

**Are young women free to say no? Young women's perceptions and observations about  
agency in negotiating sexual intimacy**

**Thandi Madziakapita**

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**Department of Psychology**

**Faculty of Humanities**

**University of Cape Town**

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**Supervisor: Anastasia Maw**

**Supervisor: Kim Foster**

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## **ABSTRACT**

In situations not defined as sexually violent or overtly coercive, young women struggle to exercise their sexual agency because of the negative influence of a number of factors. These factors include gendered norms, cultural background and peer advice. Using qualitative methodology, this study explored in-depth young women's observations and perceptions of negotiating sexual agency in heterosexual relationships. A sample of ten, first year, university students, all young women, took part in one on one interviews discussing vignettes highlighting the negotiation of sexual intimacy between a young woman and her romantic partner. They were asked to discuss their perceptions of the negotiation of sexual agency in these vignettes. Key issues and themes emerging from the one-on-one interviews were used to facilitate a follow-up focus group discussion. Results showed that different perceived factors influenced the negotiation of sexual agency. Some of these factors included gendered norms, peer advice, parental advice and teaching, media pressure and societal expectations. Analysis of the results used a feminist positioned grounded theory approach. Findings indicate that though young women may understand the concept of sexual agency, they struggle to know how to apply this agency in real life experiences and situations. This study thus concludes that young women are not able to negotiate sexual agency in overtly coercive sexual situations.

Young women; sexual agency; perception; observation; negotiation; coercive sex.

There is a complex struggle of negotiating sexual agency in situations not defined as sexually violent or overtly coercive. Female sexual agency or “a young woman’s power to act” (Overlien, 2003, p. 346) and young women’s ability to act in such situations has sparked much debate and research. The complexity of this focus of research is found in the defining and operationalising of the term ‘sexual agency’. Findings indicate that the negotiation of sexual agency in women is influenced and informed by issues such as cultural norms, contextual factors and the multilayered nature of personal perception and experience (Gavey, 2005). There is a large amount of research providing data on the factors that interact to influence sexual agency decision-making but many do not focus on the underlying concerns that these findings are demonstrating about sexual agency and young women experiencing such sexual complexities.

There is research that delves into the different experiences of older women and only recently has there been a growing focus on younger women and how they experience different aspects of their lives. This study, through focus on young girl’s perceptions and observations of the negotiation of sexual agency, hopes to make a contribution to this new literature.

## **SETTING THE SCENE**

In the past rape and sexual violence has been viewed in very different ways from how they are viewed and understood today. In the past sexually violent crimes were often silenced, condoned or denied (Gavey, 2005). Through the gradual rise of the feminist movement, sexual violence against women has become a topic of intense research informed by feminist understanding and activism. A brief look at the development of this topic shows that although there have been positive changes, like increases in awareness and a growing understanding of discourses underpinning sexual violence against women, aspects of these types of crimes remain hidden, particularly unwanted sexual conduct which is non-violent but nevertheless sexually coercive (Gavey, 2005).

Only when one looks at ‘sexually violent’ situations of the coercive nature with the understanding that they are nested in specific contexts, can one get a better understanding of the factors influencing and constructing these situations (Gavey, 2005). This in turn will lead to

understanding whether these influences hinder or aid in young women in exercising their sexual agency. There is a large amount of research on the experiences of older women and only recently has the focus moved to young women's experiences, perceptions and constructions of sexual agency (Overlien, 2003).

## **STUDIES ON SEXUAL AGENCY**

### **The power of gendered norms**

Sexual agency is deeply embedded within socially gendered norms and ideas (Bay-Cheng & Eliseo-Arras, 2008; Chung, 2005; Omorodion, Gbadebo & Ischack, 2007; Taylor, 1995). These norms and societal definitions of gender have important implications for how women attempt to negotiate their sexual agency in different situations, including how they negotiate safer sex (Taylor, 1995).

Past patriarchal and oppressive cultural values and beliefs that subordinate women and make them powerless in different social situations still exert a great influence on young women today (Omorodion, Gbadebo & Ischack, 2007). The remnants of the ideology of male supremacy still influence young women (Lewin, 1985) even in the wake of women's rights movement and the changes it has affected.

A study which focused on the sexual behaviour of young Africans living in Windsor, Canada (Omorodion, Gbadebo & Ischack, 2007) found that gender played a critical role in determining the nature and outcome of sexual activity. More specifically, themes elicited through interviews indicated that men determined and directed the nature of heterosexual intimacy.

Another study focused on undergraduate women's description of experiences of unwanted sex to see how gendered norms, like women's sexual passivity and subordination of women's sexual interests to those of men's, influenced and surrounded these situations (Bay-Cheng & Eliseo-Arras, 2008). It was found that the women would describe situations in ways that showed the influence of these gendered sexual norms, gendered ways of viewing sex and sexuality, such as

subordinating women's sexual interests to those of men. In other words they described situations that defined letting the men do what they wanted sexually and did not introduce women's desires and wants to the situations. The narratives of the women were filled with beliefs of normative gender roles within heterosexual relationships thus showing the strength of influence these gendered roles had on these young women, their sexual agency, and their power to act.

Research findings from two studies evidence double standards with regards to men and women in relation to expectations and understanding of sexuality in heterosexual relationships (Omorodion, Gbadebo & Ischack, 2007; Shefer & Foster, 2001). In both studies men often expected certain behaviours and actions for women in the sexual area but did not expect the same actions themselves. In some cases there was judgement for certain behaviours when they were done by women, but not when they were done by men. For example, a study reported that women who challenged male dominance in sexual relations were often labelled "HIV transmitters" or were seen to be 'wayward' or 'promiscuous'. There was a double standard in the standard constructions of masculine and feminine sexualities. There was a double standard on what women and men were 'allowed' to do and ways in which they should behave in sexual relations (Shefer & Foster, 2001). These double standards again highlighted the strong underlying influence of gender norms on the issue of negotiating sexual agency.

### **The power of cultural norms and expectations**

Cultural norms and expectations have a subtle but effective persuasion on how young women think about their sexual agency and in turn how young women exercise their sexual agency. Sexual agency itself is imbedded in specific sexually gendered ideologies and expectations of behaviour (Bay-Cheng & Eliseo-Arras, 2008; Chung, 2005; Omorodion, Gbadebo & Ischack, 2007; Taylor, 1995). As seen in a lot of literature, the power of heterosexual norms is still strong in affecting how women view their should-be behaviour. These understandings of gender and gender roles are a strong factor in determining attitudes towards coercive behaviour (Haworth-Hoepfner, 1998). There are strong heterosexual norms that are expected in the ways the women and men behave in sexual situations. These are defined as men being the aggressors and women as passive acceptors (Haworth-Hoepfner, 1998).

Women and men are seen to perceive social-sexual behaviours in different ways than men do (Ratundo, Nguyen & Sackett, 2001) and this is the effect of culturally gendered norms and expectations. Studies have shown this effect on the ways in which heterosexual relationships are conducted (Omorodion, Gbadebo & Ischack, 2007) and so show the effect these norms and expectations will have on young women in those heterosexual relationships.

### **The importance of discourse**

Discourse is an important tool for understanding the issue of sexual agency in young women. Some studies have found a noticeable lack of positive discourse around women's sexual desires and sexuality (Shefer & Foster, 2001; Lewin, 1985).

In a study on unwanted intercourse, young women were found to be psychologically coerced to take part in unwanted intercourse through words (Lewin, 1985). This study looked at the power of the narrative of the young women's partners and how their partner's words negatively influenced the young women's ability to say no. Thus here one can see the strength of the narrative and thus discourse around sexual agency. If these young women struggled to find the right verbal tools to define what they would and would not do sexually, others will too. Discourse is central in being able to challenge young women's lack of negotiation (Shefer & Foster, 2001).

### **The media effect**

The media does play a role in shaping what young women know about sexuality and sexual agency in relationships and thus shapes how the understanding they have of how they should act in sexual situations (Gill, 2008). Female sexual agency is packaged in advertising in a specific way that defines how a woman should be. Studies on young women's magazines and the messages they send to young women about sexual agency note that though most of the magazines script young women as sexual agents, independent and able to express their own desire, these scripts were still bound in narrowly defined heterosexual norms and practices.

These agented scripts for young women were limited and still perpetuated dominant sexual scripts, heterosexual norms (Carpenter, 1998; Garner, Sterk & Adams, 1998).

The media's influence on young women's sexual agency stems from its power to name and define socially acceptable female behaviour in sexual situations. If young women are learning specific, seeming liberating ideas about their sexual agency but are still limited to what heterosexual norms say, they will struggle to exercise this liberty in sexual situations. They will struggle even more if the situation is not overtly violent and rather sexually coercive.

### **Miscommunication**

Research sites miscommunication as one of the big problems in situations of sexual coercion. There is a miscommunication in the ways that consent is perceived according to gender differences and this can lead to the consent of sexual actions that were not wanted (Hickman & Muehlenhard, 1999). Young people struggle with being able to communicate effectively with each other about sexual relations and situations (Ajuwon, Akin-Jimoh, Olley & Akintola, 2001) and this affects how they behave in such situations. There is a difference in meaning when using the same signals or expressions of sexual consent (Hickman & Muehlenhard, 1999) and this is due to the fact that young men and women understand sexual coercion in different ways (Sanders & Reinisch, 1999). The assumption that all people have the same ideas and views of sexual intimacy should be broken because people are different and bring different variables into sexual relations (Sanders & Reinisch, 1999).

Young women are affected by this lack of communication and this in turn affects the power they have in negotiating their desires in sexual situations. If they are struggling in normal sexual encounters with their partners, how much more will sexually coercive type situations add to their struggle. Communication is integral in making sure there is clear understanding of what is desired and how young women feel about this intention. Focus on learning how to communicate effectively can give young women firmer bases on which to base their sexual choices.



This body of literature on the effect of miscommunication on sexual relations makes the point that young men and women do not understand each other, in the signals expressed in the sexual context. O'Byrne, Rapley and Hansen (2006) challenge this blame on miscommunication for unwanted sexual consent through their study that showed that young men in fact, do pick up on non-verbal cues of refusal very well and thus they do understand what their partners might be saying about the intention to become sexually intimate. This challenge then puts the focus of unwanted sexual consent on looking at why young men still put pressure on young women, when communication is well received and what effect this has on young women's sexual agency.

There is constant need for further sexual education for young women on how they can exercise their sexual agency and that is the reason behind many studies that focus on unwanted sexual consent and sexually coercive situations (Ajuwon, Akin-Jimoh, Olley & Akintola, 2001; Hickman & Muehlenhard, 1999). There is also the need to focus on the positive ways that young women are able to exercise their sexual agency. There is need to build and strengthen these factors instead of only focusing on risk factors around these situations (Denner & Dunbar, 2004). This way there is focus on how young women negotiate their own gender roles, how they understand it and thus how they build agency for themselves.

### **SOUTH AFRICAN STUDIES**

Whilst there is a substantial body of research on women's sexual agency, particularly from the United States of America, South African studies on the topic are limited. This is despite the fact that such research is very much needed in the South African context because of South African high prevalence of violence against women (Jewkes et al., 1999).

In a study that focused on sexual agency in young women in a low-income community in South Africa, results showed that when young women talked about their sexuality, they would inadvertently bring up the subject of their mothers (Lesch & Kruger, 2005). There was a strong parental role and influence in how these young girls understood sexuality and their sexual agency (Lesch & Kruger, 2005). This one study shows that a unique factor like parental influence has an effect on sexual agency in young women, again confirming the theory that sexual agency can

only be fully understood through viewing it in a multi-factorial way including cultural and contextual factors.

In another study conducted at the University of the Western Cape, heterosexuality was researched through the use of focus group discussions which were then analysed discursively (Shefer & Foster, 2001). This analysis showed the lack of positive discourse around women and their sexual desires and a double standard in how masculine and feminine roles were constructed. It was also found that discourse was a very strong tool in showing the influence of societal gendered norms on heterosexual relationships. The way participants talked about the issue showed their embedded thoughts on femininity and masculinity. This discourse included men being viewed and discussed as being positively sexual while women being viewed and discussed as representative of love and relationships (Shefer & Foster, 2001).

The literature review provided an overview of the literature on sexual agency with a particular focus on the research findings on the factors that affect the negotiation of young women's sexual agency in sexual situations. Specific studies and their findings on sexual agency have been given and this has led to a brief review on research on female sexual agency in the South African context.

The diverse factors that affect sexuality, sexual agency and thus have a part in sexually violence situations are necessary to try and understand in order to gain knowledge on the influences and effects these factors have on such situations (Gavey, 2005). This was the main aim of this study. This study's expectations were to find similar factors that influenced young women's negotiation of sexual agency in the South African setting. By using feminist based grounded theory, this study also aimed to find the underlying theory of the data produced. In other words what young women were saying overall, about their sexual agency. Lastly, this study was aimed at adding to South African literature on young women's sexual experiences, observations and perceptions.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

### **Research Design**

A qualitative design was employed for this study. A qualitative design has been chosen because it allows for in-depth analysis of the information gathered (Ambert, Adler, Adler & Detzner, 1995) by focusing on individual experience. Through a focus on individual perceptions this research study hoped to provide a fuller, descriptive understanding of how young women understand factors influencing sexual agency in intimate relationships.

As Ambert et al., (1995) clearly states, “the aim of qualitative research is to learn about how and why people behave, think and make meaning as they do, rather than focusing on what people do or believe on a large scale” (p.880) and this study aimed to specifically learn about how young women negotiate, decide what they will or can do about their sexual agency, thus how they see women’s ability to negotiate sexual intimacy.

### **Research Sample**

Ten female participants from the first year psychology class of the University of Cape Town were recruited for this study. The young women’s ages ranged between 18 and 22. The participants were recruited through the use of the SRRP Program, a program implemented by the Psychology Department of the University of South Africa to encourage participation of first year students in psychological research. Each first year psychology student is required to participate in this program to fulfil their course credit.

There was no lack of participation through the SSRP program as the female participants signed up for participation through an advert placed on the SSRP Program board (Appendix A).

### **Data Collection**

A semi-structured one-on-one interview and a subsequent focus group were the two methods used for data collection in this study.

Interviews and focus groups are two types of methods commonly used in qualitative research (Ambert et al., 1995) and the one-on-one interview has been chosen for this study because it is able to access compelling data from the participant and allows for the unique experience and meaning-making of each particular participant to emerge. Through its use, the interviews are able to give a picture of a 'real life' account of the concept under study (Gillham, 2005). This one-on-one interview aimed to understand the individual participant's own perceptions and understandings of sexual agency, while the subsequent focus group was chosen as an added method of qualitative inquiry.

The focus group was used to clarify and expound on any issues and themes that were raised in the individual interviews. Gillham (2005) describes a focus group or group interview as an easy way into the language, concerns, attitudes and views that can be found in a diverse group of people. Thus this focus group had the ability to reveal some issues that might not have been raised in the one-on-one interviews. This setting provided opportunity to view the dynamics of the interactions between the participants (Gillham, 2005) and these interactions enriched the results by allowing for some debate and discussion.

In this study the one-on-one interviews were conducted first so as to gain topics for discussion in the focus group.

## **Research Materials**

The aim of the one-on-one interviews was to generate open-ended conversation through the use of vignettes on the chosen research topic. When needed, the interviewer asked for clarification of what the participant had said, either through specific questions or through asking for examples. Vignettes (see Appendix B) and a semi-structured interview schedule (see Appendix C) were used in this study to aid the researcher.

“A vignette technique is a method that can illicit perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes from responses or comments to stories depicting scenarios and situations.” (Barter & Renold, 1999, p.25) and thus vignettes can be used as a way of exploring sensitive topics in a less

threatening manner. Young women's personal experience and perceptions on sexual agency is a topic that can be sensitive in nature and the use of vignettes allowed the researcher to elicit attitudes and opinions without having to ask intrusive and personal questions. The two vignettes were read to the participant and the participant was given opportunity to answer the questions on the read scenarios.

The questions in the interview schedule were carefully chosen to follow the vignettes and elaborate on the issues being discussed (see Appendix C).

The focus group used another interview schedule as a means of guiding the conversation within the group. This schedule was informed by the ten one-on-one interviews and thus was written after the ten interviews had been conducted (see Appendix D).

## **Procedure**

After the participant had signed up to take part in the study, the researcher contacted the participant and arranged a convenient time for the one-on-one interview.

After the participant was informed, in detail, about the study and the consent form had been signed, the researcher conducted the one-on-one interview with the participant, using the interview schedule and vignettes as guides to generate conversation. A tape-recorder was used to record the interview. The length of the one-on-one interview was 30 minutes.

When all the ten one-on-one interviews had been conducted the researcher conducted a focus group at a predetermined venue and time. The focus group brought all of the participants interviewed one-on-one together and it was used as a space to allow for a deeper exploration of key issues raised in the interviews. The focus-group was tape recorded and video recorded to allow for clear transcription as it was easier to note which participant was speaking at different times through the use of a video recorder. The length of the focus group was 60 minutes. The researchers facilitated conversation and then let the participants' converse with each other and explore the topics presented.

## **Data Analysis**

Feminist understanding of grounded theory was used as the method of analysis in this study. Grounded theory, a theory developed by the sociologists Glaser and Strauss in 1967, is a form of analysis that aims to discover, develop and verify a theory through the systematic collection and analysis of data that pertains to a specific phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Thus it is built from the ground up and is grounded in the data.

Grounded theory in feminist research has allowed for the complex analysis of complex questions. Feminist research aims to give the voices of the participants' opportunity to be heard and grounded theory allows for that (Keddy, Sims & Stern, 1990). Language is a powerful and important tool of analysis in feminist research as it shows the power dynamics in society that its discourse emulates. Through grounded theory there is a deeper focus on what participants are saying and thus the underlying meanings they are constructing. Unlike thematic analysis and content analysis that are focused on finding specific themes, grounded theory moves beyond that and tries to uncover the how the themes are connected and how the data is linked (Keddy, Sims & Stern, 1990). This allows for the uncovering of the 'unspoken' idea and understanding of the participant (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

In grounded theory and in this study, the transcriptions of the one-on-one interviews and focus groups were read and re-read. These bits of information were "extrapolated from the field and were compared with one another and the existing literature." (Keddy, Sims & Stern, 1990, p.451.) These properties were then categorised and linked together. In allowing intuition, hunches and thoughts to permeate the continual reading and grappling of the raw data, this process then ended with the formulation of a theory (Keddy, Sims & Stern, 1990).

"The theory that evolves through the work of the principle investigator in grounded theory can make a major impact on our knowledge of the life of women in society" (Keddy, Sims & Stern, 1990, p. 452) and that was the aim of using a feminist grounded theory approach to this study's data analysis.

## **REFLEXIVITY**

### **Setting**

Sin (2003) discusses the importance of the situational nature of interviewing, the impact that a setting or a specific situation can have on the interview. In this study the University could have had an impact on the interview in making the experience seem formal and rigid as the interview was held in a University building.

### **Differences and similarities**

As a socially diverse, multicultural and multilingual society, South Africa is host to many different kinds of people. The participants were from different cultures, classes, languages and religions could have affected the interview and focus group. As a researcher, my own background, in terms of culture, as a non-South African, language, religion, as a Christian, and class would have inadvertently affected how the participants viewed and constructed my position as an interviewer and thus how they responded to the interviews. The difference of background can make it hard to create easy conversation if cultural norms affect how one speaks and what one speaks of.

The researcher noticed that similarity in gender made the participants much more willing to address the issues raised in the interviews and focus-group. There was a relaxed, almost unspoken understanding of what was discussed between the researcher and the participants. It seemed like the researcher's gender gave the participants license to speak freely as they felt they had a similarity with the researcher to base their conversation on.

On the other hand, power dynamics still had an effect on the interviews and focus group situations. The researcher had the power, as she was the one asking the questions and ultimately directing the time and topic of conversation. It was subtly but clearly seen that this power dynamic affected how much the participants said through how they constantly looked to the

participant for approval of what they had said or for acceptance to continue talking. They were there to acquire their points for the SSRP program and so needed to follow the researcher's rules to a get them.

## **ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Possible ethical concerns surrounding this study included potential harm to the participant through the insensitivity of the research topic, in the one-on-one interview and focus group setting, the confidentiality of the participant identity in any data collected for the study and informed consent issues.

### **Harm**

The nature of the topic, women's perceptions and experiences of the negotiation of sexual agency, is a sensitive one. Through the use of vignettes and questions in the interview schedule used at the one-on-one interviews, no direct examples of the participant's personal experiences of sexual violence or overtly coercive sexual situations were asked for. Conversation around this topic could have caused discomfort for the participant as it had the potential to remind the participant of past difficult circumstances or experiences around the research topic. This ethical concern was addressed by providing a clear indication to the participant that she was under no obligation to answer all questions asked in the interviews and that, if uncomfortable, she was free to stop the interview at any time she wishes. In the focus group setting the same clear indication applied and the researcher made this clear when explaining the consent form.

### **Confidentiality (Identity)**

To keep the anonymity of the participant, the researcher, in the transcription process, omitted any information pertaining to the participant's identity and used pseudonyms in the discussion of specific participant's responses.

### **Consent**



The researcher did not allow a participant to take part in the study unless they had signed a consent form (see Appendix E). At the start of the one on one interview the researcher spend time explaining the study and all expectations of the participant. The participant was then asked to sign a consent form as proof of acknowledging that they understand what the study was about and thus gave their consent to take part in the study.

## RESULTS

**Table 1. Categories and codes illustrating the perceptions and observations of the participants**

<b>Main Theory</b>	
There is a tension between the knowledge of power around the negotiation of sexual agency in young women and the experience of power in negotiating sexual agency in young women	
<b>Core Category</b>	
Lack of sexual agency	
<b>Sub – Categories</b>	<b>Coded Sections</b>
“I don’t know how”	Girls beliefs, character, morals and values Girls emotions Education about sexual encounters Previous sexual experience Maturity level Communication The setting
Feeling immobile	Contextual moment of pressure Alcohol Culturally gendered norms Culturally gendered expectations Media
“I have to do what he says, he has earned it”	His behaviour towards her Potential consequences of her actions Peer advice (the advice given by peers on sexual conduct)

Peer pressure (the expectations of behaviour in sexual situations by peers) Family expectations
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One main theory emerged out of a core category and three sub-categories (see Table 1). The core category was that young women lack sexual agency. The three sub-categories were named, “I don’t know how”, feeling immobile and “I have to do what he says, he has earned it”. Each sub-category had different coded sections under it. Under each sub-category lay coded sections; the different factors that were perceived to be influences on agency in negotiating sexual intimacy.

The “I don’t know how” sub-category described all the factors that played a role in demanding a response from the young women, in terms of making a decision in the negotiation of sexual agency. The problem was felt in that the young women found that they had no knowledge of how to implement and thus satisfy these demands. The factors under this category included the girl’s beliefs morals, values, and character, her emotions, education about sexual encounters, previous sexual experience, the girl’s maturity level, communication in the romantic relationship and the social setting of the sexual situation.

The feeling immobile sub-category defined all factors that made the young women feel trapped and unable to move forward, in a decision about sexual agency, and unable to back out of the sexual situation. These factors seemed to make the young women feel unable to do anything about their sexually coercive situation. These factors were the contextual moment of pressure, the influence of alcohol, culturally gendered norms, cultural expectations and the media.

The last sub-category, “I have to do what he says, he has earned it”, discussed the factors that contributed to making the young women feel like acceptance of the sexual advances of the romantic relationship were due him because of what he had done. They felt as if he had earned it and thus they could not exercise their sexual agency and deny him his rights. These factors were his behaviour towards her, the potential consequences of her actions, peer advice and pressure, familial expectations and the length of the relationship.

Some of the factors found in each sub-category will be discussed to give a bit more understanding on the perceptions and responses that the young women had about the girls in the vignettes.

### **“I don’t know how”**

#### *Beliefs, morals, values and character*

The girl’s (in the vignette) own beliefs, morals and values were seen to influence the strength of her character and thus the strength of her agency in negotiating sexual intimacy. If she had strong morals and values and had decided to stick to specific personal beliefs she had, the young women said that they would expect it to be easier for her to exercise her agency.

*G: ...you know. She can’t do it (have sex) for (because of) her morals and her family and the things she believes in, you know... I mean those kind of factors are gonna stop, like another religious person or whatever. Um, it also depends like on like the girl, like on her character. Like if she’s strong and she can resist and she can say, ‘look here, I can’t’, or she’s quite like swept away with the whole thing, then she’s gonna be more...willing to give up what she... you know.*

If, on the other hand, she was easily swayed by the situation and did not have strong values and beliefs to stand on, it was concluded that the girl would struggle to make a decision that stood against the pressure of the situation.

#### **Education**

The lack of education of pressurized situations and how to deal with them was a factor discussed that was seen to influence a girl’s sexual agency. One participant strongly stressed that these situations arise because of lack of education and that girls need to be taught how to handle such situations.

*B: Totally. I mean, I think there's a lack of education on behalf of women. Like I don't think women always connect like... just bec.. like, I think they look in the mirror and they're like, 'I look good', and like a guy looks at them and is like, 'aaaah, I've got ideas from the way you look', and so I think, I think there's like, there is a lack of sometimes I think education...*

There seemed to be an unspoken frustration with the lack of knowledge that the young women had on how to deal with sexually coercive and pressurised situations. Many of the young women would continually express this through saying how hard it was and how they struggled to know what to do in such situations.

### ***Previous experience and relationships***

Another factor that was said to factor into a young woman's negotiation of sexual agency was the previous experience of both people in the relationship. This was whether they had had other relationships or sexual encounters and how they had dealt with those encounters. It was said that the girl would probably either re-enact her past experiences or act in the opposite way of her past experiences.

*C: I think it does make a difference if she has had other boyfriends and has slept with other people before because, I don't know, I don't know like... I'm not saying personally, but generally like that seems to make a difference..so if you have before...then you more likely to do it again, you know.*

Thus previous relationship and sexual history was a factor that could affect the determination of sexual agency in a sexually coercive situation.

### ***Communication or lack thereof in the relationship***

It was discussed that if the girl (in the pressure situation) had not had previous communication and discussion with the boy about his and her expectations of their sexual intimacy, it would be

harder for her to exercise her true feelings of getting intimate when in the actual situation where sexual intimacy was required of her.

*K: I don't think they ever talked about when is the right time for...for her to have sex but I think the boyfriend thought if he did this and that, that will impress, I mean, his girlfriend for her to have sex with her. I think they should sit down and talk about it.*

*B: Um.... [] ya, I think the other factor too, would just be like have, have, how much has a girl though about this... like...how much preparation has gone into, like, her thinking, like, has she previously in a relationship thought, like, could I be intimate with this person in this way or where are our boundaries going to be, are we gonna have boundaries?...*

The discussion and establishment of boundaries before the relationship progressed was felt to be an important part of exercising a young woman's sexual agency. Though this factor was discussed, it seemed like the reality of the matter was that the young women only hoped that that this was a tactic that could help in the real life situation of sexual coercion. In thought, they were very adamant about the effect of this factor, but when discussing a real situation, they seemed less sure.

#### *Where the pressure situation is enacted; the setting*

The girls noted that the place of pressure, where the pressure situation is enacted can have an effect on the girl's decision of sexual intimacy. The discussion centred on whether the boy asked while at home alone and in an intimate moment or whether he asked in a social situation like a club, with the music pounding and the influence of friends and peers.

The girls agreed that it was much harder to exercise sexual agency in a more intimate setting, like his house or a hotel room, than a place like a club. The intimacy of the moment and the fact that it was only him and the girl, would put more pressure on the girl to accept his advances.

The girls disagreed on whether the club setting was harder or not in negotiating sexual intimacy. Some girls thought the club setting would be a harder place to exercise sexual agency because of the influence of alcohol and peers.

*B: Like, I mean I've seen like in, like clubs and you like have had a bit to drink and you there and you like in the situation and it's really hard to say no.*

While other girls thought that the club setting was in fact an easier place to exercise sexual agency because of the nature of the setting and the cultural acceptance of a club setting as a place of fun. Thus there seemed to be an accepted rejection that young women could enact in terms of sexual interest.

*D: I don't know, I think being in like a social situation like a club or something, will be a lot easier to say no to than... I don't know, I cos, it's like if you're in the club, again, you've been drinking and you get your weirdoes and drunks and whatever else's, so it's gonna be fairly easy to say...I don't know that's just my opinion, to say okay cheers, you're weird, or whatever the case. I don't know, for me social situations, it's easier to say no than if you were like one-on-one with somebody you were in a relationship with.*

Here one sees that young women struggle to know how to deal with sexualised pressure situations in specific context and thus the influence of etiquette in what a girl is allowed to do or not allowed to do in different social settings begs discussion.

## **Feeling Immobile**

### *The contextual moment of the pressure situation*

An interesting factor that the young women discussed that influenced a girl's decision of sexual intimacy in sexually pressurized situations was the unexpected nature of the question to have sexual intimacy.

*B: Mmmm...ya... I mean I think again it's like a pressure situation, it's like a huge factor cos it's in the moment.../*

The fact that the girl was not given time to think about her decision and the fact that he was waiting for a quick answer to his intention to sleep with her was an influence on the ability of the girl to exercise her sexual agency in this situation. Her being put on the spot, affected how she made her decision.

*F: ...but I don't think it's like fair for him to put her on the spot like that. Like I just think that he shouldn't like, like make her decide then and there kind of a thing. I think he should have given her time to think about it...*

This factor of time pressure seemed like a factor that contributed to the 'panic' of not knowing what to do in a sexual situation. The young women felt they did not have the skills and knowledge of how to handle such a time pressured request and thus needed education on how to practically deal with it.

#### *Alcoholic influence*

The reoccurring effect of alcohol on the sexually coercive situation was clearly seen in the young women's discussions of the vignettes. It was interesting to see that the consumption of alcohol itself was not the affecting factor on negotiation of sexual intimacy, but rather the ways they understood the effect of the alcohol on the boy asking.

Some girls thought that if under the influence of alcohol, it might be harder to deny sexual advancement because alcohol had the ability to bring the true feelings of the boy to the surface. Thus they might struggle to say no to him if that was what he really felt for her.

*F: I don't know... maybe she'll have like good grounds in saying no or like, or maybe she'll feel really guilty. She'll believe what he's said. Cos a lot of people think, oh no drunk people tell the truth, or something...*

Other girls thought that his drunken nature was grounds enough to strongly exercise their sexual agency and say no.

*F: I think she should, well because he's in a drunken state, I think she should say no...*

*E: Oh man!*

*I: What do you think will happen then?*

*E: Aaaah! I'd probably; you know, smack him and kick him out! (Laugh)*

The influence of alcohol on the pressurized situation and its effect of the negotiation of sexual agency depended on how the advancement or pressure was viewed. Whether the young women thought the boy didn't know what he was saying or whether it was a hidden revelation of his true and deep feelings for her, both views affected how they would deal with the situation.

### *Cultural norms and expectations*

Cultural norms and expectations were not directly addressed in the conversations with the young women but were constantly subtly expressed in the ways that they explained their perceptions of the pressured situation.

The young women said they would be influenced by the cultural expectations of how to act in a romantic relationship and felt that there was an unspoken expectation for the girl to get sexually intimate after a certain period of time, if in a romantic relationship.

*A: Um...I don't know like I think there is always that, like if you go out for a while, there is kind of like expectation. I suppose, just depends how strong your*



*relationship is and if you can openly discuss what you want, what you don't want, um, but ya, I do think there is that kind of expectation in a romantic relationship.*

There also seems to be an expectation of how sexual intimacy should be enacted, how girls should act, when in a social setting.

*B: ...like going into a club, inspecting like girls and guys you know, it's very clear that you know, I think that um, girls are expected to put out a lot. Like I do, like think that. Like not a lot of girls actually do, but there is pressure I mean, what do people, like what do single people go to a club for? You meet a guy and then he buys you a drink and it's like, okay, you are expected to give him something else you know...*

Cultural norms of how one understood boys and their sexual behaviour was also said to affect how a girl viewed her romantic relationship and the pressure to become sexually intimate in that relationship. Many girls expressed this view by commenting on how normal it is for a boy to ask for sexual intimacy and thus making this pressure or asking normal and expected.

*B: I don't know, I just think like guys, I mean like not all guys, but guys have those biological like urges...  
(group laughter)  
And they just, like there, there's no like connection between like, heart, head and  
(makes circular hand gesture)*

This would affect the ability of the girl to be able to make a decision. If she is rationalizing his asking of sexual intimacy in a sexual way as it being a part of his nature, then it is harder to find a basis for exercising sexual agency, no matter her final decision. This in turn adds to her feeling of immobility and being unable to do anything in a sexually coercive situation.

*Media*

A young woman spoke strongly about the strong influential nature of the media and its ideas of sexual intimacy and how sexual intimacy should be enacted. She talked of how its constant bombardment of certain ideas of sexuality and agency are able to subtly but surely affect a girl's ability to make a decision about her sexuality.

*G: I mean, it's quite hectic for society, but I mean it's like there's that whole like, media influence, media pressure and it's just like its speeding everything up and like so many people aren't ready for it, so many girls aren't ready for it and like aren't emotionally ready and even guys, even find it hard you know, it's a bit hectic, a bit hectic...*

She said that this was due to the fact that the media taught her specific ways of being sexual and she believes this has a strong influence on girls generally and how young women understand sexual intimacy.

### **“I have to do what he says, he has earned it”**

*His behaviour; his words; his actions*

The romantic partner's behaviour was seen to play a big role in affecting the girl's decision to have sexual intimacy with him when put in a sexually pressurized situation. The young women said that the fact that he acted like a gentleman, had bought her gifts, had worked hard to be able to buy her gifts, had booked an expensive hotel, had asked her nicely, all factored in to her decision. This factor seemed to affect the girl's decision more than the other factors as it seemed to give him an upper hand in the situation. In a way, it was like he had earned her sexual response.

*F: Or like the fact is, you mean, like, like what he's done for her or like?... Well, like he's obviously done a nice dinner and he's put in so much effort and probably will make her feel obliged to say yes...*

*D: Ummm..But I think he's kind of using, you know, the whole kind of charming thing, like he's been perfect boyfriend you know, showing her that he's, like, having, getting extra job to buy her gifts and making everything special...um... So I suppose its charm, kind of a bit of manipulation and um...ya...*

The girls discussed that his material gifts and his behaviour towards the girl (in the vignette) would affect the girls' decision because of the guilt and obligation she would feel if he did these things for her. She would feel that she owed him for his generosity and so would feel more pressured to do what he wanted, to have sexual intimacy with him.

### *Peer pressure and advice*

Another strong influence on a girl's negotiation of sexual intimacy was peer pressure and advice. This included what her friends would say on the type of decision she made, what her friends had told her about sexual relationships and what they did and expected her to do. Many girls accepted that their friend's experiences and knowledge had a very strong influence on their decisions.

*F: I think it's like, like happening so often. Like I mean like, not necessarily with like my friends but like I've heard stories like, like...um... well a year ahead of me, like, most girls had like, you know, slept with guys and everything... and like, two girls hadn't and then they just did because everyone else did, so I think even though it's not like the situation in your questions, one where they had a relationship, I think, girls still feel the pressure because, um, whether it's from their friends who've already slept with someone...*

*B: Like, what is this gonna mean to my friends, you know, will it impress my friends to do this or loss my friends to do this or... is this normal right now?...*

Though it was noticed and noted, peer advice and pressure still seemed to cause the girls to think that they would have difficulty in saying no in a pressurized situation. It seemed like they still

felt helpless in spite of their knowledge of peer pressure and its power over influencing their behaviour in sexual situations.

### *Family*

The expectations of family and the influence of parents in girls upbringing was discussed as a factor that would influence a girl's decision in a sexually coercive situation. What her parents had taught her about sexual intimacy and how she viewed their expectations would affect how she decided to conduct herself.

*I: Okay. But what do you think, what different factors or outside influences can affect a girl in that type of decision?*

*E: Aaah...definitely her upbringing and the values that were instilled in her by her parents.*

The acceptance and approval of the boy from the family could also influence the girl's decision in such a situation. If she felt that her family approved of him, she would feel a bit more pressured to accept his advances.

*A: ... and that the family approves, first of all ,because once the girl... some girls think once the family and friends accepted him, she can also accept him.../*

These results show that many different factors converge to affect a girl's ability to make a decision in a sexually pressurized situation and thus affect her ability or lack of ability to exercise her sexual agency.

## **DISCUSSION**

Feminist theory and action aims to analyze gender relations, how they are constructed, experienced and how we think and don't think about them (Flax, 1987). Though not the only aim, feminist theory focuses primarily on the situations women experience and the analysis of

male domination. The focus and study of gender positions aims to dissect and thus reveal the real power interactions that are happening in society, thereby aiming to lead to a change in such power imbalances (Flax, 1987). This new awareness of power and the manner in which it is shaped and formed has created large discourse on the power that women ought to have in all situations of life. One such situation is that of sexuality and sexual agency. Sexual liberation has created strong discourse that advocates the power of women to define and choose their sexual experiences and desires (LeMoncheck, 1998). There is a 'you have the power to say no' mentality that is strongly advertised and discussed in today's discourse around the issues of women and power. This is strongly linked to situations of sexual violence involving women. One form of action against such violence involves educating women about their sexual rights and the power they have in saying no and standing up for their sexual desires and decisions.

Although there is a strong advocacy and voice for woman's sexual liberation, the assumption appears to be that all who understand what sexual liberation entails, in terms of sexual agency, will somehow know how to act upon this knowledge (LeMoncheck, 1998). The manner in which women today are expressing their sexual liberation, whether by choosing same-sex partners or by experiencing different types of sexual satisfaction, appears to indicate the ability to exercise one's sexual agency. However, little literature deals with situations that are sexually overt and coercive. Through a feminist grounded theory approach, the theory that was seen to slowly emerge through this study and its results painted a different picture. This theory suggests that there is an unspoken and underlying tension between the knowledge of power in the negotiation of sexual agency in young women, and the experience of power in negotiating such sexual agency. This study appeared to suggest that although discourse exists around issues of sexual liberation in women, the experience of liberation is much harder said than done.

In terms of the exertion of outside influences on the sexual situation, alcohol was seen as strong risk factor for date rape and sexual violence for both the perpetrator and victim (Loiselle & Fuqua, 2007). A study on the effect that alcohol had on the way women perceived risk in date-rape vignettes revealed that the greater the consumption of alcohol, the lower the ability to detect the risk of rape. This showed the large effects that alcohol had on the ability to make sound decisions, even with small amounts of alcohol (Loiselle & Fuqua, 2007). As noted in this study,

alcohol did have an effect on how young women understood the sexually coercive situations and how they would then make decisions. Perceived coerciveness was also affected by the amount of alcohol consumed, (Emmers-Sommer & Allen, 1999) showing that young women's agency could easily be affected by alcohol as their perception of the sexual coercion or their ability to say no, would be hindered. This substance is thus very influential in sexually coercive situations as it hinders the ability to think clearly and thus make level-headed decisions, though alcohol alone cannot be blamed for all unwanted sexual contact. Real-life situations are likely to involve many variables that operate simultaneously (Loiselle, & Fuqua, 2007). The power of outside influences such as alcohol complicate an already complicated power dynamic that is at work in sexually coercive situations.

This paper was also able to highlight the many variables that operate simultaneously on a young woman in sexually coercive situations. The power of gendered norms and expectations was seen to influence young women very strongly in sexual situations, as was apparent in many studies that focused on how sexual agency is embedded in strong societal norms and values (Bay-Cheng & Eliseo-Arras, 2008; Chung, 2005; Omorodion, Gbadebo & Ischack, 2007; Taylor, 1995). As was seen in this study, these highly patriarchal values and beliefs of women tended to render the young women powerless in sexually coercive situations, removing the power of agency that society supposedly granted them. The effect of media and the understanding of sexual situations it perpetuated and taught, affected how the young women understood sexual relations and situations (Gill, 2008). This study found the media effect to be accurate. The media appeared to be a means of teaching seemingly liberating ideals of women's sexual liberty that were in fact deeply entrenched in heterosexual norms and ideals. As found in other studies (Ajwon, Akin-Jimoh, Olley & Akintola, 2001) miscommunication featured as a factor influencing young women as they negotiated their sexual agency. The young women in this study struggled to find ways of communicating their consent or lack thereof in sexually coercive situations.

There were some notable differences in comparing this study with the research findings from two studies which focused on the evidence of double standards assigned to men and women in relation to expectations and understanding of sexuality in heterosexual relationships (Omorodion, Gbadebo & Ischack, 2007; Shefer & Foster, 2001). These show that there were no

specific findings in this study to express these double standards. Most of the findings articulated sexual experiences and perceptions from a singular, feminine experience and though these perceptions described ways of sexual interaction with men, the focus was on young women and their experiences. In other words, this study's findings did not discuss women's experience in relation to men, but rather simply described women's experience. It is important to take time to focus on the specific and unique experience of young women in order to allow their own perceived sense of agency to be understood (Overlien, 2003). This in turn allows for a deeper understanding of young women's ability to negotiate sexual agency and thus allows for an informed understanding of young women's issues.

A crucial issue that literature presents is that of power in sexual relationships and the negotiation of sexual intimacy. "Gender based power derives from the social meaning given to biological differences between men and women." (Blanc, 2001, p.190). The power that young women have in sexual situations is derived from the normative cultural expectations of female behaviour, its characteristics, and its roles. If there is a place for the existence of power for young women within these societal norms, then there will be a place for young women to actively exercise this power in sexual interactions with the opposite sex. In sexual relationships, as in society, a frequently unbalanced power divide exists which is apparent in women having less power than men (Blanc, 2001). There is also a large double standard between what men and women are permitted to do sexually (Blanc, 2001; Shefer & Foster, 2001). These power relations also have a clear link with sexual violence, whether overt or coercive. Thus, if sexual relationships and the power divides within them reflect society and how power is structured in societal norms, and these power divides are also apparent in sexually coercive situations, one can begin to identify the basis for young women's tension between the knowledge and experience of sexual agency.

As in many societal situations which are imbedded with power imbalances, while knowledge on the proposed actions to rectify power imbalances may exist, actual action towards this end is difficult to exercise. Young women who find themselves in situations that are difficult to define in terms of whether they are overtly sexually violent or simply sexually coercive, may find that the societal script on how to deal with power imbalances does not give them enough power to exercise their sexual agency. A lack of knowledge on how to communicate and negotiate sexual

decisions (Blanc, 2001), a lack of practical knowledge on how to deal with situations where alcohol is a major influence, and situations where there is the effect of guilt on young women, reveal that they are ill-equipped in handling their sexual agency. Though they may have the knowledge, this study shows that they do not have the experiential skills to put their sexual agency into practice and thus actively negotiate their sexual agency.

To conclude, this study notes the complexity of understanding young women's ability to exercise their sexual agency in sexually coercive situations. This complexity lies in the fact that all elements acting on the sexual situation work together to bring about a state in which young women cannot exercise their sexual agency. Power imbalances in sexual relationships and the imbedded cultural norms they derive from subtly but strongly inhibit the ability of young women to move from knowledge of their sexual agency into acting on their sexual agency. This raises concerns about the effectiveness of power discourse in feminist literature and whether feminist action is making a real difference in young women's lives.

### **LIMITATIONS**

Participants of this study were sampled from a pool of students attending the University of Cape Town. Their attendance at this university suggests that these young women have access to specific areas of social involvement. The findings of this study can then be limited in describing social settings that are particular to the student life (for example, clubs, residences and society functions) and which thus cannot be generalised to other social settings. There is a need to research different social settings in which sexual intimacy is enacted to gain a fuller understanding of the intricacies of negotiating sexual agency.

Findings in this study are also limited in their ability to generalise as they are based on the experiences and perceptions of a small sample of young women. The qualitative methodology used is also very highly individualised and unique, and thus did not express the experiences of young women in general. A much larger sample is needed for further research, in order to see if this study's findings are similar to other young women's experiences.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

There is a need for further research based on how young women understand sexually coercive situations. Furthermore, research which focuses on the positive ways in which young women are able to exercise their sexual agency by building on these factors, rather than solely focusing on the risk factors surrounding these situations, is also required (Denner & Dunbar, 2004). In this manner there is focus on how young women negotiate their own gender roles, how they understand them and thus how they build agency for themselves.

In South Africa's diverse society, there are different kinds of cultural norms and expectations around sexuality and sexual agency that need to be understood in order to comprehend how young South African women negotiate their sexual agency. Further research is needed to unravel whether these differences in culture affect young women's negotiation of sexual agency in a positive way, or whether they hinder their ability to exercise their sexual agency.

There is need to find new ways of educating young women about practical ways of exercising their sexual agency. Recommendations include mentorship programs to give young women the opportunity to discuss their situations and find experiential help from older women who have gone through such issues. Extending existing programs of sexual education to include sections where young women have the freedom to voice their struggles and question their problems with sexual agency would also provide help in focusing the programs for effective change.

Feminist theory has been an advocate for the inclusion of women's experiences and their perceptions of sexuality and sexual situations. Young women have the same need to be heard, specifically in situations concerning sexual situations which are coercive in nature. Focus on young women's negotiation of sexual agency, from their own perceptions and understanding, is integral in gaining knowledge of the issues that surround decision-making in sexual situations.

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## **APPENDICES**

## APPENDIX A

### Advertisement for Research Participation

An Honours student in Psychology is conducting research that is looking at young women's perceptions and observations of romantic relationships. This study will be conducted through one-on-one interviews (30 minutes long) and a subsequent focus group (60 minutes long). The interviews and focus group will be held in the Department of Psychology at UCT.

This is a SSRP approved study and so participation of the study will be fulfilling a DP requirement.

(NOTE: If you decide to take part in this study you will need to commit to both the interview and the focus group)

#### INTERVIEW DATES:

<b>Monday, 1 June, 9:00- 9.30am</b>	<b>Tuesday 2, June, 9:00-9.30am</b>
Name:	Name:
Student No:	Student No:
Cell:	Cell:
<b>Monday, 1 June, 10:00am – 10.30am</b>	<b>Tuesday 2, June, 10:00-10.30am</b>
Name:	Name:
Student No:	Student No:
Cell:	Cell:
<b>Monday, 1 June, 11:00- 11.30am</b>	<b>Tuesday 2, June, 11:00-11.30am</b>
Name:	Name:
Student No:	Student No:
Cell:	Cell:
<b>Monday, 1 June, 12:00 – 12.30am</b>	<b>Tuesday 2, June, 12:00-12.30am</b>
Name:	Name:
Student No:	Student No:
Cell:	Cell:
<b>Monday, 1 June, 1:00 – 1.30pm</b>	<b>Tuesday 2, June, 1:00-1.30pm</b>
Name:	Name:
Student No:	Student No:
Cell:	Cell:

**FOCUS GROUP DATE: THURSDAY 4 JUNE 9:00AM – 10:00AM**

[mdztha001@mail.uct.ac.za](mailto:mdztha001@mail.uct.ac.za)

072 830 4812

## APPENDIX B

### Vignettes / Scenarios

One:

It's finally Friday night. You are excited to be going out tonight with your amazing boyfriend. You take a long shower, do your hair and make-up and finally put together that oh-so-hot outfit you've been waiting to try. You look in the mirror and know you look good. Then your phone rings, it's time to party! Your boyfriend takes you to the party, constantly telling you how beautiful you look and how happy he is that today is your 6 month anniversary. You dance up a storm, with him, enjoying moving to the beat together. Then he gently whispers in your ear that he wants to be alone with you in a room upstairs and you realize that he might want more than he is saying. You haven't really thought about going that far with him, but you don't want to lose him. What do you do?

Two:

You're at your boyfriend's house and his parents are out so you have the house to yourselves. You have the popcorn out, the movie chosen and are enjoying watching good action on the TV while you're cuddled up on the couch with your boyfriend. He slowly moves his hand and starts playing with your hair. You let him. Then he leans over and starts kissing your neck. Then his hand starts moving lower. You tell him to stop and he says that he's been waiting for you forever. He tells you that he loves you so much and he just wants to show you how much he loves you and don't you love him? What do you do?



## APPENDIX C

### Interview Schedule

#### Questions around vignettes

1. How would you deal with this situation? What would you do? Why?
2. What different factors would influence your or another girl's decision in the above situation?
3. What issues are being discussed in these scenarios and what do you think of those issues? Do you think these issues effect young women today? Yes? No? In what way?
4. What do you think about the way women and men relate to each other in romantic relationships today? How? Examples.

## APPENDIX D

### **Interview Schedule**

Questions for focus group.

1. What are the factors that create sexually pressurized situations?
2. What do you think about communication between two people in a relationship and how it affects a girl's ability to say no if he asks for sexual intimacy?
3. Do you feel you can say no? Why? Why not? Why is it hard to say no? Where is the line?
4. Is this happening in real life situations?

## APPENDIX E

### Consent Form

#### Why is this study being done?

Thandi Madziakapita is a Psychology Honours student at UCT and is doing a research project looking experiences of relationships. You are being asked to join this study because you are between the ages of 18 and 22, in your first year at UCT.

#### What happens in this study?

If you agree to take part in the study Thandi will arrange to meet you at a time that is convenient for you, for a one-one-one interview. You will also be asked to commit to take part in a focus group at a later stage.

In the one-on-one interview Thandi will give you two scenarios and will ask you some questions about your thoughts on those scenarios and thus on your ideas, perceptions and observations of romantic relationships. The one-on-one interview will be tape recorded. At the focus group you will be discussing some issues that will have been raised through the one-on-one interviews with other participants who took part in the one-on-one interviews. This focus group session will be video-recorded.

#### Other things you should know:

- As a first-year psychology student, 90 minutes of participation in the studies of post-graduate students is compulsory to satisfy your DP requirements for this course. By agreeing to take part in this research study you fulfill this requirement.
- The interview and focus group will take place in a room in the Department of Psychology at UCT. The interviews will be tape recorded and the focus group video recorded.
- The researcher, Thandi, will keep all information pertaining to your identity confidential. Your name will not be used in any report or in anything written about the study.
- You do not have to answer any questions that you think are too personal or make you feel uncomfortable.

If you have read the above and agree to participate in this research project, please sign below.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant (Printed Name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student No

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Thandi Madziakapita  
[Mdztha001@uct.ac.za](mailto:Mdztha001@uct.ac.za),  
072 830 4812