoms or whatever it is and put it on cause otherwise it’s fiddly.

(SA, NAS, 19)

So when sex is spontaneous how do you know who has the condoms?

Oh just get into a pattern....we both have them at each of our houses.

We both have them.

I guess we have meeting stations at her and my house.

(SA, Emma AS 17, Tim NAS 18)

In Amy and Peter’s case buying the condoms was something that Peter automatically did because Amy was too uncomfortable undertaking this task. Consequently, it was taken for granted that he would buy them when they were required.

I can remember when you (to Peter) first starting going out and started buying it [condoms] cause I’m still not very keen on the idea of going out and buying any (laugh). It’s really all down to Peter.

The first time buying them was sort of quite hard, but then after that it just got easier and easier and I don’t think about it anymore. It’s just something you have to do, like getting a prescription or what ever you know. You just do it like you have too.

For Becky and Ashby who had been going out longer than any of the other couples (three and a half years), almost all decisions around sexual activity had been previously established, so minimal verbal communication occurred between them before sexual activity was undertaken.

So you’d talk about [when to have sex] basically would you?

Well not really. (small laugh)

Well but we sort of seem to know (she looks at Ashby here).

Yeah it’s just sort of like you know.

We’ve sort of been with each other long enough now to sort of know what the other one likes.

(SA, AS, 17)

As this type of negotiation was firmly established, its pattern was much harder to disrupt if one partner was no longer happy with a particular situation. Becky
encountered this when, in the last few months of her relationship, she had insisted Ashby wear a condom, even though this had not been a prerequisite for their sexual activity. Although Ashby agreed, it was obvious he was annoyed by this stipulation when he explained, ‘I’m a good boy, I do what I’m told’. Such a remark implied this break from previous patterns of practice may have caused some tension in their relationship.

7.3.1 Sexualising power

The above descriptions from couples of processes of negotiation and the distribution of power they imply between partners, draw upon a discourse of ‘equality’. The ways in which the young couples represented their relationships here, was one where decisions were made equally, after consultation with the other party whose views were respected and taken into consideration. This kind of negotiation where communication is paramount and a mutual feeling of satisfaction over decisions achieved, suggests an ideal of power relations. It is the kind of equality which creates healthy and fulfilling relationships and which from their narratives, it appears most of the couples wished to attain and implied they had achieved, at various moments in their relationships. For example:

Amy and Peter claimed during the couple activity that they made sexual decisions equally.

Louisa: Okay what about ‘B’ - ‘Decisions about sexual activity are made equally between us’. Where would you put that?
Amy: (To Peter) We always make decisions equally, wouldn’t we?
Peter: Uhm, it would be, we are pretty equal there the average is about half and half I guess.
(CA, AS, mixed)

Similarly, Tim and Emma claimed sexual decisions were made equally in their relationship and this was evident from the fact that each partner was happy with the result of such decisions.
Louisa: So decisions about sexual activity are ‘always’ [referring to where they have placed the card] made equally between you? How do you know that?

Tim: Because we are both happy with the outcome. If we are both happy with the way it turned out, that’s what we wanted to do so.

Emma: And if I wasn’t happy I’d tell him. (laugh)

Tim: And I’d probably concede. (Says this jokingly. All laugh)

This was also the case for Ngaire and George.

Louisa: So you’ve put the card under ‘always’ make sexual decisions equally between you. So how do you know?

Ngaire: (laugh) Satisfaction.

George: Expressions. (laugh)

Ngaire: He wants it next time..uhm..yeah (laugh) it’s pretty hard case. (CA, NAS, 19)

Cam and Chris described their sexual decision making as a mutual activity with no one partner assuming control.

Cam: I reckon it’s....I reckon it’s equal it’s like we decide equally, like when and how often and how.

Chris: Yeah see the decisions yeah it’s not just decisions about sexual activity we make together it’s like everything. Cause there is no one in charge here. (CA, NAS, 19)

For Nina and Neil, being frank about their feelings on any sexual issue in order to come to an agreement, was how they portrayed their decision making.

Neil: I’d say that it’s a mutual thing that we both agree about it.

Nina: Mmmm.

Neil: It’s pretty, we’re pretty straight out now, we don’t sort of muck around you know.

Nina: Yeah. (CA, NAS, 17)

Theory about the distribution of power within relationships has often been constructed around heterosexuality as a repressive institution in which men exercise power over women (Kitzinger and Wilkinson, 1994). While heterosexuality can operate as an oppressive institution, its power is not monolithic and neither are young women and men ‘docile’ subjects who act in
Emm a:

Tim:

So decisions about sexual activity are ‘always’ [referring to where they have placed the card] made equally between you? How do you know that?

Because we are both happy with the outcome. If we are both happy with the way it turned out, that’s what we wanted to do so.

Emma:

Tim:

And I wasn’t happy I’d tell him. (laugh)

And I’d probably concede. (Says this jokingly. All laugh)

This was also the case for Ngaire and George.

Louisa:

Ngaire:

George:

Ngaire:

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(Satisfaction.

Expressions. (laugh)

He wants it next time... uhm... yeah (laugh) it’s pretty hard case.

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Cam and Chris described their sexual decision making as a mutual activity with no one partner assuming control.

Cam:

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Chris:

Yeah see the decisions yeah it’s not just decisions about sexual activity we make together it’s like everything. Cause there is no one in charge here.

(CA, NAS, 19)

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Neil:

I’d say that it’s a mutual thing that we both agree about it.

Nina:

Mmmm.

Neil:

It’s pretty, we’re pretty straight out now, we don’t sort of muck around you know.

Nina:

Yeah.

(CA, NAS, 17)

Theory about the distribution of power within relationships has often been constructed around heterosexuality as a repressive institution in which men exercise power over women (Kitzinger and Wilkinson, 1994). While heterosexuality can operate as an oppressive institution, its power is not monolithic and neither are young women and men ‘docile’ subjects who act in
complete absence of agency within its nexus. Narratives of the young women and men above indicate, they were able to perceive their sexual relationships in such a way where power was not simply designated to the male by virtue of his sex/gender, and was instead negotiated between partners. The instability of power means it is constantly fragile, precarious and subsequently subject to contestation and negotiation and this is something young people implied they took advantage of.

While power relations were constituted by the couples as 'equal', it was obvious that some times young people’s narratives of sexual negotiation involved a mediation of power. This was particularly the case when young women described an acknowledged concession to their partner's power, but in a way which salvaged their agency in particular practices. For example, Ngaire and Becky prioritised their partner's sexual pleasure over their own gratification.

Ngaire: If I don't, if I don't give him one [an orgasm], I get upset and think, oh we've got to do it again until you do (laugh)...all the time I want to and uhm I don't mind if I'm not satisfied as long as he is.
(II, NAS, 18)

Becky: ...I wanted him to get what he wanted from it you know, and I didn't really care cause I was quite happy just for him to you know [orgasm] and sometimes he'd say 'oh do you want me to stop and I'd be like 'oh it's okay' even though I sort of wanted him to, I still wanted him to get what he wanted from it. Because I didn't want him to be dissatisfied.....
(FG, AS, 17)

For other young women who participated in the couple activity, privileging their partner's pleasure over their own was not stated as explicitly as Becky and Ngaire, although it was evident they did this in their relationship practice. For instance, when I asked Cam about satisfaction and pleasure in her relationship, she spoke about wanting to make sex more pleasurable for her partner Chris:
I feel like that in some ways I could make it better for him and like I've got to try and find a way to make it better. I don't know why I feel that way it's just how it is.
(II, NAS, 19)

Later on in the interview she expressed dissatisfaction with the way Chris sometimes rushed foreplay:

Chris's really good with stuff like that but other times he's not and...it doesn't mean that the sex is bad it's just not as fulfilling as it could be.
(II, NAS, 19)

Despite her dissatisfaction she had never mentioned this to Chris because:

I find it hard to say like...things like that to him because he's very sensitive about stuff like that anyway that he's not satisfying me enough and I feel like if I said it to him...he'd get very I don't know on guard'.
(II, NAS, 19)

Instead of confronting Chris with her own lack of satisfaction Cam pushed this aside to assert she needed to try harder at pleasing Chris sexually, clearly prioritising his sexual gratification over her own. Similarly, Nina described in her individual interview how she sometimes faked orgasm with her boyfriend Neil. She explained this in terms of wanting to give Neil the impression she had enjoyed sex and that he had pleased her - 'I have, I have faked it but that is only to make him feel better'. In faking orgasm, rather than demanding real sexual satisfaction from the relationship Nina symbolically concedes Neil's pleasure is more important than her own (Holland et al, 1998:121).

In these instances, young women reported mediating male power by acknowledging its operation and actively choosing to assent to it. They claimed they placed their own sexual pleasure in secondary importance. In a sense they appeared to actively subject themselves to this power, seeing it as something they had control over through their active participation in sustaining it. They saw themselves as having agency because they had made a choice to continue with sexual activity they didn't really want, or to give their partner's pleasure in the absence of their own. In effect, they reconstituted their own pleasure so it became indistinguishable from that of their partner. As Cam put
it, ‘He says he gets a lot more pleasure if I’m enjoying myself and I get a lot more pleasure when he’s enjoying himself’. In adopting their partner's pleasure as their own, (so what gives them pleasure is pleasing him) these young women undertook a mediation of male power. Of course this offered them only limited agency, as power in these situations was still essentially exercised by the male, while all these young women could do was carve themselves minimal agency within it.

In addition to ‘equal’ and ‘mediated’ power, a final type of power that was evident in the negotiation of young people’s sexual relationships (which has been well documented by feminists) was - coercive power (Gavey, 1992). As might be expected coercive power was not demonstrated by couples during their interaction in the research context, as the ‘rules’ governing the research situation served as a restraint on abusive behaviour. However, inconsistencies across narratives produced in different research methods indicated the equal distribution of power young couples professed was not always a reality, all of the time, in their relationships. This was revealed in discrepancies between their purported opinions about coercive sexual behaviour and other narratives which depicted actual behaviour in their relationships. Without exception, all subjects emphasised during the couple activity, that if either of them did not want to have sex or did not want to perform a particular activity they would not be impelled to do so.

Ashby: ....if they really don’t want to do it then you know there’s nothing you can do about it. You can’t force them or anything.  
(CA, AS, 17)

Chris:   Well uhm...if someone doesn’t want to do something you can’t force them to do anything I mean you can’t I mean it would just ruin what we have between us if I was to force my opinion on her (to Cam).  
(CA, NAS, 19)
Cause if one of us doesn't want to have sex we won't we'll just say 'no'.

Nina: It's not like..
Neil: You don't feel obliged.
Nina: Yeah we don't have this thing where I will because you want to, but I don't really want to kind of thing.

(CA, NAS, 17)

Peter: Cause it has happened before one person wants it and the other person doesn't or can't or something like that.
Louisa: So what usually happens in that kind of situation?
Amy: Then the person who doesn't usually wins out, or, I mean if you were to go ahead it would be rape really and that's not you know that's not something that Peter and I want to go through.

(CA, AS, 18)

While resolute in voicing these opinions about their relationships, evidence either from their partners or other narratives they offered indicated unequal power relations were sometimes or predominately at work. In Nina and Neil's case decisions about sexual activity were not always decided as equally as portrayed by them. Nina described a period in their relationship when Neil wanted her to perform oral sex on him and she refused. At this time Neil used physical force, in an attempt to pressure her into performing it for him. Nina explained, 'He'd always keep on pushing my head down there and I'd go 'ow don't do that' (II, NAS, 17). Clearly, Neil used his physical might to exert power over Nina to engage in an activity she did not want to, indicating that sexual decision-making was not always conducted as democratically as depicted.

Similarly, although Ashby insisted on the importance of not 'forcing' someone to have sex, Becky his girlfriend spoke in a focus group session about continuing to have sex when she didn't really want too. Adding support to this, Ashby hinted that he may have sometimes coerced Becky into sexual activity:

You know if like you can try and persuade them but you know (Becky laughs). You can say 'Are you sure, are you sure' you know I mean, you know give them a taste...

(CA, AS, 17)
Chris, (who also stated above that sexual activity should be an equal choice), openly admitted in the individual interview the first time he had sexual intercourse with his girlfriend Cam, he had pressured her into it, ‘I didn’t want to, I didn’t want to put, I mean like I was putting a bit of pressure on her like.....’. That Cam was reluctant to have sex was communicated in her individual interview when talking about her emotional anxieties surrounding it and the way she described her experience of this sex as ‘indifferent’.

Amy also revealed that, although Peter never forced her to have sex, he certainly exerted pressure on her. This was disclosed in two separate comments she made during the couple activity which went as follows:

Amy: Like uhm he might be in the mood but I might not be and it’s sort of like you know ‘oh you never want to give me any’ (putting on Peter’s voice).

Amy: I mean Peter will usually say ‘How about it’ or something like that, it sort of you know ‘oh no, I don’t really feel like it tonight’ or you go (to Peter) ‘Oh come on, please man’.

Clearly, Peter did not take Amy’s ‘no’ as her final answer and in some instances appeared to have exerted additional emotional pressure ‘you never want to give me any’ to try and persuade her into sexual intercourse. While in Nina and Neil’s relationship the expression of power was one of overt physical force, the last three examples demonstrate what Gavey has characterised as ‘heterosexual coercion’. That is, the way in which in the absence of direct force or violence, disciplinary power works to sustain ‘male power’ over women (Gavey, 1992:325).

What is apparent here is a fracturing between young people’s construction of negotiation and its contingent power relations and their actual practice, a phenomenon they may not have been consciously aware of. The operation of disciplinary power which Gavey invokes with her concept of ‘sexual coercion’

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9 Gavey adopts Foucault's notion of disciplinary power in her work. This power is positive in that it produces and constitutes meanings, desires, practices etc. It is exercised through its invisibility so that discipline is ‘infused in multiple and diffuse ways throughout the social body’ (Gavey 1992:327).
involves the participation of the subject in practices which they do not necessarily register as detrimental to their own agency. In fact, it is exactly this character of its operation that makes it so successful. Young people's portrayal of a relationship in which power is only shared equally, may also be attributed to a kind of 'wish fulfilment' in absence of this situation in reality. One young woman in a focus group commented that it was common to 'say oh yeah I've got an equal relationship but you don't, no one ever does I don't think' (FG, AS, 17). Because it does not evoke pleasant feelings to admit imbalances of power around a particular issue, this may not be voiced even though it is a material reality.

Other New Zealand survey research supports the finding that young people experience sexual coercion in relationships with 18% of subjects aged 16 and over reporting at some time being forced to have sexual intercourse (Coggan et al, 1997). Clearly, sexual coercion and violence feature in young people's experience of sexual relationships. However, I would argue coercive power was not the predominant form of power which appeared to operate in the couple's relationships in this research. In the relationships above where coercive power was said to operate, young people also reported moments in which power was mediated or more greatly resembled 'equality'. For instance, after breaking up because Ashby had slept with someone else, Becky accepted him back on the basis he abided by rules she had set concerning the use of contraception, having an HIV/AIDS test and telling her where he was going and what he was doing. He had managed to adhere to all such stipulations at the time they both participated in the research.

Similarly, Neil and Nina's relationship had undergone some massive changes, whereby Neil had nearly lost his life\(^{10}\) and subsequently stopped drinking and reflected upon his aggression. In addition, he had lost interest in sex while Nina was now the one likely to want to engage in it. In Chris and Cam's case, Cam appeared to have considerable hold over Chris by virtue of his love for

\(^{10}\) Neil had been critically injured in a fight outside a pub one night. The experience had encouraged him to re-think his priorities in life and as a consequence he gave up drinking and mixing with what he described as 'the wrong crowd'.
her. In addition, she was planning a working holiday abroad which could be seen as an assertion of her independence. All of these circumstances reveal the precarious nature of power's operation, its mutability and tendency to be accessed variously by each partner depending upon the issue under negotiation and the context of any particular moment.

7.4 Conclusion

This chapter has contributed to an understanding of young people's (hetero)sexual practices as conceptualised by them. It has shown that a majority of young people in the study perceived themselves as having experience of relationships which started on average when they were 13 years old. The mean number of partners was 5, with young women more likely to date older men, while young men went out with young women the same age or younger. Relationship length was diverse, with the majority of young people's shortest relationships being between 'one week to one month', while 30% of the sample had experienced relationships between 1-5 years. There were no significant gender differences in one night stands or sexual activity generally in relationships. Insight into how young people made the decision to engage in sexual intercourse, suggested that in most cases this was pre-meditated, especially when they were in a more enduring relationship.

In line with young people's own conceptualisation of sexual practice, the chapter has also provided information on (hetero)sexual practices in relation to sexual pleasure. This was documented in support of young people's expressed interest in this kind of information and their identification of it as missing in sexuality education programmes (Chapter 4). Findings explored what young people did (and did not find) pleasurable about sexual activity in an endeavour to contribute to a discourse of sexual erotics in sexuality education programmes.
In relation to the research’s aim of re-examining the ‘gap’ equation, the findings also reveal how young people in this study conceptualised the effect of their level of sexual knowledge upon their practice. I argued, this data gave support to the way in which young people differentiate knowledge (Chapter 4). While official discourses of sexual knowledge enabled young people in the sample to make confident and decisive decisions about whether or not they wanted to engage in sexual activity, informal discourses of sexual knowledge appeared to have the potential to make (especially) young women’s experience of sexual activity and sexual subjectivity more positive.

Also as part of the re-conceptualisation of the ‘gap’ equation the chapter explored the relationship between young people’s sexual subjectivities and their heterosexual practice in terms of how these are played out within such relationships. Concentrating on data from the couple activity it was revealed how power is sexualised within the relationship context. An analytic framework for the operation of power around sexual activity was devised where three relationships to power were explored - sharing of power = ‘power equality’, mediated power - in which young women carved out limited agency within male power and coercive power - in which male power is exercised repressively over young women.

In the final chapter these findings and those from the previous data chapters are explored in terms of their theoretical and practical implications for sexuality education programme design and sexuality theories.
Chapter Eight

Conclusions

8.0 Introduction

This thesis set out to understand the relationships between young people’s sexual knowledge, sexual subjectivities and sexual practices. Inspired by feminist methodologies and theories, it explored young people’s constitution of their sexual knowledge and sexual subjectivities, as well as gender relations within the context of (hetero)sexual relationships.

In this final chapter, I review the findings of the research as they relate to the aims which have underpinned this study. In the first section, I summarise the major data findings in relation to the central concepts of the thesis; the relationship between young people’s sexual knowledge, sexual subjectivities and (hetero)sexual practice. In the second section of the chapter, I reflect on the research design and consequent limitations for the study. In the third section, I outline the theoretical implications of the research for feminist theories of sexuality, masculinity theory and ‘the body’. In addition, I offer suggestions for further research in these areas. Finally, I describe what I consider to be the main contributions of the research to the design of sexuality education programmes in New Zealand.

8.1 Summary of major findings

The research findings contribute to understanding in five areas; (1) Young people’s conceptualisation of sexual knowledge, (2) young people’s gendered relationship to sexual knowledge (3) young people’s sexual subjectivities, (4) and their experience of embodiment, as well as (5) their (hetero)sexual practices. These are discussed in turn below.
8.1.1 Sexual Knowledge: Distinctions and Hierarchies

Young women and men participating in this research were found to have made a distinction between two types of sexual knowledge, one pertaining to knowledge derived from personal/practical sexual experience, and the other derived from secondary sources such as sexuality education. Within these two conceptualisations, they constructed a hierarchy in which knowledge gained from personal/practical experience appeared to be accorded a higher status. This was demonstrated in the way young couples who volunteered to participate in the study, decided the person who was more sexually knowledgeable in their relationship was the one who had more practical sexual experience (Chapter 4.2). Similarly, such couples revealed in the individual interviews that they partially derived their sense of themselves as good sexual partners in relation to the amount of practical sexual experience they had. In contrast, their references to the need to possess sexual knowledge derived from secondary sources, (like friends or sexuality education) appeared to have less bearing on this perception of themselves as sexual (Chapter 4.2).

The young New Zealanders in the sample also made distinctions between types of knowledge drawn from secondary sources, appearing to refer to two sorts of discourses here. These were 'official discourses of sexual knowledge' and a 'discourse of sexual desire and pleasure' (or what I have termed a discourse of erotics). Official discourses of sexual knowledge were spoken of when young people in the interviews talked about clinical, scientific and morally sanctioned sexual knowledge and often referred to reputable sources like sexuality education and educational books in relation to them. In contrast, a discourse of 'erotics' was more personal, involving the 'lived' experience of sexual activity, couple interaction and corporeal (bodily) feeling. This discursive framing of sexuality was present within most focus group discussion and expressed in talk about how sexual activity developed in a relationship, how to ask someone out and what different sexual partners were like (Chapter 4.2). It also surfaced in the questionnaire, in response to open
ended questions about the kinds of disagreements likely to arise in relationships. In response to this question, a predominance of young women and men mentioned issues of where and how often to have sex, as well as what positions and types of sexual activity to engage in (Chapter 4.2).

Despite mentioning and appearing to talk more frequently about/through a discourse of desire and pleasure, many young people who answered the questionnaire revealed they felt they lacked knowledge about, for example, sexual positions and techniques and how to get what they wanted out of a sexual relationship (Chapter 4.1). Most of the young couples who participated in the study, spontaneously mentioned how they lacked knowledge in this area, and how it had been missing from sexuality education programmes they had attended. Young people’s interest in a discourse of erotics was also expressed through their animated talk in focus groups when discussing issues like the physical desirability of partners and sex. In addition, the research also revealed that friends were a preferred source of sexual knowledge for young people. I argued that this may be because they were more likely to provide this kind of ‘erotic’ information (Table 4:2). Young people’s talk in the focus groups and interviews supported this idea, by describing how discussion with friends provided information which could not be gleaned from sexuality education (such as how to have sex and what it felt like).

8.1.2 Young people’s gendered relationship to sexual knowledge.

The survey also revealed the most common age group in which (43%) young people claimed they had learned about sexual intercourse was between 8 and 10 years old. Young men were more likely to claim they had learned about sex at 8 years, while young women reported this as 10 years (Chapter 4.1). The age at which sexual knowledge was acquired appeared to be earlier for those young people who had left school (8 years), compared with school students (9 years). Young women perceived themselves as slightly more knowledgeable than young men on non-traditional sexual knowledge survey questions about for example, sexual positions and techniques (Chart 4:2). They also appeared slightly more knowledgeable on traditional knowledge items (Chart 4:1).
The research findings revealed how gender can be seen to mediate the way in which young people put the sexual knowledge they have into practice. When indicating whether their level of sexual knowledge affected their relationships or ability to have relationships, more young men described their level of knowledge as having no effect (Chapter 4.3). I argued this might be because dominant discourses of masculinity constitute young men as knowledgeable in sexual matters, regardless of their actual possession of sexual knowledge. Therefore, most young men might have perceived their actual sexual knowledge as having little significance for their sexual practice. The operation of such dominant discourses around masculinity however, appeared to create feelings of anxiety for many young men, who in the interview expressed anxiety about having to ‘perform’ in order to successfully take up this subject position as ‘knower’ (Chapter 4.4).

The research also demonstrated the effect of dominant discourses of femininity which construct women as ‘lesser knowers’ who must follow men’s lead in sexual situations, even if they possess extensive sexual knowledge. While young women in the questionnaire perceived themselves as more knowledgeable than young men (and on traditional knowledge items were), such knowledge required careful management. When responding to other survey questions, the young women explained the potentially damaging effect of such knowledge which could ‘scare guys off’, leave them vulnerable to ‘be used for sex’ or ‘expected to have sex’ (Chapter 4.4). This argument was supported in the narratives of young women in couples who in interviews explained how they managed their knowledge by concealing it. For example, they did not suggest different sexual positions (which might betray their sexual knowledge) until trust had been established between partners.

In terms of the relationship between knowledge and practice, these dominant discourses of gendered sexual subjectivity can be seen to intervene in the application of knowledge into practice. In the case of some young women, they were seen to curb the activation of knowledge in practice, while for some
young men (as indicated above) they constructed a phantom relationship between sexual knowledge, subjectivity and practice.

What was also revealed about young people's conceptualisation of the relationship between their knowledge and practice was that many in this study perceived this relationship quite differently from how sexuality and HIV/AIDS education researchers have. Researchers in these areas have theorised a knowledge/practice 'gap', premised on the notion that official kinds of sexual knowledge involving how to keep oneself safe are deemed a necessary prerequisite to practice (Murphy et al, 1998; Chapman de Bro et al, 1994). However, sixty percent of subjects answering the questionnaire indicated they felt their level of sexual knowledge had no impact on their sexual relationships or ability to engage in them (Chapter 4:3).

Talk across three quarters of the focus groups also revealed that this interim between knowledge and practice was not conceptualised as a 'gap'. Instead, young people in the focus groups seemed to conflate the concepts of knowledge and practice so that practice was perceived as knowledge. That is, knowledge was thought to be derived from practice, therefore it did not have to be a pre-requisite for it. Rather than positing a gap between knowledge and practice, many young people in the study appeared to conceptualise a kind of practice/knowledge in which knowledge and practice manifested together.

8.1.3 The complexities of young people's sexual subjectivities

The research findings also suggested the way in which young people in this study articulated their sexual subjectivity was inextricably tied to being sexually active. There was a tendency amongst both young women and men to perceive what defined them as sexual people as being the sexual activity they had engaged in. This was evident when young people in the interviews used their sexual partners as a reference point from which to talk about themselves as sexual people/partners (Chapter 5.1). It seemed as if they perceived the sexual activity they engaged in, as bestowing them with the
status of a sexual person. This finding was reinforced by an absence of talk (across the methods) about a sense of sexual subjectivity which did not make reference to sexual activity engaged in with someone else. Young people's allusion to 'sexual practice' as a means of determining their sense of themselves as sexual people is aligned with the findings of Chapter 4, in which a hierarchy of sexual knowledge was disclosed. If knowledge derived from practical experience is held in higher esteem, it is perhaps not surprising that young people's experience of sexual practice is perceived by them to inform their sense of themselves as sexual people.

What the data also suggested, was that young people's sexual subjectivities were complex, contradictory and ever changing. The findings showed how young people's sense of themselves as sexual people was in some ways subjected to dominant discourses of male and female sexuality, but not totally determined by them. Many of the examples of young men taking up dominant subject positions in these discourses came from focus group sessions, where peer pressure to appear appropriately masculine was at its most intense. When young men took up these dominant sexual subjectivities, they represented themselves as sexually assertive, emotionally detached, and with a voracious sexual desire and a body that guaranteed them sexual satisfaction (Chapter 5.2.1). A few of the young men in the sample even acknowledged that taking up these subject positions formed part of being a man.

Many of the young women in the study also defined themselves as sexual in relation to dominant discourses of female sexuality (at least some of the time). This was generally witnessed in the focus groups or individual interviews where they constituted themselves as sexually vulnerable, less easily pleasured than young men, victim to male sexual gratification and more interested in the emotional aspects of physical intimacy (Chapter 5.2.3). By taking up dominant subject positions in these discourses young women and men in the study, could be seen to reproduce gendered inequality and as indicated above, the gendered application of knowledge within practice.
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Yet, despite such examples of young people taking up dominant discourses of heterosexuality, there were other examples of young women and men who were able to negotiate ‘alternative’ (hetero)sexual subjectivities. The construction of an active female sexual subjectivity could be identified in the questionnaire where more young women than young men reported they had ‘lots’ of control over the kinds of sexual activity they engaged in, contraception and how often to have sex (See Table 5.5). This sense of agency could also be seen in the talk of some young women in group discussions, who reworked traditional discourses of the sexual double standard in order to define themselves in ways that were more positive and offered them greater sexual agency (Chapter 5.3.1). Young women did this by redefining the label of ‘slut’ so their own actions were not encompassed within it, by describing women’s sexuality as powerful and recognising how women could use their sexuality to attract partners they desired. Some young women were also able to articulate their experiences of sexual pleasure and desire (Chapter 5.3.1). Although the extent to which this negotiation of dominant sexual subjectivities provided them with agency was contingent upon the characteristics and circumstances of individual young women, this data indicated that ‘alternative’ sexual subjectivities could be taken up (at least some of the time) by young women. When it was possible to explore how young women negotiated these subject positions, it seemed that their access to alternative discourses of female sexuality and a strong sense of oneself as a sexual person, played a crucial role.

The data also revealed alternative discourses of male heterosexuality. Examples of this were more likely to emerge in research contexts where young men felt secure enough to reveal them, and where there were fewer repercussions for their successful attainment of masculinity. Some young men, for example in group discussions and interviews, took up alternative sexual subjectivities by de-centring the importance they placed on sex in their relationships. In opposition to traditional discourses which render sex a main priority for young men to engage and stay in relationships, many of those who

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1 The complex way in which these were taken up by young men is explored in the theoretical section in this chapter.
answered the questionnaire indicated what they most wanted in an ideal relationship was 'love' followed by 'trust, honesty, respect' and then 'commitment' (Table 5:6). As this kind of data emerged from young men who were experienced in relationships, it is possible that, for some young men, positive (hetero)sexual relationships offered a context in which alternative expressions of male sexuality could be realised and played out.

8.1.4 Young women and men's dis/dys/embodiment.

Another theme which emerged from the research findings was the nature of young people’s experience of their bodies - a process I referred to as embodiment. This process and its related states of disembodiment and dysembodiment, appeared to be a gendered process. I have argued this is because the processes by which young people become embodied/disembodied are linked to the dominant discourses of femininity and masculinity described above. This will be discussed in section 8.3.2.

In this research, sexual embodiment for young women was evidenced in their ability to experience their bodies in ways that were corporeally pleasurable. Young women who revealed an embodied sexuality demonstrated a recognition and insertion of their bodies into their narratives during the interviews and through their responses to a survey question about what was pleasurable about sexual activity (Chapter 6.1.1). Embodiment in these narratives involved explicit statements of particular corporeal feeling such as 'naked skin together', 'the penis going in and out' and a lower abdomen sensation that 'lifts you to the ceiling'. By using two young women who participated in the couple activity as examples2, it was possible to determine two main factors that may have influenced their ability to experience embodiment. Both displayed a generally positive relationship with their bodies, implying this increased the likelihood of their ability to experience pleasurable corporeal sensation during sexual activity with a partner. Another

2 These young women appeared to be more consistently embodied than other young women in the research.
factor, which may have contributed to their sexual embodiment, was that they exercised relative autonomy in their relationships.

The experience of sexual embodiment for young men in the study, did not revolve around an ability to experience sexual activity as corporeally pleasurable, but rather an awareness of their bodies and the possibilities of them beyond dominant conceptions of masculinity. Embodiment for young men involved the intensification of their corporeal pleasure through recognition of the sensual experience of their bodies. This heightened corporeal satisfaction appeared to be accessed through their emotional feelings. This was illustrated by young men's talk in the interviews when they described sex as better with a partner they cared about, rather than causal sex (Chapter 6.1.2). Recognition of the sensual experience of their bodies was also seen in their responses to a question in the survey. This asked what was pleasurable about sexual activity, and many young men revealed pleasurable corporeal feelings that were inextricably bound with emotional ‘intimacy’, ‘closeness’ and ‘the thought of being with someone you love’ (Chapter 6.1.2). In thinking about what enabled young men in the interviews to speak in embodied ways, it was apparent that each were or had been in, a long term relationship in which they professed to have some emotional investment. This situation may have provided them with a context in which to be connected with their feelings, which the research findings suggest is a necessary condition for their embodiment.

Examples of young people’s sexual disembodiment in this study were more complex, with young people reporting greater diversity in their experience of this corporeal state. For some young women, disembodiment was expressed as a kind of numbness or an absence of ‘corporeal sensuality’ (Chapter 6.2.2). This was apparent from their declarations about feeling unsure about whether they had experienced orgasms or simply failing to refer to the body at all in their talk.
Whilst an absence of corporeal sensuality was potentially recognisable by some young women, others were oblivious to its lack. The former group who recognised they were unable to experience pleasurable corporeal sensation were not 'deaf' to their body's sensuality as a traditional notion of disembodiment might imply. These young women clearly experienced their bodies as 'lived', yet their relationship with them was distorted\(^3\) by dominant discourses of appropriate femininity which rendered them often dissatisfied, embarrassed and ashamed of their bodies and subsequently unable to experience corporeal sexual pleasure (Chapter 6.2.3). This finding indicated a different type of disembodiment which I have argued might be conceptualised as dys-embodiment. Young women's dys-embodiment was evident in the way they talked about their dissatisfaction with their bodies in the focus groups in relation to the Hey Sister picture, and within the interviews when young women in couples expressed anxiety that their partners would not find them physically/sexually appealing (Chapter 6.2.3). These feelings and thoughts could be seen to intrude upon the pleasurable corporeal experience of sexual activity (as in Becky's case 6.2.4), although young women in the study rarely recognised them as having such power.

Dys-embodiment was also a more appropriate term with which to describe many young men's experience of their bodies in this research. As the young men in the sample did not appear to have problems with pleasurable corporeal sensation, they could not be seen to be sexually disembodied in the same way as young women. This would have rendered them unaware of bodily pleasures during sexual activity and young men in this sample (whatever the reason), did not describe this. Rather, they spoke of their dys-embodiment in relation to a restricted sense of their bodies and its potential. Dominant discourses of heterosexual masculinity appeared to mediate young men's relationship with their bodies. This was apparent in the interviews, where young men appeared to distance themselves from their bodies claiming they did not think or worry about them (Chapter 6.2.5). A careful analysis of this talk indicated however that these young men did think and

\(^3\) This process will be explained in 8.3.2.
were anxious about their bodies. This was revealed for example, when they
described how they thought they were 'ugly', had small biceps and were too
short (Chapter 6.2.5). These comments signalled that some young men in the
study made mental comparisons with dominant conceptions of the 'perfect'
male body and felt inadequate in light of these. In making sense of this
phenomenon, I argued that hegemonic masculinity required that young men
experienced their bodies in line with dominant discourses of masculinity, and
these discourses discourage any recognition of thoughts about the
'inadequacies' of their bodies.

The analysis of the data on young people's experiences of their bodies
suggested there might be a continuum of dis/dys/embodiment. This ranged
from disembodiment (where an awareness of corporeal sensation was
absent), to embodiment (where there was a positive recognition of the
sensuality of the body). Mid-way between these two points, lies dys-
embodiment (where the subject's relationship with their body is distorted), a
situation which may or may not induce a lack of corporeal sensations (for
young women). The theorisation of a continuum was necessary to describe
the fluctuation of young women's experiences of embodiment, disembodiment
and dys-embodiment. Being embodied was not a permanent state for any of
the young women interviewed in the research. Instead, those who constituted
themselves as sexually embodied in some of their narratives also indicated
their dys-embodiment in others (Chapter 6.2.4). These young women seemed
to vacillate between points on the continuum depending upon the contextual
features of a sexual situation, such as who their partner was, how they felt
about their body at that moment, and what point in the development of their
relationship they were at.

8.1.5 (Hetero)sexual Practices

This thesis has re-conceptualised sexual practice from young people's
perspective which has meant contributing to, and offering an understanding
of, what I term a 'discourse of erotics'. A discourse of erotics comprises an
acknowledgement of young people's sexual desires and pleasures, details about these, the logistics of sexual interaction, what sexual activity feels like (corporeally) and 'courtship rituals' (such as how to ask someone out), which are traditionally missing from sexuality education programmes. The data collected from young people has provided information on their sexual repertoires (Chapter 7.1), what they find pleasurable about sexual activity (Table 7:10), what they dislike about it (Table 7:11) and details of their relationships such as, their duration and quantity (Chapter 7.1), which have not been previously documented in New Zealand. By incorporating details about sexuality and sexual relationships which interest young people themselves, I attempted to extend the meaning of sexual practice as it is traditionally conceptualised in sexuality research (Chapter 2). In doing so, I have endeavoured to contribute to a discourse of erotics which might inform sexuality education programmes.

What the data has also disclosed in relation to our understandings of sexual practice is how young people in the study related their sexual knowledge and their sexual activity. A minority of young people in the questionnaire perceived a direct relationship between knowledge and practice and described a mixture of positive and negative effects of their knowledge on their practice. Positive effects of sexual knowledge were, for example, instilling a sense of confidence and autonomy and enabling young people to decide what, if any, sexual activity they would engage in (Chapter 7.2.1). For some young women in the sample, confident sexual subjectivities produced by possession of sexual knowledge, improved the pleasure reaped from sexual activity. Still, other young women and men viewed their sexual knowledge as having alerted them to the dangers inherent in sexual activity. For other young women in the sample knowledge had a negative effect, by contributing to a sense of fear that they would be used or harmed by a partner (Chapter 7.2.2). An especially traumatic example of how knowledge of sexual activity could impact negatively, appeared in the answers of two subjects who had survived sexual abuse and who expressed caution and fear about entering
relationships. None of the young men in the sample referred to this negative consequence of sexual knowledge for their sexual activity.

8.2 Parameters of the research design

Like all pursuits of knowledge and the narratives that are subsequently produced, the scope and findings of this study are partial. In this section I reflect on the value of the research design and its associated limitations.

The advantages of a multiple method design (which involved the use of focus groups, survey, couple activity and interviews) were that each method produced different narratives about young people’s sexual knowledge, subjectivities and practices. Because each method involved the production of data in a different context, it was possible to see how narratives were constructed publicly and privately. For instance, what young people revealed in the privacy of interviews sometimes diverged quite markedly from their narratives in the couple activity session (Chapter 7.3.1). These inconsistencies hinted at the lived reality of the couple’s relationship practice. Multiple methods were also useful for addressing the difficulties of researching a sensitive topic like sexuality. For example, the use of an anonymous self completion questionnaire provided a means to diffuse any embarrassment subjects might experience.

The building block design of the methods, where each informed the creation of the next was also highly effective. It enabled insights gained from one method to increase the success of the next, in terms of their appropriateness for the participants and their ability to access the information sought. For instance, the focus groups offered understandings about how young people articulated their sexual subjectivities and practices, the language they employed in their constructions and a sense of their ‘sexual culture’. These insights could then be taken into account when designing the questionnaire in relation to the topics which were broached, and how questions were framed.
The use of both qualitative and quantitative methods was effective in providing information at both general and specific levels. These two types of data could then be analysed in relation to each other in order to form a more comprehensive picture of young people's conceptualisations of their sexual knowledge, subjectivities and practices. The questionnaire tapped patterns across the sample at a general level, which could then be analysed in conjunction with the specific details of the lives of those who participated in the couple activity and interviews. For instance, the survey finding that young women generally had a negative perception of their bodies could also be traced (and therefore to some extent verified), in interview narratives. The use of a qualitative method like an individual interview, was able to compensate for the shortcomings of the survey, by exploring how and why young women felt this way in greater depth.

A limitation of the research design was that although I was interested in exploring heterosexual practice within the context of a relationship, this could only be accessed in a limited way. The type of practice I witnessed occurring between couples in the activity session, was not actual sexual practice, but the negotiation of how the couples represented their sexual practice in their relationship. This was some way removed from negotiation of sexual issues within the course of a relationship. This was because what the couple said they did in the research context and what actually transpired within the course of their relationship may have diverged significantly. Although the individual interviews were able to draw out, to some extent, any inconsistencies between the portrayal and reality of the couple's relationship, there may have been more of these that could have produced other narratives about 'practice'.

A major limitation of the study was that it was not able to apply an 'ethnic' and 'class' analysis to the findings. My consultation with senior members of Maori and Pacific Islands communities and their concerns with my inevitable ethnocentrism, persuaded me against any ethnic analysis (See Chapter 3). An inability to decide what constituted 'class' in New Zealand society, and
difficulty in measuring this, meant that this indices of analysis was also not attempted. The research would have been improved by a better means of distinguishing 'class' and the resources to employ members from ethnic communities who could conduct and analyse the research in a manner culturally appropriate to these groups. As a consequence, I was not able to contribute to knowledge about how 'class' and 'ethnicity' intersect with the sexual knowledge, sexual subjectivities and sexual practices of young people in the study.

A further limitation of the research design was the composition of the sample. As all of the subjects were volunteers they did not represent New Zealand's youth population. In fact, it could be argued that only particular types of young people are willing to participate in research on a topic like sexuality. These young people might for instance, be more sexually liberal or mature than other 17-19 year olds. The sample was also weighted towards young women because they were more willing to volunteer for the research, and students who were still at school, as they were easier to access than those who had left. In Chapter 3, I described my difficulty in recruiting couples and how the final sample was comprised of only six. This was a small number and given that only particular types of people are likely to volunteer for research on sexuality, these couples are unlikely to be representative. Therefore, the research findings need to be read tentatively rather than understood as definitive.

8.3 Contributions to Sexuality theory

In this section, I describe the main contributions of the research to feminist theories of sexuality, theory around masculinities and the 'body' and outline issues raised by the research that warrant further investigation.

8.3.1 'Adding agency' to the gap equation: theorising young people's sexual subjectivities.

As argued in Chapters 1 and 2, researchers interested in sexuality have tended to seek answers to the 'gap' equation by appealing to theories about
dominant discourses of female and male sexual subjectivities and practices, in ways that have negated the subjective agency of individuals (Wight, 1992; Aggleton, 1991). In giving prevalence to young people’s own constitution of the ‘gap’ equation, this research has offered an understanding of this phenomenon in a way that is more likely to reveal young people as active agents.

As part of my investigation of ‘agency’, the data indicated that some young women and men in the sample were able to negotiate alternative sexual subjectivities (Chapter 5.3). These findings have been especially important in contributing to theories of masculinity (Connell, 1995; Mac an Ghaill, 1994) by revealing the precariousness of the operation of hegemonic masculinities. Hegemonic masculinity operates so that appropriate masculinity must constantly be achieved and subsequently, it remains in a state of instability. From the interactions of young men in group discussions it was obvious that spaces continually opened and closed for alternative male sexual subject positions to be taken up (Chapter 5.3.2).

These were enabled through a complex interplay of interaction between young men, where access to them was partially dependent upon the reactions of peers to comments made by members of the group. Young men appeared to carefully read acceptance and rejection in other male’s reactions to their talk, adjusting their own projection of themselves in accordance with them. This meant that if a member of the group took up an alternative sexual subject position this would often open the way for other male subjects to do so as well (Chapter 5.3.2). Conversely, if the reaction of the group was adverse, it was highly likely that the young man would revert to a construction of himself in accordance with dominant discourses of masculinity. The implication of these findings for theorising hegemonic masculinity is that other men might be essential in enabling access to alternative sexual subjectivities. It seems that it is other young men’s acceptance or rejection which is
perceived to predominantly count in young men's sense of themselves as appropriately masculine.

Collecting data on young men's negotiation of dominant discourses of sexuality was a difficult task. This was because throughout the research methods young men were diligently occupied with the maintenance of hegemonic masculinity. Discovering more instances in which young men successfully negotiate these discourses and the means by which they achieve this, is imperative if more opportunities for such negotiation are to occur. The research could have benefited from the design of methods that took cognisance of the operation of hegemonic masculinity. Creating a method with the direct objective of decreasing young men's need to meet the terms of hegemonic masculinity may have proved more productive in eliciting instances of their taking up alternative sexual subject positions.

This research also adds to knowledge about young women's sexual agency. It contributes to feminist theory concerned with identifying spaces in which heterosexual women can experience themselves as sexual agents (DuPlessis, 1997). This contribution has been made by documenting and exploring instances in which young women in the study endeavoured to disrupt dominant discourses of (hetero)sexuality (as described in section 8.1.2). The findings also disclosed one of the characteristics which enabled some of these young women to negotiate dominant discourses of female sexuality. As seen in the examples of Anna, Shona, Kuni and Aroha, (Chapter 5.3.1) this appeared to be their possession of a definite sense of themselves as sexual people, who knew what they wanted in relationships and believed in their right to have it.

To extend theoretical/empirical investigations concerning how this agency is accessed by some young women, we need to examine further how it is that

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4 If this is the case, it implies that the presence of male facilitators and educators within sexuality education might be extremely important. Male facilitators may be more able to create spaces for young men to explore alternative sexual subjectivities than their female counterparts. Testing this possibility would produce valuable insights for designing more effective sexuality education.
some young women have a more lucid sense of their sexual selves. More of the contextual specificities enabling this (such as the support Shona and Anna received during their pregnancies), need to be uncovered if greater numbers of young women are to take up empowering sexual subject positions. One means of unlocking this information might be to recruit a selective sample of young women who display the ability to negotiate dominant discourses of female sexuality for investigation.

8.3.2 Imaginary Bodies

By focusing on the body I hoped to extend post-structural conceptualisations of subjectivity beyond the discursive, to incorporate the material. Post-structuralism is often criticised for its inability to anchor its theories within the material circumstances of people’s lives and so by focusing on ‘the fleshed’ aspects of subjectivity, the thesis has attempted to address this criticism (Benhabib, 1992). Including an exploration of how young people articulate and experience their bodies has also added another dimension in addressing relationships between sexual knowledge and practices left out by much sexuality and HIV/AIDS education research (Hillier et al, 1998; Stewart, 1995). This additional dimension has provided information into how young people’s experiences of their body impacts upon their sexual practices, revealing examples of their sexual embodiment and disembodiment, as well as a new conceptualisation of the body as dys-embodied.

Other research about young people’s experience of their bodies refers to these exclusively in relation to the states of embodiment/disembodiment (Roberts et al, 1995; Holland et al, 1994b). The findings of the current research have uncovered the nuances in these states in terms of the experience of dys-embodiment and way in which all of these corporeal states can be seen to be gendered. The theorisation of a continuum of dis/dys/embodiment builds upon previous depictions of these states by recognising their fluidity and contextual contingency.
While this research has provided empirical and theoretical insight into different types of embodiment and how some young people might experience them, much work is still needed in this area. For example, this study indicated that a positive body image and autonomy within a heterosexual relationship were two characteristics that could contribute to the ability of some young women to articulate and experience embodiment. There are undoubtedly other characteristics and contexts which might also have this effect and which demand investigation. Some possibilities include: young women's views about nudity and sexuality, the history of their relationship with their bodies (ie. have they trained their body for sport or dance), or perhaps their familiarity with feminist discourses about women's bodies. Another factor hinted at within the narratives of young women in the couple activities, was the attitude of their partner's to their bodies. Discovering if these and other factors are instrumental in encouraging young women's embodiment, may offer other insights into how this state might be achieved for more young women.

I felt I had as a result of the research, come to understand the least about young men's embodiment. Undoubtedly, young men must access embodiment in ways other than having an emotional investment in a relationship which increases the physical satisfaction of sexual activity (as found in this study). Disclosing how else embodiment manifests itself amongst young men, and what potential positive (and negative) implications this has for their experiences of their bodies and sexual activity, is therefore an important undertaking.

Another area for further investigation concerns uncovering young men's experience of disembodiment. As explained in Chapter 6, disembodiment is where young men do not hide their acknowledgement of their bodies in order to appear suitably masculine (which is dys-embodiment), but who do not appear to genuinely acknowledge or experience corporeal sensuality. None of the young men who participated in the individual interviews appeared disembodied. However, the sample in this study was small, and therefore there may be young men who do experience disembodiment. Determining
which young men do and why, is an important future undertaking. Similarly, deciphering why it is more likely that young women experience disembodiment, would further our understanding about this corporeal state as gendered.

In order to understand how the states of disembodiment and dys-embodiment occurred amongst young people in this study, I adopted the notion of the 'imaginary body' from psychoanalysis. This concept enabled a recognition of how exterior forces such as discursive and material practices shape the experiences of the body. In contrast to Foucauldian (1980) theory where discourses are inscribed on to a docile body, discourses are seen to be inextricably enmeshed in the flesh, so that the body may be seen as 'naturally social' (Grosz, 1987) (See Chapter 2 for full explanation). Here the imaginary body which is partially informed by dominant discourses of femininity and masculinity, is experienced by the subject as their own body, with no separation between the natural/biological body and the social/discursive 'imaginary' body.

The nature of such an imaginary body was displayed by young women when they articulated how they perceived themselves to be 'fat', having a 'big buttocks', 'wide hips', and or 'small breasts' and their descriptions of feeling 'bloated', 'grotts', 'ashamed' and 'shy' as a result of these perceptions (Chapter 6.2.3). Such views were formed in relation to dominant discourses of feminine beauty which left young women feeling inadequate and with an 'unreal' sense of their bodies (Chapter 6.2.3). Young men's imaginary bodies were also seen in their anxieties about the failure of their own physiques to conform to dominant models of appropriate masculinity. This appropriate masculinity was premised on notions of muscularity, physical strength and sexual potency. Their fears about not being able to 'last long enough' during sexual intercourse and complaints about being 'too short', having 'small biceps' and not being 'well toned' were testimony to the presence of an imaginary male body.
Another dimension to the imaginary body considered in this research involves the body schema which comprises an 'anticipatory plan of (future) action' incorporating knowledge of the body's current location in space and potential for movement (Schilder, 1978). As the imaginary body is partially informed by a plethora of dominant (and subordinate) discourses about female and male bodies, the body schema in turn is influenced by these. In this research, I have added a gender analysis to this concept, by suggesting it is possible for some young women to describe experiencing less pleasure from sexual activity than young men, because such an experience is not normative within the dominant discourses of heterosexuality which inform their imaginary bodies. In constituting the corporeal schema, these dominant discourses severely limit the plans of 'possible action' for young women's bodies so that their experience of their bodies conforms with traditional perceptions of women's bodies as less easily pleasured than men's. Similarly, young men's documented propensity to achieve sexual satisfaction with minimal difficulty may also be attributable to the fact that dominant discourses of masculinity allow/encourage this. As described earlier, these discourses do not simply infiltrate the skin of bodies to achieve these results, but rather they are incorporated into the imaginary body which is experienced by the subject as not imaginary but real. This theorisation offers a gendered corporeal explanation for the well documented phenomenon of young women being less likely to find sexual activity pleasurable than young men, in a way that attempts to avoid the pitfalls of essentialism.

This theorisation of the 'imaginary body' is still in its infant stages and substantial work must be undertaken to uncover more examples of it in order to legitimate its existence. Of particular theoretical interest to me are the potential limits of the imaginary body. Is the potential of young women's and men's bodies confined by the limits of discourse or the materiality of the flesh? Or, are each inactivated without the presence of the other? If this were the case, is the potential for young women and men's experiences of their bodies infinite? Such questions necessitate further investigation into the presence and operation of the imaginary body.
8.3.3 Sexualising power in (hetero)sexual practice

An examination of practice as articulated within the context of the couple dynamic has enabled, an understanding of gendered interaction between partners and the development of an analytic framework of how power is sexualised within the couple context. While researchers such as Holland et al, (1998) have formulated comparable frameworks, this one has been devised on the basis of empirical work with couples in interaction. It also emphasises the constantly shifting nature of subject's engagement with 'equal', 'mediated' and 'coercive' power in any one relationship. While different experiences of power within anyone relationship are not dismissed by Holland et al, (1998), my intention has been to make this possibility a feature of an analytic framework of power.

In the couple activity session, young people divulged how they undertook particular processes in their sexual decision-making. They constituted their negotiation of conflicts by explaining how communication and respect for the other person's wishes enabled them to work through these situations (Chapter 7.3). This particular portrayal of negotiation depicted an operation of power where decisions appeared to be made equally, following consultation with the other partner whose views were respected and taken into consideration. Such negotiation and the power sharing it involved could be conceptualised within this analytic framework as 'equal power'.

However, not all young people's narratives of sexual negotiation reflected this 'equality' of power. Another analytic category of power emerged in young people's descriptions of their mediation of power. This was particularly noticeable with young women who described a conscious acquiescence to their partner's power, but perceived this as a means of salvaging some of their own agency in regard to particular practices. The prioritisation of their partner's sexual pleasure over their own gratification provided a prime

5This example of negotiation of power is comparable to Holland et al's, (1998) notion of empowerment through femininity. Young women in this study displaying this kind of
example here. In this instance, young women mediated male power by recognising its operation, yet actively choosing to yield to it by relegating their own sexual pleasure to secondary importance. They perceived their agency as stemming from their active role in making this choice, rather than it being forced upon them. This offered young women a very limited form of power, but it also afforded them a sense of greater agency than the final category of sexualised power uncovered by the research and described below.

The discovery of coercive power in young heterosexual relationships contributes to research already conducted in New Zealand which identifies heterosexual coercion in the relationships of women 28-52 years (Gavey, 1992). This third type of power was rarely observed in the interaction of partners during the research, but it surfaced in the inconsistencies between young people's individual narratives and the ways couples represented their relationship practice. These inconsistencies indicated that in some cases, the equal distribution of power young couples professed was not always a reality in their actual relationship practice. One of the ways this was revealed was in the discrepancies between young men's alleged opinions about sexual coercion and other talk which depicted their behaviour in accordance with coercive action. Along with indicating the presence of sexual coercion between couples in this 17-19 year old age group, these findings also suggest a discrepancy between some young people's construction of negotiation and its contingent power relations, and their actual practice.

While this analytic framework for understanding the sexualisation of power is useful for indicating the operation of power within the context of young people's heterosexual relationships, there is still much to learn about how subjects experience this power. For example, the research indicated the negotiation of power between partners was in a perpetual state of flux, where coercive power may operate in one instance in the relationship while a mediation of power was undertaken in another. There was a tendency for young people to move in and out of this power nexus, at various moments in

"empowerment are aware of the constraints of conventional femininity, but rather than"
their relationships, however it was not clear what influenced these shifts. To better understand the way young people engage with the nexus of power surrounding their relationships, it would be necessary to concentrate on these shifts in order to determine what makes them possible.

8.4 Implications for Sexuality Education Programmes

Because of the limitations of the study outlined in section 8.2, these recommendations for the design of sexuality education programmes in New Zealand are offered tentatively. The implementation of these recommendations requires considerable thought, in terms of how to translate them into practical solutions that will meet the needs of diverse groups of young people in New Zealand, in ways that are positive and empowering.

- Recognising young people’s conceptualisation of sexual knowledge and practice.

Within the ‘logic’ of the gap equation as theorised by sexuality and HIV/AIDS researchers, emphasis has been placed on ‘knowledge’ as primary and necessary for practice (Bury, 1991; Bruce and Bullins, 1989). My own research suggests however, that if practice is knowledge for many young people, then clearly to these young people it is practice which is of primary importance to them, not knowledge as it is perceived in the ‘gap’ equation. This finding suggests we need to rethink the ‘logic’ of the gap equation as set out by sexuality and HIV/AIDS researchers, and the way that young people perceive the relationship between their knowledge and practice when designing sexuality education programmes. Data from this research implies there must be a relocation of emphasis from knowledge to practice within sexuality education in a way that recognises knowledge is not a pre-requisite to practice for some young people.

The research findings about sexual knowledge indicate that if sexuality education messages are to be more effective they need to acknowledge attempting to transgress them they work within their constraints.
young people's construction of a hierarchy of sexual knowledges (Section 8.2) and the emphasis they place on practice. Raising the status of sexual knowledge derived from sexuality education for young people is one place in which to start. In view of young people’s privileging of knowledge obtained from personal practice, it might be beneficial to draw the messages of sexuality education into closer alignment with young people’s actual sexual practices. This means positively acknowledging young people in ways that currently few sexuality education programmes do, by treating them as sexual agents who seek sexual pleasure, have sexual desire and the potential to experience satisfying sexual relationships.

- **Introducing a discourse of erotics**

If sexuality education programmes want to affect the sexual practices of greater numbers of young people, I would argue they need to introduce a discourse of erotics into their agenda. A discourse of erotics would comprise the missing information about desire and pleasure identified and requested by young people in this research (such as how to have sex in terms of positioning etc, how to ask someone out and what sex feels like both emotionally and physically). The data collected in Chapter 7 about what sexual activities young people engage in and what they find pleasureable and not pleasurable about such activities, offer a starting point for the development of a discourse of erotics. Including a discourse of erotics within sexuality education might be one way of raising the status of knowledge offered by such programmes by catering to young people’s interests and drawing such information closer to their lived experiences. The challenge becomes how to incorporate a discourse of erotics into programme design in a way that positively acknowledges the pleasures of sexual activity in non exploitative and empowering ways. Yet, simultaneously recognises the perils of sexual activity and arms young people to protect themselves from these.

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6 Many young people in this research clearly wanted access to a discourse of desire and pleasure, evident in their identification of it as missing from sexuality education programmes they had attended, and their calls for its inclusion in them.
Introducing a discourse of erotics would not only be beneficial in terms of closing the perceived 'gap' between the official knowledge offered by many sexuality programmes and young people's own interests and practices but it may have other positive consequences. As already noted, Tolman and Higgins (1994) have described how a sense of sexual desire and pleasure can help young women to decide assertively what sexual practices they wish to engage in. Introducing a discourse of erotics would open spaces within sexuality education to legitimate and explore young women's sexual desires and pleasures in ways that could be advantageous for them.

- Providing spaces for alternative expressions of young women and men's sexual subjectivity.

The study's findings in relation to gender emphasise the importance of eradicating gendered inequality and what are commonly called 'sexual stereotypes' because of their limiting effects for young women and men's experience of their sexuality. These limiting effects were seen in Chapter 4, where I demonstrated how gender mediated the application of knowledge in practice. The operation of dominant discourses of male and female sexuality meant some young women had to curb the application of their sexual knowledge in practice, while some young men experienced insecurities about having to appear knowledgeable in sexual situations. In each case, young women and men encountered negative consequences for their experience of their sexuality (Chapter 4.4). The research also indicated that dominant discourses of heterosexuality may have limiting effects for young women and men's corporeal experiences of sexual pleasure (Chapter 6.3). I argued that young women's and men's potential experience of corporeal sexual pleasure may be restricted by what is pronounced normative for each gender, within these discourses. In terms of sexual inequality, insights into the negotiation of sexual decision making between young couples also provided important information about the exercise of coercive power by young men (Chapter 7.3.1).
What these findings suggest is that the sexualisation of power within heterosexual practice, and the limiting effect of dominant perceptions of female and male sexuality for young people, must be recognised and resisted in the design of sexuality education programmes.

For young women these negative consequences were the forfeiting of their sexual pleasure until they felt they could trust their partner and reveal their sexual knowledge by asking them to perform sexual activities they found pleasurable.

7 For young women these negative consequences were the forfeiting of their sexual pleasure until they felt they could trust their partner and reveal their sexual knowledge by asking them to perform sexual activities they found pleasurable.
APPENDIX - A

FOCUS GROUP SCHEDULE
Focus Group Schedule

BEFORE DISCUSSION.

Set up room conducive to small group discussion. Put chairs in circle.

Set up tape recorder and make sure that it is working. Record date, place and group on tape.

INTRODUCTION.
Thank you for volunteering. My name is Louisa and the research I am doing is about young people and relationships.........

The purpose of this group discussion is to get an idea of what you think young people think about girlfriend/boyfriend relationships. It is to help me design the rest of my research on this topic.

There is never any right or wrong answer about the things you will be discussing, just differing points of view. Please join in the conversation - the point of having a group discussion is for you to discuss your ideas with others in the group.

Before we begin, this is a research project so anything that you say is confidential. Information shared in this room, should stay in this room between us. As long as no one has any objections, it is being tape recorded so we don't miss anything that is said.

WARM UP - QUESTION TIME (20 minutes)

• Okay. Can we begin by going around the circle saying your name and your age and whether most of your friends are in sexual relationships or not.

(Draw plan of seating arrangement with names so can refer to participants by name)

• What words or images come to mind when I say a ‘boyfriend relationship’? (If the focus group is boys only replace with ‘girlfriend relationship’)

• Why do you think that people get involved in relationships?

• What qualities do you think are important in relationships?

• How would you describe the kinds of relationships young people get involved in?

• What do you think young women and men want from sexual relationships?
- What are some of the best things about being in a relationship?
- What kind of problems do you think young people experience in sexual relationships?

ACTIVITY TWO - CARD GAME (30 minutes)

- Cards. I have images here of boyfriend/girlfriend relationships. I am going to pass the cards around so you can look at them, and then together we will discuss what you think the images are communicating about relationships.
- What sorts of things aren't these pictures depicting about relationships?
- What do you think these pictures are saying about the pleasures involved in relationships? Do you think they are true?
- What do you think these images are saying about getting 'turned on' in relationships? Do you think it is true?
- What do you think these pictures are saying about power in girl/boyfriend relationships? Do you think this is true?

WHEN DISCUSSION IS COMPLETE - DEBRIEFING - (10 minutes)

The sheet of paper I am about to hand out only has 2 questions on it. One gives you the opportunity to add anything extra you want to contribute to the discussion we have just had. The other asks if participating in the group has changed your thinking about anything.

I would be grateful if you could now fill them out.

(Questions were worded)
- Is there anything you want to say about relationships and young people that you did not say to the group?
- Has participating in the group made you change your mind about anything
APPENDIX - B

FOCUS GROUP IMAGES

Image 1    ‘Save the Last Dance for me’

Image 2    ‘Movie Couple’ (this image can be viewed vertically or horizontally to produce different meanings)

Image 3    ‘Hey Sister!’

Image 4    ‘Love’

Image 5    ‘The Oldies’

Image 6    ‘Latin Lovers’

Image 7    Maori Couple

Image 8    Pacific Island Couple
**love** *noun*

Fondness; charity; an affection of the mind caused by that which delights; a kindness, a favour done; i.e. brings tea in bed every Sunday morning; a devoted attachment to one of the opposite sex; sexual attachment; a love affair.

Used as a term of endearment or affection, a phrase such as "I fancy you like rotten"; the mere pleasure of playing, without stakes: in some games, no score.
Participant Consent form for Focus Group Discussion

• I consent to participation in the research project about girlfriend/boyfriend relationships conducted by Louisa Allen, which will involve my participation in a focus group discussion.

• I understand that my identity will be protected in the writing up of the project through the use of pseudonyms, and sufficient alteration of my personal details so that I am not recognisable to those who know me.

• I consent to the use of anonymous extracts from the transcripts in Louisa Allen’s PhD thesis. These anonymous extracts may also be used in associated publications such as conference papers and articles. Some may also be used as illustrative materials in lectures.

• I understand that at the completion of the study all tape recordings and transcripts will be destroyed.

• Should I wish to stop the focus group discussion I am participating in because I feel uncomfortable, I may do so at any time.

• I consent to the focus group discussion being tape recorded.

BEFORE SIGNING THIS FORM YOU MAY REQUEST AN INTERPRETER BY USE OF THE FOLLOWING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>I wish to have an interpreter.</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maori</td>
<td>E hiahia ana ahau ki tetahi tangata hei korero Maori ki ahau.</td>
<td>Ae</td>
<td>Kao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samoan</td>
<td>Oute mana'o e iai se fa'amatala upu.</td>
<td>Ioe</td>
<td>Leai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tongan</td>
<td>'Oku fiema'u ha fakatonulea.</td>
<td>Io</td>
<td>Ikai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cook Island</td>
<td>Ka inangaro au i tetai tangata uri reo.</td>
<td>Ae</td>
<td>Kare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niuean</td>
<td>Fia manako au ke fakaaoa e tagata fakahokohoko vagahau.</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>Nakai</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Signed______________________________________________________

Date__________________________________________________________

Print Name____________________________________________________

Address________________________________________________________

Phone__________________________________________________________
APPENDIX - D

QUESTIONNAIRE
A QUESTIONNAIRE ABOUT

Girlfriend / Boyfriend Relationships

This questionnaire is designed to help me gain an understanding of
young people's relationships, for work I am doing towards a degree at
University.

Although the questionnaire asks you specifically about
girlfriend/boyfriend relationships it is recognised that these
relationships are no more 'normal' or important than other kinds of
relationships. For example homosexual relationships.

The questionnaire is voluntary. That means if you feel uncomfortable
about the content and do not want to fill it out, you should tell the
person distributing this questionnaire, before you go any further.

To help me get the best results from this questionnaire I would really
appreciate it if you could answer every question that is appropriate to
you, as truthfully and accurately as you can

Thanks Louisa
1. What is your date of birth? For example: 22.9.82
   
   Day _______ Month _______ Year______

2. *(Please circle one)* Female / Male

3. Are you religious? *(Please tick one)*
   
   Yes [ ] → Please Specify your religion __________

   No [ ]

4. Which describes you? *(Please tick)*
   
   I attend church regularly [ ]
   I only go to church occasionally [ ]
   I never go to church [ ]

5. With which ethnic group/s do you identify? *(Please tick)*
   
   Maori *(Please Specify iwi)* ______________________________ [ ]
   Pacific Islander *(Please Specify)* ______________________________ [ ]
   Asian *(Please Specify)* ______________________________ [ ]
   Pakeha/New Zealander/European *(Please Specify)* ______________________________ [ ]
   Other *(Please Specify)* ______________________________ [ ]

6. *(Please Answer parts A-D. Write Unemployed if not working or if you don't know because you don't have contact with your father/mother or s/he is no longer alive please state this)*
   
   A. What is your Father's job title?
      ____________________________________________

   B. Describe what kind of work your Father does
      ____________________________________________

   C. What is your Mother's job title?
      ____________________________________________

   D. Describe what kind of work your Mother does
      ____________________________________________
7. Which applies to you? (Note: A girlfriend or boyfriend is someone you have 'gone out with' / had a relationship with - for any period of time)  

(Please tick one only)  

☐ I am currently in a girlfriend/boyfriend relationship  
(Please go to question 8)  

☐ I have had a girlfriend/boyfriend relationship but I am not currently in one.  
(Please go to question 8)  

☐ I have never had a girlfriend/boyfriend relationship  
(Please go to question 13)  

8. Approximately what age were you when you started going out with boyfriends/girlfriends? (NB. 'Going out' means either dating on a regular basis or having one night stands with them)  

(Please Specify in years. For example 13 years old)__________________________  

9. How many girlfriends/boyfriends have you had?  
(For example: 1, 6, 20 etc) _____________________________________________  

10. Are your girlfriends/boyfriends usually........... (Please tick one only)  

Older than you ☐  
Younger than you ☐  
The Same Age as you ☐  
A mixture of older, younger and the same age ☐  

11. How long (to the nearest week, month or year) was........  

Your Longest relationship?_____________________________________________  

Your Shortest relationship?_____________________________________________  

If you are currently in a relationship how long have you been in this relationship?  
_________________________________________________
12. Please tick the box beside the statement that applies to you.

(NB. Sexually active means participating in petting (hugging, kissing) or sexual intercourse with someone.)

☐ I have been sexually active with a partner

☐ I have not been sexually active with a partner

13. Have you ever experienced any unwanted sexual activity or sexual type touching?

(Please tick one only)

Yes ☐ No ☐

What do I know about sexual activity?

14. Place a T for True or an F for False next to the statements according to what you believe.

☐ A woman will not become pregnant if she has sex standing up

☐ You can get AIDS from kissing

☐ A condom is 100% safe

☐ Men have greater sex drives than women

☐ Sexual activity can only occur between men and women

☐ Sexual intercourse under the age of 16 is illegal

15. At approximately what age did you first learn about sexual intercourse?

(Please Specify in years for example 7 years old)
16. Which things do you feel you are knowledgeable about in relation to sex? *(Please tick as many or as few boxes as you wish)*

- [ ] How to put on a condom.
- [ ] What turns a partner on.
- [ ] Getting what you want out of a sexual relationship.
- [ ] Sexual positions and techniques.
- [ ] How you can catch HIV/AIDS.
- [ ] What lesbianism is.
- [ ] What homosexuality is.
- [ ] The stages in the process of conception.
- [ ] What STDS are and how they are caught.
- [ ] How to avoid unwanted sexual activity.
- [ ] What Prostitution is.

17. From which sources have you learned the most about sex?

1 = Never consulted this
2 = Not useful
3 = Useful
4 = Very useful

*(Please circle the appropriate number)*

- [ ] The Internet
- [ ] Romantic Novels
- [ ] School sexuality education
- [ ] Educational books about sex
- [ ] Pornographic magazines
- [ ] Parents
- [ ] Other Family members
- [ ] Magazines for women
- [ ] Television
- [ ] Friends

18. How confident do you feel about your level of sexual knowledge?

*(Please tick one only)*

- [ ] Confident and Experienced
- [ ] Confident but Inexperienced
- [ ] Not Confident but Experienced
- [ ] Not Confident and Inexperienced
19. Do you think that your level of sexual knowledge has affected your relationships/or your ability to have relationships?
(Please Circle) Yes / No

If yes, how has your level of sexual knowledge affected your relationships?
(Please Describe) ____________________________________________

__________________________________________

About Me

20. How would you describe your body? Please choose three words from the following list

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perfect</th>
<th>Unique</th>
<th>Toned</th>
<th>Changing</th>
<th>Flabby</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hairy</td>
<td>Ugly</td>
<td>Useful</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Attractive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexy</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Skinny</td>
<td>Well Proportioned</td>
<td>Over weight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Feminine/Masculine</td>
<td>Lazy</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. ___________ 2. ___________ 3. ___________

Are there any other ways you would describe your body that are not listed?
(Please Specify) ____________________________________________

21. How sexy do you think you are?
1 = Very Sexy
2 = Sort of sexy
3 = Not sexy at all

(Please circle the appropriate number)

1 2 3

22. How would you describe your sexual desire?
1 = Very strong
2 = Average
3 = Weak
4 = None

1 2 3 4
23. Circle the number appropriate to what you do least and most with your body.

1 = Always  2 = Regularly  3 = Occasionally  4 = Never

(Please circle)
Think it is nice  1  2  3  4  Ignore it  1  2  3  4
Hate it  1  2  3  4  Hide it  1  2  3  4
Criticise it  1  2  3  4  Worry about it  1  2  3  4
Touch it  1  2  3  4  Enjoy it  1  2  3  4

24. What parts of your body do you get the most pleasure from? That is: those parts you like to touch or be touched, to smell or look at.

(Please choose your 3 most pleasurable parts from the list)
Genitals  Ears  Chest  Neck  Face  Legs
Back  Hands  Thighs  Tongue  Lips
Back side  Hair  Feet  Eyes  Stomach
1. 2. 3.

Are there are other parts of the body you find pleasurable that are not named? (Please Specify)

25. Which best describes your attitude towards sexual activity?

(Please circle the appropriate one)
It is something which is fun  Agree  Disagree
It is to be taken seriously by both partners  Agree  Disagree
It is risky  Agree  Disagree
It is over rated  Agree  Disagree
It increases your status amongst friends  Agree  Disagree
It is pleasurable  Agree  Disagree
It indicates your commitment to someone  Agree  Disagree
It should be reserved for marriage  Agree  Disagree

This question continues on the next page......
It is a loving experience  
I do it to please my partner  
I do it purely for my own satisfaction  
I do it because my friends are doing it  
It is disgusting and animal like  
It is private and intimate  
It is embarrassing  

26. Are you?  

(Please tick one only)

- Homosexual (A man who is sexually attracted to another man)  
- Lesbian (A woman who is sexually attracted to another woman)  
- Bisexual (A person who is sexually attracted to both sexes)  
- Heterosexual (A person who is sexually attracted to the opposite sex)  
- Not sure  
- Other (Please Specify) ____________

STOP

PLEASE NOTE: Only answer question 27 - 38 if you have been sexually active with a partner. (Sexually active means engaging in petting and/or sexual intercourse with a partner). Please go straight to number 38 if this does not apply to you.

27. Please choose 2 words that describe how you see yourself as a sexual partner

- Fun loving  
- Lustful  
- Lazy  
- Raunchy  
- Dominant  
- Affectionate  
- Spontaneous  
- Loving  
- Gentle  
- Impatient  
- Humorous  
- Kinky  
- Romantic  
- Caring  
- Assertive

1. ____________________________ 2. ____________________________

Are there other words you would use to describe yourself as a sexual partner? (Please Specify) ________________________________________________
28. Do you feel able to control the level and kinds of sexual activities that occur in a relationship with a partner?

☐ Yes  ☐ No  ☐ Sometimes

29. Which do you feel you have most control over? (Please Circle Appropriate Number)

1 = No control  2 = Some control  3 = Lots of control

Kinds of sexual activity
Contraception
How often to have sex

30. What parts of a partner turn you on most? (Please choose the 3 most attractive parts)

Genitals  Ears  Chest  Neck  Face  Legs
Back  Hands  Thighs  Tongue  Hair  Hair
Stomach  Feet  Eyes  Lips  Backside

1.  2.  3.

Are there other parts of the body you find sensual that are not named? (Please Specify)

31. Please complete the following sentences

What I find pleasurable about sexual activity is ............

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

32. What I do not find pleasurable about sexual activity is .........

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
28. Do you feel able to control the level and kinds of sexual activities that occur in a relationship with a partner?

☐ Yes  ☐ No  ☐ Sometimes

29. Which do you feel you have most control over? (Please Circle Appropriate Number)

1 = No control  2 = Some control  3 = Lots of control

Kinds of sexual activity  
1 2 3
Contraception  
1 2 3
How often to have sex  
1 2 3

30. What parts of a partner turn you on most? 
(Please choose the 3 most attractive parts)

Genitals  Ears  Chest  Neck  Face  Legs
Back  Hands  Thighs  Tongue  Hair  Hair
Stomach  Feet  Eyes  Lips  Backside

1. ____________________  2. ____________________  3. ____________________

Are there any other parts of the body you find sensual that are not named? (Please Specify)______________________________________________

31. Please complete the following sentences

What I find pleasurable about sexual activity is.............

______________________________________________

______________________________________________

______________________________________________

32. What I do not find pleasurable about sexual activity is...........

______________________________________________

______________________________________________

______________________________________________
33. What I want in a girlfriend/boyfriend relationship is

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

34. How would you express your sexual desires to a partner you knew well? *(Please tick one of the following)*

☐ By telling them
☐ By showing them what I like and want
☐ By telling and showing them what I like
☐ I don't express my sexual desires to my partner
☐ I wouldn't express my sexual desires to my partner *(Please specify why)*

________________________________________________________________________

35. The kinds of disagreements likely to arise in your relationship(s) about sexual activity are

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

36. Do you practice safer sex *(Please Tick One only)*

☐ Always  ☐ Sometimes  ☐ Never

37. Do you use contraceptives *(Please tick One only)*

☐ Always  ☐ Sometimes  ☐ Never  ☐ Have not had sexual intercourse

38. You Have Now Finished

THANK YOU

For Your Co-operation
Interview Schedule for Individual Interviews

Warm up questions
Can you tell me a little bit about yourself like where you grew up, your family, what your plans are for this year?

- Background to the relationship
- Can you tell me about your relationship? How would you describe it?
  Prompts
  - how they feel about the relationship
  - how they conceptualise it
  - how long have they been going out
  - how old is the partner
  - how would you describe the emotional part of the relationship
  - are you in love with the person or in lust with them?

- Can you tell me about how you met

Dating / Desire / Decision making

- Thinking back on how your relationship with has developed can you tell me about points or times when the relationship changed or developed in some way to bring it to where it is now?
  Prompts
  - relationship development/stages

- This question might be a bit embarrassing but can you tell me a little bit about the sexual side of your relationship?
  Prompts
  - are they engaging in sexual intercourse or petting
  - at what stage in the relationship did this start
  - how long have they been sexually active for (is this their first relationship)
  - how important sexual activity is in the relationship (would they still be in the relationship if there was no sexual activity?)
  - has sexual activity taken place with anyone else while you have been in this relationship?

- Can you tell me about how you came to make the decision to have sexual intercourse?
  Prompts
  - who suggested it
  - how did s/he feel about it
  - how did they know the time was right

- Can you tell me a little bit about the first time you had sexual intercourse with your current partner?
  Prompts
  - was it planned
  - where did it happen
  - how did they feel about it afterwards. If they were virgins was it as good as they thought it would be. How did it rate with their other experiences of previous partners
  - is it more or less pleasurable now?
• Can you tell me a bit about satisfaction and pleasure and the sexual activity you are engaged in with your partner?
  Prompts
  - is it pleasurable or isn’t it pleasurable why? Why not?
  - orgasms - were they something you learned together or did they have them before (girls only)
  - what is more important pleasing yourself or your partner - why
  - how do you know what the other person finds pleasurable
  - how do you know what you find pleasurable in sexual activity
  - negotiation of pleasure
  - have you ever experienced any physical barriers to satisfying sexual activity such as premature ejaculation

• How would you describe you and your partner’s sexual desire?
  Prompts
  - which partner wants sex the most
  - how are differences negotiated
  - how do they think they measure against the stereotype of males being more horny than females?
  - was their expectation of what males and females are supposed to be like sexually true or false in their experience of relationships? In this relationship?

• Do you use contraception?
• Do you practice safer sex?
• Can you tell me about how you came to the decision to use contraception and practice safer sex? (change this question into not use and not practice safer sex if the participants answer is negative)
  Prompts
  - what stage in the relationship was this
  - who introduced the idea
  - whose job is it to remember the condoms?

• Is there anything about the sexual part of the relationship that you would change?
  Prompts
  - why
  - have they tried too
  - What response have they been met with

Sexual subjectivity
• What sorts of things come to mind when you think about how you view your body and your current sexual relationship?
  Prompts
  - what kind of body image do they have?
  - why do you think you feel that way about your body where have you got those ideas from?

• How might the way you feel about your body affect the kinds of sexual activity you take part in?
  (if the guys say nothing ask why they think it is so difficult to think about their bodies)

• Some people worry about not being good enough as a sexual partner. Can you tell me what you think about yourself as a sexual partner in your current relationship?
• **Knowing**

• What sorts of things come to mind if I ask you about your sexual knowledge and how you think of yourself as a sexual person?

• Sometimes how much you know about sexual activity can affect your experience of it: what about in your relationship?

**FINAL QUESTIONS**

12. Can you tell me how you see your relationship progressing?

13. What about other people’s relationships? In what ways do you think they are similar or different to yours?

**WHEN THE TAPE RECORDER IS TURNED OFF?**

At the end of the interview I will ask the interviewees how they found the interview. Was it difficult to talk about the things I asked? Did they feel uncomfortable? How could I alter the situation to be more comfortable for them? Has the interview made them think about anything differently?
APPENDIX - F

PLEASURE SHEET
If and whether you feel your desires are being met.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DESIRABLE</th>
<th>IF DESIRABLE DO YOU HAVE THIS IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP?</th>
<th>NOT DESIRABLE</th>
<th>THIS COLUMN IS FOR ANY COMMENTS YOU WANT TO MAKE ABOUT EACH OF THE STATEMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Companionship</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being able to love someone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being loved by someone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual fulfilment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Support from your partner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honesty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your wishes respected with regards to sexual activity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling sexually attracted to your partner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your partner finds you sexually attractive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Your needs are taken into consideration in decisions concerning the relationship</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sexual Fidelity = both partners only participate in sexual activity with each other</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Referring to the current relationship you are in, please tick the appropriate box(s)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Activity</th>
<th>Pleasurable</th>
<th>Not Pleasurable</th>
<th>Don't do this Activity</th>
<th>Have done this with other partners</th>
<th>Was Pleasurable with another partner</th>
<th>Was not Pleasurable with another partner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hugging</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Kissing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sexual Intercourse</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oral Sex</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mutual masturbation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anal Sex</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sexual touching</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sharing sexual fantasies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other: Please Specify</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
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<td>2.</td>
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<td>3.</td>
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<td>4.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX - G

ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL

Letter 1  Cambridge Psychology Research Ethics Committee
Letter 2  North Health Ethics Committee
8 September, 1997

Dear Miss Allen

Application for ethical approval of a research project: Young Heterosexuals: Knowledge, Subjectivity and Practice

Thank you for your letter dated 2 August 1997. The Chairman has considered the documentation provided by you and has agreed that all the conditions raised by the Committee, in my letter dated 26 June 1997, have been met. I am pleased to be able to tell you that the Chairman, on behalf of the Cambridge Psychology Research Ethics Committee, has agreed to give ethical approval to the research project entitled ‘Young Heterosexuals: Knowledge, Subjectivity and Practice’ as set out in your original submission and your letter dated 2 August 1997.

On behalf of the Committee I would remind you that the Committee attach certain standard conditions to all ethical approval. These are:

(a) that if the staff conducting the research should change, any new staff should read the application submitted to the Committee for ethical approval and this letter (and any subsequent letter I may write concerning this application for ethical approval)

(b) that if the procedures used in the research project should change or the project itself should be changed you should consider whether it is necessary to submit a further application for any modified or additional procedures to be approved

(c) that if the employment or departmental affiliation of the staff should change you should notify me of that fact.
The Committee also ask that if you should encounter any unexpected ethical issues, you will inform them of what these are.

Yours sincerely

[Louise Woollard]
Secretary
29 October 1997

Ms LA Ellen
2/4 Beach Road
Milford
Auckland

Dear Ms Allen

97/216  YOUNG HETEROSEXUALS: KNOWLEDGE, SUBJECTIVITY AND PRACTICE

Your application, which was received by this office today, will be considered by Ethics Committee Y at the meeting on 12 November 1997.

If you wish to attend the meeting, please contact me a few days prior to the meeting and I will allocate you a specific time.

Yours sincerely

Sandra Haydon
Secretary
Ethics Committees
APPENDIX - H

LETTER INTRODUCING RESEARCH
Dear Board of Trustees,

In 1996 the Education Review Office conducted a report on Reproductive and Sexual Health Education which found ‘few schools review and modify their programmes in order to improve student satisfaction or teacher performance’ (p.31 Ministry of Health). I am a New Zealander who is a doctoral student from the University of Cambridge who wants to help schools further review and improve their sexuality programmes. Research suggests that what young people learn from sexuality education programmes may not be put into practice because they feel it has little relevance or interest to their experiences (Massey, 1996). The research I propose, will explore what sexual knowledge young people have, which of this knowledge they use and why. The Health Research Council of New Zealand have granted me a scholarship in order that this information may be used by sexuality educators to not only provide young people with more satisfaction from their sexuality programmes, but from their relationships as well.

Sally Hughes from Family Planning suggested I send you this letter to ask you to consider our school’s participation in this research project which would occur over the year I am in New Zealand (July 1997-July 1998). Volunteer students (17 to 19 years) would participate in:

Focus groups (There would be only one or two focus groups per school consisting of 5-8 students)
An anonymous written questionnaire (distributed to 50 students in the seventh form)
Individual Interviews (For students who after completing the questionnaire want to be interviewed)
Couple interviews (Only for students who have been interviewed)

Those who participate in these would be asked what they believe their sexual knowledge to be, how they conceive of themselves as sexual people and the effect they see these things having on their practice.

This project has undergone ethical approval by the University of Cambridge Psychology Research Ethics Committee and therefore adheres to its regulations. The research is also currently under review by the North Health Ethics Committee in order that the research has been ethically approved by a body in New Zealand.
To ensure your school receives the full benefit of this research, I will provide students with feedback on these findings and present them to you in a written report.

Should you wish to discuss this project further I am happy to meet with you to answer any questions.

Thank you for giving consideration to this research. I am sure you are aware of the importance of understanding how young people use the knowledge they gain from sources such as sexuality programmes. No matter how comprehensive a sexuality education programme is, there will still be young people who fail to put its messages into practice. Understanding the motives and circumstances of these people is one of the many challenges sexuality education faces.

Yours sincerely

Louisa Allen

Should you wish to contact my New Zealand supervisor her details are as follows
Sue Middleton (Associate Professor)
School of Education, Te Kura Toi Tangata
University of Waikato, Te Whare Wananga O Waikato
Private Bag 3105
Hamilton

Ph. 07 838 4500
Fax. 07 838 4555
Home ph. 07 8555922
email educ_mid@waikato.ac.nz
APPENDIX - I

INFORMATION SHEET ABOUT RESEARCH
Young People’s Negotiation of Girlfriend/Boyfriend Relationships

1. What’s it all about?
   My name is Louisa Allen and I’d like to invite you to take part in research I am doing about girlfriend/boyfriend relationships for a degree at University. The study has been made possible by a grant from the Health Research Council of New Zealand and the findings will be used to help make young people’s experience of relationships more positive and fulfilling.

2. Do I have to take part?
   Your participation is entirely voluntary (your choice) and it is your right not to take part if you don’t want too. If at any point in the research you no longer wanted to participate you can withdraw without providing a reason.

3. What would taking part in the research involve?
   You have the choice of participating in one or both parts of the research. The first part involves filling out an anonymous, (you don’t need to put your name on it) questionnaire which takes about 25 minutes. The questionnaire asks you about girlfriend/boyfriend relationships and how you understand yourself as a sexual person. Some of the questions are of a personal nature, so if you think this might make you uncomfortable remember you only need to take part if you want to, and feel comfortable doing this.

The second part of the research is for those who are currently in a steady relationship and would be willing to have their partner and themselves take part in an interview with me. This interview would ask

Principal Investigator: Louisa Allen MA (hons) ph. 09 4108380
Supervisor: Associate Professor Sue Middleton School of Education, University of Waikato Ph. 07 838 4500
each partner specifically about the relationship they are in. There would be one interview with each of you separately and then a session when you would discuss things together. Each interview would take around half an hour and be held out side of school time. With your consent the interview would be tape recorded.

4. **Who can take part?**

   You can take part in the study if you are between 17-19 years old. Around four hundred 17-19 year olds who have either left school or are currently in the sixth or seventh form will be involved in the study. To take part in the questionnaire you don't have to currently be in a girlfriend/boyfriend relationship or have ever had one.

5. **Where will the research take place?**

   The questionnaire will be held at school. Interviews will be arranged at you and your partner's convenience and held where ever you would feel most comfortable.

6. **How will I benefit from the research?**

   This research aims to make sexuality education more positive and empower young people. The findings will form the basis for making improvements to existing sexuality programmes. There is very little research in New Zealand that has collected information from young people themselves, about their experiences of relationships and how they understand their sexuality. This sort of information is important so that those who work with young people in schools and the community can take account of these experiences in their dealings with them.

7. **What about Confidentiality?**

   No material which could personally identify you will be used in any reports on this study. Your name and personal details will be changed so you can not be identified by those who know you. At the end of the research all tapes and written copies of interviews will be destroyed.

8. **Statement of Approval**

   This study has received ethical approval from the North Health Ethics and Cambridge Psychology Ethics committees.

9. **Health Advocates Trust**

   If you have any queries or concerns regarding your rights as a participant in this research you may contact the Health Advocates Trust phone. 623 5799.

Please feel free to contact the researcher if you have any questions about the study.
APPENDIX - J

LETTER SUPPORTING RESEARCH BY
NEW ZEALAND SUPERVISOR
TO:

Dear

As detailed on the attached memorandum from the University of Cambridge Board of Graduate Studies, I am acting supervisor for Ms Louisa Allen while she is in New Zealand gathering data for her doctoral research.

I hope your school is able to participate in this project. In return for your support, Louisa and I will ensure that your school is kept informed about the findings. The information will be very useful to you in planning your sexuality education programmes.

I commend Louisa to you as someone who will approach the topic, the young people, and the staff with sensitivity, discretion, and openness.

If you have any concerns or questions about the project, don’t hesitate to get in touch with me.

Yours sincerely

Sue Middleton (Associate Professor)

Phone:
work: 07 8384500
Home: 07 8555922

Fax:
work: 07 7 8384555

e-mail:
educ_mid@waikato.ac.nz
APPENDIX - K

ETHNIC COMPOSITION OF MAIN GROUPS
FROM QUESTIONNAIRE SAMPLE
**Ethnic Composition of Questionnaire Sample**

**Ethnic Break Down of Main Groupings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maori</th>
<th>Pacific Island</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Pakeha</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iwi* Groupings</td>
<td>Ethnic Groups</td>
<td>Ethnic Groups</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>Arab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngati Kahuna</td>
<td>Samoan</td>
<td>Cambodian</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>Brazilian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngati Porou</td>
<td>Cook Island</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>South African</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tainui</td>
<td>Nueian</td>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>Finnish</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nga Puhi</td>
<td>Tongan</td>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngai Tahu</td>
<td>Fijian</td>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maniapoto</td>
<td>Raratongan</td>
<td>Taiwanese</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Te Arawa</td>
<td>Is of Kiribati</td>
<td>Malaysian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Te Aupouri</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tamil Indian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngati Hine</td>
<td></td>
<td>Nepalese</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuwhare Toa</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fijian Indian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngati Te Rangi</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngati Whatua</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngati Kuri</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Iwi* = Maori tribal affiliation
APPENDIX - L

COUPLE CONSENT FORM
Participant Consent Form For Interviews and Activities

• I consent to participation in the research project about heterosexual couples conducted by Louisa Alien, which will involve my participation in interviews and couple activities.

• I understand that there is potential for disagreement between myself and my girlfriend/boyfriend in the joint interviews and that I may withdraw from them at any time if I feel this is a problem.

• I consent to the activity and interview sessions being tape recorded.

• I understand that my identity will be protected in the writing up of the project through the use of pseudonyms, and sufficient alteration of my personal details so that I am not recognisable to those who know me.

• I consent to the use of anonymous extracts from the transcripts in Louisa Alien’s PhD thesis. These anonymous extracts may also be used in associated publications such as conference papers and articles. Some may also be used as illustrative materials in lectures.

• I understand that at the completion of the study all tape recordings and transcripts will be destroyed.

• Should I wish to stop the interview or activity I am participating in because I feel uncomfortable, I may do so at any time.

• I also understand I am free to withdraw from the project at any time.

BEFORE SIGNING THIS FORM YOU MAY REQUEST AN INTERPRETER BY USE OF THE FOLLOWING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Translation</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>I wish to have an interpreter.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maori</td>
<td>E hiahia ana ahau ki tetahi tangata hei korero Maori ki ahau.</td>
<td>Ae</td>
<td>Kao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samoan</td>
<td>Oute mana’o e iai se fa’amatala upu.</td>
<td>Ioe</td>
<td>Leai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tongan</td>
<td>‘Oku fiema’u ha fakatonulea.</td>
<td>Io</td>
<td>Ikai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cook Island</td>
<td>Ka inangaro au i tetai tangata uri reo.</td>
<td>Ae</td>
<td>Kare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niuean</td>
<td>Fia manako au ke faka’aoga e tagata fakahokohoko vagahau.</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>Nakai</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX - M

SUBJECT’S RESPONSES TO THE SURVEY QUESTION:

‘WHAT I FIND PLEASURABLE ABOUT SEXUAL ACTIVITY IS.......’
Sample of actual responses from respondents under coded main themes to the question:

‘What I find pleasurable about sexual activity is.......’

NB. The responses are as the subjects wrote them without spelling alterations.

1. Activities other than sex
   The foreplay before hand (Moa 10, Female)
   Oral Sex (Catering 3, Female)
   Oral sex (Huia 28, Female)
   Hugging (Tui 7, Female)
   Being touched in a loving way, talking (Community Care 3, Female)
   Oral Sex (Huia 61, Male)
   Foreplay (Fitness 2, Male)
   Kissing, Fondling (Kiwi 41, Male)
   Talking and being touched by my partner (Tui 27, Male)
   Just you and your partner alone together and just holding them (Tui 31, Male)

2. Desiring Someone
   It's fund to feel wanted - and make someone else feel wanted (Ruru 5, Female)
   That it is with someone I love and desire (Ruru 7, Female)
   Loving the other partner and caring (Computing 6, Male)
   Fun. Animal lust (Huia 27, Male)

3. Being desired
   Being with someone, feeling wanted (Tui 12, Female)
   The closeness with another person and the feeling of being wanted (Kiwi 9, Female)
   The feeling of someone wanting you (Kiwi 10, Female)
   Knowing that someone likes my body and wants to touch me (Kea 20, Female)
   It's so intimate. It makes you feel wanted and loved (Huia 31, Female)
   It makes you feel wanted by someone (Kiwi 49, Male)
   That someone likes me enough to do that with me (Huia 62, Male)
   Driving women nuts (Service 3, Male)

4. Being in Control
   Feeling comfortable enough to let loose and be able to have a say in what happens (Moa 13, Female)
   Being the dominant one or sometimes being dominated. (Fitness 16, Female)
   That I rule (Kea 26, Female)
   I call the shots, it's my decision to do whatever I want to (Kea 38, Female)
   The way it makes me feel, dominance over men (Ruru 46, Female)
   The power (Farming 2, Male)
   Being the dominant one (Fitness 10, Male)
   Taking some control (Tui 32, Male)
5. Feelings of embodiment (ie. acknowledgement of pleasurable corporeal feelings)
The feeling of having my partner inside my body. The closeness of bodies together (Kea 24, Female)
The feeling, being close to my partner - a little bit naughty (Business 3. 4, Female)
The closeness involved and the feeling of naked skin together (Business 1. 6, Female)
The orgasm (Fitness 18, Female)
I love kissing and touching. I like the excitement during, being in my partners arms afterwards (Tui 9, Female)
The feeling of the penis going in and out of me and him touching me all over and feeling me (Community Care 5, Female)
My partner's body against mine (Huia 18, Male)
The presence (physical and mental) of a female. Being physically stimulated. (Kahu 4, Male)
Feeling, kissing, staring, hugging (Design 5, Male)
Slow touching, and getting hot/sweaty (Ruru 51, Male)

6. Learning / Experimentation
The togetherness and experimenting (Business 1. 24, Female)
That you can experiment with the person that you love and nobody else gets to share that with him (Business 1. 7, Female)
Experimenting with new and different activities (Business 1. 5, Female)
Its really nice feeling and doing new things (Tui 6, Female)
It feels good. Its special and you learn a lot about the other person (Kiwi 50, Female)
That you can learn how to do it (Ruru 48, Female)
A good experience (Ruru 10, Male)
Well you go and try every position there is and when you think you have got the right position. Sweet as. (Business 1, Male)

7. Mutual Activity (ie. the feeling of equality or that this is a shared activity)
Feeling of comfortable enough to let loose and be able to have a say in what happens (Moa 13, Female)
That its normally a two-way thing, there is pleasing for both partners. (Catering 1, Female)
Foreplay, holding, nakedness, joint decision (Fitness 21, Female)
I like to think that my partner is getting what he wants, but also wants to make sure I'm happy. (Community Care 1, Female)
Sharing it with a partner (Huia 24, Female)
The involvement of both partners doing what they both enjoy (Kiwi 34, Female)
The neutralism involved (Kiwi 40, Male)
Closeness and sharing (Tui 38, Male)
8. Pleasure/enjoyment *(ie. Sex as fun)*

Enjoying being with my partner (Tui 19, Female)
That I can have fun and do what I want to do in a fun manor feeling loved and held close by someone (Tui 9, Female)
It’s fun being touched etc (Tui, 3 Female)
The fun two people can have together experiencing love and enjoyment (Tui 22, Female)
You get enjoyment from both sides (Kiwi 43, Female)
Lots of things! Being open, comfortable and able to enjoy myself (Kea 2, Female)
It’s fun and enjoyable (Kea 23, Female)
The intimacy and love and fun (Huia 52, Female)
It can be so much fun with the right partner (Ruru 36, Female)
Having fun with your partner and exploring their body (Professional 4, Male)
That it is fun and a loving and caring thing (Design 2, Male)
I love the fun of it. Very exciting (Design 8, Male)
Fun (Ruru 47, Male)
Its fun (Huia 55, Male)
That it is fun and it brings another level of the relationship ie. a commitment (Kiwi 60, Male)
The level of enjoyment I get from it, and the pleasure I give (Kiwi 37, Male)
Lots of fun (Kiwi 29, Male)
Its fun and exilerating (Tui 2, Male)

9. Pleasurableness of Emotional Intimacy

The intimacy and love I feel while engaging in it (Moa 5, Female)
The closeness and affection between two people (Moa 4, Female)
Finding each others level of feeling combining this to be together in mind, body and feeling a higher degree of closeness (Moa 2, Female)
The bonding; of being with someone you know and really trust and be able to do something so intimate. (Office 3, Female)
The feeling of closeness to my partner when we do it as a sign of love not lust (Business 3. 1, Male)
That I can be with a person who is so intimate they are willing to share these feelings (Huia 34, Male)
Making love to the person that you love. Not just getting satisfied physically but the whole being (Huia, 1 Male)
The thought of being with someone you love (Kiwi 3, Male)

10. Relief / Relaxation

The fore-play and how much relaxed I feel after intercourse (Fitness 9, Female)
Love and the feeling of release (stress) (Huia 4, Female)
It’s relaxing and claming. It fulfils something (Community Care 2, Female)
That we are doing it and it bring a lot of stress relief on us both (Farming 5, Female)
It is relaxing (Fitness 8, Male)
That it makes me feel good and let off a bit of steam (Business 1. 11, Male)
11. Togetherness / Closeness
The closeness and affection between two people (Moa 4, Female)
The feeling of closeness, perhaps and feeling safer (Moa 8, Female)
The intimacy and the feeling and the bond afterwards (Computing 5, Female)
The closeness of 2 people (Business 1. 23, Female)
Being close (Business 1. 10, Female)
Being close to someone I love (Mothers 2, Female)
Being close to the guy I love (Mothers 3, Female)
Feeling close to the person because I care about them (Community care 4, Female)
Feeling you get when you are close to them (Kiwi 25, Male)
Being close to my partner (Kiwi 30, Male)
Feeling of being so close to someone (Kiwi 62, Male)
One to one contact (Fitness 17, Male)
The intimacy and privacy (Business 3. 4, Male)

12. Touching someone else
Being touched. Everything. Touching (Mothers 1, Female)
The feeling of touching someone (Kiwi 14, Female)
Touching and climax (Moa 3, Female)
Kissing, hugging and touching him (Kea 25, Female)
Exploring their body (Professional 7, Male)
Feeling her (Design 7, Male)

13. Way of increasing emotional intimacy
It makes two people that much closer and able to know that much more about themselves and each other (Service 2, Female)
It's just you and your partner to get really close to the person closer than you have ever been (Buisness 2, Female)
The total intomisey (spelling?) that comes from it, it makes people really close (Tui 29, Female)
It creates a bond between two people and is a way of showing them how much you care for them (Kiwi 4, Male)
It is really enjoyable and helps strengthen our relationship (Design 8, Male)
APPENDIX - N

SUBJECT’S RESPONSES TO THE SURVEY QUESTION:

‘WHAT I DO NOT FIND PLEASURABLE ABOUT SEXUAL ACTIVITY IS.......’
Sample of actual responses under coded themes to the question,

‘What I do not find pleasurable about sexual activity is.......’

NB. The responses are as the subjects wrote them without spelling alterations.

1. Coercion / Force

Someone who is forceful and just expects you to do what they want (Moa 13, Female)
When you hear about date rape and when you are involved in a sexual relationship that you can be scared of your partner at times (Moa 8, Female)
When I don’t want to! (Moa 3, Female)
Being told or expected to do certain activities that I don’t want to (Computing 1, Female)
If my partner is trying to force themself on me. (Business 1.5, Female)
Being dominated (Fitness 8, Male)
Pressure (Kiwi 30, Male)
Overpowering (Kiwi 29, Male)
Dominise (Fitness 17, Male)

2. Particular types of sexual activity

Unwanted touching, no sharing. (Catering 1, Female)
Dirty shit like BJ’s. One way jobs - it’s not what sex is about to me. (Business 1.1, Female)
Him trying to turn me on by cliteral stimulation, or around my breasts (Community Care 6, Female)
Doing it doggy style or any other degrading styles (Tui 28, Female)
Doggy style, I like being able to see my partners face. I hate plain sex, I like feeling loved during sex, styles like doggystyle make me feel used. (Tui 34, Female)
Kissing (Tui 7, Female)
Anal sex (Huia 32, Female)
Being too kinky ie. anus sex (Ruru 34, Female)
People who take it so fast (Professional 2, Male)
Annal sex (Huia 1, Male)
Foreplay (Huia 53, Male)
Kinky partner wanting sexual intercourse (Kiwi 6, Male)
Anal touching (Kiwi 3, Male)
3. Lack/Not enough of sexual activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When it’s too short!!! (Moa 15, Female)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Something that is over and done with in 5 minutes (Kiwi 13, Female)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whenever you want him, he’s conveniently not there. (Huia 7, Female)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t like stopping. (Moa 5, Female)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A short one (Professional 4, Male)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somebody turning you on and saying wait wait wait (Business 1. 3, Male)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I’m not getting any (Design 8, Male)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When it is finished (Ruru 3, Male)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finishing (Huia 34, Male)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If the person says they would like to, you get there, then they think twice. But you have to respect this. (Tui 32, Male)</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not having it (Tui 16, Male)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Unpleasant emotional feelings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When he is only in it for himself (Business 1. 7, Female)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guys taking it forgranted. Not always doing what I want to do. (Community Care 4, Female)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If something embarrassing happens or regrets (Tui 20, Female)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes no trust (Tui 1, Female)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being embarrassed (Kea 2, Female)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If your not with the scene, thinking about something else in a bad mood. (Huia 26, Female)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When there is no exchange of emotions (no real love / caring) (Business 2. 1, Male)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The moning and arguments (Computing 6, Male)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could sometimes be embaressing (Service 4, Male)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risks of hurt (Design 6, Male)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The guilt that folows if I only did it for the sake of sex (Business 3. 1, Male)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissapointment (Huia 27, Male)</td>
<td>27</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rejection (Kiwi 36 , Male)</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repocusition - if not with right person / right reason (Kahu 5, Male)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Unpleasant feelings associated with the body

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sweaty bodies (Moa 11, Female)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The aching or pain that you get after the sexual activity (Computing 3, Female)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slimey feeling. Afterwards (Business 1. 21, Female)</td>
<td>21</td>
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<tr>
<td>The sweatiness (Business 1. 17, Female)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting Thrush - I get it real easy (Community Care 3, Female)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When it hurts (Tui 13, Female)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When it hurts (Tui 9, Female)
It really hurt the first couple of times (Tui 6, Female)
if they are not gentel and it hurts (Kiwi 14, Female)
My own body / self image (Kiwi 15, Female)
Actual penetration can still hurt sometimes (Kea 28, Female)
Sometimes it can hurt (Huia 70, Female)
Sometimes feeling self conscious about my body. Sometimes not wanting to
do some things. (Kahu 7, Female)
Fanny farts (Fitness 5, Male)
Intense pain, kinky pain is ok, Hurting is destructive (Fitness 13, Male)
Getting butt naked (Business 3. 16, Male)
Nervousness. Boringness. My body. (Kahu 4, Male)
The naked bit (Tui 2, Male)

6. Risks associated with sexual activity eg. AIDS

Worrying about contraception - is it safe. (Buisness 1. 22, Female)
Getting pregnant (Business 2.1, Female)
You have to be really careful about things eg. Contraception (Kiwi 43,
Female)
Worrying about getting pregnant (Huia 67, Female)
That you can catch STDs, get pregnant, especially when your partner doesn’t
really care about you! (Ruru 36, Female)
Some conoquences eg pregnancy, STD’s (Ruru 33, Female)
Getting AIDS (Farming 6, Male)
Risky (Ruru 11, Male)
Risks (Huia 63, Male)
Babies (Kiwi 17, Male)
It can be dangerous (Huia 55, Male)
Risks, worrying afterwards (Kiwi 62, Male)
Risks involved (Kiwi 48, Male)
Certain consequences which may happen. For example with sexual
intercourse there may be guilt, risk of unwanted pregnancy, and the
disapproval of partners parents. (Mechanics 1, Male)

7. Condom / Contraception hassles

The worry over the contraception and the fact that it becomes an urgency, I
wouldn’t like to be dependent on it (Moa 1, Female)
Having to use contraception (condom) (Business 3. 4, Female)
When we have to stop to put condom on (Service 1, Female)
I don’t like to use a condom because it feels like a rubber thing. Partner hates
it to. (Community Care 5, Female)
Condoms, the after mess, smell. (Huia 9, Female)
The messy stuff like condoms etc (Huia 2, Female)
Wearing a condom. It stops most of the feeling. (Huia 39, Male)
The problems it can cause between people, the risk eg broken condom etc.  
(Kiwi 37, Male)

### 8. Lack of privacy

Sometime (not very often) around certain people things can become uncomfortable eg. kissing around family, sisters. (Business 1.9, Female)  
Having no place to be comfortable doing it, or not being in the right mood for sex. (Farming 5, Female)  
Friends being nosey about and wanting to know all the details and rumours that can spread (Tui 22, Female)  
People wanting to know (Ruru 29, Male)  
Not much / having to worry about parents walking in etc. no real privacy anywhere (Kiwi 25, Male)  
Chicks who tell everybody about it (Tui 31, Male)

### 9. How far to go

Being unsure of how far to go (Kiwi 47, Female)  
Going that far (having sex) (Kea 8, Female)  
Scared of having sex (Kea 9, Female)

### 10. Nothing

Very little (Moa 12, Female)  
Nothing (Catering 2, Female)  
Nothing. I love sex (Business 3.2, Female)  
There's nothing really I don't find pleasurable (Business 3.4, Female)  
Nothing (Business 1.24, Female)  
I don't find anything not pleasurable (Mothers 2, Female)  
I don't find anything not pleasurable because if something is unpleasurable I say so. (Community Care 2, Female)  
Nothing. I always make sure I'm completely comfortable with all sexual activity (Kiwi 42, Female)  
Nothing (Ruru 20, Female)  
Nothing (Mechanics 2, Male)  
Nothing (Mechanics 3, Male)  
Nothing (Design 1, Male)  
There's really nothing that I don't find pleasurable about sexual activity (Design 7, Male)  
Nothing (Ruru 10, Male)  
Nothing (Huia 61, Male)  
No unpleasurable things have happened (Huia 41, Male)  
Nothing (Kiwi 57, Male)  
Nothing (Tui 27, Male)
8. Lack of privacy

Sometime (not very often) around certain people things can become uncomfortable eg. kissing around family, sisters. (Business 1. 9, Female)
Having no place to be comfortable doing it, or not being in the right mood for sex. (Farming 5, Female)
Friends being nosey about and wanting to know all the details and rumours that can spread (Tui 22, Female)
People wanting to know (Ruru 29, Male)
Not much / having to worry about parents walking in etc. no real privacy anywhere (Kiwi 25, Male)
Chicks who tell everybody about it (Tui 31, Male)

9. How far to go

Being unsure of how far to go (Kiwi 47, Female)
Going that far (having sex) (Kea 8, Female)
Scared of having sex (Kea 9, Female)

10. Nothing

Very little (Moa 12, Female)
Nothing (Catering 2, Female)
Nothing. I love sex (Business 3. 2, Female)
There’s nothing really I don’t find pleasurable (Buisness 3. 4, Female)
Nothing (Business 1. 24, Female)
I don’t find anything not pleasurable (Mothers 2, Female)
I don’t find anything not pleasurable because if something is unpleasurable I say so. (Community Care 2, Female)
Nothing. I always make sure I’m completely comfortable with all sexual activity (Kiwi 42, Female)
Nothing (Ruru 20, Female)
Nothing (Mechanics 2, Male)
Nothing (Mechanics 3, Male)
Nothing (Design 1, Male)
Theres really nothing that I don’t find pleasurable about sexual activity (Design 7, Male)
Nothing (Ruru 10, Male)
Nothing (Huia 61, Male)
No unpleasurable things have happened (Huia 41, Male)
Nothing (Kiwi 57, Male)
Nothing (Tui 27, Male)
11. Don’t know
I don’t know (Farming 3, Male)
I don’t know (Ruru 24, Male)

12. Messiness of sexual activity
Sweaty bodies (Moa 11, Female)
The mess (Computing 2, Female)
The mess afterwards (Business 10, Female)
Having to clean up the come afterwards (Business 1. 23, Female)
Sperm - mess (Business 1. 6, Female)
It can get quite messy both physical and mentally (Kiwi 23, Female)
When in uncomfortable positions, sweat / wetness etc (Kiwi 52, Female)
Afterwards, its all sweaty and wet (Huia 3, Female)
Condoms, the after mess, smell. (Huia 9, Female)
Having to go clean up afterwards (Huia 20, Female)
The messyness of it. I don’t dig sex that much (Kahu 3, Female)
The mess afterwards (Computing 8, Male)
Sweating (Fitness 10, Male)
The left over results, ie. wet patch. (Ruru 32, Male).
The wet patch (Huia 40, Male)
Afterwards - wet patch (Huia 11, Male)
Mess (Kiwi 17, Male)
That it’s messy (Tui 21, Male)
APPENDIX - O

SUM SCORES OF BODY PERCEPTION FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRE
Sum Scores of Young Women and Men's Body Perception

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>Mean Score</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Young Women</td>
<td>11.7809</td>
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<tr>
<td>Young Men</td>
<td>12.8429</td>
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</table>

SCALE OF SCORES

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>All (very)Positive</th>
<th>Neutral Feeling</th>
<th>All (very)Negative</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
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<td>Negative</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
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</tbody>
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A


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Bibliography


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Bibliography


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**N**


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R


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Bibliography


Bibliography


Bibliography