THE RELATIONSHIP CONTEXT OF SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR

Young Adults’ Romantic Views as Predictors of Condom Use and Pressured Sex

by

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This thesis is presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Murdoch University.

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I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main
content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary
institution.

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ABSTRACT

The current thesis focused on the relationship context of sexual behaviour, and on how the romantic views held by young adults related to sexual compliance. Romantic views explored included rejection sensitivity, expectations of a partner’s desires to use condoms, and romantic views related to power in relationships. Romantic views were hypothesised to relate to both condom use and pressured sex in a variety of relationship contexts. Furthermore, gender was examined as a factor that may shape the sexual behaviour of young adults.

Study 1 used a pre-existing American data set to test the relationship between fears of rejection and sexual behaviour among single young adults (n = 387). Rejection fears related to experiencing more pressured sex, expected sex, and less condom use, consistent with a rejection sensitivity model. Furthermore, fears of rejection interacted with relationship importance, such that rejection fears predicted more pressured sex among those placing low, but not medium or high, importance on relationships.
Studies 2, 3, and 4 used a purpose-built online survey with Australian university students (18-25 years, n = 1144) who reported on their relationships and sexual behaviour in diverse relationship contexts. Study 2 focused on condom use as a form of sexual compliance in romantic and casual relationships, taking into account whether individuals wanted to use condoms, and whether they thought their partners did. Rejection sensitivity predicted condom use when individuals’ condom use desires were at odds with those they thought their partners held. Specifically, rejection sensitive individuals used condoms less, if that was what they thought their partners wanted, supporting the importance of contextual factors when linking personality dispositions to behaviour. The importance of gender was also highlighted, with women over-represented relative to men among those who reported wanting to use condoms more often than they thought their partners did.

Consistent with the common perception that men are less responsible than women when it comes to condom use, Study 3 hypothesised that in romantic relationships young adults would expect men to want to use condoms less than women. Results showed that although men and women did not significantly differ in their own level of condom use desire, women thought that men wanted to use condoms less than men reported wanting to use condoms themselves, suggesting that gender stereotypical views about condom use do exist, but that such views may not be accurate.

The final study explored how emotional intimacy power related to different sexual experiences for men and women. Participants reported how invested they were in the romantic or casual relationship, and how invested they thought their partners were. Using a measure of individual relationship power, and consistent with predictions, individuals with more power used condoms in a manner more consonant
with their own desires. Experiences of pressured sex were contrary to the hypothesis, with men, but not women, with more power experiencing more pressured sex. It is possible that sexual behaviour may be used as an exchange process between couples, with sex representing something that women give to men, and condom use representing something that men give to women.

In summary, all four studies suggest that young adults have relationship consequences in mind, particularly their own need to belong, when negotiating sexual behaviour in both romantic and casual relationships. The findings have theoretical implications that generally support models of rejection sensitivity, cognitive-affective personality factors, and power-dependence relations. Importantly, the findings also have clinical implications for sexual health initiatives and therapeutic work with individuals and couples.
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LIST OF ORIGINAL PUBLICATIONS

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CHAPTER ONE: OVERVIEW

As clinicians, we are trained to empathise with people, and understand the motivations behind behaviour. However, as researchers, we are trained to test theoretical models and review evidence in support of such models. Whilst these two orientations are not mutually exclusive, in the area of young adult sexual behaviour, the emphasis has certainly been on testing models that predict behaviour, and little attention has been paid to understanding young adults’ sexual behaviour from their own perspectives. Yet it is this deeper understanding of young adult sexual behaviour that is critical to clinical work with sexually active young adults. When working to understand young adult sexual behaviour, it is therefore apparent that researchers and clinicians have valuable insights to offer one another.

Much of the research on sexual behaviour in young adulthood has focused on whether or not individuals choose to engage in safe or unsafe sexual behaviour. This line of research has predominately been guided by individual-based theories such as the Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980), the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), the Health Belief Model (Rosenstock, 1974), and Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986). These models emphasise constructs such as attitudes towards condoms, perceived susceptibility to risk, and social norms. Although individual-based models have been shown to predict sexual risk-taking, they all centre on the idea that young adults tend to engage in more or less risky sexual behaviour.

However, it is unlikely that young adults themselves view their sexual behaviour strictly in terms of a risky or less-risky dichotomy. It has been argued that research places too much emphasis on the individual engaging in sexual
behaviour, and too little emphasis on the relational processes occurring within the couple (Bruhin, 2003; Crockett, Raffaelli, & Moilanen, 2003; Ingham & van Zessen, 1997; Moore & Rosenthal, 2006; Rosenthal, Gifford, & Moore, 1998). If we are to conduct research on the sexual behaviour of young adults in a way that is consistent with the motivations and experiences of young adults themselves, then the reasons that young adults have sex need to be considered. Young adults have sex for a range of motivations, with two of the most important motivations being for pleasure, and for the development of intimacy (Cooper, Shapiro, & Powers, 1998; Hill & Preston, 1996). The development of intimacy in relationships is an important task of young adulthood (Erikson, 1964) and young adults report intimacy to be one of the greatest rewards of being in a romantic relationship (Sedikides, Oliver, & Campbell, 1994). Therefore, when predicting sexual behaviour, the desire to fulfill intimacy needs is likely to be one of the major factors that shape young adult sexual behaviour.

Young adults’ expectations about the fulfillment of intimacy needs are guided by their romantic views. Romantic views reflect individual differences in cognitive representations of relationships (Furman & Simon, 1999; Furman & Wehner, 1994). With interpersonal relationships being so important to our own wellbeing, it is not surprising that much of our cognitive processing is devoted to them (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Furman and colleagues have argued that romantic views affect not only how individuals interpret partner behaviour, but also how they respond to partner behaviour. They have also proposed that the impact of romantic views on interpersonal behaviour may manifest in the area of attachment, caretaking, affiliation and sexuality in relationships. The link between romantic views and interpersonal behaviour may be particularly relevant
to sexual interactions, as it is likely that individuals use interpersonal concerns as a guide to their sexual decision making. However, in order to enrich our understanding of the link between romantic views and sexual behaviour, it is also important to consider the relationship context in which sex takes place, and the types of sexual behaviour negotiated between partners.

Examining the relationship as a context for sexual behaviour is consistent with theoretical models that highlight the need to take into account the context when examining individuals and their behaviour (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998; Mischel & Shoda, 1995). Young adults report having sex in a variety of romantic and non-romantic relationship contexts (Galligan & Terry, 1993; Rosenthal et al., 1998; Sheeran, Abraham, & Orbell, 1999) and individuals have been shown to have different expectations regarding relationship qualities and sexual behaviour according to relationship types (Ellen, Cahn, Eyre, & Boyer, 1996). If individuals view their sexual behaviour as having different meaning depending upon the relationship context, then research investigating sexual behaviour among young adults should differentiate between relationship types, such as romantic and casual relationships. By understanding differences in sexual behaviour across relationship contexts, a broader understanding of young adult sexual behaviour can be gained that is more representative of young adult sexual experiences, than if relationship contexts were not considered.

In addition, to understand young adult sexual behaviour and the relational aspects of sexual negotiation, a focus on aspects of sexual behaviour that extends past condom use is warranted. Much of the research on young adult sexual behaviour centres on predicting condom use. Whilst the importance of this research cannot be disputed, it may lead to relational processes, and other types
of sexual negotiations other than condom use, being overlooked. The experience of consensual unwanted sex is common among young adults and is an important area of research, partly due to the psychological impact of unwanted sex (de Visser, Rissel, Richters, & Smith, 2007; Moore & Rosenthal, 2006; O'Sullivan, 2005; Patton & Mannison, 1995). Unwanted sex can occur when there is a discrepancy between partners about whether they desire to have sex (O'Sullivan). Whilst it is clear that the rights of individuals to refuse sex should be respected, there will indeed be some situations where individuals consent to having sex that is not desired (O'Sullivan & Allgeier, 1998). Both unwanted sex and condom nonuse are associated with undesirable physical and psychological health symptoms. In addition, both unwanted sex and condom nonuse can result from complying with a partner’s sexual desires. One reason that young adults may comply with their partner’s sexual desires is to maintain a relationship. Consistent with young adults’ needs to develop intimacy in sexual relationships (Cooper et al., 1998), and the fundamental human need to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), it is understandable that young adults would be driven to maintain relationships, sometimes even at the expense of their own preferences for sex and condom use. The concept of the need to belong is embedded within this thesis, and it is argued that young adults are influenced by their belongingness needs when making decisions about sex and condom use.

Young adults’ romantic views are likely to shape perceptions of whether partners will meet their belongingness needs. When young adults make decisions about sex, their romantic views provide the lens through which they view their partner’s behaviour, and in turn respond to it. The studies in this thesis were guided by a model in which romantic views are hypothesised to relate to sexual
behaviour. The romantic views the model takes into account include the general
romantic views of the individuals, the more specific romantic views that
individuals hold of their partners, and the specific romantic views that
individuals think their partners hold of them. This model is represented in Figure
1.

The four empirical studies in this thesis have been designed to test aspects
of this model, with the common thread of thought being that the romantic views
people hold about relationships are linked to their sexual behaviour. The focus of
each of the four studies is shown in Figure 1. The numbers alongside the links in
the model represent the relevant studies. The current thesis does not attempt to
exhaust all possible links between the constructs presented, nor does it attempt to
replace other well-supported models of sexual behaviour. Rather, the model is
provided as a framework to guide exploration of the romantic views that
contribute to the sexual behaviour of young adults. The rationale for
investigating the model and the specific links in Figure 1 is outlined below
before being explained in further detail in Chapter 2.

One theoretical model that specifically addresses compliance is rejection
sensitivity. Individuals who are more rejection sensitive are hypothesised to
engage in more compliant behaviour, including compliant sexual behaviour
(Downey, Bonica, & Rincon, 1999). Rejection sensitivity is characterised by
anxiously expecting, readily perceiving and reacting intensely to rejection
(Downey & Feldman, 1996). According to Downey and colleagues’ model,
rejection-sensitive individuals who over-invest in relationships are particularly
prone to compliance. In line with this model, Study 1 (Chapter 3) focuses on the
link between rejection sensitivity and sexual compliance. Downey and colleagues
Figure 1. The relationship context of sexual behaviour model which demonstrates the link between romantic views and sexual behaviour. The numbers alongside the links represent the number of the study that examines the link.
also argue that rejection-sensitive individuals with high levels of relationship investment in particular, comply with their partners’ desires in an effort to prevent rejection. Therefore, as indicated by the path annotated with “1” in Figure 1, Study 1 examines the moderating effect of relationship importance in the link between rejection sensitivity and sexual compliance. Specifically, Study 1 investigates the proposition that rejection-sensitive individuals who over-invest in relationships are more sexually compliant to their partners. To examine a range of sexual behaviours, Study 1 includes experiences of pressured sex, expected sex and condom use.

The main theme of Study 2 (Chapter 4) is that individuals make decisions about condom use with not only their own romantic views and condom use desires in mind, but also the perceived condom use desires of their partners. Study 2 was designed to test three links represented in Figure 1. First, Study 2 examines the link between rejection sensitivity and condom use. Second, condom use as sexual compliance is investigated more thoroughly by examining whether individuals want to use condoms and whether they think their partners do. The hypothesis is that rejection sensitivity will predict condom use at times when young adults’ condom use desires are at odds with their partner’s perceived condom use desires. The final question Study 2 examines is whether gender plays a role in shaping men’s and women’s perceptions of their partners’ desires to use condoms, and in particular, it tests whether women are more likely than men to think that their partners want to use condoms less than themselves.

In Study 3 (Chapter 5), the link between gender and condom use desires is explored further. Consistent with the common perception that men are less responsible than women when it comes to condom use (Campbell, 1995), it is hypothesised that
young adults will expect men to want to use condoms less than women. Little is known about whether these assumptions are accurate, and there is some research to suggest that men do not evaluate the initiation of condom use as negatively as women expect (Kelly & Bazzini, 2001). Therefore, Study 3 focuses on the need to further our understanding of the role that gender plays in shaping young adults’ perceptions of their partner’s condom use desires, and also, whether men want to use condoms as infrequently as women believe.

Study 4 (Chapter 6) examines the final section of the model, and in keeping with the notion that romantic views predict sexual behaviour, the link between power-related romantic views and sexual behaviour is investigated. There are many ways that power can be conceptualised and measured, and here the focus is on power-dependence relations (Emerson, 1962) and emotional intimacy relationship power (Tschann, Adler, Millstein, Gurvey, & Ellen, 2002). The argument is that those who are more invested in their relationships than their partners hold less power, and thus will be more sexually compliant. As sex and condom use have different meanings for men and women, Study 4 tests whether more powerful individuals will experience condom use and pressured sex differently, based on their gender. Social exchange theory is used to guide the investigation of a moderating effect of gender on the link between power and sexual compliance.

In essence, this thesis examines factors that are likely to be important to young adults making decisions about sex and condom use. Specifically, this thesis focuses on constructs that are related to one of the main motivations reported by young adults for having sex: to be close to a partner. Through selecting constructs that are directly
relevant to young adults’ attempts to be close to partners and to build and maintain relationships, a more comprehensive and accurate understanding of young adults’ sexual behaviour can be gained.

To investigate the links in Figure 1, data from two samples are used. Study 1 uses data from a community sample of American young adults. For Studies 2, 3, and 4, a survey was conducted of Australian university students. Each study has a preface that highlights the main constructs of the model under consideration, and the links of the model tested in that chapter. The preface to each chapter also explains the rationale for each of the studies, being progressively supportive of the central argument of this thesis that romantic views relate to sexual compliance. As this thesis is based partly on published manuscripts, each empirical chapter is a self-contained study. This means that each chapter has its own abstract, focused literature review, method section, results section and discussion. Thus, the references for each are presented at the end of each chapter.

Following directly on from this overview chapter, Chapter 2 reviews the relevant literature to support the argument that romantic views are important to consider when seeking to understand the sexual behaviour of young adults. The literature review synthesizes information from the literature on romantic views, including rejection sensitivity and adult attachment style, gender, and power. The literature review also foreshadows the clinical significance of romantic views when working with sexually active young adults, as considered in greater depth in the general discussion of this thesis (Chapter 7). Most of all, the literature review provides the context from which the aims and hypotheses of this thesis arose, and an argument for the importance of
considering romantic views when attempting to understand young adult sexual behaviour.
References


CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The pathways leading to adulthood in westernized countries are more variable for contemporary young adults, than they were for previous cohorts during the past 50 years (Shanahan, 2000). However, it is clear that young adults are making later transitions into adulthood, delaying major life events such as leaving home, entry into employment, and marriage, until later in life (Fussell & Furstenberg, 2005). As young adults make later transitions into adulthood, a distinct developmental stage of life spanning the ages of 18 to 25 years has emerged (Arnett, 2000). Emerging adulthood represents a time in which societal expectations are more flexible than in later years, and a time in which different future directions are explored (Arnett, 2000). It is also during young adulthood that individuals prepare for the roles and responsibilities of adulthood, including marriage. As young adults look towards marriage, many enter into relationships that are more emotionally intense and intimate than they have experienced before. Indeed, the development of an intimate relationship has long been recognised as a major developmental task of young adulthood (Erikson, 1968).

Leading to the choice of an intimate partner, young adults may explore romantic and sexual experiences with a variety of partners. Young adults may remain single, date casually, engage in serial monogamy or may even commit to one partner (Meier & Allen, 2009). The pathways to marriage that young adults take are likely to be varied, reflecting a general pattern of variability in the pathways to adulthood (Shanahan, 2000). However, the fact that the median age of first marriage in Australia is 29.6 years for males, and 27.7 years for females (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008), similar to other westernized countries (Fussell & Furstenberg, 2005; Meier & Allen, 2009),
demonstrates that young adulthood represents a stage in which relationships are often uncommitted, at least in the legal sense of the word.

With commitment in many young adult relationships being absent, or ambiguous (Lindsay, 2000; Meier & Allen, 2009), it is understandable that matters of intimacy and romantic involvement are salient in the minds of young adults (Seiffge-Krenke, 2007). Whilst the uncertainty of romantic commitment during this developmental phase may be welcomed by some, other young adults may find the unwritten rules of romance during young adulthood difficult to interpret. As young adults move towards formal commitment to a partner, it is likely that themes of partner acceptance and rejection are of both interest and concern. Young adults must navigate the choices they make about committing to a romantic partner, and must respond to, and perhaps attempt to influence, the choices that desired others make about them.

Due to the heightened uncertainty in early romantic relationships, young adults may refer to their romantic views as a guide to interpreting and responding to partner behaviour. Romantic views refer to cognitive representations of relationships (Furman & Simon, 1999) and share similarities with relationship schemas (Baldwin, 1992) or working models of relationships (Furman, Simon, Shaffer, & Bouchey, 2002). Furman and Simon argued that romantic views play a role in interpreting partner behaviour, and also in guiding one’s own behaviour. Thus in young adult relationships, romantic views shape whether young adults perceive their partners’ behaviour as being accepting or rejecting, and guide how young adults respond to partner behaviour.

When applied to the relationship context of sexual behaviour, romantic views are likely to influence young adults’ sexual negotiations with their partners. It has been
argued that interpersonal interactions are driven by the ‘hot’ processing system, rather than the ‘cool’ processing system (Pietrzak, Downey, & Ayduk, 2005). The ‘hot’ system is used for quick emotional processing, whereas the ‘cool’ system is used for cognitive and strategic processing (Metcalfe & Mischel, 1999). Due to the heightened physical and emotional arousal experienced at the time of sexual negotiation, it seems likely that sexual encounters would be processed by the ‘hot’ system. Pietrzak and colleagues also argued that ‘hot’ processing entails the use of existing schemas to interpret interactions. For example, young adults who hold the romantic view that their partners are likely to be rejecting, will interpret their partner behaviour through this lens, and may more readily perceive rejection cues. As a result of heightened physical and emotional arousal that triggers ‘hot’ processing, young adults are likely to be relying on their romantic views during sexual encounters. This thesis examines the ways in which young adults’ romantic views relate to sexually compliant behaviour.

The construct of sexual compliance has been selected as it emphasises sexual behaviour as a form of interpersonal behaviour that is negotiated within a couple, rather than as a health behaviour that an individual makes a decision about in isolation. Two forms of sexual compliance are the focus of this thesis: condom use and pressured sex. Although they are different behaviours, they are similar in that both must be negotiated with a sexual partner. During sexual negotiations, situations may arise where partners have differing desires, and some individuals may comply with the desires of their partners. The other similarity that condom use and pressured sex share is that both behaviours have implications for health. Obviously, condom non-use puts young adults at risk of sexually transmitted infections and unplanned pregnancies (Moore &
There are also negative experiences associated with pressured sex including reduced well-being (Moore & Rosenthal, 2006; Zweig, Barber, & Eccles, 1997). Due to the health implications associated with pressured sex and condom use, it is important to understand predictors of each. One way that our understanding of the predictors of sexual compliance can be increased, is by the inclusion of both individual and contextual level factors in models of sexual compliance.

The significance of considering contextual factors in the study of developmental outcomes has long been recognised by Bronfenbrenner and colleagues (Bronfenbrenner, 1995; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). It is particularly important to take contextual factors into consideration when investigating young adult relationships, because given that many young adults are uncommitted, young adults negotiate sex in varied relationship contexts. One way that relationship contexts vary is in terms of the types of relationships in which young adults negotiate sex. For example, recent research on adolescent and young adult relationships has recognised not only casual and romantic relationship contexts, but also “one night stands,” “friends with benefits” and “bed buddies” relationships, each entailing different expectations about sexual negotiation (Ellen, Cahn, Eyre, & Boyer, 1996; Hughes, Morrison, & Asada, 2005). Therefore, young adult sexual behaviour should be understood within relationship contexts in order to reflect the complex situations in which young adults must negotiate sex and condom use. Such a perspective highlights the need for research on sexual compliance that examines individual factors, processes within dyads and contextual features of relationships.
This thesis aims to address a number of areas that have been neglected in past research on young adult sexual behaviour. First, in order to examine factors that are likely to be of concern to young adults themselves when engaging in sexual interactions, this thesis focuses on young adults’ romantic views, and in particular, whether they think their partners will accept or reject them. Additionally, this thesis considers the relationship context as being essential in gaining a comprehensive understanding of the link between romantic views and sexual behaviour. Finally, connections of these views and contexts to both condom use and pressured sex are examined, in order to maintain a focus on the relational aspects of sexual negotiation, rather than a narrow focus on the health risks associated with condom nonuse. In conjunction with these aims, this thesis is intended to contribute to theory on young adult romantic and sexual relationships, and to provide clinically useful information to professionals working with sexually active young adults.

The literature relevant to each construct of the broader model of this thesis will be reviewed to offer an overarching perspective on the relevance of romantic views to sexual behaviour. In addition, the introductions in Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6 will provide more focused reviews of the literature relevant to the empirical questions introduced in each of the studies. The present chapter reviews the evidence for the importance of romantic views in understanding the relationship context of sexual behaviour. First, the construct of rejection sensitivity is introduced to demonstrate that expecting that one’s partner will be rejecting is likely to elicit sexually compliant behaviour. Second, the importance of taking contextual factors into consideration when examining the link between romantic views and behaviour is highlighted. Specifically, the link between
rejection sensitivity and sexual compliance appears to be dependent upon the relationship context, and whether young adults believe that their partners want to use condoms. A review of the relationship context of sexual behaviour would not be complete without a discussion of the role of gender. In this literature review, the particular focus is on the way gender shapes romantic views. Finally, the literature on power in relationships is reviewed, with an emphasis on the way in which romantic views relate to the power that individuals hold in relationships, and the possible implications for the sexual behaviour of men and women.

Rejection Sensitivity and Other Views of Romantic Relationships

In examining the link between romantic views and sexual behaviour, two theoretical models are particularly relevant because they focus on expectations of rejection and the fulfillment of intimacy needs, i.e., rejection sensitivity and attachment style. Rejection sensitivity is a cognitive-affective processing system that leads individuals to anxiously expect, readily perceive, and display intense reactions to rejection (Downey, Bonica, & Rincon, 1999). Adult attachment style has focused on varying experiences of love, and working models of self and relationships (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). The constructs of rejection sensitivity and attachment style have much theoretical overlap. Indeed, researchers have found an association between rejection sensitivity and insecure attachment (Ayduk, Downey, & Kim, 2001; Downey & Feldman, 1996; Petherick & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2006; Young & Furman, 2008). Both constructs reflect the romantic views that people hold and focus on expectations about intimacy needs being met by significant others.
However, there are a number of important differences between the two constructs. One difference relates to the suitability of attachment measures for young adult casual relationships and less developed romantic relationships. Adult attachment relationships are characterised by behaviour in which partners seek close contact, use each other as a safe haven in times of distress, and as a secure base from which to explore the world (Fraley & Shaver, 2000). Not all young adult relationships meet these criteria. In fact, many young adult relationships, and particularly casual sex encounters are characterised by a lack of intimacy, as would be expected in early stages of relationship formation. Young and Furman (2008) question the relevance of applying attachment style measures to adolescent populations where romantic relationships may not yet have developed to the stage of emotional dependence. This argument could also apply to young adult romantic relationships that are in the early stages of development. As romantic attachments take on average two years to develop (Fraley & Shaver), it could be argued that most young adult sexual experiences are with partners to whom they are not attached, at least in the theoretical sense of the word. Thus, one criticism of attachment research is that attachment measures are often applied to romantic or casual relationships which are not attachment relationships (Fraley & Shaver).

It can be argued that rejection sensitivity is a more appropriate measure of romantic views for many young adult relationships. Young and Furman (2008) point out that attachment style measures include components such as one’s ability to depend emotionally upon one’s partner, whereas rejection sensitivity specifically focuses on expectations of rejection. As young adulthood is a period of life in which new relationships are discovered and developed, it is essential that a measure of romantic
views is chosen that is appropriate for the types of relationships in which young adults are primarily involved. In light of these considerations, it may be more suitable to use a measure of rejection sensitivity that focuses on expectations of rejection and acceptance with young adults, rather than measures of attachment that include factors such as using one’s partner as a safe haven and as a source of emotional dependence.

The second difference between the two constructs is the level of specificity of the constructs. Attachment style is a complex and multidimensional construct, whereas rejection sensitivity is a more targeted construct. This difference has implications when attempting to understand the factors that predict behaviour. For example, if a measure of preoccupied attachment was used to predict condom use, it would suggest that both fears of being abandoned and the desire to merge closely with a partner predict behaviour, because the measure encompasses a range of cognitions and affect. In contrast, the measure of rejection sensitivity specifically focuses on fears of rejection from another person, and therefore it can be known that it is rejection fears, rather than desires to be close to another that are predictive of behaviour. As rejection sensitivity is a more targeted measure of rejection fears, it may be particularly useful for predicting sexual compliance, given that compliance is considered to result from fear of abandonment or rejection (Downey et al., 1999; Impett & Peplau, 2003), rather than from other aspects of insecure attachment.

It is also important to consider whether measures of relationship views are specific to romantic relationships (romantic views), or whether such measures are views of a variety of relationships, including family and peer relationships. It has been argued by Furman and Wehner (1994) that individuals hold different relationship views for
different types of relationships, such as a separate view for friends and romantic partners. According to Furman and Wehner, although there is some consistency in relationship views held between such relationship types by individuals, there are also differences. They tested the correlation of attachment scales for family, peer and romantic relationships among adolescents and they found that, although there were significant correlations between attachment to specific relationships (such as friends and romantic partners), the correlations were varied enough to support the conclusion that views are varied across relationship types. In order to measure relationship views that are specific to sexual encounters, it makes sense to focus specifically on romantic relationship views.

Downey and colleagues also measured rejection sensitivity across relationship types, particularly relationships with significant others (Downey & Feldman, 1996). To assess the general view of relationships that individuals held, respondents were presented with a broad range of hypothetical scenarios in which they must request something from a significant other. The scenarios were carefully selected through open-ended interviews with undergraduate students, asking them to identify interpersonal situations in which rejection is possible. The situations are therefore relevant to young adults. The targets of the hypothetical requests included parents, teachers, romantic partners, potential romantic partners and friends. Downey and Feldman (1996) decided to retain a single factor from the rejection sensitivity test based on the results of a scree test, in line with the idea of one general view of relationships, rather than views for types of relationships. This one factor consisted of 18 items and represented one general factor of rejection sensitivity.
Later research however, supports the idea of rejection sensitivity measuring separate views for relationship types. Brookings, Zembar and Wilson (2003) used confirmatory analysis to support the notion that a three-factor solution may best reflect the construct of rejection sensitivity, with situations involving parents, partners and significant others (e.g. friends) each representing one factor. Brookings and colleagues suggested that using a one-factor scale may result in the loss of useful and interesting information and thus, rejection sensitivity should be examined according to the rejection sensitivity dimension of interest. Given that this thesis focuses on sexual behaviour, it seems important to focus specifically on romantic views, and thus only the items relating to rejection by romantic or potential romantic partners are used in the studies on rejection sensitivity.

*Rejection Sensitivity and Relationship Importance*

The body of research investigating the link between rejection sensitivity and interpersonal behaviour has increased steadily. For example, higher levels of rejection sensitivity have been found to predict dating violence among males (Downey, Feldman, & Ayduk, 2000), self-silencing behaviour (Harper, Dickson, & Welsh, 2006) and hostile behaviour after conflict (Ayduk, Downey, Testa, Yen, & Shoda, 1999). More recently, Young and Furman (2008) also found that rejection sensitivity predicted increased risk of sexual victimization among adolescents. Therefore, there is a growing body of research supporting the link between the construct of rejection sensitivity and a variety of types of interpersonal behaviour.

When examining the link between rejection sensitivity and sexual behaviour, it may also be interesting to consider how the construct of rejection sensitivity interacts
with other romantic views. Relationship investment is a central part of Downey at al.’s (1999) rejection sensitivity model, with those who score high on measures of rejection sensitivity engaging in avoidance or overinvestment strategies in an attempt to prevent rejection. The model suggests that in order to prevent rejection, some individuals will avoid relationships, thus minimizing their investment, whereas others will engage in strategies to prevent their partner from leaving them by over-investing in relationships. Avoidance strategies involve avoidance of involvement or investment in romantic relationships, whereas overinvestment strategies involve engaging in coercive or compliant behaviour to prevent rejection.

Engaging in controlling or aggressive behaviour in an attempt to prevent rejection is characteristic of coercive strategies. For example, rejection-sensitive males are more prone to engage in dating violence as a coercive strategy (Downey et al., 2000). Compliant strategies include changing oneself to fit with the imagined or actual desires of one’s partner and tolerating abuse to maintain the relationship (Downey et al., 1999). For example, rejection-sensitive adolescent girls have reported taking actions they know to be wrong in order to maintain the relationship with their boyfriend (Purdie & Downey, 2000). Downey and colleagues identify complying with a partner’s wishes for sexual intimacy as an example of a compliant strategy to maintain the relationship.

Therefore it seems apparent that relationship investment may play an important role in determining how rejection-sensitive individuals react to perceived cues of rejection. In effect, two individuals with similar levels of rejection sensitivity may engage in very different behaviour with a partner depending on whether they avoid or overinvest in relationships to prevent rejection. The interactive effect between rejection
sensitivity and relationship investment has been previously applied to dating violence (Downey et al., 2000), depression and relationship dissolution (Zimmer-Gembeck & Vickers, 2007).

Zimmer-Gembeck and Vickers (2007) investigated the interaction between rejection sensitivity and relationship commitment on depression and relationship dissolution. It was expected that the impact of rejection sensitivity on depression would be stronger when relationship commitment was high, as individuals would have more invested in the relationship and therefore, more to lose should problems arise. It was argued that those high in relationship commitment would be subject to stress from rejection as they would ruminate about rejection. Indeed, results supported the hypotheses with the chance of relationship dissolution being higher among rejection-sensitive adolescents who reported greater commitment than among those reporting less commitment. Similarly, rejection-sensitive adolescents who reported higher relationship commitment experienced more depressive symptoms at time two than those with low levels of commitment. The results support the notion that rejection sensitivity appears to be associated with adverse individual and interpersonal experiences, when relationship commitment is high. Perhaps these individuals are over-investing in their relationships.

Zimmer-Gembeck and Vickers (2007) measured relationship commitment by asking adolescents how committed they were to their relationship and how likely they thought it would be that the relationship would be life-long. Although this is an appropriate measure of relationship investment for partnered individuals, the measure is not so suitable for single individuals, or those in the early stages of relationship formation. In order to provide a measure of relationship investment that can be used for
both single and partnered individuals, participants could report how important they think it is to be involved in a romantic relationship.

This type of measure has been used by Downey et al. (2000) when testing the predictive qualities of the interaction between rejection sensitivity and relationship investment for male violence in dating relationships. Downey and colleagues found that relationship investment, operationalised as the importance placed on being in a relationship, moderated the link between rejection sensitivity and dating violence. Rejection-sensitive males had a higher probability of engaging in dating violence as a coercive strategy if they were highly invested in relationships. Thus the studies above (Downey et al., 2000; Zimmer-Gembeck & Vickers, 2007) highlight two important constructs as being particularly relevant to interpersonal behaviour: rejection sensitivity and relationship investment. These links have yet to be tested together to predict sexual behaviour.

In consideration of the interactive effects of rejection sensitivity and relationship investment, it may be useful to look to the attachment literature. Attachment researchers have also acknowledged the importance of avoiding or overinvesting in relationships. For example through factor analyses, Collins and Read (1990) identified the three most important elements of attachment style which they labeled “close”, “depend” and “anxiety”. These three factors are similar to the key parts of the rejection sensitivity model. First, the items pertaining to anxiety about being abandoned or unloved resemble the measure of anxiety in the rejection sensitivity model. Second, the items measuring expectations about whether a significant other will meet one’s needs (depend) are similar to the measure of whether individuals expect others to meet their needs in the
rejection sensitivity model. The final factor (close) identified by Collins and Read addressed whether individuals were comfortable being close to others. This final factor relates to the model of rejection sensitivity whereby individuals either avoid or overinvest in relationships; both models account for behaviour in which individuals try to get close to, or withdraw from others.

Other models of attachment style have also differentiated individuals based on whether they seek closeness with others, or avoid relationships. For example, Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) categorised individuals into four attachment prototypes including secure, preoccupied, dismissing and fearful, based on semi-structured interviews. These prototypes reflected individuals’ views of the self and other, although the prototypes also differed in terms of whether they wanted to be close to others, or avoid relationships. In this model, avoidance was high in those displaying both the dismissing and fearful attachment styles, but only the individuals displaying the fearful attachment style avoided relationships due to fears of being rejected. Those in whom the dismissing attachment style predominated avoided relationships because such individuals minimized the importance of close relationships. Exemplars of the four prototypes also differed on whether they felt anxiety about being abandoned; this anxiety was highest among the preoccupied and fearful prototypes.

In some ways, the two dimensions that categorize the four attachment prototypes in Bartholomew and Horowitz’s (1991) model, anxiety and avoidance, reflect the two dimensions that differentiate individuals in Downey’s et al.’s (1999) model: fears of rejection, and relationship investment. It can also be argued that these two constructs reflect the dimensions of avoidance and anxiety. However, there are some differences
between the two models that should be noted. First, there is evidence to suggest that rejection-sensitive individuals have a tendency to avoid intimacy, rather than seek out intimacy (Brookings, Zembar, & Hochstetler, 2003). Second, as previously noted, rejection sensitivity measures may be better applied to adolescent or less developed relationships than attachment style measures, as the measure of attachment style focuses more on emotional dependence on one’s partner (Young & Furman, 2008).

Attachment researchers have explored the way attachment anxiety and avoidance interact, and how these romantic views predict compliant sexual behaviour. For example, it has been found that among women, attachment anxiety and avoidance were related to consenting to unwanted sex in an actual (Gentzler & Kerns, 2004) or hypothetical scenario (Impett & Peplau, 2002). Some research has explored the reasons behind these links. College women in dating relationships were asked whether they would consent to unwanted sex with their current dating partner in a hypothetical scenario and their related reasons for doing so (Impett & Peplau). The reasons that anxiously attached women often gave for consenting to unwanted sex included fears that their partners would lose interest in them. In contrast, avoidantly attached women often reported engaging in unwanted sex because they saw sex as a relationship obligation. But Impett and Peplau did not consider the interaction between high fears of rejection and relationship avoidance. The interaction between high anxiety and high avoidance has been found to predict individuals having sex due to fears that a partner will leave or reject them (Schachner & Shaver, 2004). However, this would suggest that highly rejection-sensitive individuals who avoid relationships are the most compliant, which is
different to Downey’s model that suggests rejection-sensitive individuals who overinvest in relationships are the most compliant.

In terms of condom use, greater attachment anxiety has been found to be associated with more unsafe sexual practices (Feeney, Kelly, Gallois, Peterson, & Terry, 1999; Feeney, Peterson, Gallois, & Terry, 2000; Kershaw et al., 2007; Strachman & Impett, 2009). One interesting finding from Feeney and colleagues (2000) was that among males, attachment avoidance was associated with a greater perceived risk of contracting HIV/AIDS, whereas attachment anxiety was associated with a lowered perceived risk. This leads one to wonder how individuals high in both anxiety and avoidance perceive risk, and more importantly to consider the condom use behaviour of such individuals. However, the interaction between avoidance and anxiety is seldom investigated. In three of the studies examining attachment and condom use, the interaction of rejection sensitivity with relationship investment, or with similar constructs such as attachment avoidance, was not tested (Feeney et al., 1999; Feeney et al., 2000; Strachman & Impett). In the fourth study, the interaction was found to be nonsignificant, however, a select sample of pregnant women was used (Kershaw et al., 2007). Therefore, very little is known about whether rejection-sensitive individuals are more compliant with condom use if they avoid or overinvest in relationships.

Further clues as to whether rejection sensitivity interacts with relationship investment to predict sexual compliance can be found in the literature on non-sexual compliant behaviour. In particular, attachment researchers have investigated the link between romantic views and non-sexual compliant behaviour. Interestingly, fearfully attached individuals score higher on measures of compliance (Gudjonsson, Sigurdsson,
Lydsdottir, & Olafsdottir, 2008), adopt subservient roles in friendships and romantic relationships, describe themselves as exploitable, and were the only attachment style group to be consistently associated with a lack of assertiveness (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). Fearfully attached individuals have high fears of rejection, but avoid relationships in an attempt to prevent rejection. Thus, studies on attachment style and non-sexual compliant behaviour suggest that rejection-sensitive individuals who avoid relationships may comply with their partner’s desires.

According to Downey et al.’s (1999) model, those high in rejection sensitivity and relationship investment should be the most compliant. Intuitively this makes sense, as those who fear rejection and are highly invested in relationships, or strongly value the importance of being in a relationship, have more to lose. Indeed, Zimmer-Gembeck and Vickers (2007) found that rejection sensitivity was associated with relationship dissolution and depression, especially among those high in relationship commitment. Additionally, rejection-sensitive males with higher levels of relationship investment have been shown to be more likely to engage in dating violence (Downey et al., 2000). However, the attachment style literature suggests that those high in rejection sensitivity, but low in relationship investment may be the most prone to compliance. Therefore, there is inconsistency in the literature regarding whether rejection-sensitive individuals are more compliant if they avoid or overinvest in relationships. Answering this question is important to further our understanding of the behaviour of individuals negotiating sex and condom use. If more research were conducted on the romantic views held by young adults who are sexually compliant, professionals working with sexually active young adults could be made aware of the cognitive representations that are associated with
sexual compliance, and potentially adopt a more empathetic understanding of their behaviour. As more information is needed regarding how rejection sensitivity interacts with relationship investment, this question is addressed in Study 1.

Rejection Sensitivity and the Context Surrounding Condom Use

In applying the model of rejection sensitivity to compliant sexual behaviour, it is important to consider whether the behaviour is truly compliant, or is actually consistent with an individual’s own desires. In the case of consensual unwanted sex, the primary reason for having sex is due to pleasing one’s partner, rather than one’s own desires (Impett & Peplau, 2003). In other words, an individual has sex because it is what that person’s partner wants, rather than what the individual wants. Therefore, the behaviour can be considered to be compliant.

The case for considering condom nonuse as sexual compliance is more complex. It is troublesome to assume that condom nonuse is a form of sexual compliance simply because the behaviour engenders a degree of risk. In many instances, although condom nonuse may be considered to be risky, it is not necessarily sexually compliant. For example, a man or woman may choose to have sex with a new partner without a condom because they do not like the physical feel of condoms. In such cases, condom nonuse would be congruent with one’s condom use desires and therefore can not be considered compliant behaviour. Sexual compliance in condom use behaviour can only manifest itself in situations where the condom use desires of one partner are discrepant from the desires (perceived or actual) of the other. Additionally, an individual who would normally be sexually compliant can only behave in a compliant manner if that individual’s condom use desires are incongruent with those of the partner. If an
individual who is usually sexually compliant has a partner with condom use desires that match those of the individual in question, then that individual’s behaviour and desires will be congruent. Therefore, when examining the link between rejection sensitivity and sexually compliant condom use, it is important to consider whether the individual wants to use condoms, and whether that individual thinks his or her partner does.

Considering the condom use desires of both partners when examining the link between rejection sensitivity and condom use is also important in order to more accurately measure the predictive value of rejection sensitivity. Mischel and Shoda (1995) argued that in order to understand how a personality disposition relates to behaviour, it is not only important to examine how behaviour varies as a function of the personality construct, but also the contexts in which this link is strongest. Downey and colleagues (1999) suggested that rejection sensitivity should predict compliant behaviour when there is a chance of conflict or rejection. Thus, when condom use is negotiated, rejection sensitivity should be of predictive value when partners have incongruent condom use desires such as when an individual wants to use a condom, but perceives that one’s partner does not. In contrast, when both partners are in agreement about condom use, the chance of conflict and rejection is low, and hence rejection sensitivity should not be triggered, and should not predict behaviour.

Few studies have examined young adults’ condom use desires, or the perceived condom use desires of their partners. This is an important factor to consider as it recognises that there are two people involved in the negotiation of condom use instead of a sole individual. Many studies have examined attitudes towards condom use and intentions to use condoms. However, there are surprisingly few studies that have asked
participants whether they wanted to use condoms. Although these concepts share similarities, there are also important differences. Attitudes towards a behaviour refer to whether the individual’s evaluations of that behaviour are favourable or unfavourable (Ajzen, 1991). For condom use, individuals may vary according to how much they like or dislike condoms. It is reasonable to assume that those who dislike condoms won’t want to use them, and research supports the idea that those with negative attitudes towards condoms are less likely to use them. Even though those who believe condoms reduce sexual pleasure are less likely to use them (Randolph, Pinkerton, Bogart, Cecil, & Abramson, 2007), it may also be true that some individuals with negative attitudes towards condoms may still want to use condoms to protect themselves against unwanted pregnancy and/or STIs.

Additionally, the distinction between intentions to use condoms and wanting to use condoms should be highlighted. Intentions to perform a behaviour refer to the extent to which a person will try to perform a behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). Research has shown that those who do not intend to use condoms use condoms less (Albarracín, Johnson, Fishbein, & Muellerleile, 2001; Muñoz-Silva, Sánchez-García, Nunes, & Martins, 2007). However, an individual may not intend to use condoms but still want to use them. For example, consider a scenario where a couple has developed a habit within their relationship not to use condoms. An individual may want to use condoms, but may not believe that they would be able to convince their partner to use condoms. One study of economically disadvantaged women has shown that nearly one in five women wanted to use a condom with their partner during a 30-day period but did not ask (Cabral, Pulley, Artz, Brill, & Macaluso, 1998). People may not intend to use condoms due to a
variety of reasons, such as an unwilling partner, but may still want to use condoms. In order to accurately measure sexual compliance, research should examine not whether individuals like condoms, or whether they intend to use condoms, as such constructs do not consider the overall condom use desire. Instead, researchers should examine whether an individual’s behaviour is consistent with what they want to do.

A handful of studies have asked participants whether they want to use condoms and the results are mixed. In one study focusing on romantic relationships, half of the women involved reported wanting to use condoms with their partner, but only 8% reported consistent use over a three-month period (Pulerwitz, Amaro, De Jong, Gortmaker, & Rudd, 2002). In another study of romantic relationships, 62% of adolescents reported wanting to use condoms at least half of the time (Tschann, Adler, Millstein, Gurvey, & Ellen, 2002). Additionally, it has been found that individuals generally perceive that their partners want to use condoms less often than themselves (Tschann et al., 2002).

As with research on condom use desires, there has been little research on whether people think their partners want to use condoms. However, condom use has been linked to the perception of a partner’s attitudes towards condoms (Finkelstein & Brannick, 2000; Pallonen, Timpson, Williams, & Ross, 2009). Furthermore, adolescents in romantic relationships expect that their partners want to use condoms less than themselves (Tschann et al., 2002). As two people are involved in the process of negotiating condom use, the perception of partner desires to use condoms seems inherent.
Another contextual factor that is essential to consider when examining condom use desire, and an individual’s expectations of one’s partner’s condom use desire, is the relationship type in which condom use is negotiated. There is research to suggest that condom non-use has a symbolic meaning of trust and intimacy in the relationship (Bauman & Berman, 2005; Flood, 2003; Montgomery et al., 2008; Moore & Rosenthal, 1998; Sobo, 1995). Perhaps related to this symbolic meaning is the finding that condoms are used less in ‘steady’ or ‘committed’ relationships (Ellen et al., 1996; Ku, Sonenstein, & Pleck, 1994; Misovich, Fisher, & Fisher, 1997; Plichta, Weisman, Nathanson, Ensminger, et al., 1992; Rosenthal, Hall, & Moore, 1992; Sanderson, 1999). As individuals have different expectations regarding whether others want to use condoms in casual versus romantic relationship contexts, it is imperative that this factor is taken into consideration when examining individuals’ condom use desires. However, little is known about whether relationship type matters because existing studies on condom use desire have only focused on romantic relationships (Pulerwitz et al., 2002; Tschann et al., 2002).

Therefore, more research is required examining the condom use desires of individuals. One advantage of examining condom use desires is that it enables condom use to be conceptualised as a sexually compliant behaviour rather than as a risk taking behaviour. As interpersonal concerns seem to hold more immediate importance to young people than health concerns (Rosenthal et al., 1992), this model may provide a valuable insight into the sexual behaviour of young people. Collecting more information about the individual and contextual-level factors associated with condom use is imperative in
designing more targeted and effective sexual health programs for young adults. The link between rejection sensitivity and compliant condom use will be addressed in Study 2.

**Romantic Views and Gender**

When considering the condom use desires of young adults, it is likely that gender will have an impact on the formation of young adults’ perceptions of their partner’s condom use desires. Social norms about gender play an important role in determining the context of sexuality that impacts upon sexual behaviour (Amaro, 1995; Gagnon & Simon, 1973). Individuals may hold different expectations about their partners, based on the partner’s gender. In turn, this may affect sexual behaviour, as people attempt to meet the desires that they perceive their partners to have. In the case of opposite sex interactions, this of course means that women’s romantic views will be partly determined by what their views are of men, and men’s romantic views will be partly determined by what their views are of women. This idea relates to sexual scripts which are mutually shared conventions that guide the norms of sexual behaviour, and play a role in estimating our partner’s feelings (Simon & Gagnon, 1987).

The impact of sexual scripts on sexual behaviour has been previously explored in terms of individuals’ perceptions of how long men and women like to engage in foreplay and intercourse. Miller and Byers (2004) asked heterosexual couples about how long they prefer to engage in foreplay and intercourse, and how long they thought their partners preferred to engage in such behaviour. Sexual scripts were explored by asking participants what their expectations were regarding how long they thought *most* men and women would want to engage in foreplay and intercourse. While men had fairly accurate perceptions about what their partners would desire, women significantly
underestimated the duration at which men would prefer to engage in foreplay and intercourse. Interestingly, women’s perceptions of what their male partners preferred was more closely related to their stereotypical views of what men wanted, rather than what their partners reported wanting. The authors suggested that individuals were using stereotypical information to guide their views about what their partners wanted more so than personal information provided to them by their partner. It is likely that the same kind of process is occurring with negotiations about whether or not to have sex, and whether or not to use a condom. People may be forming views of their partner’s sexual desires based on their gender, more so than what their partners want individually.

The bioecological model (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000) posits that cultural, or macro-level factors filter down to impact the individual at the micro level. Therefore, it is important to consider the societal influences regarding what we expect of men and women, because almost inevitably, these will impact upon an individual’s romantic views of men and women. Some societal beliefs that may be particularly relevant to condom use include whether men or women are the more responsible party regarding condom use, and whether men or women want to use condoms more. Additionally, in terms of negotiating when sex occurs, it may be important to examine societal expectations regarding whether sex is something that is more valued by men or women in relationships.

Regarding societal expectations about condom use, some scholars have argued that society expects women to be the gatekeepers of sexual activity (Morgan & Zurbriggen, 2007; Wiederman, 2005), and to be more responsible for the prevention of unwanted pregnancy and STIs/HIV than men (Campbell, 1995; East, Jackson, O’Brien,
& Peters, 2007; Marston & King, 2006). There is also evidence to suggest that men’s lack of concern about their health is linked to representations of masculinity (Sorrell & Raffaelli, 2005). Campbell suggested that gendered expectations of condom use are passed on through society in a number of ways. Firstly, many of the safe sex campaigns in society target women more often than men. She acknowledged that while the attention given to women’s health is commendable, it runs the risk of suggesting that it is the woman’s responsibility to ensure that condoms are used. Additionally, Campbell argued that safe sex programs that teach women how to negotiate condom use with their male partners may be reinforcing two ideas: first, that women hold the responsibility to ensure condoms are used; and second, that men do not wish to use condoms and must be ‘convinced’ to wear one. Therefore, safe sex campaigns may unintentionally send the message to men and women that women are responsible for condom use, and that men do not wish to use condoms.

However, it may be that men want to use condoms more often than women expect. Studies investigating condom use desire have often asked women, but not men, how often they want to use condoms (Bowleg, Lucas, & Tschann, 2004; Pulerwitz et al., 2002). One study that did ask both males and females did not test for a gender difference (Tschann et al., 2002). So it is often assumed that men want to use condoms less than do women, but the reality remains unknown. Therefore, there appears to be a gap in the literature with the result that our understanding of men’s desires to use condoms is limited. This question is addressed in Study 3.

Gender norms are also likely to influence sexual behaviour in terms of the negotiation of sex between couples. Societal expectations may play a role in
determining our expectations about the degree to which men and women value sex in relationships (Leiblum, 2002). In other words, the views that people hold of men and women may influence how much they think their partners like sex, and want to have sex. Sex has been described as a resource which women bring to relationships, and that men want (Baumeister & Vohs, 2004), and male college students list sex as a reward gained from a relationship, whereas women do not (Sedikides, Oliver, & Campbell, 1994). Additionally, women report avoiding sex more than men, and their male partners generally agree that women avoid sex (Brassard, Shaver, & Lussier, 2007). If women expect that their male partners always want sex based on societal messages that men always want sex, then women may be negotiating sexual activity with the view that their partner is always ready to have sex. However, as a substantial proportion of men report experiencing unwanted sex (Muehlenhard & Cook, 1988; O'Sullivan & Allgeier, 1998; Vannier & O'Sullivan, in press), this may not always be the case.

The expectations that people hold about men’s and women’s preferences to use condoms, and about how much men and women value sex, may be linked to certain sexual behaviours for the more or less powerful partner. It has been argued that when the power balance in a relationship is unequal, steps will be taken to try to equalize the balance (Emerson, 1962). One way that power may be balanced is by offering greater rewards to a partner. For example, a less powerful woman may offer extra resources to her partner in order to balance the relationship, or she may ensure that her partner is receiving as many rewards from the relationship as she herself. What she deems to be of worth to her partner may be determined by what she believes men want from their partners. Therefore, power may interact with gender so that more powerful individuals
experience compliant condom use and pressured sex differently, depending on their gender.

**Romantic Views and Power**

The power that one has in a relationship may be determined by the person’s romantic views. As people are driven to maintain social bonds (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), they devote much attention to thinking about how invested their partners are in the relationship. It is likely that romantic views shape individuals’ assumptions about how invested their partners are in relationships. When individuals compare their own level of investment in a relationship to that of their partners, they will perceive themselves as being relatively more or less invested. This is an important point to consider as those who are less invested in the relationship than their partner have more power (Sprecher, Schmeeckle, & Felmlee, 2006; Waller & Hill, 1951).

There has been some research investigating the link between power and sexual behaviour. For example, studies have found that those with more power got their way with regard to condoms more often (Tschann et al., 2002; Wang, Wang, & Hsu, 2007) or generally used condoms more often (Bruhin, 2003; Buyssse & Van Oost, 1997; Jorgensen, King, & Torrey, 1980; Pulerwitz et al., 2002; Pulerwitz, Gortmaker, & DeJong, 2000). Others, however, have found no relationship between power and sexual behaviour (Bralock & Konik-Griiffin, 2007; Cabral et al., 1998; Teitelman, Ratcliffe, Morales-Aleman, & Sullivan, 2008). Some studies have found that a significant effect of power on condom use depends on the measure of power used (Jorgensen et al., 1980; Tschann et al., 2002).
Limited research is available regarding how power relates to unwanted sex. Among female adolescents, the ability to refuse unwanted sex has been linked to the belief that male control in relationships is non-normative (Sionean et al., 2002). Additionally, female adolescents with less power report that their boyfriends have the most say about when they have sex (Wang et al., 2007). Finally, Pulerwitz et al. (2000) found that those with less power reported more forced sex than those with more power. However, forced sex should not be conceptualised as sexual compliance, as the very nature of an act being forced upon someone suggests that the experience was not consensual.

The way power has been both conceptualised and measured varies widely across studies on power and sexual behaviour. For example, power has been measured by asking who has more financial resources (Sionean et al., 2002), who wins arguments (Jorgensen et al., 1980), who makes the decisions (Cabral et al., 1998; Harvey, Bird, Galavotti, Duncan, & Greenberg, 2002; Jorgensen et al., 1980; Tschann et al., 2002), who is more emotionally invested (Felmlee, 1994; Sprecher & Felmlee, 1997; Tschann et al., 2002) and, simply by directly asking who has the most power (Cabral et al., 1998; Felmlee, 1994; Sprecher & Felmlee, 1997; Tschann et al., 2002). Some authors have investigated multiple aspects of power and others have used a composite measure, averaging the balance of power across these domains. It is likely that these different measures of power are tapping into different aspects of power. There are a number of other issues that are important to consider when measuring power. These include the aspect of power that is measured, whether the power potential or an outcome of power is
measured, and how the measure is presented to participants. Each issue will be reviewed below.

Emerson (1962) viewed power as a structural element within a dyad, rather than as a trait that exists within an individual. More specifically, Emerson argued that the power held by one person is contingent on another’s dependency. In the context of sexual relationships, there are a number of factors that may determine how dependent individuals are on their partners. Financial dependence may be one of the most obvious examples. Individuals may also be dependent upon their partners for companionship, to belong to a partner’s social group, or for sexual gratification. There are many ways to measure dependence. When choosing an area of dependence to measure, it is important to consider what is regarded as being of value to those in the sample being studied.

Gaining emotional intimacy and commitment from a partner may be of more relevance to young unmarried or uncommitted adults than are financial resources. It has long been argued that the experience of intimacy and making a commitment to a partner are of central concern to individuals in the developmental phase of young adulthood (Erikson, 1964). More recently, research suggests that that companionship and intimacy are rewards that young adults find in romantic relationships (Sedikides et al., 1994). Young adults are often unmarried (Meier & Allen, 2009) and the very nature of being an unmarried young adult means that commitment is absent or possibly highly tentative. Therefore, commitment and intimacy may be seen as relationship qualities to be desired by individuals, and so a partner’s commitment and expressed intimacy will have the potential to impact upon the power balance in relationships.
Emotional intimacy power in relationships is based on one partner being more emotionally involved, or more in love than the other (Tschann et al., 2002). The person who is least involved in the relationship is deemed to have the most personal resources, and thus the most power (Tschann et al., 2002), consistent with the principle of least interest (Sprecher et al., 2006; Waller & Hill, 1951). An important feature of emotional intimacy power is that it is not concerned with total levels of investment, but rather how invested an individual is relative to his/her partner. In unbalanced relationships, it may be that those who think they are more dependent on the relationship also think they have more to lose if relationships end. These people may be more willing to compromise their own desires for the sake of relationship maintenance. Therefore, Study 4 focuses on receiving more emotional intimacy and signs of commitment relative to one’s partner, as a source of power in romantic and casual relationships.

The second question of importance when measuring power is whether the measure focuses on the potential of power or an outcome of power. Bacharach and Lawler (1981) assert that measures of power outcome emphasise the end result, or manifestation of power, and may include who wins conflicts, who determines how the couple spends their leisure time and who controls what method of birth control is used. Potential power, by contrast, may be seen as a precursor to power outcomes and is a structural element in a dyad which can exist without a power outcome being observed. Of the studies reviewed above, some investigate potential power (e.g., emotional investment discrepancy) and others focus on power outcomes (e.g., who makes decisions) as predictors of sexual behaviour. Although using one power outcome to predict another may be a valid way to predict sexual behaviour, it does little to explain
why a particular partner holds the most power. However, if a measure of potential power is used to predict behaviour, our understanding of why certain people are more powerful than others is enhanced. For example, if the individual who wins most arguments in a couple, is also the same individual who has the most influence on condom use, it seems that this person holds more power in two domains of the relationship, but the reason for holding greater power remains unknown. The reason why the individual holds more power lies within understanding his or her potential power.

Another important issue in the measurement of power concerns the way the measures are presented to participants. Some studies directly ask participants who has more power, who has more say regarding particular areas in life, or who is more invested in the relationship (Bowleg, 2004; Felmlee, 1994; Sprecher et al., 2006). However, social desirability may greatly affect the results. Understandably, people do not like to admit that they have less power in relationships, and this notion appears to be supported in the literature. In many studies, when asked directly who has more power, people will often say the power is equal or they have more power (Felmlee, 1994; Sprecher & Felmlee, 1997; Tschann et al., 2002). However, when power is measured indirectly, the proportion of people disclosing less power may increase. For example, one woman in a qualitative study reported that she had power in her relationship, but later reported that if she wanted to go out, she would have to ask her partner (Bowleg, 2004). An alternative to asking participants directly which partner has the most power is by asking first about the participant’s potential power, and then about the perceived potential power of their partner. Some biases still may occur in reporting, but the benefit
of this method is that it does not require the participant to report directly who they think has the most power.

Emotional investment discrepancy as a domain of power has previously been investigated as a predictor of condom use in adolescent romantic relationships (Tschann et al., 2002). It was found that those with more emotional intimacy power (they were less emotionally invested than their partners) got their way more with condom use, whether this meant using or not using a condom the last time they had sex. This finding also highlights an important point regarding the link between power and condom use that is often overlooked: it is presumed that the more powerful partner should determine condom use. In some cases this will entail using a condom, but in many instances it will mean not using a condom. Tschann and colleagues measured both decision-making power and emotional investment power. Linking to Bacharach and Lawler (1981), emotional intimacy power can be conceptualized as a measure of potential power, whereas decision-making power may best be conceptualised as an outcome of power. Interestingly, decision-making power did not predict condom use in Tschann and colleagues’ study, but emotional intimacy power did.

Tschann et al. (2002) also explored the interaction between gender and power as a predictor of condom use however, it was not significant. Gender has been identified as an important but often overlooked factor that shapes sexual behaviour (Amaro, 1995). The study by Tschann and colleagues focused only on romantic relationships, and so we do not know whether gender plays a more important role in casual relationship contexts. Perhaps gender will play a more important role in the negotiation of condom use in casual relationships, where the perception of a partner’s preferences to use condoms is
likely to be based more on their partner’s gender than on already established patterns of condom use that may have occurred in more long-term romantic relationships. Consistent with the idea that individuals attempt to stabilize power imbalances (Emerson, 1962) it is expected that less powerful young adults will offer rewards to their partners and the rewards offered will reflect what young adults expect men and women to value. Specifically, women will have sex with their partners when they do not desire it (pressured sex) due to the perception that men value sex highly, and men will wear a condom due to the perception that women value condom use. The interaction between power and gender is investigated in Study 4.

The Current Thesis

This thesis had a number of aims. Primarily, the aim of this thesis was to examine a conceptual model of the links between young adults’ romantic views and sexual behaviour, in both casual and romantic relationship contexts. Based on evidence that young adults have sex to feel close to a partner (Cooper, Shapiro, & Powers, 1998), and that generally, individuals are driven by a need to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), it was essential that factors relating to the fulfillment of intimacy needs be investigated. Romantic views were therefore identified as an important construct to examine, because young adults need to evaluate whether partners will meet their belongingness needs (Furman & Simon, 1999). Additionally, in order to highlight the relational nature of sexual behaviour, sexual behaviour was conceptualised as a behaviour that was negotiated between couples, with sexual compliance being the behaviour of interest, rather than sexual behaviour per se.
The construct of romantic views was approached from a number of different angles to investigate the relationship context of sexual behaviour. The model of rejection sensitivity was a central guiding theory whose most salient notion is that rejection-sensitive individuals engage in behaviour with the foremost aim of preventing rejection by a partner. It was hypothesised that in line with Downey’s (1999) model of rejection sensitivity, greater fears of rejection would be associated with more frequent experiences of having sex because one felt expected to or pressured, and with reduced odds of condom use. Following on from that, the interactive effect of rejection sensitivity and relationship investment was explored. The interaction between rejection sensitivity and relationship investment tests a part of Downey’s (1999) model that purports that those rejection-sensitive individuals who overinvest in relationships are the most prone to compliance. Thus it was hypothesised that rejection sensitivity and relationship investment would interact such that rejection sensitivity would predict more sexual compliance when relationship investment was high.

A second aim of this thesis was to examine the contexts in which rejection sensitivity predicted behaviour. It was acknowledged that rejection sensitivity would be predictive of behaviour in some contexts, but not others, and that the contexts that trigger the predictive qualities of rejection sensitivity should be contexts that are ripe for conflict and rejection. Specifically, rejection sensitivity was predicted to relate to condom use behaviour in situations where individuals’ condom use desires were incongruent with their partner’s perceived condom use desires. It was hypothesised that condom use would be less frequent when rejection sensitive participants wanted to use condoms but thought that their partners did not. Additionally, it was hypothesised that
condom use would be more frequent when rejection sensitive participants did not want to use condoms, but thought that their partners did.

The third aim of this thesis was to examine whether the views that young adults held of their partners were different for men and women. Society holds different expectations of men and women in terms of a range of different parameters, including sexual behaviour. These societal norms may filter down to impact upon individual expectations that people hold of their partners in sexual interactions. As society expects women to be the gatekeepers of sexual activity (Wiederman, 2005), and to be more responsible for condom use (Campbell, 1995), it was hypothesised that women would expect their male partners to want to use condoms less than themselves.

A final aim of this thesis was to explore how romantic views related to the power balance in relationships and sexual compliance. This thesis explored how emotional intimacy power related to experiences of pressured sex and condom use, and in particular, how these experiences differed for men and women. Gender was thought to add an additional layer to the context surrounding sexual behaviour, as it may determine both what individuals expect of their partners and what they ‘give’ to their partners. It was hypothesised that women with greater power would have pressured sex less often, however, due to the scant information regarding men’s experiences of pressured sex, no hypotheses were proposed regarding the experiences of pressured sex for men. With respect to condom use, it was hypothesised that individuals with more power in romantic relationships would use condoms more often, if that was a behaviour they desired, consistent with previous research (Tschann et al., 2002). For casual relationships, it was hypothesised that more powerful men would use condoms less, but
that more powerful women would use condoms more, consistent with stereotypical expectations regarding what men and women want.

In summary, this thesis explored the relationship context of sexual behaviour in terms of pressured sex and condom use. An aim of this thesis was to use an empathetic approach to understanding young adult sexual behaviour, guided by the consideration that one of the main reasons young adults have sex is to be close to a partner. Thus, the focus was on the interpersonal concerns that young adults may entertain when negotiating sex itself, and when negotiating condom use. As a result, the four empirical studies of this thesis examined the link between romantic views and sexual compliance in romantic and casual relationship contexts.
References


Pulerwitz, J., Amaro, H., De Jong, W., Gortmaker, S. L., & Rudd, R. (2002). Relationship power, condom use and HIV risk among women in the USA. *AIDS Care, 14*(6), 789-800.


The central argument of this thesis is that romantic views relate to sexual compliance, and a conceptual model has been presented that highlights the particular constructs under examination. The first study of this thesis investigates the link between rejection sensitivity and sexual compliance as guided by the model of rejection sensitivity (Downey, Bonica, & Rincon, 1999; Downey & Feldman, 1996). According to Downey and colleagues, rejection sensitive individuals comply with their partner’s wishes in order to prevent rejection, and one area in which such compliance may manifest is sexual behaviour. Furthermore, rejection sensitive individuals are thought to behave in a compliant way when they are highly invested in relationships. Study 1 tests whether the construct of relationship investment moderates the proposed link between rejection sensitivity and sexual compliance. Three measures of sexual compliance are included in Study 1: condom use, and reports of having sex because one felt expected to, or pressured.

An additional aim of Study 1 is to demonstrate the importance of romantic views for single young adults. It is argued that romantic views are relevant to young adults negotiating sex, even outside of romantic relationship contexts. Much research on sexual behaviour includes only partnered individuals, and Study 1 addresses this gap in the literature. The shaded portion of the model below represents the particular constructs and the links of the model under investigation in Study 1 (Figure 1a).
Data for Study 1 are taken from a local area study conducted by Eccles and Barber (e.g. Barber, Eccles, & Stone, 2001), the Michigan Study of Adolescent Life Transitions (MSALT). American young adults (N = 387) who self-identified as single were the participants for Study 1. The survey items selected from Study 1 from MSALT are included in Appendix A. As the MSALT data were collected previously, and Downey and Feldman’s (1996) measure of rejection sensitivity was not included, an alternative scale of rejection fears was devised from the available items about romantic relationships. Thus to avoid confusion with the rejection sensitivity scale used in Study 2, the terms ‘rejection fears’ or ‘fears of rejection’ are used in Study 1 to signify the fears of rejection scale that was developed from MSALT items.
References


CHAPTER THREE

STUDY 1: THE ROMANTIC VIEWS OF SINGLE YOUNG ADULTS: REJECTION FEARS ARE LINKED TO SEXUAL COMPLIANCE.
Abstract

Romantic views have been found to relate to interpersonal behaviour, but this connection has generally been examined within romantic relationships. The current study assessed how fears of rejection and the importance placed on being in a relationship related to sexual compliance among single young adults. Sexually experienced participants (N = 387) reported their sexual behaviour in terms of unwanted sex and condom use. Greater fears of rejection were related to a greater frequency of having sex because one felt expected to, or was pressured, and to reduced odds of condom use. Further analysis revealed that greater rejection fears predicted more pressured sex only among those who placed a low importance on relationships. Results suggest that romantic views relate to the sexual behaviour of single individuals.
The Romantic Views of Single Young Adults: Rejection Fears are Linked to Sexual Compliance.

Research examining the interpersonal context of sexual behaviour has often focused on sexual behaviour in ongoing relationships. For example, studies have examined how romantic views relate to sexual compliance in ongoing relationships. However, romantic views may affect the sexual behaviours of single individuals in addition to those of partnered individuals. This study aims to explore how romantic views, including fears of rejection and the importance placed on being in a relationship, relate to sexual compliance. In an attempt to examine a variety of forms of sexual compliance, both condom use and having unwanted sex due to feeling pressured or expected to are examined. Romantic views refer to the representations of relationships, either conscious or unconscious, that people hold and are similar to relationship schemas (Baldwin, 1992), scripts, working models (Shaver, Collins, & Clark, 1996), or other cognitive representations of relationships (Furman & Simon, 1999; Furman & Wehner, 1994).

Relationship views shape how individuals interpret partner behaviour, and in turn may guide one’s own behaviour (Furman & Simon, 1999). For example, an individual who fears rejection may interpret ambiguous behaviour from their partner as a sign that they are withdrawing from the relationship, and as a result may react in a hostile manner towards their partner. Previous research on the link between romantic views and interpersonal behaviour has followed different theoretical models to account for such links. Two theoretical models that are particularly relevant to the current study include rejection sensitivity and adult attachment style. The positions from both models
offer potential insight into the ways in which romantic views, including fears of rejection and the perceived importance of relationships, relate to the sexual behaviour of single young adults.

Rejection Sensitivity

Rejection sensitivity is conceptualised as a cognitive-affective processing system that entails anxiously expecting rejection from others and intensely reacting to perceived cues of rejection (Downey & Feldman, 1996). An important part of the rejection sensitivity model is relationship investment. In an attempt to prevent rejection, rejection-sensitive individuals may adjust their level of relationship investment and engage in avoidance or overinvestment strategies (Downey, Bonica, & Rincon, 1999). Downey and colleagues (1999) explain that avoidance strategies involve minimizing involvement or investment in romantic relationships whereas overinvestment strategies involve engaging in coercive or compliant behaviour. Examples of coercive behaviour are controlling or aggressive behaviour whereas compliant behaviour may include changing oneself to fit the desires of one’s partner or tolerating abuse. Downey et al. (1999) propose that sexual behaviour may be an area in which compliance may manifest. According to the model, compliant behaviour results from engaging in overinvestment strategies to prevent rejection. For example, individuals may comply with their partner’s desires for sex or may self-silence with regards to condom use in order to maintain the relationship. Therefore engaging in unwanted sex and forgoing condom use may be seen as two forms of sexual compliance.

The relationship between rejection sensitivity and overinvestment strategies has been previously explored in terms of dating violence. Downey, Feldman, and Ayduk
(2000) examined how rejection sensitivity and relationship investment related to dating violence among male college students. Dating violence may be seen as a coercive overinvestment strategy. Downey and colleagues found that relationship investment, operationalised as the importance placed on being in a relationship, moderated the link between rejection sensitivity and dating violence. Rejection sensitive males had a higher probability of engaging in dating violence as a coercive strategy if they were highly invested in relationships. The study highlights two important constructs as being particularly relevant to interpersonal behaviour: rejection sensitivity and relationship investment. Such links have yet to be tested in terms of sexual behaviour.

Recently, the link between rejection sensitivity and interpersonal behaviour has been extended to sexual behaviour. Young and Furman (2008) found that greater rejection sensitivity predicted increased risk of sexual victimization among adolescents. However, relationship investment as a potential moderating factor was not explored. Additionally, Young and Furman did not examine whether the link between rejection sensitivity and sexual victimization differed between single and partnered participants.

How rejection sensitivity relates to behaviour among single individuals is unknown. Downey et al. (2000) examined dating violence in the participant’s current or most recent ‘dating relationship’ and Young and Furman (2008) did not examine how rejection sensitivity predicted sexual victimization among single and partnered individuals separately. Other studies of rejection sensitivity have found rejection sensitive individuals to be less satisfied in their relationships (Downey & Feldman, 1996), to engage in more hostile behaviour during conflict (Downey, Freitas, Michaelis, & Khouri, 1998), inhibit their opinions (Harper, Dickson, & Welsh, 2006) and among
early adolescents, do things they know are wrong to maintain their romantic relationships (Purdie & Downey, 2000). All of these studies have examined how rejection sensitivity relates to the behaviour of partnered individuals, or at least those involved in a dating relationship. We know little about how rejection sensitivity relates to the interpersonal behaviour of single adolescents or adults.

*Adult Attachment Style*

Another theoretical model examining the link between romantic views and sexual behaviour is attachment theory. Infant attachment style has been adapted to apply to adult romantic relationships and can be used to describe how individuals experience love and relationships (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Adult attachment style is similar to rejection sensitivity in a number of ways. First, as outlined by Downey et. al. (1999), attachment style and rejection sensitivity both refer to the romantic views that people hold. Second, each theory includes cognitive and affective components of how individuals expect others to meet their needs. Finally, the two constructs differentiate individuals based on whether they seek closeness to others, or avoid investment in relationships. These three factors mirror the “anxiety”, “depend” and “close” factors identified as major components of adult attachment style by Collins and Read (1990).

Attachment researchers have considered the ways in which attachment style relates to sexual behaviour (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). For example research has found that among women, attachment anxiety and avoidance were related to consenting to unwanted sex in an actual (Gentzler & Kerns, 2004) or hypothetical scenario (Impett & Peplau, 2002). Among men, attachment avoidance but not attachment anxiety related to more unwanted sex (Gentzler & Kerns, 2004). Some research has explored the
reasons behind these links. College women in dating relationships were asked whether they would consent to unwanted sex with their current dating partner in a hypothetical scenario and their related reasons for doing so (Impett & Peplau, 2002). The reasons that anxiously attached women gave for consenting to unwanted sex included fears that their partner would lose interest in them. Avoidantly attached women reported engaging in unwanted sex as they saw sex as a relationship obligation. Impett and Peplau did not consider fearful attachment style, characterised by high fears of rejection and relationship avoidance (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). However, the interaction between high anxiety and high avoidance has been found to predict individuals having sex due to fears that a partner will leave or reject them (Schachner & Shaver, 2004).

In addition to having unwanted sex, another manifestation of sexual compliance may be condom nonuse. Usually, condom use is negotiated between two people. If one person decides to forgo condom use to comply with their partner’s wishes, then this can be seen as sexual compliance. Condom nonuse, rather than use, was included as a measure of sexual compliance based on research finding that nearly 70% of males and over 80% of females intend to use condoms with casual partners (von Haeften, Fishbein, Kaspryzk, & Montano, 2000). Therefore condom nonuse is likely to be contrary to the personal intentions of single individuals. Additionally, it has been found that young people tend to want to use condoms more often than they perceive their regular partners to want to use condoms, indicating a tendency to underestimate the extent to which others want to protect themselves (Tschann, Adler, Millstein, Gurvey, & Ellen, 2002). If young adults underestimate their sexual partners’ interests in using a condom, a compliant response could be condom nonuse.
Past research examining attachment style and condom use has found greater attachment anxiety to be associated with more unsafe sexual practices (Feeney, Kelly, Gallois, Peterson, & Terry, 1999; Feeney, Peterson, Gallois, & Terry, 2000; Kershaw et al., 2007; Strachman & Impett, 2009). Feeney and colleagues (1999) also measured comfort with closeness. This construct shares a similarity to relationship investment which is an important feature of rejection sensitivity theory. Specifically, both measures relate to the romantic view that being close to others is something to be desired. However, the interaction between attachment anxiety and comfort with closeness was not tested by Feeney and colleagues. Kershaw and colleagues tested for an interaction effect between attachment anxiety and avoidance on condom use and found a nonsignificant result. However, with participants all being pregnant, it was a select sample and the authors did not control for relationship status, but only the status of the relationship with the father of the baby.

**Relationship Status**

Many studies have overlooked how romantic views relate to the sexual behaviour of single individuals. As outlined above, there have been no studies specifically examining the sexual behaviour, or even general behaviour of single individuals using rejection sensitivity theory. Additionally, while there have been some exceptions (Bogaert & Sadava, 2002; Schachner & Shaver, 2004), many studies of attachment style and sexuality fail to take relationship status into account (Feeney et al., 1999; Feeney et al., 2000; Gentzler & Kerns, 2004; Tracy, Shaver, Albino, & Cooper, 2003), or focus on sex that occurs in a romantic relationship context (Brassard, Shaver, & Lussier, 2007; Davis, Shaver, & Vernon, 2004; Davis et al., 2006; Impett & Peplau,
Therefore, we know little about how romantic views predict the sexual behaviour of single young adults.

Why might we expect the behaviour of single individuals to be different from their partnered counterparts? Perhaps single individuals have different motivations for having sex. It has been found that single people report having sex for reasons of sexual partner approval more often than those in relationships (Cooper, Shapiro, & Powers, 1998). Furthermore, the links between motives for sex and romantic views may be different for single and partnered individuals. Schachner and Shaver (2004) found that avoidant attachment and having sex due to feelings of insecurity were positively correlated. Interestingly, when groups were analysed separately by their involvement in casual sex, the relationship only held for those with casual sex experience. These results suggest that negotiating sex is different for single individuals and that their romantic views may be more important in governing their sexual behaviour than has generally been recognised.

Another important factor to consider when looking at differences in the sexual behaviour of partnered and single individuals is the measure of romantic views used. Young and Furman (2008) reported that rejection sensitivity increased the risk of being sexually victimized among adolescents. They also measured romantic attachment style and found an overlap between the preoccupied measure of attachment, or attachment anxiety, and rejection sensitivity. Given the theoretical overlap between rejection sensitivity and preoccupied attachment, one may expect both measures to predict sexual victimization. However, preoccupied attachment style did not predict sexual victimization. Young and Furman suggest that the slight difference in romantic views
reflected in each measure may explain why rejection sensitivity predicted sexual victimization but preoccupied attachment did not. Specifically, the measure of rejection sensitivity focuses on expectations of a partner’s or potential partner’s rejection, whereas the measure of preoccupied attachment focuses on one’s emotional dependence upon a partner. Perhaps a measure of romantic views that focuses on partner acceptance may be more relevant to single participants.

The present study aimed to assess how the romantic views of single young adults, including fears of rejection and relationship investment related to sexual behaviour. It was expected that individuals who scored higher on a measure of rejection fears would engage in more compliant sexual behaviour including engaging in unwanted sex and forgoing condom use. The present study also explored whether the link between rejection fears and sexual behaviour was moderated by the importance placed on relationships. It is possible that those who highly fear rejection would be vulnerable to compliance if they were also highly invested in being in a relationship. This was based on the rejection sensitivity model (Downey et al., 1999) that posits that rejection sensitive individuals who over-invest in relationships will comply with their partners’ wishes in an attempt to prevent rejection.

Method

Participants and Procedure.

Data used for the present study are taken from the longitudinal dataset, the Michigan Study of Adolescent Life Transitions (MSALT). Over 20-years, nine waves of data were collected with participants recruited from middle and lower class school districts in Southeastern Michigan. The data used in this study were collected at wave 7
in 1992 when the participants were between 20 and 21 years of age. Questionnaires
were mailed to participants with return postage-paid envelopes. Participants were
compensated with $20 for their time.

Only sexually experienced participants who identified themselves as single were
included in the present study (N = 387). Of the selected sample, 51.1% were female.
The ethnicity of the sample consisted of Caucasian (89.3%), African American (4.1%),
and Asian American (1.4%) with remaining participants (5.2%) from various ethnic
groups. Participants reported their last year of education. Twenty percent reported year
twelve or below, 5% reported some vocational training and 75% reported some college
education. As an indication of sexual orientation, participants reported on a scale of 1-7
how important it was that their dates were someone of the same sex (1 = Not important
at all, 7 = Very important). Some men (5.6%) and women (3.2%) reported that it was
very important that their dates were of the same sex. These participants were not
included in the analysis as the compliance measures available specifically related to
sexual intercourse.

One-way ANOVAs and chi-square statistics indicated that the single participants
selected for this study differed from the partnered participants on some variables of
interest. First, a chi-squared analysis indicated that males and females were distributed
significantly differently across relationship status groups ($\chi^2 (1,1182) = 25.17, p < .01$).
Nearly two-thirds of partnered participants were women (65.5%), but as previously
mentioned, only 51.1% of single participants were women. Then, given that there were
significantly more women relative to men in the partnered group of young adults, gender
was controlled in the following analysis comparing single participants to partnered participants.

In terms of their romantic views, single participants reported that it was less important to be in relationships \((M = 4.40, SD = 1.82)\) than did partnered participants \((M = 5.51, SD = 1.49; F(1,1168) = 124.16, p < 0.01)\). Single and partnered participants’ fears of rejection could not be compared as this construct was only measured for single participants. In terms of the participants’ sexual behaviour, single and partnered young adults did not differ in their reported frequency of expected sex \((F(1,957) = 1.55, p > 0.05)\). However, single participants reported more frequent pressured sex \((M = 1.29, SD = 0.55)\) than partnered participants \((M = 1.18, SD = 0.45; F(1,964) = 13.31, p < 0.01)\) and were more likely to use a condom the last time they had sex than partnered participants \((\text{single} = 67.5\%, \text{partnered} = 43.5\%; \chi^2 (1,967) = 53.86, p < .01)\).

**Measures**

*Fears of Rejection.* Participants were presented with a list of 29 reasons for not being in a serious relationship. Reasons were varied. Examples included not finding the right person and valuing their independence. Participants were asked to rate how important each reason was on a scale of 1-7 (1 = Not important at all, 7 = Very important). Four items were selected that related to fears of rejection. These included “I am afraid of getting hurt;” “Commitments never last;” “I have had bad experiences in relationships;” and “I have witnessed too many bad relationships.” These four items comprised the Fears of Rejection Scale \((\alpha = .82; M = 3.47; S.D. = 1.59)\).

*Relationship Importance.* Participants were asked about their views on dating. One item measured the importance that participants placed on relationships. Participants
were asked “How important is it to you to be involved in a steady, committed relationship with one person?” Participants responded to a seven-point scale ranging from 1-7 (1 = Not at all important – 7 = Very Important). The mean was 4.43 (S.D. = 1.80). Relationship importance was not significantly correlated with the fears of rejection scale ($r (381) = .02; p > .05$), indicating that these are separate constructs.

**Sexual Behaviour.** Unwanted sex was measured with two items. Participants were asked to indicate how often they had sex for the following reasons: “because you are pressured into it”, and “because it is expected of you”. Possible responses for the two items ranged from 1-6 (1 = never, 6 = always). This scale has been used in previous research on sexual coercion among single and partnered individuals (Zweig, Barber, & Eccles, 1997).

Participants were asked also to indicate the method(s) of birth control that was used the last time they had sex by checking the listed method(s) which included a condom, and other varieties such as the pill, a diaphragm or ‘something else’. This yielded a dichotomous variable of condom use.

**Results**

A correlation matrix of the independent and dependent variables is presented in Table 1. As can be seen from the correlation matrix, fears of rejection related to having more pressured and expected sex, and less condom use. The importance placed on relationships did not significantly relate to the other constructs, and therefore, its inclusion in the regression analysis below was to investigate its role as a moderating variable. Being female was linked to having more pressured sex, and having greater
fears of rejection. Thus, gender was entered as a control variable in the regression analyses that follow.

Table 1.

*Correlations of variables among sexually experienced participants (N = 360)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Fears of rejection</td>
<td>–</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Relationship importance</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>–</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Gender</td>
<td>-.23**</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>–</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Pressured sex</td>
<td>.18**</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>-.21**</td>
<td>–</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Expected sex</td>
<td>.12*</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.32**</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Condom use at last sex</td>
<td>-.14*</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>-.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*aGender: 0 = female, 1 = male. bCondom Use: 0 = nonuse, 1 = use. *p < .05. **p < .01.

Stepwise regression was used to examine how fears of rejection and relationship importance related to sexual behaviour. At the first step, the main effects of fears of rejection and relationship importance were entered, with gender as a control. An interaction term was created by calculating the product of the standardized scores for fears of rejection and the importance placed on relationships. The interaction term was entered at the second step. The model was used to predict the frequency of expected and pressured sex and whether a condom was used the last time participants had sex.

*Pressed Sex*

Twenty-five percent of single young adults reported having pressured sex at least some of the time (35% of women and 18% of men; \( M = 1.29; S.D. = 0.55 \)). Fears of
rejection significantly predicted pressured sex with greater fears of rejection predicting more pressured sex at both steps of the model (Table 2). Relationship importance was not significantly predictive of pressured sex at either step of the model, however its interaction with fears of rejection significantly predicted pressured sex. Being female also predicted more pressured sex.

Table 2

*Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Pressured Sex*

*(N = 360).*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>SE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (females = 0; males = 1)</td>
<td>-.19</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fears of Rejection</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Importance</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fears x Importance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F for change in R²</td>
<td>9.05**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: **p < .01 *p < .05.*

To investigate the significant interaction, ModGraph (Jose, 2008) was used to graph the nature of the interaction and is presented in Figure 1. ModGraph follows the guidelines of Aiken and West (1991) whereby three levels (low, medium and high) are calculated for the main effect and the moderating variable. The mean constitutes the medium value, and the low and high values are one standard deviation below and above the means respectively. Figure 1 suggests that a high level of rejection fears is associated with more pressured sex among those placing a low or medium level of
importance on relationships, more so than those placing a high importance on relationships. To gain a more accurate understanding of the interaction, simple slopes were computed using ModGraph. Fears of rejection predicted pressured sex for those placing a low (slope = .10, \( t = 2.87, p < .01 \)), and a medium importance on relationships (slope = .05, \( t = 2.59, p < .01 \)), but not among those placing a high importance on relationships (slope = -.01, \( t = -.27, p > .05 \)). Thus, the main effect of fears of rejection on pressured sex was qualified by a significant interaction with relationship importance.

![Graph](image-url)

**Figure 1.**

*Frequency of pressured sex as predicted by the fears of rejection and relationship importance interaction.*

**Expected Sex**

Forty-one percent of participants reported having sex because they felt it was expected of them (39% of women and 43% of men; \( M = 1.61; S.D. = 0.95 \)). Greater rejection fears predicted more expected sex at both steps of the regression model (Table 3). The other main effects of gender and relationship importance and the interaction
between fears of rejection and relationship importance did not significantly predict expected sex.

Table 3

*Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Expected Sex (N = 360).*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th></th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender (females = 0; males = 1)</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fears of Rejection</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.14*</td>
<td>.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Importance</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fears x Importance</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$F$ for change in $R^2$</td>
<td>2.49†</td>
<td></td>
<td>.29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: **$p < .01$, *$p < .05$, †$p < .10.***

Condom Use

Sixty-eight percent of sexually experienced participants used a condom the last time they had sex (64% of women and 72% of men). As condom use was a dichotomous variable (use or nonuse the last time participants had sex), logistic regression was used to test the regression model (Table 4). At both the first and second steps, the only significant predictor was fear of rejection with greater rejection fears reducing the odds of condom use the last time participants had sex.
### Table 4

*Summary of Logistic Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Condom Use at Participants’ Last Sexual Encounter (N = 360).*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>SE B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (females = 0; males = 1)</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fears of Rejection</td>
<td>-.17*</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Importance</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fears x Importance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\chi^2 = 8.16^*$

$df = 3, 4$

*Note: $e^B =$ exponentiated $B$ (odds ratio).*

*Note: **$p < .01$ *$p < .05$. †$p < .10$.*

### Discussion

The current study assessed how romantic views related to sexual behaviour among single young adults. Greater fears of rejection predicted more pressured and expected sex, and reduced odds of condom use the last time participants had sex. Relationship investment moderated the link between fears of rejection and pressured sex such that greater fears of rejection significantly predicted having more pressured sex among those placing a low, but not a high degree of importance on relationships. The
results suggest that romantic views, particularly fears of rejection, relate to sexual
behaviour even among single individuals.

The finding that individuals were more compliant sexually if they had greater
fears of rejection supports the model of rejection sensitivity and is consistent with the
findings of Young and Furman (2008). Although Downey’s measure of rejection
sensitivity was not used, the findings support the hypotheses presented by Downey and
colleagues (1999) that rejection sensitive individuals will comply more with their
partner’s sexual desires, or perceived sexual desires, which in this study included having
unwanted sex and forgoing condom use. The results also are consistent with past
research findings that those who are high in levels of attachment anxiety have more
unwanted sex (Gentzler & Kerns, 2004) and use condoms less (Feeney et al., 1999;
Feeney et al., 2000; Kershaw et al., 2007; Strachman & Impett, 2009) than those who
are low in levels of attachment anxiety.

The model of rejection sensitivity also purports that rejection sensitive youths
who overinvest in relationships will be particularly prone to compliance (Downey et al.,
1999). The present study, of single individuals, does not support this notion. In the case
of condom use and expected sex, the relation between fears of rejection and behaviour
was not significantly moderated by relationship investment. Further, higher fears of
rejection were predictive of more pressured sex among those who placed a low
importance on relationships. Fears of rejection did not significantly predict pressured
sex among those who placed a high level of importance on relationships, which was
inconsistent with our expectations.
Why may rejection sensitive individuals have more pressured sex if they place a low, rather than a high importance on relationships? Downey et al. (1999) predicted that youths with such an interpersonal disposition (high rejection fears and low investment) will avoid relationships. They also suggested that through the avoidance of relationships, youths may miss out on opportunities to develop relationship skills. Perhaps individuals who avoid relationships have under-developed sexual negotiation skills and find it difficult to say no to a persistent partner.

The attachment literature may provide an insight as to why rejection sensitive individuals who placed a low importance on relationships had more pressured sex. Downey and colleagues (2000) drew parallels between such individuals and those with a fearful attachment style. Fearfully attached individuals are said to avoid relationships due to rejection fears (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). Interestingly, it has been found that fearfully attached individuals tend to score higher on measures of compliance (Gudjonsson, Sigurdsson, Lydsdottir, & Olafsdottir, 2008), adopt a subservient role in friendships and romantic relationships, describe themselves as exploitable, and were the only attachment style to be consistently associated with a lack of assertiveness (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). As such, they may be more vulnerable to a partner’s pressure than those who are scared of rejection but place a higher level of importance on relationships.

Another explanation for why fears of rejection predicted pressured sex for those with a lower but not higher level of relationship investment may be how the two groups of individuals responded to another’s advancements towards sexual intimacy. Perhaps among individuals who fear rejection, those who highly value being in a relationship
will more readily accept the opportunity to have sex to feel close to their partner than those who place less importance on being in a relationship. These individuals may have sex primarily because they want to. In contrast, individuals who fear rejection and place a lower importance on relationships may not particularly desire physical or emotional intimacy and thus perceive that sex results from partner pressure, but may nevertheless consent to their partner’s pressure due to fears their partner will leave them. Thus, such individuals may have sex not because they want to, but rather to please their partner and therefore may report having sex in response to pressure. This possibility is consistent with findings that those high in both relationship anxiety and avoidance have sex due to fears that their partner may abandon them (Schachner & Shaver, 2004).

The interaction between fears of rejection and relationship investment did not significantly predict expected sex and condom use. Rather, the main effect of fears of rejection significantly predicted all three measures of sexual compliance. For expected sex and condom use in a casual relationship encounter, sexual compliance may be used as a method of preventing rejection regardless of whether they think it is important to be involved in a relationship.

Some cautions must be noted when interpreting the results. First, as with all cross-sectional data, causality cannot be inferred. While fears of rejection predicted sexual behaviour, it could also be argued that experiences of expected and pressured sex may predict later fears of being rejected. It is likely that being pressured by a partner to have sex may lead individuals to develop negative romantic views. However, the idea that condom nonuse would predict later fears of rejection seems less plausible.
Second, it is unknown who the sexual partners of the single participants were. While it is likely that their sexual encounters were with casual partners, participants may have reported their sexual behaviour based on their recollections of previous romantic relationships. Additionally, one form of sexual compliance was operationalised as condom nonuse. Ideally, it would be interesting to examine whether the participant wanted to use a condom or not, to determine whether their lack of condom use was truly sexual compliance. However, as previously noted, it is likely that participants did want to use condoms and underestimated their partner’s desire to use a condom. Finally, the data were collected some time ago. Nevertheless, the link between romantic views and sexual behaviour is relevant to today’s young people. Individual differences in rejection fears are unlikely to change across age cohorts and therefore it could be argued that rejection fears are as important today as they were some years ago.

With these limitations in mind, these results add to the growing body of research examining the link between romantic views and sexual behaviour and extend research findings and theory to the sexual behaviour of single individuals. The findings are also valuable in that one-quarter of the participants were not university-educated which indicates that the sample is likely to be more generalizable to the wider population than most studies examining only university students. An additional strength of the study is that it examines sexual compliance in terms of unwanted sex and condom use rather than a one-dimensional measure of sexual behaviour.

On a more practical level, the current findings may be of use to sexual health programs and campaigns. Perhaps health promotion efforts will be more effective if it is considered that single people making sexual decisions do so with relationship outcomes
in mind rather than just health outcomes. It appears that sexual negotiation is more
difficult when an individual fears rejection. Romantic views, especially fears of
rejection, are important to the sexual behaviour of individuals even outside of the
traditional romantic relationship context.
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The results of Study 1 highlighted the importance of romantic views, including fears of rejection and the importance placed on being in a relationship, when predicting sexual compliance. Fears of rejection predicted less condom use and more sex due to partner pressure, or feeling expected to have sex. However, the measure of condom use as sexual compliance was a dichotomous measure of condom use the last time participants had sex. The limitation of this measure is that it does not account for the fact that some participants may have preferred not to use a condom and that therefore, non-use was not compliant. As the focus of this thesis was on sexual compliance, it was important to consider whether condom use was consistent with what young adults wanted to do. In other words, did young adults get their way with condom use, or did they comply with their partners’ desires?

To more accurately measure condom use as a form of sexual compliance, Study 2 surveys Australian young adults about whether they wanted to use condoms, and whether they thought their partners wanted to use condoms. As rejection sensitivity is hypothesised to predict compliant behaviour, the condom use desire context is expected to be an important factor. For rejection sensitivity to predict compliant condom use, the predictive value of rejection sensitivity should be especially evident when partners disagree about whether to use condoms.

An additional aim of Study 2 is to consider the role of gender in the conceptual model explored in this thesis. There appears to be a general perception in society that women are considered to be the gate-keepers of sexual activity (e.g., Weiderman, 2005), and are responsible for ensuring protection is used (Campbell, 1995), whereas men are
considered to be less responsible for risk protection. Therefore, as well as examining the link between rejection sensitivity and condom use, Study 2 examines whether women are more likely than men to expect that their partners want to use condoms less often than themselves.

To address these questions about rejection sensitivity, condom use desire and gender, Study 2 examines the shaded area of the model in Figure 1b. Rejection sensitivity is the main romantic view tested as a predictor of condom use, and this link is also considered in the context of condom use desire and by gender. More specifically, to explore whether romantic views predict behaviour differently across contexts, Study 2 examines the moderating effect of the condom use desire context. Additionally, Study 2 considers whether men and women perceive different condom use desire contexts. Particularly, whether more women than men expect their partners to agree with them about condom use.

To investigate the shaded section of the model in Figure 1b, an online survey was specifically designed that included measures of rejection sensitivity (Downey & Feldman, 1996), condom use desire and condom use behaviour. The online survey can be found in Appendix B. Australian young adults (N = 1144) responded to the survey and participants reported their romantic (n = 649) and casual (n = 144) relationship experiences. This dataset is also used in Studies 3 and 4. A correlation matrix of all of the main constructs under investigation can be found in Appendix C.
Figure 1b. The relationship context of sexual behaviour model as applied to romantic and casual relationship contexts. Figure shading and bolding represent constructs and links investigated in Study 2.

CHAPTER FOUR
STUDY 2: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN REJECTION SENSITIVITY AND COMPLIANT CONDOM USE.

Study 2 has undergone peer review and has been accepted for publication in *Archives of Sexual Behavior*. The following chapter represents this manuscript.

ABSTRACT

Those who are rejection sensitive anxiously expect and readily perceive rejection. Rejection sensitivity is hypothesized to predict behavior, however this link may be more evident in some contexts than others. The current study examined the link between rejection sensitivity and condom use. Australian young adults in romantic (n = 649, 70% female) and casual (n = 144, 76.2% female) relationship contexts completed measures on rejection sensitivity, condom use preferences, and condom use. Regression analysis showed that rejection sensitivity predicted condom use when participants’ condom use preferences were at odds with those they thought their partner held. Specifically, highly rejection-sensitive individuals who preferred more frequent condom use reported using condoms less often, if that was what they thought their partners wanted. The results lend support to the model of rejection sensitivity in that individuals comply more with their perceived partner’s preferences if they are more rejection-sensitive. The results also highlight the need to take the situational context into consideration when examining links between personality dispositions and behavior.

KEYWORDS: condom use, rejection sensitivity, condom use preferences, relationship context.
The Relationship Between Rejection Sensitivity and Compliant Condom Use

In an effort to reduce rates of HIV and STIs, many researchers have examined factors related to condom use. Although health implications may be a primary motivating factor for conducting such research, health implications may not be the only motivating factor for condom use. Many scholars have suggested that interpersonal factors may be more important than health concerns to people making risky sex decisions and that a greater emphasis is needed on the interpersonal dimensions of sexual behavior (Amaro, 1995; Bromnick & Swinburn, 2003; Crockett, Raffaelli, & Moilanen, 2003; Rosenthal, Hall, & Moore, 1992; Sheeran, Abraham, & Orbell, 1999). Thus, the current study aimed to examine condom use as a behavior motivated by interpersonal concerns. In particular, we were interested in how the romantic views held by individuals related to condom use. Romantic views refer to cognitive representations of relationships that people hold (Furman & Simon, 1999) and may include constructs such as rejection sensitivity and attachment style.

Rejection Sensitivity and Sexual Behavior

Those who are rejection sensitive readily perceive and anxiously expect rejection from others (Downey, Bonica, & Rincon, 1999). In an effort to prevent rejection, individuals may comply with what they perceive their partners to want. Downey et al. suggest that one area in which compliance may manifest is sexual behavior. We argue that those who fear rejection may make condom use decisions based on what their partner wants, rather than what they themselves want. In effect, sexual compliance may manifest in condom use behavior.
In examining the link between rejection sensitivity and sexual behavior, Young and Furman (2008) found that rejection sensitivity predicted increased risk of sexual victimization among adolescents. However, the relationship context under which sexual victimization was taking place was unknown. Additionally, the measure of sexual victimization included experiences of the use of physical force to obtain sex. As the construct of compliance involves voluntarily engaging in a behavior that one would rather not do, it seems inappropriate to consider forced sex as sexual compliance. Condom use may be a more appropriate measure of sexual compliance.

The link between condom use and romantic views has been investigated by attachment researchers. The construct of adult attachment style shares similarities with rejection sensitivity. In particular, attachment anxiety is characterized by fears of abandonment and fears of being unloved (Collins & Read, 1990). Research suggests a link between attachment anxiety and less frequent condom use (Feeney, Kelly, Gallois, Peterson, & Terry, 1999; Feeney, Peterson, Gallois, & Terry, 2000; Kershaw et al., 2007), but also to more frequent condom use (Bogaert & Sadava, 2002). One reason for these mixed results may be that relationship status hasn’t always been considered. More information is needed regarding how fears of rejection may predict condom use in casual and romantic relationship contexts. Research has shown that individuals expect to use condoms more in casual versus romantic relationship contexts (Ellen, Cahn, Eyre, & Boyer, 1996). In addition, those who have casual sexual encounters use condoms more than those who have romantic sexual encounters (Gebhardt, Kuyper, & Greunsven, 2003; Juarez & Martín, 2006; Sheeran et al., 1999). Therefore, it is apparent that relationship context is an important variable to consider when predicting condom use.
When Should Rejection Sensitivity Matter?

In both romantic and casual relationships, it is also important to consider whether each partner wants to use condoms. Mischel and Shoda (1995) argued that in order to understand how a personality disposition relates to behavior, it is not only important to examine how behavior varies as a function of the personality construct, but also the contexts in which this link is strongest. If rejection sensitivity affects sexual behavior at some times but not others, this may be a reflection of the true nature of rejection sensitivity, rather than an inconsistent link between rejection sensitivity and behavior.

The link between rejection sensitivity and sexual compliance should be greatest when there is a chance of conflict or rejection. When negotiating condom use, it is unlikely that rejection sensitivity will affect behavior if both partners agree to use a condom, or agree not to use a condom. In contrast, when one partner wishes to use a condom but the other doesn’t, the chance of conflict should be higher. These situations are more likely to trigger rejection sensitivity. It is also these situations in which we should expect those with higher levels of rejection sensitivity to be more compliant and therefore, it is important to consider the condom use preferences of both partners.

Condom Use Preference

Many studies have examined attitudes towards condoms and intentions to use condoms. Surprisingly, few studies have asked participants whether they wanted to use condoms. At first glance, these concepts appear similar, but there are important distinctions to be made. Attitudes towards a behavior refer to whether the individual’s evaluations of that behavior are favorable or unfavorable (Ajzen, 1991). However, some
individuals with negative attitudes towards condoms may still want to use condoms to protect themselves against unwanted pregnancy and/or STIs. Intentions to perform a behavior refer to the extent to which a person will try to perform a behavior (Ajzen, 1991). However, an individual may not intend to use condoms but still want to use them. For example, some individuals may not intend to use condoms due to their belief that they could not convince their partners to use condoms, but they may still want to use condoms. In order to accurately measure sexual compliance, research should examine not whether individuals like condoms, or whether they intend to use condoms, as such constructs do not consider the overall condom use preference. Instead, researchers should examine condom use preferences when examining condom use as a form of sexual compliance.

In summary, the current study aimed to examine condom use as a function of rejection sensitivity and condom use preference discrepancies. It was expected that rejection sensitivity would predict behavior in situations where individuals’ condom use preferences were at odds with their partner’s perceived condom use preferences. The current study grouped participants into four groups based on such preferences. Two were congruent groups (both partners did or did not want to use condoms) and two were incongruent groups (participants either did or did not want to use condoms, and thought their partners wanted the opposite to themselves). In the two incongruent groups, it was expected that highly rejection sensitive individuals would be compliant to what they perceived their partner’s condom use preferences to be, whether that be by using condoms more or less frequently. In the two congruent groups, it was not expected that rejection sensitivity would be related to condom use. As condom use often differs
according to other birth control use, this variable was controlled in all regression
analyses (Sheeran et al., 1999). Additionally, since condom use and expectations about
condom use differ for romantic and casual relationships, these effects were examined
across both relationship contexts.

As an additional aim, the current study also sought to describe the differences
between condom use preference groups. First, whether levels of condom use differed
between condom use preference groups, and second, whether men and women were
distributed significantly differently across groups. As women expect their male partners
to want use condoms less than themselves (Edwards & Barber, 2009), it was
hypothesised that women would be overrepresented in the group that wanted to use
condoms more than they thought their partners did.

METHOD

Participants

The current study included participants with romantic (n = 649), and casual (n =
144) relationship experience. All participants were from one Western Australian
university, were 18 to 25 years of age, unmarried, and reported having sex with an
opposite sex partner during the past year. Seventy-one percent of participants were born
in Australia. The mean age of participants reporting romantic relationship experience
was 20.9 years (SD = 2.06). Seventy per cent were female. Those reporting casual
relationships were of similar age (M = 21.9; SD = 2.09) and gender composition (76.2%
female).
Measures

An online survey included sections on demographic information, rejection sensitivity, relationship type, condom use preferences, and sexual behavior.

Rejection Sensitivity

The Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire (RSQ; Downey & Feldman, 1996) presents participants with a number of situations where something is asked of another (e.g., you ask your boyfriend/girlfriend if he/she really loves you). Participants rated how concerned or anxious they would be over the person’s response (1 = very unconcerned to 6 = very concerned) and whether they expected the person to respond in an accepting manner (1 = very unlikely to 6 = very likely). The RSQ consists of 18 items using situations involving romantic partners, friends, parents, and significant others (α = .83), however, the current study focuses on the six items that were specific to a romantic relationship or a potential romantic relationship situation (α = .75).

A total rejection sensitivity score was calculated by following the instructions outlined by Downey and Feldman (1996). This involved reversing the participants’ scores on expectancy of acceptance to reflect expectancy of rejection, and then multiplying the reversed score by their degree of anxiety. Each of the multiplied scores was then averaged across all six items, to provide a final rejection sensitivity score. Higher scores reflect greater rejection sensitivity.

Relationship Type

Participants were asked about the different relationships they had experienced during the last year. The definitions of relationships are shown in the Appendix. All “other relationships” will be referred to as casual relationships in analyses that follow.
Participants who had experienced a romantic relationship within the last year were asked to think of their current or most recent romantic partner when responding to the survey items on condom use preferences, condom use and birth control use. The same method was used for casual relationship experiences. Participants could respond to either section on romantic or casual relationships, or both.

Condom Use Preferences

To assess participants’ own preference to use condoms, participants were asked “How often do you want to use a condom?” (1 = never to 5 = every time). To assess their perception of their partner’s condom use preference, participants were asked “How often do you think your partner wants to use a condom?” (1 = never to 5 = every time). Some participants in casual relationships indicated that they had sex with their partner only once. Accordingly, such participants were presented with items that were more relevant to their experiences as it did not make sense to present a never-always frequency scale when they had sex with their partners only once. Specifically, they were asked: “Did you want to use a condom” and “Do you think your partner wanted to use a condom”? (1 = No, not at all to 5 = Yes, very much). To bring the responses in line with those having sex more than once, participants responding at the lower end of the scale (with a 1 or 2) were recoded as 1 (never) and those responding with a 4 or 5 were coded as 5 (every time). A small number of participants responded with a 3 and were excluded from analysis as it was unclear which end of the scale would best represent their condom use preferences (n = 2 for own preferences and n = 1 for partner’s perceived preferences).
To examine sexually compliant condom use behavior, participants were divided into four groups based on their own condom use preferences (more or less frequently) and congruence with their partner’s perceived condom use preferences (congruent or incongruent). The “Both Want” and “Both Don’t Want” groups had condom use preferences that were congruent with their partner. Specifically, when reporting condom use preferences, these participants had preferences that were no more than one point away from their partner’s perceived preferences. In the “Both Don’t Want” group, both partners wanted to use condoms less frequently. In the “Both Want” group, both partners wanted to use condoms more frequently. Participants were placed in one of two incongruent groups (the “Participant Wants” and “Partner Wants” groups) when participants had condom use preferences that were at least two points away from their partner’s perceived condom use preference. In the “Partner Wants” group, participants wanted to use condoms less frequently than they thought their partners did. In the “Participant Wants” group, participants wanted to use condoms more frequently than they thought their partners did.

If the participants rated their own or their partner’s condom use preference as a 3, they were included in a congruent group if they were only one point away from their partner, but in an incongruent group if they were two points away from their partner. For example, if a participant rated their condom use preference as a 3, and perceived their partner’s condom use preference as a 2, then they were included in the “Both Don’t Want” group. In contrast, if they perceived their partner’s condom use preference to be a 1, then they were included in the “Participant Wants” group. This ensured that all participants in the incongruent groups had condom use preferences that were at least
two points away from their partner’s perceived condom use preferences. If both the participant and their partner’s perceived level of condom use preference were rated as 3, they were excluded from analysis (n = 22 for romantic relationships; n = 3 for casual relationships).

**Birth Control Use**

Participants indicated which method of birth control they generally used with that particular partner from a list. These included not using protection or birth control, condoms, the pill, and other forms of birth control (e.g., implanon, a diaphragm, having a vasectomy). Participants could endorse more than one option if applicable (e.g., condoms and the pill).

**Condom Use**

Participants were asked how often they used condoms with their partner (1 = never to 5 = always). Participants who had been in a casual relationship in which they had sex with their partner only once indicated which method/s of birth control they used that time. This resulted in a dichotomous measure of condom use (yes/no). Similar to the condom use preference measure, their responses were recoded to allow participants to be included in the analyses. Those who used a condom with their partner were recoded with a 5 as they technically used a condom every time with their partner. Those who did not use a condom were recoded with a 1, meaning they never used protection with that partner.

**Procedure**

Participants were recruited to complete an online survey via one of two ways: the School of Psychology homepage or an email sent to university guild members.
Posters were displayed on notice boards at various buildings around the university directing students to the School of Psychology homepage. All participants were required to enter their student number and password to access the survey. This ensured that only the university’s students participated and that responses were entered only once. Participants were assured that although their student number was required to enter the survey, identifying information would be kept separate from their responses. The survey took approximately 15 minutes to complete. To compensate participants for their time, they were able to enter a lottery for a MP3 Player upon completion of the survey.

RESULTS

Descriptive information for rejection sensitivity, condom use preference, partners’ perceived condom use preferences, and condom use is shown in Table 1 for men and women in romantic and casual relationship contexts. Analyses were performed to examine whether the mean differences in condom use frequency differed among condom use preference groups. The mean levels of condom use for each group are shown in Table 2. In analyses focused on casual relationships, the “Partner Wants” group was excluded due to low sample size (n = 9). A one-way between-groups ANOVA was used with post-hoc contrasts using Tukey’s tests to detect significant differences in condom use frequency among condom use preference groups. In romantic relationships, the ANOVA revealed significant differences between groups, $F(3, 616) = 276.50; p < .01$, with “Both Don’t Want” participants using condoms less than all other groups ($p < .01$) and “Both Want” participants using condoms more than all other groups ($p < .01$). In casual relationships, the between-groups ANOVA showed a significant difference in condom use frequency between groups, $F(2, 130) = 63.82; p <$
Tukey’s post hoc tests revealed that all groups significantly differed from one another with “Both Don’t Want” participants using condoms the least ($p < .05$) and “Both Want” participants using condoms the most ($p < .01$).

Chi-square analyses were conducted to determine whether men and women were distributed significantly differently across condom use preference groups in romantic and casual relationships. Seventy percent of participants in romantic relationships were female, but results showed that men and women were distributed significantly differently across condom use preference groups, $\chi^2(3, 656) = 49.04$, $p <.01$. Further analysis suggested that the significant chi-square result was due to the large residuals found in the “Partner Wants,” “Participant Wants” and “Both Want” groups. Specifically, fewer men (15%) and more women (85%) were found in the “Participant Wants” group than expected. Additionally, the “Partner Wants” group contained more men (69%) and fewer women (31%) than expected. Finally, more men (41%) than expected were found in the “Both Want” group. The chi-square analysis was not significant for casual relationships, $\chi^2(2, 144) = 3.44$, $p >.05$. 
Table 1.

*Mean levels of rejection sensitivity, condom use preference, and condom use, by relationship type and gender.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Romantic Relationships</th>
<th>Casual Relationships</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rejection Sensitivity&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>11.06</td>
<td>4.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condom Use Preference&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>1.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner’s Perceived</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>1.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condom Use Preference&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>1.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condom Use&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>1.62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:*  
<sup>a</sup> Participants scores ranged from 1.50- 29.50;  
<sup>b</sup> 1 (never) - 5 (always).
Table 2.

Mean levels of condom use frequency according to relationship context and condom use preference group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condom Use Frequency</th>
<th>Romantic Relationships N = 628</th>
<th>Casual Relationships N = 132</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both Don’t Want</td>
<td>1.67 a</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner Wants</td>
<td>3.74 b</td>
<td>1.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Wants</td>
<td>3.40 b</td>
<td>1.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both Want</td>
<td>4.56 c</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Values with differing subscripts in each column are significantly different from one another.

Multivariate Analyses

Multiple linear regression analyses were used to test the main and interactive effects of rejection sensitivity and condom use preference group on condom use frequency. Dummy variables were created to allow the condom use preference groups to be entered into the regression analyses. The “Both Don’t Want” group was the referent group. Analyses were run separately for romantic and casual relationship contexts. At the first step, the main effects of rejection sensitivity and the three condom use preference group dummy variables were entered, along with gender and other birth control use as control variables. At the second step, the interaction terms
were entered. The interaction terms were created by multiplying dummy variable codes with rejection sensitivity z scores.

Regression analysis for romantic relationship contexts

Statistics for the regression analysis are shown in Table 3. At the first step, all three dummy variables and not being on another form of birth control significantly predicted more condom use. Neither rejection sensitivity nor gender significantly predicted condom use. At the second step, the dummy variables and other contraceptive use remained significant predictors of condom use. The dummy variable for the “Participant Wants” group significantly interacted with rejection sensitivity.

To test the nature of the interaction, condom use was regressed onto rejection sensitivity separately for each condom use preference group with gender and birth control retained as control variables. Among “Participant Wants” participants, rejection sensitivity significantly predicted less condom use ($B = -.05; SE B = .03; \beta = -.20; p < .05$). Among “Partner Wants” participants, rejection sensitivity did not significantly predict condom use, but the coefficient was in the expected direction with higher levels of rejection sensitivity relating to more condom use, which would be the compliant response for this group ($B = .06; SE B = .04; \beta = .26; p > .05$). For the congruent groups, rejection sensitivity did not significantly predict condom use in the “Both Don’t Want” group ($B = .01; SE B = .01; \beta = .01; p > .05$) or the “Both Want” group ($B = -.02; SE B = .01; \beta = -.11; p > .05$).

Regression analysis for casual relationship contexts

Statistics for the regression analysis are shown in Table 4. At the first step, rejection sensitivity significantly predicted less condom use and the two dummy variables significantly predicted more condom use. Neither gender nor birth control use was
significant. At the second step, the interaction between the dummy variable, reflecting “Participant Wants” group membership, and rejection sensitivity was significant. This indicated that rejection sensitivity interacted with being in the group in which the participants wanted to use condoms more often than they thought their partners did. Rejection sensitivity was not a significant predictor of condom use at the second step, once the interaction terms were taken into account.

Table 3.

*Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Condom Use Among Sexually Experienced Individuals in Romantic Relationships (N = 617).*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>SE B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender †</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth Control Use ^</td>
<td>-.73</td>
<td>.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rejection Sensitivity</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Partner Wants” Group</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Participant Wants” Group</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Both Want” Group</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RS x “Partner Wants”</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RS x “Participant Wants”</td>
<td>-.26</td>
<td>.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RS x “Both Want”</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R²</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F for change in R²</td>
<td>164.59**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* † females = 0, males = 1; ^ non-use = 0, use = 1; *p < .05, **p < .01.
Table 4.

**Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Condom Use Among Sexually Experienced Individuals in Casual Relationships (N = 131).**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th></th>
<th>Model 2</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>SE B</td>
<td>β</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender †</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth Control Use ^</td>
<td>-.21</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>-.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rejection Sensitivity</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>-.22**</td>
<td>-.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Participant Wants” Group</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>.23**</td>
<td>.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Both Want” Group</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>.79**</td>
<td>2.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RS x “Participant Wants”</td>
<td>-.69</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>-.23*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RS x “Both Want”</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R²</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td></td>
<td>.56</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F for change in R²</td>
<td>30.57**</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.98**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* † females = 0, males = 1; ^ non-use = 0, use = 1; *p < .05, **p < .01.

Regression analyses were run separately for the three condom use preference groups to investigate the direction of the interaction with rejection sensitivity. Condom use was regressed onto rejection sensitivity in each group with gender and other birth control use retained as control variables. Rejection sensitivity significantly predicted less condom use in the “Participant Wants” group with a standardized beta of -.57 (B = -.18; SE B = .04; p < .01). Rejection sensitivity did not predict condom use among participants in the “Both Don’t Want” group (B = -.02; SE B = .04; β = -.08; p > .05) and the “Both Want” group (B = -.03; SE B = .02; β = -.17; p > .05).
DISCUSSION

The current study examined the link between rejection sensitivity and condom use, while taking into consideration condom use preferences, to determine in what circumstances rejection sensitivity predicted condom use behavior. In both romantic and casual relationship contexts, the link between rejection sensitivity and condom use was moderated by condom use preference group membership. Specifically, higher levels of rejection sensitivity predicted less condom use in the “Participant Wants” groups. In groups where the participants’ condom use preferences were congruent with their perceptions of their partners’ preferences, the link between rejection sensitivity and condom use was not significant. In the remaining “Partner Wants” group, rejection sensitivity did not significantly predict condom use but the relationship was in the predicted direction with higher levels of rejection sensitivity being associated with more condom use in romantic relationships. It is likely that the small sample size of the “Partner Wants” group resulted in insufficient statistical power to detect a significant relationship. In summary, rejection sensitivity predicted sexually compliant condom use behavior when there was a discrepancy between the participants’ condom use preferences and their partner’s condom use preferences.

The results of the current study lend support to the argument presented by Mischel and Shoda (1995) that a personality disposition should relate to behavior particularly in situations which act as a trigger to the personality disposition. In this case, rejection sensitivity related to behavior in situations that were ripe for conflict and rejection, that is, that the participant perceived they had different preferences for condom use from their partner. The results also suggest that the model of rejection
sensitivity (Downey et al., 1999) can be suitably applied to compliant sexual behavior in both romantic and casual relationship contexts among young adults.

Young and Furman (2008) found that rejection sensitivity predicted sexual victimization and suggested that youths who were rejection sensitive may comply with their partner's pressures due to fear of rejection. The current results were consistent with this suggestion and extend research on rejection sensitivity to condom use in both casual and romantic relationship contexts. The current results also add to the literature on attachment anxiety and condom use. Past research findings on attachment anxiety and condom use have been mixed with one study finding attachment anxiety to be associated with more condom use (Bogaert & Sadava, 2002), but most studies have found attachment anxiety to be associated with less condom use (Feeney et al., 1999; 2000; Kershaw et al., 2007). The current results are consistent with previous research finding attachment anxiety to be associated with less condom use, at least when participants wanted to use condoms.

Young and Furman found that rejection sensitivity, but not preoccupied attachment predicted sexual victimization, even though the two constructs reflecting romantic views overlapped. They suggest that rejection sensitivity may be more relevant to situations where setting boundaries with a partner is of concern as the measure of rejection sensitivity focuses on acceptance from a partner, whereas preoccupied attachment focuses on the emotional dependence upon a partner. The current results suggest that there is a link between fears of rejection and condom use that is dependent upon the context of the sexual encounter, including the perceived condom use preference discrepancy of the dyad. Thus, the results support the idea that rejection sensitivity as a construct is relevant to boundary setting with a sexual partner.
We also note the results for condom use varied among condom use preference groups. There were clear differences in the frequency of condom use among the condom use preference groups. Specifically when both partners wanted to use condoms (the “Both Want” group), condom use was close to every time. In contrast, in the “Both Don’t Want” group, condom use was close to never. Condom use fell around the mid-range point on the frequency of use scale in the groups where one partner wanted to use a condom, but the other did not (the “Participant Wants” and “Partner Wants” groups). Such results may help inform health promotion efforts. Perhaps in couples where neither partner wishes to use condoms, a more realistic goal than increasing condom use may be to ensure that both partners have STI and HIV tests before making the decision to have unprotected sex. For couples with both partners wanting to use condoms, attention could be paid to the maintenance of condom use. Finally, if an individual belongs to an incongruent group, health promotion efforts could be directed towards respecting one’s partner’s preferences to use condoms or in working towards building communication skills about negotiating safer sex with one’s partner.

One caveat to this health promotion approach is that participants were coded as belonging to a condom use preference group based on their perceptions of their partner’s condom use preferences. We did not have the data to test the accuracy of their perceptions. Therefore, it is possible that some individuals who were assigned to the “Participant Wants” group had partners who wanted to use condoms more frequently than they imagined. In such cases, it may be counterproductive to educate individuals about skills to convince their partner to use a condom (or to accept that they wear a condom). To a rejection-sensitive person, the notion that their partner may indeed be unwilling to use a condom, and that they must convince them, would
likely be an anxiety provoking task that may be too much for them to attempt.
Perhaps it is simply their perceptions of their partner’s condom use preferences that are inaccurate. If so, educating individuals that others most likely want to use condoms as often as they do themselves (Edwards & Barber, 2009) may prove a more effective strategy for promoting safer sex.

Correcting misperceptions about partner condom use preferences may be particularly important for women. The current study showed that women were overrepresented in the “Participant Wants” group. If women underestimate the frequency at which their partners want to use condoms, they may actually belong to the “Both Want” group, rather than the “Participant Wants” group. In such cases intervention could be directed towards correcting the misperception that many men need to be convinced to wear condoms by educating women that generally men want to use condoms as often as women do (Edwards & Barber, 2009).

Several limitations of the current study should be noted. The number of participants recruited in the current study was satisfactory, but few men with experience in casual relationships participated. As such, the current results may not generalize well to young men’s casual relationship experience. There was also a lack of participants in the incongruent group where participants wanted to use condoms less than they thought their partner did (“Partner Wants” group). This may have contributed to the inability to detect a significant relationship between rejection sensitivity and condom use in this group. Finally, the measure of condom use was a single-item measure, although alternatives are rare in this field of research (Noar, Cole, & Carlyle, 2006). The measure of condom use preferences also may be limited by the fact that participants were retrospectively reporting their condom use preferences. It may be that participants adjusted their condom use preferences to
align with their behavior, consistent with cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957).

Other recommendations for investigating condom use behavior, however, have been followed (Noar et al., 2006). This included controlling for birth control use and measuring condom use specific to one particular partner which is not often taken into account when predicting condom use, according to the review by Noar et al. The other main strength of the current study was that condom use was examined as an interpersonal behavior, rather than just as health behavior.

In summary, the current results extend the literature on rejection sensitivity by applying the model to condom use behavior. Rejection sensitivity was found to predict condom use only when condom use preferences were perceived to be discrepant from one’s partner. Thus, the results highlight the importance of taking into account the condom use preferences of individuals and their perceived partners’ preferences when predicting condom use. When using an individual difference variable to predict behavior, it is important to take the situation into account and this claim has been supported in determining the link between rejection sensitivity and condom use.
REFERENCES


### Definitions of relationship types presented to participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship Type</th>
<th>Relationship Sub-type</th>
<th>Presented definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Romantic Relationships</td>
<td>(No sub-types)</td>
<td>This is when you have had a boyfriend or girlfriend. You are both aware that you are in an actual relationship together. You may or may have not have had sex.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Relationships</td>
<td></td>
<td>This will include a variety of casual relationships and casual sex encounters including:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A one night stand</td>
<td>Sex with someone you have just met.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sex with a friend</td>
<td>You are primarily friends but also have had sex.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sex with an ex-partner</td>
<td>Having sex after you have broken up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual Relationships</td>
<td></td>
<td>You have been seeing someone casually, but the relationship may not be ‘official’. You may be still seeing other people or may be unsure about where you stand with each other. You may or may not have had sex.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Study 2 indicated that rejection sensitivity predicted condom use at times when partners disagreed about whether to use a condom. The importance of gender was also underscored through analyses showing that men and women were unevenly distributed across condom use preference groups in romantic relationships. Specifically, the results showed that more women, and fewer men, than expected, were represented in the group in which participants wanted to use condoms more than they thought their partners did. This finding supported the argument that people hold different expectations of men and women (Wiederman, 2005) and that women are perceived to be more responsible for condom use than men (Campbell, 1995).

The large number of women in the “Participants Want” group may be explained by the idea that a higher proportion of women than men think that their partners want to use condoms less than themselves. There is little information in the literature regarding how often men and women want to use condoms. Study 2 suggested that many women think that their partners want to use condoms less than themselves, but actual preferences remain unknown. It is possible that men want to use condoms as often as women do. This is an important area of research because if men want to use condoms as often as women do, intervention efforts could be directed towards educating women that men want to use condoms more often than women expect. In order to address the gap surrounding men and women’s condom use desire in the literature, Study 3 investigates whether women think their male partners want to use condom less than themselves, and whether men report wanting to use condoms less than women do.

The investigation of young adults’ perceptions of their partners’ condom use desires, and the impact of gender on those perceptions, addresses the shaded area of
Figure 1c below. The main romantic views under consideration in Study 3 are whether individuals expect their partners to want to use condoms, and perhaps more importantly, whether they expect their partners to want to use condoms less than they themselves do. Study 3 extends the findings from Study 2 by examining the mean differences between men and women’s views of their partner’s condom use desires, and by exploring whether these views match reports from participants of the opposite gender. Study 3 also demonstrates the importance of young adults’ perceptions of their partner’s condom use desires in predicting condom use behaviour, and suggests clinical implications for working with sexually active young adults.

Figure 1c. The relationship context of sexual behaviour model as applied to romantic and casual relationship contexts. Figure shading and bolding represent constructs and links investigated in Study 3.
References


CHAPTER FIVE

STUDY 3: WOMEN MAY UNDERESTIMATE THEIR PARTNERS’ DESIRES
TO USE CONDOMS: POSSIBLE IMPLICATIONS FOR BEHAVIOUR.

Study 3 has undergone peer review and has been published in the Journal of Sex Research. The following chapter represents this manuscript.

Abstract

Australian young adults reported how often they wanted to use condoms in both romantic \((n = 667)\) and casual relationship \((n = 152)\) contexts and how often they thought their partners wanted to use condoms. Young adults wanted to use condoms more often than they perceived their partners to in both casual and romantic relationship contexts. Gender interactions showed that this pattern was especially strong among young women. Women seemed to underestimate the frequency at which their male partners wanted to use condoms. Furthermore, both the participants’ condom use desires and perceptions of their partners’ condom use desires predicted condom use behaviour. Results suggest that gendered expectations may play a part in how often individuals perceive their partners to want to use condoms, which in effect may determine condom use behaviour.

Keywords: Australia, condom use desires, condom use, gender.
Women may underestimate their partners’ desires to use condoms: Possible implications for behaviour.

Condom use is an important area of study in sex research due to the health implications that condom nonuse entails. In an effort to reduce rates of STI/HIV transmission and unwanted pregnancy, many studies have examined factors associated with condom use. One understudied factor is whether an individual wants to use a condom and whether they think that their partner does. If condom use desires relate to condom use behaviour, and if an individual’s partner wants to use condoms more often than they would expect, then intervention efforts could be directed at correcting such misperceptions.

Condom use behaviour has been linked to attitudes towards condoms and intentions to use condoms, with research finding that both holding positive attitudes towards condoms, and having intentions to use condoms relate to condom use (Albarracín, Johnson, Fishbein, & Muellerleile, 2001; Muñoz-Silva, Sánchez-García, Nunes, & Martins, 2007; Sheeran, Abraham, & Orbell, 1999; Zimmerman et al., 2007). Condom use has also been linked to the perception of a partner’s attitudes towards condoms (Finkelstein & Brannick, 2000; Pallonen, Timpson, Williams, & Ross, in press). However, for two reasons it is important to also consider condom use desires, including whether one wants to use a condom and whether one believes one’s partner wants to use condoms. The first reason is that simply focusing on attitudes and intentions could lead to an underestimation of the proportion of people who desire to use condoms. For example, one could want to use a condom without intending to, perhaps if one thinks one’s partner does not want to use a condom. Also, one could hold negative attitudes towards condoms but still want to use...
condoms for health reasons. In both examples, individuals who appear to view condom use unfavourably actually want to use condoms. This issue is important to consider when educating young people about the likelihood of a future partner wanting to use a condom. If partner attitudes towards condoms predict condom use (Finkelstein & Brannick, 2000; Pallonen et al., in press), condom use may be increased if young adults believe it is more likely that their partner will want to use condoms than not use them. Thus, it would be beneficial to have normative information regarding young people’s favourable condom use desires.

The second reason that it is important to investigate condom use desires is one of theoretical importance. It may be that condom use desires will make a unique contribution to theoretical models that attempt to explain condom use behaviour. What one desires to do, or wants to do, refers to what one would most prefer. By asking whether one wants to use condoms, and if one thinks their partner does, then the measure should more accurately reflect the preferred activity of each partner, regardless of whether they have favourable attitudes and intentions towards condom use. Therefore, investigating how condom use desires relates to condom use is important for both practical and theoretical purposes.

Few studies have examined condom use desire and thus more research examining whether people want to use condoms is needed. In romantic relationships, half of women report wanting to use condoms with their partner, but only 8% reported consistent use over a three month period (Pulerwitz, Amaro, De Jong, Gortmaker, & Rudd, 2002). In one study of adolescents in romantic relationships, 62% reported wanting to use condoms at least half of the time (Tschann, Adler, Millstein, Gurvey, & Ellen, 2002). Finally in a qualitative study of 14 African American women in a variety of relationship contexts, only 5 reported wanting to
use condoms with their partner, although 12 said that they wanted to use condoms at
the beginning of their relationship (Bowleg, Lucas, & Tschann, 2004).

Approximately half of college students have forgone condom use when they wanted to use a condom (Smith, 2003). Inconsistent condom use among women has been linked to wanting to use a condom but not asking (Cabral, Pulley, Artz, Brill, & Macaluso, 1998). It is possible that some young adults may not be using condoms as they are under the impression that their partners do not want to. Past research has shown that adolescents want to use condoms more often than they perceive their romantic partners as wanting to use condoms (Tschann et al., 2002). If people commonly perceive that their partners want to use condoms less than themselves, and if such beliefs are inaccurate, intervention could be targeted at correcting such misperceptions.

Not enough is known about the role of gender in forming such perceptions. Amaro (1995) argues that gender is an important, but often overlooked factor that shapes sexual behaviour. One way that gender may shape sexual behaviour is through the different sexual scripts that people hold. Sexual scripts are mutually shared conventions that guide the norms of sexual behaviour, and play a role in estimating our partner’s feelings (Simon & Gagnon, 1987). Research suggests that women may make estimates of their partner’s sexual desires for the duration of sexual activity based on the sexual scripts held for men, rather than on their partner’s actual sexual desires (Miller & Byers, 2004). It is likely that the scripts that individuals hold for men and women regarding their interests in engaging in safe sex may also be used to estimate their partner’s level of condom use desire. Campbell (1995) has argued that societal expectations regarding sexual behaviour differ for men and women. For example, women are targeted in safe sex campaigns more than
men, which may reflect the belief that women are more health conscious than men. Differences in the expectations of women and men may contribute to unsafe sexual behaviour. Many safe sex programs include sexual negotiation skills for women to persuade their partners to use condoms. According to Campbell, this reflects two beliefs: first that women are viewed as holding the responsibility for ensuring that protection is used, and second that men are not interested in using condoms.

The notion that gender shapes our expectations of how individuals should want to use condoms is supported in the literature. Tschann et al. (2002) found that more women than men had a perceived condom use desire discrepancy in the direction of women wanting to use condoms more than their partner. Additionally, the idea that women want to use condoms but that men control condom use was a sexual script that emerged in the qualitative study by Bowleg and colleagues (2004). Indeed, research indicates that young women care more about safer sex (Buysse & Van Oost, 1997) and are stereotypically viewed as being responsible for sexual health (Marston & King, 2006). There is also evidence to suggest that among male adolescents, traditional attitudes towards masculinity are associated with holding negative attitudes towards condoms, and the belief that men are less responsible for pregnancy prevention than women (Pleck, Sonenstein, & Ku, 1993). Therefore, some people seem to hold the perception that men are the ‘less responsible’ party when it comes to using protection and are less interested in the use of protection. Such beliefs may lead women to assume that men do not want to use condoms.

It also appears that women expect to be negatively judged by men if they initiate condom use. When predicting how a man would react to a woman initiating condom use in a hypothetical scenario, female participants expected the male character to respond more negatively to the initiation of condom use by a female
character than did male participants (Kelly & Bazzini, 2001). Tschann et al. (2002) did not test whether male and female participants actually differed in their desire to use condoms and other studies asking if individuals want to use condoms have only asked women about their own condom use desires (Bowleg et al., 2004; Pulerwitz et al., 2002). Perhaps men do not object to condom use as strongly as women expect.

The present study considered the relationship context when examining condom use desire, or wanting to use condoms. Much research shows that condoms are used more in casual than in romantic relationship contexts (Ku, Sonenstein, & Pleck, 1994; Rosenthal, Hall, & Moore, 1992; Sheeran et al., 1999). Bowleg et al. (2004) examined a variety of relationship contexts, however, the study was qualitative and had a small sample size which does not enable results to be generalised. Other research on condom use desire utilizing larger samples has focused on romantic relationship contexts (Pulerwitz et al., 2002; Tschann et al., 2002), and so it is important to determine whether previous findings on condom use desire extend to casual relationship contexts. As young people expect others to use condoms more in casual relationships (Ellen, Cahn, Eyre, & Boyer, 1996), they may expect their casual partners’ condom use desires to be closer to their own.

In summary, the present study hypothesised that individuals would perceive their partners as wanting to use condoms less often than they did themselves in romantic relationship contexts. As there is evidence that youths expect condoms to be used more in casual than in romantic relationships (Ellen et al., 1996), it was unknown whether a condom use desire discrepancy would extend to casual relationships. The role of gender in forming perceptions of partner condom use desire was also investigated. We expected an interaction with gender whereby the condom use desire discrepancy will be greater for women than men, with women
expecting their male partners to want to use condoms less often than men want to themselves. Finally, the link between condom use desires and condom use behaviour was explored. As condoms are generally used less when other forms of birth control are used, such as the contraceptive pill, birth control use was controlled (Sheeran et al., 1999; Zimmerman et al., 2007). After controlling for birth control use, we expected that wanting to use condoms and perceiving that one’s partner wants to use condoms would be associated with more frequent condom use.

**Method**

*Participants and Procedure.*

The current study is part of a larger study examining sexual compliance among young adults. Western Australian university students responded to an anonymous online survey. Respondents entered their student password which ensured only the university’s students participated and that they completed the survey only once. Participants accessed the online survey via one of two ways: the School of Psychology homepage or an email sent to the University’s Guild members. Posters were displayed on notice boards at various buildings around the university directing students to the School of Psychology homepage. Such efforts resulted in a response rate of 15.3% (N = 1144), based on university enrolment numbers at the time of data collection (2006).

Participants were from a broad range of disciplines with biological sciences, business, veterinary science, media, psychology and law, each constituting approximately 10% of respondents with the remaining 40% from various other disciplines. Other demographic information of the total sample is presented in Table 1. From this larger sample, participants in the current study were selected based on their relationship and sexual experience. Although participants with and without
relationship and sexual experiences were encouraged to participate, the current study only examines data from participants who had sex with their partner. Participants were also excluded from the current analysis if their partner was of the same sex. This is because we were interested in how participants viewed their partner’s condom use desires as a function of gender. The age and gender composition of the final sample used in the present study are presented in Table 1.

Measures

Relationship Type. Participants completed items on romantic and/or ‘other’ relationships that they had experienced during the past year. Participants could report one romantic relationship, one ‘other’ relationship, or both. Some participants who were sexually active in both relationship contexts (n = 118) reported on both relationship types. Definitions of each relationship type were presented to participants and appear in Table 2 along with information on the number of respondents reporting on each relationship type. Please note that although the relationship definitions presented did not require participants to have had sex with their partners, the current study only examines data from those who had. All ‘other’ relationships will be referred to as casual relationships in the results below.

Participants were asked if they had experienced a romantic relationship during the past year. Participants with such experience were asked to think of their current or most recent partner. They were then asked to think of that one partner when responding to items on condom use desire and sexual behaviour. The same method was then used for the reporting of casual relationship experiences. Participants who reported experiencing both a romantic and casual relationship experience during the past year were presented with two separate sets of condom use desire and sexual behaviour items.
Table 1

Demographic information of the total sample and the sexually experienced romantic and casual relationship sub-samples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Total Sample</th>
<th>Enrolment Status</th>
<th>Undergraduate</th>
<th>90.5%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N = 1144</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place of birth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>North America</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>South America</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romantic Relationship Respondents Who Had Sex With Their Partner. N = 667</td>
<td></td>
<td>Age Mean (S.D)</td>
<td>20.90 (2.06)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Range</td>
<td>18-25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>71.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual Relationship Respondents Who Had Sex With Their Partner. N = 152</td>
<td></td>
<td>Age Mean (S.D)</td>
<td>21.13 (2.09)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Range</td>
<td>18-25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>23.2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>76.8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Condom Use Desires. Participants rated on a scale of 1-5 (1 = never - 5 = always) how often they wanted to use a condom and how often they thought their partner wanted to use a condom. Some casual relationship respondents reported that they had sex with their partner only once ($n = 42$). Such participants were presented with alternative items as it did not make sense to present a never-always frequency scale when they had sex with their partner once. These items were: “did you want to use a condom” and “do you think your partner wanted to use a condom”? (1 = No, not at all - 5 = Yes, very much). To bring the responses in to line with those having sex more than once, participants responding at the lower end of the scale (with a 1 or 2) were coded as 1 (never) and those responding with a 4 or 5 were coded as 5 (always). A small number responded with a 3 and were excluded from analysis as it was unclear which end of the scale would best represent their own or their partner’s perceived condom use desires ($n = 2$ for own desires and $n = 1$ for perceived partner desires).

Sexual Behaviour. Participants indicated which method of birth control they generally used with that particular partner from a list of six. These included not using birth control, condoms, the pill, and other forms of birth control (e.g. implanon, a diaphragm, having a vasectomy). Participants could endorse more than one option if applicable (e.g. condoms and the pill). In the analyses that follow, participants were coded with a one if they or their partner were using a form of birth control other than condoms, and a zero if they were not.

Finally, they were asked how often they used condoms with their partner (1 = never – 5 = always). Participants who had been in a casual relationship in which they had sex with their partner only once indicated which method/s of birth control they used that time. This resulted in a dichotomous measure of condom use (yes/no).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship Type</th>
<th>Relationship Sub-type</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Romantic Relationships</td>
<td>N = 667</td>
<td>This is when you have had a boyfriend or girlfriend. You are both aware that you are in an actual relationship together. You may or may have not have had sex.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual Relationships</td>
<td>A one night stand, n = 28</td>
<td>Sex with someone you have just met</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sex with a friend, n = 44</td>
<td>You are primarily friends but also have had sex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sex with an ex-partner, n = 25</td>
<td>Having sex after you have broken up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual Relationship</td>
<td>N = 53</td>
<td>You have been seeing someone casually, but the relationship may not be ‘official’. You may be still seeing other people or may be unsure about where you stand with each other. You may or may not have had sex</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Similar to the coding of the condom use desire measure, their responses were coded to allow participants to be included in the analyses. Those who used a condom with their partner were coded with a 5, as they technically used a condom every time with their partner. Those who did not use a condom were coded with a 1, meaning they never used protection with that partner.

**Results**

Descriptive information for condom use desires and perceived partner’s condom use desires is displayed in Table 3. Participants’ condom use desires and their perceptions of their partners’ condom use desires were significantly correlated in both romantic \( (r = .66, p < .01) \) and casual \( (r = .41, p < .01) \) relationship contexts.

To investigate the hypotheses regarding the discrepancy between the participants’ condom use desires and their perceived partner’s desires, split plot analyses of variance and between-groups analyses of variance are used. Multiple linear regression analyses are used to determine whether condom use desires predict condom use behaviour. All analyses that follow are run separately for romantic and casual relationship contexts. Additionally all analyses that follow for casual relationship contexts were run with and without participants who reported having sex only once. The results were unchanged when the participants who had sex once were excluded and so the analyses presented below for casual relationships are for all casual relationship respondents.

A split plot design was used to test the difference between how often participants wanted to use condoms and how often they thought their partners wanted to, and whether this discrepancy differed by gender. A significant main effect showed that individuals wanted to use condoms more often than they perceived their partners to want to use condoms in both romantic \( (F(1, 637) = 11.83, p < .01) \) and
casual relationships \( F(1,142) = 10.84, p < .01 \). A significant interaction showed the condom use desire discrepancy differed by gender for both romantic \( F(1,637) = 50.29, p < .01 \) and casual relationships \( F(1,142) = 5.37, p < .05 \).

Table 3.

*Descriptive Statistics of How Often Participants Wanted to Use Condoms and How Often They Thought Their Partner Wanted to Use Condoms in Romantic and Casual Relationships*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Own Condom Use Desire</th>
<th>Perceived Partner Condom Use Desire</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( M ) (SD)</td>
<td>( M ) (SD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romantic Relationships</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>2.51 (1.63)</td>
<td>2.72 (1.69)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>2.62 (1.69)</td>
<td>2.03 (1.47)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2.59 (1.68)</td>
<td>2.22 (1.56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual Relationships</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>3.33 (1.93)</td>
<td>3.21 (1.81)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>3.81 (1.68)</td>
<td>2.72 (1.74)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3.70 (1.74)</td>
<td>2.84 (1.76)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To test the nature of the interactions, repeated measures t-tests were run for male and female participants separately. Female participants in both romantic \( t(454) = 9.9, p < .01 \) and casual relationships \( t(110) = 6.03, p < .01 \) wanted to use condoms more than they thought their partners did. Male participants in romantic relationships wanted to use condoms less than they thought their partners did \( t(183) \)
= 2.12, \( p < .05 \)) whereas male participants in casual relationships \( (t (32) = .51, \ p > .05) \) did not significantly differ in their own compared to their partner's perceived condom use desires.

To directly test whether women significantly underestimated the frequency with which men wanted to use condoms, between groups ANOVAs compared men's own condom use desires to women's perceptions of men's condom use desires. In romantic relationships, women underestimated men's condom use desires \( (F (1,642) = 13.23, \ p < .01) \). In casual relationships, the result did not reach significance but was in the same direction as in the romantic relationship context \( (F (1,143) = 2.98, \ p > .05) \).

The mean level of the frequency condom use was 2.77 \( (SD = 1.61) \) for romantic and 3.32 \( (SD = 1.74) \) casual relationships. Multiple linear regression analyses were used to examine whether condom use desires predicted condom use behaviour in both romantic and casual relationship contexts. Participants' condom use desires and their partners' perceived condom use desires were entered together with gender and birth control (used as control variables). Results are presented in Table 4. In the regression analyses for both romantic and casual relationship contexts, the greater the participants' condom use desires, the more frequently participants reported using condoms. Similarly, the greater their partner's perceived condom use desires, the more frequently participants reported using condoms. Furthermore, in romantic relationships, use of other forms of birth control predicted significantly less frequent use of condoms. Therefore, the participants' perceptions of their partner's condom use desires predicted condom use, even when their own condom use desires were controlled. Both significantly contributed over and above the other to predict condom use.
Table 4

Summary of Simple Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Condom Use Among Sexually Experienced Individuals in Romantic (N = 667) and Casual Relationships N = 152).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Romantic Relationships</th>
<th>Casual Relationships</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>SE B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (females = 0; males = 1)</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth Control (Non-use = 0; Use = 1)</td>
<td>-.62</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own Condom Use Desires</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Partners’ Condom Use Desires</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$F$</td>
<td>284.76**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

Discussion

Young adults reported wanting to use condoms more often than they thought their partners did in both casual and romantic relationship contexts. Furthermore, the perceived condom use desire discrepancies interacted with gender. The results suggest that gendered expectations may act as a barrier to condom negotiation, at least in romantic relationships. Young women in romantic relationships thought that their partners wanted to use condoms less often than the male participants with romantic relationship experience reported themselves. Although the same finding in
casual relationships did not reach statistical significance, it was in the same direction as in the romantic relationship context. Finally, both wanting to use condoms and holding the perception that one’s partner wanted to use condoms predicted condom use behaviour in both romantic and casual relationship contexts.

One contribution of this study is the extension of the finding that individuals perceive their partners as having lower condom use desires than themselves from romantic relationships (Tschann et al., 2002) to casual relationship contexts. Even though young people generally expect that condoms are used more in casual relationships (Ellen et al., 1996), the participants in this study still saw their partners as wanting to use condoms less than themselves. The other important contribution of this study is the consideration of gender when examining condom use desires and perceived partner condom use desires. The results support the notion that young women hold a sexual script in which it is expected that men want to use condoms less often than women. The results also build upon past research findings that suggest that individuals base their estimations of their partner’s sexual duration desires on their stereotypes of men and women rather than their partner’s actual desires (Miller & Byers, 2004). It appears that the same processes may be involved when young people estimate their partner’s condom use desires. If young women perceive that their male partners want to use condoms less often than themselves, and if such perceptions are based on inaccurate stereotypes, then correcting such misperceptions may be a sensible goal for public health campaigns.

A number of limitations must be kept in mind when interpreting the results. First, we did not recruit dyads, but individuals at one university. Although it is possible that in some cases both members of a dyad participated in the survey, we do not have the information to match their data. Without specific partners’ reports, we
can only suggest the likely inaccuracy of perceptions based on sample averages.
Second, only a small number of male participants with casual relationship experience participated in the study. This may have decreased the statistical power to detect a significant difference between how often young women in casual relationships thought their partners wanted to use condoms, and how often young men wanted to use condoms themselves.

Third, the study is limited by its cross-sectional nature. Condom use desires may have predicted condom use, but it is also possible that the reverse effect is true. Individuals may have reported their own condom use desires after considering their behaviour. According to cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957), individuals feel uneasy when their thoughts or attitudes are at odds with their behaviour. Therefore, participants may have adjusted their condom use desires after consideration of their sexual behaviour, in an effort to increase the congruence between their own desires and their behaviour. However, even if the link between condom use desires and behaviour may have been weaker in reality, the finding that participants thought their partners wanted to use condoms less than themselves should not have been lessened. Finally, due to the same retrospective recall limitation, participants may have based their perceptions of their partners’ condom use desires on whether they used a condom rather than their preceding expectations.

The current research makes a unique contribution to a small area of research on condom use desire and tests the role of gender in forming perceptions of partner condom use desires. The current study also follows guidelines to control for birth control use and relationship type or partner specificity when examining condom use (Noar, Cole, & Carlyle, 2006). Finally, predictors of condom use that may be targeted at an intervention level have been investigated. Specifically, interventions
may be improved by addressing young peoples’ perceptions of their partner’s condom use desires and highlighting the notion that generally, partners will want to use condoms more than they expect.

The current findings are of relevance to sexual health program coordinators and those working in the field of public health. If young women learn that male partners want to use condoms more often than they expect, then it may make it easier for them to negotiate condom use. Perhaps the continuing educational focus on equipping young women with the skills to persuade their partners to use condoms led them to think that their partners did not want to use condoms. Correcting such misperceptions may provide an opportunity to increase rates of condom use.
References


Pulerwitz, J., Amaro, H., De Jong, W., Gortmaker, S. L., & Rudd, R. (2002). Relationship power, condom use and HIV risk among women in the USA. *AIDS Care, 14*(6), 789-800.


PREFACE TO CHAPTER SIX

Study 3 highlighted the importance of gender in the construction of young adults’ expectations of their partners’ desires to use condoms. Stemming from this study, and linking back to the central argument of this thesis, that romantic views relate in predictable ways to sexually compliant behaviour, Study 4 investigates the interaction between gender and power, and specifically, how power relates to different sexual experiences for men and women. It is argued that romantic views determine the power young adults hold in relationships. Additionally, emotional intimacy power is identified as being an important domain of young adult romantic and casual relationships. This is based on the fact that the fulfillment of intimacy needs is an important task of young adulthood, and that many relationships in young adulthood lack formal commitment. Therefore, emotional intimacy and commitment are likely to be desired qualities in young adult relationships that can lead to power imbalances. Such power imbalances are likely to be associated with different sexual experiences.

Study 4 tests the final section of the model of this thesis as shown below in the shaded section of Figure 1d. Power is conceptualised as arising from the romantic views that young adults hold about their partners’ desires for intimacy and commitment. Additionally, gender is investigated as moderating the link between emotional intimacy power and sexual compliance. Inspired by the importance of gender in determining expectations about partner condom use desire in Studies 2 and 3, Study 4 aims to investigate the way that emotional intimacy power relates to condom use and pressured sex differently for men and women. Participants in Study 3 had gendered expectations of their partners, believing that men wanted to use condoms less than women did. It is also possible that gendered expectations apply to
young adults’ beliefs about the value their partners place on sex itself. Study 4 investigates the possibility that more powerful individuals will experience pressured sex and condom use differently, depending on whether they are a man or a woman. Social exchange theory is used to guide the hypotheses about the moderating effect of gender on the link between power and sexual compliance.

Figure 1d. The relationship context of sexual behaviour model as applied to romantic and casual relationship contexts. Figure shading and bolding represent constructs and links investigated in Study 4.
CHAPTER SIX

STUDY 4: WHO’S GOT THE UPPER HAND? EMOTIONAL INTIMACY

POWER PREDICTS DIFFERENT SEXUAL EXPERIENCES FOR MEN AND WOMEN.
Abstract

Those who are more emotionally invested in relationships may have less power than their partners. Furthermore, power may predict sexual experiences. Australian young adults reported their condom use and pressured sex experiences in both romantic ($n = 708$) and casual ($n = 118$) relationships. Results showed that greater power (lower relative investment) predicted more condom use among those wanting to use condoms. In casual relationships, an interaction with gender showed that women in particular used condoms more when they had more power. Power also interacted with gender for pressured sex and unexpectedly, men who had more power experienced more pressured sex. The possibility that condom use and pressured sex have different meanings for men and women is explored.

Keywords: Power, Gender, Pressured sex, Condom use
Who’s got the upper hand? Emotional intimacy power predicts different sexual experiences for men and women.

Romantic relationships can be a source of much satisfaction. However, relationships can also bring challenges when two people have competing desires or motivations. Both partners in romantic relationships must negotiate these challenges, and at times one partner may experience more favourable outcomes than the other. One factor that is likely to determine which partner most often experiences their desired outcome is power. Power can manifest in a range of behaviours in relationships, such as one partner predominantly dictating what the couple does during their spare time, or one partner winning arguments more frequently than the other. Generally, the most powerful partner holds the most influence over what the couple does (Emerson, 1962), and therefore the least powerful partner may often take a compliant position. Compliant behaviour may also manifest in sexual behaviour (Impett & Peplau, 2003). For example, less powerful partners may engage in sexual behaviours because they are consistent with what they perceive their partners to want, rather than what they want themselves.

Social exchange theory offers valuable insight into the balance of power in intimate relationships in that it highlights the importance of identifying the rewards and costs of being in a relationship (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). Sometimes, one person may receive fewer rewards from being in the relationship than their partner does. For example, partners who are less in love may not find the relationship as rewarding as partners who are more emotionally invested. This phenomenon is known as the principle of least interest (Sprecher, Schmeckle, & Felmlee, 2006; Waller & Hill, 1951), whereby the person who is least in love has the most power in
the relationship. Those who are the least in love should find fewer rewards from the relationship than their partner, and would therefore be the least dependent upon the relationship, which as Emerson (1962) points out, would make them more powerful.

The amount of power that one holds in a relationship may relate to one’s sexual behaviour, and in particular, sexual compliance. Two areas in which sexual compliance can manifest include decisions about whether to engage in sex, and decisions about whether to use condoms. For example, less powerful individuals may always consent to have sex with their partner, even when they don’t want to. There is evidence to suggest that both men and women sometimes engage in unwanted sexual activity (Morgan & Zurbriggen, 2007; Muehlenhard & Cook, 1988; O'Sullivan & Allgeier, 1998; Vannier & O'Sullivan, in press). O’Sullivan and Allgeier found that the most common reason for engaging in unwanted consensual sexual activity with a partner was to satisfy one’s partner’s needs. In exchange terms, this may be seen as offering a reward to one’s partner. Additionally, individuals may make condom use decisions based on their partner’s preferences, rather than their own. In both instances, sexual compliance entails making decisions about one’s own sexual behaviour based on the perceived desires of one’s partner rather than on one’s own desires (Impett & Peplau, 2003).

**Power and Sexual Behaviour**

Although the link between power and sexual behaviour appears inherent, there is limited evidence regarding how power relates to unwanted sex or sexual coercion. Among female adolescents, the ability to refuse unwanted sex has been linked with holding the belief that male control in relationships is non-normative (Sionean et al., 2002). Additionally, female adolescents with less power report that their boyfriends have the most say about when they have sex (Wang, Wang, & Hsu,
Women in qualitative studies have also described pressured sex as being linked to power in relationships (Morgan & Zurbriggen, 2007). However, little is known about how power relates to unwanted sex for men.

Engaging in unwanted sex is not the only way that power may manifest in sexual behaviour. Some research has found that those with greater power use condoms more often (Buysse & Van Oost, 1997; Jorgensen, King, & Torrey, 1980; Pulerwitz, Amaro, De Jong, Gortmaker, & Rudd, 2002; Pulerwitz, Gortmaker, & DeJong, 2000). However, other researchers have found no relationship between general power and condom use (Bralock & Koniak-Griffin, 2007; Cabral, Pulley, Artz, Brill, & Macaluso, 1998; Harvey, Bird, Galavotti, Duncan, & Greenberg, 2002; Teitelman, Ratcliffe, Morales-Aleman, & Sullivan, 2008). When considering the link between power and condom use, it may be important to consider the condom use desires of the individual. Condom use behaviour can only be conceptualised as compliance when the use or nonuse of condoms is inconsistent with one’s own desires, and so it is important to consider condom use desires. Research taking into account individuals’ desires to use condoms has found that those with more power reported condom use behaviour that was consistent with their own desires (Tschann, Adler, Millstein, Gurvey, & Ellen, 2002; Wang et al., 2007).

The Importance of Potential Power

Some studies have found that a significant effect of power on condom use depends on the measure of power used (Harvey et al., 2002; Jorgensen et al., 1980; Tschann et al., 2002). For example, Harvey and colleagues (2002) did not find general power to relate to condom use, but they did find that those who reported decision making power around condom use used condoms more. However, power has also been measured according to who has more financial resources (Sionean et
al., 2002), who wins arguments (Jorgensen et al., 1980), who makes the decisions in the relationship (Cabral et al., 1998; Harvey et al., 2002; Jorgensen et al., 1980; Tschann et al., 2002), who is more emotionally invested (Felmlee, 1994; Sprecher & Felmlee, 1997; Tschann et al., 2002) and simply by directly asking who has the most power (Cabral et al., 1998; Felmlee, 1994; Sprecher & Felmlee, 1997; Tschann et al., 2002). Some authors have separately investigated multiple aspects of power, and others have used a composite measure, averaging the balance of power across these domains. It is likely that these different measures of power are tapping into different aspects of power. Two issues are important to consider when measuring power in romantic or casual relationships. The first relates to whether the power measure is assessing potential power or an outcome of power. The second relates to whether the domain of power is relevant to the sample.

Bacharach and Lawler (1981) differentiate between potential power and power outcomes. Measures of power outcomes emphasise the end result, or manifestation of power and may include who wins conflicts, who determines how the couple spends their leisure time and who controls what method of birth control is used. Potential power by contrast, may be seen as a precursor to power outcomes and is a structural element in a dyad. Of the studies reviewed above, some investigate potential power (e.g. emotional investment discrepancy), whereas others focus on power outcomes (e.g. who makes decisions) as predictors of sexual behaviour. It is argued that this differentiation is important, as power outcomes reflect a consequence of power, whereas potential power reflects the origins of power. In other words, measures of power outcomes can indicate who holds power, whereas measures of potential power can demonstrate why an individual holds power.
When choosing a measure of power to investigate, it may also be important to consider the particular aspect of power that is relevant to the sample being studied. Tschann and colleagues (2002) highlight the notion that the resources a person brings to a relationship are a basis of power, or potential power, and the more resources brought, the more powerful the individual is. For example, greater financial resources lead to greater potential power. However, for young adult romantic relationships in which the couple is unmarried, financial resources may be of little relevance. Like Tschann and colleagues, it is argued that emotional commitment to a partner is of more relevance to unmarried young adults. Individuals who are committed to relationships are invested in the relationship continuing, and thus may be more willing to sacrifice their own needs for the sake of their partner and the relationship (Rusbult & Buunk, 1993). This idea is consistent with the principle of least interest which states that the most invested partner is the least powerful (Sprecher et al., 2006; Waller & Hill, 1951). It may be that those who are more dependent on the relationship will have more to lose if the relationship were to end. These partners may be more willing to compromise their own desires for the sake of relationship maintenance.

Emotional intimacy as a domain of power has previously been investigated as a predictor of condom use in adolescent romantic relationships (Tschann et al., 2002). Adolescents with more emotional intimacy power (in other words, those less emotionally invested than their partners) were more likely to have their condom use desires enacted. This meant that more powerful individuals were more likely to use condoms the last time they had sex if they wanted to use condoms, and were less likely to use condoms if they did not want to use condoms.
Power and Gender

The outcome of power in a relationship is also likely to depend on the gender of the individual. Many studies have found that the way in which the least powerful person in the relationship experiences sexual outcomes is linked to their gender (Bruhin, 2003; Buysse & Van Oost, 1997; Jorgensen et al., 1980). Generally, studies report that those with less power use condoms or contraception less often if they are female (Buysse & Van Oost, 1997; Jorgensen et al., 1980). However, Bruhin (2003) found that condoms were used more in clusters where men were more powerful than women. It should be noted however, that very different measures of power were used across these studies.

The impact of power on sexual behaviour may be determined by what we expect men and women to value in sexual relationships. It has been argued that when the power balance in a relationship is unequal, steps will be taken to try to equalize the balance (Emerson, 1962; Sprecher & Schwartz, 1994). One way power may be balanced is by offering greater rewards to a partner. For example, a less powerful woman may offer extra resources to her partner in order to balance the relationship, or ensure that her partner is receiving as many rewards from the relationship as herself. What she deems to be of worth to her partner may be determined by what she believes men to want from their partners. There is evidence to suggest that women believe that men don’t want to use condoms (Bowleg, Lucas, & Tschann, 2004; Kelly & Bazzini, 2001). Additionally, qualitative research suggests that women forgo condom use as a sign of love and care for a male partner, whereas men use condoms as a sign of love and care for their female partners (Pulerwitz & Dworkin, 2006). It might therefore follow that a woman with less power in a relationship would forgo condom use in order to offer more rewards to her partner in
the relationship. In contrast, a man with less power may wear a condom to offer a reward to his partner. However, Tschann and colleagues (2002) did not find that gender and power interacted to predict condom use. Adolescents in Tschann et al.’s study reported condom use with a main sexual partner who they were ‘serious about’. Research is yet to investigate this link in casual relationships, and thus it is possible that the gender of one’s partner may be particularly important in casual relationships where patterns of condom use are still developing in the dyad.

Our expectations of men and women may also play a role in predicting unwanted sex. Sex has been described as a resource which women bring to relationships, and that men want (Baumeister & Vohs, 2004). There is also research to support the idea that both men and women expect that men value sex more than women. For example, male college students list sex as a reward gained from a relationship, whereas women do not (Sedikides, Oliver, & Campbell, 1994). Additionally, qualitative research suggests that some women believe that men’s desire for sexual gratification is due to the biology of being male, suggesting a belief that male sexual desire is more innate than female sexual desire (Morgan & Zurbriggen, 2007). Although there is valid argument against the notion that the male sexual desire is less than female sexual desire (Wood, Koch, & Mansfield, 2006), society appears to commonly adopt the viewpoint that men value sex more than women (Leiblum, 2002).

It should then follow that an individual with less power may be more likely to offer sex as a reward to a partner if they are a woman, but not a man. Offering sex as a reward to their partner may take the form of consenting to have sex even when they don’t want to. In other words, in order to ensure that a male partner has equal rewards to that of a female partner, women with less power could compensate their
partners by having sex with them whenever their partner wants to have sex, including when they themselves don’t want to. Therefore holding less power in a relationship may be associated with sexual compliance among women.

The Current Study

The current study aimed to assess how emotional intimacy power predicted condom use and experiencing pressured sex, and how these links were moderated by gender. Most research on power and sexual compliance has focused on romantic relationship experiences, or has not examined relationship contexts separately (e.g. Tschann et al., 2002). Thus, there is a lack of research that specifically explores experiences in casual relationships. The current study aimed to address this gap by extending the literature on power and sexual behaviour in romantic relationships to casual relationship contexts. The second reason for differentiating between relationship contexts is that condom use is associated with relationship status (Misovich, Fisher, & Fisher, 1997; Sheeran, Abraham, & Orbell, 1999), and sexual compliance may be experienced differently in romantic relationship contexts to casual relationship contexts (Vannier & O'Sullivan, in press). Therefore, this study examines sexual experiences in both relationship contexts. However, in order to increase the likelihood that individuals in casual relationships were to some degree emotionally invested, and to increase homogeneity in this sub-group, only those who had sex more than once with their partner were examined.

With these considerations in mind, the hypotheses of this study varied by relationship context and sexual behaviour type (condom use or pressured sex). In terms of condom use, it was hypothesised that participants with more power would use condoms more, if that was a behaviour they desired. This connection was expected to exist in both romantic and casual relationship contexts. The interactions
between gender and power for condom use were hypothesised to reach significance for casual, but not romantic relationship contexts. The prediction for romantic relationships was based on past research examining gender and power interactions for condom use in romantic relationships (Tschann et al., 2002). However, there is little past research to inform predictions about casual relationships. Based on the notion that expectations about one’s partner’s condom use desires may be based on their partner’s gender rather than established patterns of condom use, it seems reasonable that gender may be a more salient factor in casual relationships. Therefore, it was hypothesised that individuals with greater power in casual relationships would use condoms more if they were a woman, but less if they were a man.

Predictions about the link between power and pressured sex differed by gender, but not by relationship context. First, it was hypothesised that gender and power would interact to predict pressured sex in both romantic and casual relationship contexts. Predictions about the link between power and pressured sex were based on the societal expectation that men value sex more than women, and on theory that suggests that less powerful individuals offer rewards to partners in an attempt to equalise power imbalances (Emerson, 1962). It was hypothesized that women with less power would have sex in response to male partners’ pressure more often than women with more power. Due to the limited information available regarding men’s experiences with unwanted sex, it was unknown how power would relate to pressured sex for men.
Method

Participants.

Participants in this study were taken from a larger sample of Western Australian university students who responded to an online survey (n = 1144). The larger sample were from a broad range of disciplines with biological sciences, business, veterinary science, media, psychology and law, each constituting approximately 10% of respondents, with the remaining 40% from various other disciplines. The majority of students were undergraduate students (90.5%), with the remaining being post-graduate students. Participants reported a variety of places of birth including Australia (71%), Asia (12.2%), Europe (8.3%), North America (4.2%), Africa (2.9%), New Zealand (1.1%) and South America (0.3%).

From this larger sample, participants in the current study were selected based on their relationship and sexual experience. Although participants with and without relationship and sexual experiences were encouraged to participate, the current study only examines data from participants who had sex with their partner. Participants were excluded from the current analysis if their partner was of the same sex, given the focus of this study being on how relationship power functioned in relationships with both a male and female partner. Thus, in this study there were 708 students (70.5% female, age $M = 20.90$ years, $SD = 2.06$) who reported having a sexual romantic relationship experience, and 118 students (78.8% female, age $M = 21.12$ years, $SD = 2.10$) who reported having a sexual casual relationship experience. Sample sizes for the analysis that follow may vary due to missing data.

Measures

Relationship Type. Participants completed items on romantic and/or ‘other’ relationships that they had experienced during the past year. Participants could report
one romantic relationship, one ‘other’ relationship, or both. Some participants who were sexually active in both relationship contexts \( n = 89 \) reported on both relationship types. Definitions of each relationship type were presented to participants. Romantic relationships were defined as “when you have had a boyfriend or girlfriend. You are both aware that you are in an actual relationship together. You may or may have not have had sex”. ‘Other’ relationships included casual relationships and casual sex encounters. The types of casual relationships and their definitions presented to participants included sex with a friend (you are primarily friends but also have had sex), sex with an ex (having sex after you have broken up), a one-night-stand (sex with someone you have just met) and other casual relationships (You have been seeing someone casually, but the relationship may not be ‘official’. You may be still seeing other people or may be unsure about where you stand with each other. You may or may not have had sex). All ‘other’ relationships will be referred to as casual relationships in the results below. Although the relationship definitions presented did not require participants to have had sex with their partners, the current study only examines data from those who had. Additionally, only those who had sex with their partner more than once were included in the current analyses. Those who considered their relationship to be a ‘one-night-stand’ were included if they had sex with their partner more than once.

Participants who had experienced a romantic relationship during the past year were asked to think of their current or most recent partner. They were then asked to think of that one partner when responding to items on relative power and sexual behaviour. The same method was then used for the reporting of casual relationship experiences. Participants who reported experiencing both a romantic and casual relationship experience during the past year were presented with two separate sets of
relative power and sexual behaviour items. Their data was used in analyses of both romantic and casual relationships.

Emotional Investment and Relative Power. Participants completing the romantic and casual relationships sections responded to items measuring the power balance of their relationship, operationalised by the perceived emotional investment discrepancy. As a measure of emotional investment, participants responded to a number of items relating to their own emotional investment, and the perceived emotional investment of their partner on a scale of 1-5. Scale tags were appropriately adjusted to suit the item (e.g. 1 = Not much, 5 = A lot). Higher scores indicated higher levels of emotional investment. Items differed according to whether the participant was reporting a romantic or other relationship.

The emotional investment scale for romantic relationships included six items. Five items were taken from the emotional investment scale used by Tschann and colleagues (2002) including “How much commitment do you want in this relationship?”, “How important is it to you to share your feelings with your partner?”, “How important is it to you to feel close to your partner?”, “How much do you need your partner?” and “How much do you feel you give to the relationship with your partner?” One item was created for the purpose of the study: “How much do you like/love your partner?” Items assessing perceived partner emotional investment were reworded to reflect the required meaning (e.g. “How much does your partner need you?”). Cronbach’s alpha was .84 for the participant’s emotional investment items and .87 for the perceived partner’s emotional investment items.

The emotional investment scale for casual relationships included four items. One item was adapted from the measure used by Tschann and colleagues (2002), “How close do you want to be to your partner?” Three other items were created
specifically for non-romantic relationships. These included “Are you hoping to have a more serious relationship with your partner?”, “How much do you like your partner?” and “How emotionally intimate do you want to be with your partner?” Cronbach’s alpha was .93 for the participant’s emotional investment items and .91 for the perceived partner’s investment items.

The measure of relative power was created by subtracting the participant’s own averaged emotional investment score from their perceived partner’s averaged emotional investment score. Higher scores on the measure of relative emotional investment indicated that the participant was less emotionally invested, and therefore held more power than their partner.

**Sexual Behaviour.** As a measure of pressured sex, participants reported on a scale of 1-5 (1 = Never, 5 = Always) how often they had sex with their partner because they were pressured into it ($M = 1.33; SD = .66$ for romantic relationships; $M = 1.36; SD = .82$ for casual relationships). The pressured sex item was taken from published research on the link between sexual coercion and well-being (Zweig, Barber, & Eccles, 1997). Participants were asked how often they used condoms with their partner (1 = never – 5 = always) and also how often they wanted to use a condom when they had sex with their partner (1 = never – 5 = always). Only participants who wanted to use condoms at least half of the time ($\geq 3$) were included in the analyses predicting condom use frequency (condom use frequency: $M = 4.05; SD = 1.17$ for romantic relationships in this subset; $M = 3.73; SD = 1.61$ for casual relationship participants in this subset).

As a measure of birth control use, participants indicated which method of birth control they generally used with that particular partner from a list of six. These included not using birth control, condoms, the pill, and other forms of birth control.
(e.g. implanon, a diaphragm, having a vasectomy). Participants could endorse more than one option if applicable (e.g. condoms and the pill). Many participants in romantic (66%) and casual (51.3%) relationships reported using a form of birth control other than condoms. In the analyses that follow, participants were coded with a one if they or their partner were using a form of birth control other than condoms, and a zero if they were not.

Procedure

Students from a Western Australian university responded to an anonymous online survey. Respondents were required to enter their student password which ensured that only the university’s students participated, and that they completed the survey only once. Participants accessed the online survey via one of two ways: the School of Psychology homepage or an email sent to the University’s Guild members. Posters were displayed on notice boards at various buildings around the university directing students to the School of Psychology homepage. Such efforts resulted in a response rate of 15.3% (N = 1144), based on university enrolment numbers at the time of data collection.

Results

Bivariate associations between gender, power, pressured sex and condom use are first explored. The regression analyses that follow investigate the main effects of power and gender and their interaction. Additionally, as this study focuses on whether power predicted getting one’s way with condom use, both the correlational and regression analyses predicting condom use included only those participants who reported wanting to use condoms at least half of the time with their partner (romantic $n = 279$; casual $n = 70$). This restriction meant that getting one’s way with condom use would entail more frequent condom use.
**Bivariate Analyses of Factors Predicting Pressured Sex and Condom Use.**

Bivariate analyses are presented in Table 1. Greater emotional intimacy power was significantly related to more condom use in romantic relationships, but this relation did not reach statistical significance in casual relationships. Power was not significantly related to pressured sex in either romantic or casual relationships. Female gender was significantly associated with reporting less relative power in both romantic and casual relationships and within romantic relationship contexts, experiencing more pressured sex. Additionally, less condom use was significantly associated with experiencing more pressured sex in both romantic and casual relationships. Using another form of birth control was significantly associated with male gender in romantic relationships, and with less condom use in romantic relationships.

**Multivariate Analyses of Factors Predicting Pressured Sex and Condom Use**

Multiple linear regression analyses were used to test for predictors of pressured sex and condom use in romantic and casual relationships. In the first step, gender and relative power were entered, and the interaction was entered in the second step. The interaction term was created by multiplying the dummy code for gender with a standardized relative power score. Four different regression analyses were run to investigate how the model predicted two types of sexual behaviour (pressured sex and condom use) in two relationship contexts (romantic and casual). In analyses predicting condom use, being on another form of birth control (such as the contraceptive pill) was controlled in the first step as this has been associated with less condom use (Sheeran et al., 1999).
Table 1

_Bivariate associations between gender, emotional intimacy power, and sexual behaviour. Casual and romantic relationships are presented on the upper and lower diagonals respectively._

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Birth Control*</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>-.29**</td>
<td>-.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Gender†</td>
<td>-.08*</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>-.30**</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>-.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Emotional Intimacy Power</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-.14*</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Pressured sex</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.11*</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>-.30*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Condom Use Frequency</td>
<td>-.24**</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>.12*</td>
<td>-.28**</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.; *Non-use = 0, Use = 1.; † Male = 0, Female = 1

_Pressured Sex_

_Romantic Relationships._ At step one of the regression analysis, gender was a significant predictor of pressured sex but relative power was not (see Table 2). At step two the interaction term was a significant predictor and was investigated using Modgraph (Jose, 2008) which follows the guidelines of Aiken and West (1991). The nature of the interaction is displayed in Figure 1. Simple slopes were also investigated using Modgraph. As can be seen from the figure, greater relative power predicted having more pressured sex for male participants (slope = 0.16; $t = 2.54, p < .05$) but not for female participants (slope = .03, $t = .80, p > .05$).
Casual Relationships. At the first step of the regression analysis, more relative power significantly predicted more pressured sex, whereas gender did not. At the second step, the interaction of gender and power significantly predicted pressured sex (see Table 2). The interaction was investigated using Modgraph and the nature of the interaction appeared similar to that presented for romantic relationships. Simple slope computations showed that greater power significantly predicted more pressured sex for male participants (slope = 0.39; \( t = 2.79, p < .01 \)), but not female participants (slope = -0.02; \( t = -0.21, p > .05 \)).

Condom Use

Romantic Relationships. At the first step of the regression analysis, greater relative power and not being on another form of birth control significantly predicted more condom use, whereas gender did not (see Table 3). At the second step, the interaction of gender and power was not a significant predictor of condom use. Therefore the interaction between gender and power was not investigated further.

Casual Relationships. In casual relationships, the interaction term significantly predicted condom use at the second step, however, no other variables reached significance (see Table 3). Modgraph was used to examine the significant interaction which is displayed in Figure 2. Simple slopes revealed that greater emotional intimacy power predicted more condom use for women (slope = 0.63; \( t = 2.75, p < .01 \)) but did not reach significance for men (slope = -0.62; \( t = -1.70, p > .05 \)). However, the results for men should be interpreted with caution as the number of men included in this subgroup with more favourable condom use desires drops to 11.
Table 2
Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Pressured Sex Among Sexually Experienced Individuals in Romantic (n = 653) and Casual Relationships (n = 110).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Romantic Relationships</th>
<th></th>
<th>Casual Relationships</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td>Model 2</td>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td>Model 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>SE B</td>
<td>β</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender†</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.12**</td>
<td>.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G x P Interaction</td>
<td>-.13</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>-.16*</td>
<td>-.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted $R^2$</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$F$ for change in $R^2$</td>
<td>5.00**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.76*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *p < .05.  **p < .01.; † Male = 0, Female = 1.
Figure 1. Power as a predictor of pressured sex in romantic relationships for men and women.
### Table 3

**Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Condom Use Frequency Among Sexually Experienced Individuals in Romantic Relationships who wanted to use condoms at least half of the time (n = 279) and Casual Relationships (n = 70).**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Romantic Relationships</th>
<th></th>
<th>Casual Relationships</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td>Model 2</td>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td>Model 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth Control Use</td>
<td>-.54</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>-.23**</td>
<td>-.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender†</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>-.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.12*</td>
<td>.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G x P Interaction</td>
<td></td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted $R^2$</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$F$ for change in $R^2$</td>
<td>6.81**</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$; †Gender: Male = 0, Female = 1. *$^a$ Birth Control Use: Non-use = 0, Use = 1.*
Figure 2.
Power as a predictor of condom use frequency in casual relationships for men and women.
Discussion

The present study investigated the link between power and sexual behaviour, and found that emotional intimacy power predicted sexual behaviour for young adults in romantic and casual relationship contexts. In addition to this, the way that power outcomes were experienced by individuals depended upon their gender. It is possible that these patterns reflect the different meaning that sexual experiences have for men and women. The findings regarding the link between power and condom use will first be examined. Then the unexpected findings regarding the link between men’s experiences of pressured sex and power and possible explanations for this link will be discussed.

The hypotheses regarding power and condom use were partially supported. Having greater power predicted more frequent condom use in romantic relationships for both men and women who wanted to use condoms more frequently. Therefore, participants with greater power used condoms in a way that was consistent with their own desires. In casual relationships, the interaction between gender and power was significant and in the expected direction, with greater power predicting more condom use for women, but not men. Women reporting casual relationship experiences used condoms more often if they had greater power than if they had less power.

The results add to the current literature on power and sexual behaviour, supporting previous studies that have found greater power to be associated with more condom use (Buysse & Van Oost, 1997; Jorgensen et al., 1980; Pulerwitz et al., 2002; Pulerwitz et al., 2000; Woolf & Maisto, 2008) or condom use that was consistent with what participants wanted (Tschann et al., 2002; Wang et al., 2007). The present study extended past research to casual relationship contexts and examined the role of gender in determining the relationship between power and
condom use. The results suggest that power may have a differential effect on condom use for men and women in casual, but not romantic relationship contexts.

It could be that gender is a more salient factor in casual relationships than in romantic relationships. For example, in romantic relationships it may be that patterns of condom use have already been established over time, and both partners are aware of the other’s desires to use or not to use condoms. Research has found that perceptions of partner attitudes towards condoms predicts condom use (Pallonen, Timpson, Williams, & Ross, 2009). If the participants in the current study were basing their perceptions of their partner’s condom use desires on past patterns of sexual interactions rather than their gender, then this could explain why there was no gender interaction for romantic relationships.

In contrast, in casual relationship contexts, patterns of negotiating condom use and communication about condom use desires may still be developing. In such cases, individuals may rely on their partner’s gender as an indicator of their condom use desires rather than on their previous indications of their desires to use condoms. Thus, in casual relationships the link between power and condom use would be more dependent upon one’s partner’s gender than in romantic relationships. Gender does appear to play an important role in linking power and condom use in casual relationships and supports the notion that condom use may be determined by exchange processes. Specifically, if condom use is perceived as something of value to women, but not men, then this would explain why greater power predicted more condom use among women, but not men. However, this conclusion should be interpreted with caution due to the small number of men in the sample.

The results also add to the small area of research examining the link between power and pressured sex. It was predicted that women with less power would have
more pressured sex. However, the link between power and pressured sex did not reach significance for women. No predictions were made about how power would relate to unwanted sex among men, but it was found that men with greater power had more pressured sex in both romantic and casual relationship contexts. There is evidence to suggest that many men report experiencing unwanted sex (Muehlenhard & Cook, 1988; Vannier & O'Sullivan, in press), however little is known about the predictors of unwanted sex. The present study makes a valuable contribution to our understanding of the predictors of unwanted sex among men. There are at least three possible explanations regarding why men with more power had more pressured sex. First, the direction of effects may be worth considering, with the experience of pressured sex potentially leading to more power. To elaborate, it is possible that men are making assumptions about the amount of power they hold in relationships based on whether their partners pressure them for sex. If a man has a female partner who pressures him to have sex, he may assume that she has a high emotional investment in the relationship, and perhaps more so than he does. This would lead to an emotional investment discrepancy score indicating that the man had greater power. Future research could use data from both partners to investigate the intriguing possibility that women who pressure their male partners for sex are not as emotionally invested as their male partners assume, and that their sexual initiative is simply motivated by greater desire for sex, rather than a desire to be emotionally intimate with their partners.

It is also possible that the direction of the relationship between power and pressured sex works in the opposite direction for men: having greater power leads men to be pressured by their female partners for sex. This explanation is consistent with Baumeister and Voh’s (2004) contention that sex is a resource that women give
to men. In relationships where the man is more powerful, the woman is by definition less powerful, or more invested in the relationship than her partner. If a woman believes that her partner is less emotionally invested in the relationship than she is, she may offer sex as a way to increase the rewards that her partner finds in the relationship. This may take the form of the woman pressuring the man to have sex with her. Future research should investigate this possibility from the woman’s perspective, and ideally use both members of couples to determine whether women with less power initiate sex more often and whether such initiations are perceived as pressure by the male partner, and also the female partner.

A third explanation of the link between power and pressured sex for men is based on findings from the attachment literature. Gentzler and Kerns (2004) investigated the relationship between adult attachment style and men’s experiences of unwanted sex. They found that avoidant attachment, characterised by being less intimate in romantic relationships, was related to a greater number of unwanted sexual experiences for men. Thus, avoidant men may be likely to report lower emotional investment in relationships, which would contribute to a higher emotional investment discrepancy, or power score. Gentzler and Kerns suggested that avoidant men may have sex when they are pressured by their partners in an attempt to avoid an in-depth discussion about why they do not want to be sexually intimate. In other words, avoidant men may have sex when pressured by their partner in order to avoid an argument.

One final point of interest from the results regarding pressured sex relates to the experiences of those who were less powerful than their partners. Specifically, of those with less power, men appeared to have less pressured sex than women. This may be explained by the finding that being female was associated with having more
pressed sex than men in general, and therefore it would be expected that women with less power would have more pressured sex. It is also possible that compared to men with more power, men with less power could be more emotionally invested in their relationships. When men have a high level of emotional investment, they may take every opportunity to be intimate with their partner, and so there may be few occasions where men feel a degree of resistance to their partner’s initiations of sexual activity.

**Limitations and Directions for Future Research**

A number of limitations must be kept in mind when interpreting these findings. First, the direction of effects can not be determined from the present study. To determine whether power prospectively predicts pressured sex, future research could use alternative methods of data collection, such as a diary method to determine whether having more power leads to pressured sex, or whether the reverse is true.

A second limitation is regarding the small number of male participants in casual relationships. For pressured sex, the same pattern emerged in men’s casual relationships as in their romantic relationships and so, even if the sample of male casual relationships was larger, it is possible that more power would predict more pressured sex among men. For condom use, the power by gender interaction was not significant in romantic relationships, but was in casual relationships. Future research should investigate whether this finding is replicated in a larger male sample, when more statistical power would be available.

Future research could also adopt alternative methods of measuring power. This study used discrepancy scores, which has the benefit of emphasizing the imbalance of power in relationships. Discrepancy scores have been used widely in studies looking at power and emotional investment discrepancy (Tschann et al.,
2002) and have found significant results. Additionally, other researchers simply ask participants to rate on a scale whether they are more involved in the relationship, or if their partner is more involved (Felmlee, 1994; Sprecher & Felmlee, 1997; Sprecher et al., 2006). Both of these methods mean that those with similar levels of emotional investment (balanced power) are given the same score, whether the couple has low or high total emotional investment. Therefore, the use of discrepancy scores limits our understanding of how couples with partners who are both high in investment differ from couples with partners who are both low in investment. Future research could divide participants into groups: couples with both partners with high investment, couples with both partners with low investment, and couples with partners who are unequally invested.

Finally, the current study used social exchange theory to guide the interpretation of the interaction of power with gender. Emotional intimacy and sex were framed as resources that were traded between partners. However, not all aspects of social exchange theory were included in this study. Namely, no attention was given to comparison levels and comparison levels of alternatives (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). Future research may usefully consider these elements of relationships and the association with sexual behaviour.

Conclusions

The current research makes an important contribution to the area of research on power and sexual behaviour. Little is known about how power relates to unwanted sex, especially among men, and even less is known about men’s experiences in casual relationships. There is evidence to suggest that potential power, as measured by participants’ emotional investment discrepancy, predicts sexual experiences for young adults. Individuals with less power may look to the
sexual aspect of their relationship as a way to increase the rewards that their partner is receiving from the relationship, and thus restore balance. In some cases, this may take the form of forgoing condom use, or pressuring their partners for sex. It also appears that the link between power and sexual experiences may depend on what we expect men and women to value. Specifically, the results shed light on the meanings that condom use and sex have for men and women. In particular, that sex may be seen as something that women give to men, and at least in casual relationships, condom use as something that men give to women.
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CHAPTER SEVEN: GENERAL DISCUSSION

Young adulthood is a developmental stage in which one of the main tasks is to form intimate romantic relationships. The findings of this thesis clearly suggest that young adults had relationship consequences in mind when negotiating sexual behaviour with their partners. This conclusion is based on evidence that the sexual behaviour of young adults was significantly linked to their romantic views, including the way they thought about relationships and thought about their partners. Romantic views, or the expectations that individuals held of their partners, were explored through expectations of rejection, expectations of partner investment in relationships, and gendered expectations about whether partners wanted to use condoms. Interpersonal concerns were associated with the way individuals negotiated their sexual encounters including negotiations about when sex occurs and negotiations about condom use. Furthermore, the results show that romantic views were relevant to casual as well as romantic relationship contexts.

The importance of romantic views was supported through four studies, with each study adding a key piece to the overall model. In the first study, rejection sensitivity was found to predict less frequent condom use and more frequent pressured and expected sex. In the second study, rejection sensitivity was found to predict condom use in some contexts, but not others, depending on whether individuals thought their partners agreed or disagreed with their preferences for condom use. This thread was explored further in Study 3, in which the expectations that individuals held regarding their partners’ desires to use condoms were associated with the gender of their partners. Finally, holding greater power in the relationship was linked to getting one’s way with condom use, and for men, to
experiencing more pressured sex (Study 4). The common thread to all studies was that romantic views were linked to the sexual behaviour of young adults.

From these results, it can be seen that the model proposed in Chapter 1 (shown below) was generally supported. Significant links between the relationship constructs under investigation and sexual compliance were found. In particular, rejection sensitivity was demonstrated to predict young adult sexual compliance in terms of both condom use and pressured sex, in romantic and casual relationship contexts. Gender was found to play an important role in the model, consistent with the idea that gender shapes sexual behaviour (Amaro, 1995). Interestingly, gender was found to relate to young adults’ perceptions of their partner’s desires to use condoms and to predict significantly different sexual experiences for powerful men and powerful women in relationships. Collectively, these findings demonstrate that the five constructs on the left of the model predict sexual compliance in romantic and casual relationship contexts.

**Figure 1. The relationship context of sexual behaviour model as applied to romantic and casual relationship contexts.**
The examination of the interface between romantic views and sexual behaviour provides a unique contribution to the literature. It is a common view that young adults engaging in unsafe sexual practices are reckless youth (Schwartz, 2006), and their behaviour has been examined within a broader realm of risk-taking behaviour (Moore & Rosenthal, 2006). While condom nonuse can of course be accurately conceptualized this way, the result may be that one of the most important factors guiding behaviour has been overlooked: the relationship context. Human beings are fundamentally social beings whose behaviour is often driven by a need to belong and to have connections with other individuals (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). The need to be close to others also appears to be important when predicting unwanted sex. It seems that young adults considered factors other than their own level of sexual desire, or health, when engaging in sex with a partner. Thus, this thesis provides a multifaceted examination of the relationship context of young adults’ sexual behaviour.

Because the findings of each of the individual studies of this thesis have been summarized and discussed in earlier chapters, the following discussion focuses on the broader lessons from the combined results. Specifically, this discussion examines the general contributions that this thesis has made to our understanding of rejection sensitivity, gender, power and the relationship context of sexual compliance. In conjunction with discussing the broader lessons of this thesis, the potential implications that the findings have for theory development in the area of interpersonal behaviour are explored. This thesis also has a number of practical implications, both for sexual health initiatives and for work with couples. These practical implications are considered to highlight the importance of the findings of this thesis in informing clinical work with young adults.
Theoretical Implications

Rejection sensitivity

One of the major contributions that this thesis makes to our understanding of rejection sensitivity is insight into the moderating variable of relationship importance. This thesis investigated sexual compliance among single young adults and explored links to fears of rejection. It was found that fears of rejection predicted more pressured sex, more expected sex and reduced odds of condom use among single young adults. While the results were supportive of Downey, Bonica, and Rincon’s (1999) model of rejection sensitivity wherein those with greater fears of rejection would be more sexually compliant, the results did not support the hypothesis that compliance would be highest among those who over-invested in relationships. Rather, fears of rejection significantly predicted more pressured sex among those with a low level of relationship investment. This would suggest that rejection sensitivity interacts with relationship investment in a way contrary to what was predicted by Downey and colleagues. Thus, the notion that rejection-sensitive individuals who are highly invested in relationships are compliant may not apply. Rather, rejection-sensitive individuals who are less invested in relationships appear to be more compliant.

A number of reasons for this unexpected finding were explored. First, it is likely that individuals who placed a low importance on relationships shared similarities with fearfully attached individuals (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991) who avoid intimacy in close relationships. Fearfully attached individuals have been found to score higher on measures of compliance (Gudjonsson, Sigurdsson, Lydsdottir, & Olafsdottir, 2008), and to avoid conflict in relationships to prevent rejection (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). As such, they may be more vulnerable
to a partner’s pressure than those who are afraid of rejection but demand that their 
partners meet their needs. Second, rejection-sensitive individuals who place a high 
importance on relationships may more readily engage in intercourse with partners as 
a way of fostering much-desired intimacy. For these individuals, their partner’s 
sexual initiatives may be desired rather than unwanted. In contrast, rejection-
sensitive individuals who place a low value on relationships may have less desire to 
be sexually intimate with a partner, and thus their partner’s sexual advances may be 
interpreted as unwanted pressure. Such individuals may comply with partner 
pressure due to fears that their partner will otherwise leave them.

A second contribution that this thesis makes to our understanding of the 
construct of rejection sensitivity is the demonstration of the importance of contextual 
factors. This thesis found that rejection sensitivity was linked to compliant condom 
use. This investigation found further, that rejection sensitivity was linked to condom 
use in situations in which the negotiation of condom use was likely to produce 
conflict, i.e., when individual condom use desires were incongruent with the condom 
use desires young adults thought their partners held.

The variability of the behaviour of rejection-sensitive young adults across 
relationship contexts has theoretical implications for the literature. The importance 
of considering contextual factors has long been argued by Bronfenbrenner and 
colleagues (Bronfenbrenner, 1995; Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 1995; Bronfenbrenner 
& Morris, 1998), and the findings of this thesis certainly support that argument. 
Bronfenbrenner also stressed the importance of including the interaction between 
process, person and contextual variables (Bronfenbrenner, 1995; Bronfenbrenner & 
Evans, 1995). In this thesis, characteristics of the person (rejection sensitivity) 
interacted with process variables (perceived exchanges between partners regarding
condom use desire), within casual and romantic relationship contexts, to predict sexual behaviour. Although the final component of time was not included to complete the process-person-context-time (PPCT) model (Bronfenbrenner, 1995), the findings support the PPCT model.

The demonstrated importance of contextual factors in this thesis was also supportive of the assertion by Mischel and Shoda (1995) that the situational context must be taken into account when examining the link between personality traits and behaviour. In this case, the link between rejection sensitivity and behaviour was evident when there was a chance of rejection, consistent with the predictions of Downey and colleagues (1999). Taking the context into consideration meant that links between rejection sensitivity and condom use were uncovered that would otherwise have remained unknown. Thus, this thesis supports a number of theoretical models that emphasise the importance of taking the context into account when examining the link between individual traits and behaviour.

The variability of the behaviour of rejection-sensitive young adults between relationship contexts also contributes to our understanding of the complex interpersonal circumstances that may lead individuals to comply with their partners’ desires. This thesis demonstrated that individual factors related to sexual compliance were more central in predicting condom use in some relationship contexts than in others. For example, rejection sensitivity predicted condom use when individuals expected that their partners disagreed with them about condom use, but not when they perceived their partners to agree with their condom use desires. Therefore, rejection sensitivity only predicted condom use when young adults perceived opposing condom use desires, which perhaps indicated that a conflict about condom use was possible. This suggests that individuals consider the implications that
condom use could have on their relationships. Additionally, the variation in the
behaviour of rejection-sensitive individuals across contexts highlights natural
variation in human behaviour. It demonstrates that young adults understandably
adjust their behaviour to the situation they are in. Indeed, it is this very nature of
variability in behaviour that makes us all human.

Gender

Another major construct considered in this thesis was gender. Gender was
expected to be important in shaping young adults’ romantic views of their partners,
especially those desires they thought their partners held in regards to sex and
condom use. Women in particular were doubtful about their partners’ enthusiasm for
condom use. It was found that a disproportionate number of women wanted to use
condoms more than they thought their partners did. This raised the question of
whether the perceptions women held about men wanting to use condoms less
frequently than themselves are accurate. Many scholars have argued that gender is a
highly influential factor that shapes sexual behaviour (Amaro, 1995; Gagnon &
Simon, 1973; Moore & Rosenthal, 2006). This thesis found that women expected
their male partners to want to use condoms less often than women did themselves.
However, male participants reported wanting to use condoms at the same frequency
at which women did; and moreover, male participants reported wanting to use
condoms more often than the frequency at which female participants thought their
male partners wanted to.

These results suggested that many women hold the expectation that men
don’t want to use condoms. Such results are consistent with the viewpoint of
Campbell (1995) that men are expected to be the less responsible party when it
comes to birth control, and are less interested in using protection than women.
However, the results of the present inquiry go further to suggest that the assumptions that women make about men may be inaccurate. These results are consistent with the study by Kelly and Bazzini (2001) who found that whilst women expected a male character in the hypothetical scenario to react negatively towards his partner’s initiation of condom use, men did not expect the male character to respond so negatively.

*Power*

The examination of romantic views in this thesis was also extended to emotional intimacy power in romantic and casual relationship contexts. It was argued that the level of power in relationships was determined by the balance between two factors: an individual’s own level of emotional investment in the relationship, and an individual’s perception of how invested one’s partner was in the relationship. The findings of this thesis were consistent with previous literature stating that those who are the most emotionally invested in (Sprecher, Schmeckle, & Felmlee, 2006; Waller & Hill, 1951), or most dependent (Emerson, 1962) upon their partners are the least powerful. These findings also demonstrate the importance of potential power (Bacharach & Lawler, 1981) in romantic and casual relationship contexts. In support of the general argument of this thesis that young adults have relationship consequences in mind when negotiating sex, emotional intimacy power was shown to predict sexual behaviour. This suggests that the perceived discrepancy between young adults’ emotional investment acted as a source of power in relationships.

Power predicted condom use and experiences of pressured sex differently depending on the gender of the individual. Specifically, for men but not women, having greater power predicted experiencing more frequent pressured sex in both
romantic and casual relationship contexts. Additionally, in casual relationships, women with more power used condoms more frequently whereas men did not. Social exchange theory was used to explain the reasons why potential power was often associated with different sexual experiences of men and women. It was argued that when young adults feel they are receiving more rewards from the relationship than their partner (i.e. they are more emotionally invested and less powerful), they would take steps to ensure that the less invested partner is receiving more rewards (Sprecher & Schwartz, 1994). Guided by societal messages that men value sex more than women (Baumeister & Vohs, 2004; Leiblum, 2002), it appeared that less powerful women pressured their male partners to have sex as a way to ‘give’ a resource of value to their partners. Similarly, less powerful men in casual relationship contexts appeared to be ‘giving’ protected sex to their female partners, consistent with the societal message that women value protected sex more than men.

The link between gender and power also differed by relationship context when predicting condom use, which again highlights the importance of considering contextual factors when predicting behaviour (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000; Mischel & Shoda, 1995). Gender did not moderate the relationship between power and condom use in romantic relationships. However, in casual relationships, gender did moderate the link between power and condom use. This finding may shed some light on the differences between negotiating condom use in each context. It is possible that in situations where the couple has been negotiating condom use for some time, expectations about a partner’s desires to use condoms could be based on past condom use behaviour or conversations about condom use. For example, an individual may know the romantic partner’s condom use preferences as he or she had spoken to that partner about the issue before, or had made assumptions based on
usual condom use behaviour. In contrast, individuals in casual relationship contexts may not have such information on which to base assumptions about their partners’ condom use desires. In such contexts, young adults may make estimations of their partner’s desires to use condoms based on other information such as the partner’s gender. If gender plays a more important role in casual relationship contexts, then this would explain why gender moderated the link between power and condom use in casual, but not in romantic relationship contexts.

**Relationship Type**

Although there were sometimes differences between romantic and casual relationships in the four studies, generally the way young adults thought about relationships predicted their condom use behaviour and experiences of pressured and expected sex in both relationship contexts. These findings suggest that individuals engaging in casual sex are not as removed from the relationship context as the term would suggest. Indeed, individuals in casual relationships, and especially those who feared rejection, appeared to consider the relationship when making decisions about their sexual behaviour. This was despite the fact that these individuals did not consider themselves to be in an official relationship with their partner. This conclusion is consistent with qualitative research finding that young adults engage in casual sex in the hope of finding love (Rosenthal, Gifford, & Moore, 1998). It is therefore apparent that romantic views are relevant to the sexual behaviour of individuals across a variety of relationship contexts. Focusing on single young adults is not common in research on sexual behaviour and romantic views, and so these findings contribute to the closing of a gap in the literature. This thesis supports the notion that romantic views are relevant to sexual behaviour in both romantic and casual relationship contexts.
Clinical Implications

The findings of this thesis have practical implications for both safe sex campaigns and clinical work with individuals and couples. Of all the chapters in this thesis, Study 3 seems to lend itself to being the most valuable to safe sex programs and campaigns. If women expect that their male partners do not wish to use condoms, negotiating condom use becomes understandably intimidating and difficult. If safe sex campaigns highlighted the idea that men wanted to use condoms as often as women did, women could enter sexual negotiations with the view that their partner is likely to be someone to work with towards ensuring protection, rather than an obstacle to overcome, or an adversary to convince. Of course, from the results, it could also be argued that women want to use condoms less often than men expect. Whilst this may be true, the finding appears unlikely to be beneficial to safe sex promotion efforts and may be harmful.

The practical relevance of Study 2 is particularly compelling when viewed in conjunction with Study 3. In Study 2, it was found that rejection sensitivity predicted condom use when participants’ condom use desires were at odds with the desires they thought their partners held. Specifically, in the “Participant Wants” group, individuals wanted to use condoms more than they thought their partners did, and complied to their partners’ perceived desires if they were more rejection-sensitive. The word relevant to intervention efforts in that sentence is perceived. Study 2 found that more women than expected were found in the “Participant Wants” group. It is possible that women belonging to the “Participant Wants” group held inaccurate perceptions about how often their partners wanted to use condoms. In particular, women belonging to the “Participant Wants” group believed their male partners
wanted to use condoms less than half of the time, whereas in reality their partners may actually have wanted to use condoms more than half of the time.

The possibility that partners want to use condoms more often than expected is particularly relevant to rejection-sensitive individuals. When faced with the dilemma of a partner not wanting to use a condom, the idea of having to negotiate condom use, or convince one’s partner to use a condom, is likely to be an anxiety-provoking task for a rejection sensitive individual. Furthermore, the degree of anxiety and fear raised may be enough that the individual may not raise the issue of condom use, and in effect, may ‘go with the flow.’ However, if individuals, and women in particular, are informed that their partners are likely to want to use condoms as often as they themselves do, then the prospect of negotiating condom use is unlikely to raise the same amount of anxiety, because the individual would be expecting their partner to be in agreement, rather than in opposition.

Studies 2 and 3, which focused on gender, have practical implications for working with couples. This thesis showed that individuals made assumptions about their partners’ preferences for condom use, and those assumptions were linked to the partner’s gender. Specifically, Study 3 suggested that individuals may make assumptions about whether their partners want to have sex based on their partner’s gender. However, if such assumptions are based on gender, individuals could be making assumptions about their partners’ desires for sex and condom use that are inaccurate. The results of this thesis are consistent with Miller and Byers (2004) who found that individuals make assumptions about their partners based on their partner’s gender in regards to the preferred duration of sex. Gendered expectations may be particularly important when working with sexual difficulties. Holding gendered expectations may prevent clients, and even therapists, from enquiring into
individual’s sexual preferences based on generalizations about what men and women want.

It is also possible that gendered expectations about partners extend to areas outside the sexual realm. For example, it is generally thought that women see relationships as being more important to their lives than do men (Cross & Madson, 1997). This assumption may then result in women believing that they are more invested in their relationships than their male partners, and thus holding less power in the relationship. However, if men are in fact more invested in the relationship than women expect, women may hold more power than they realise. Therefore, the implications of the results of this thesis could be extended to other areas of interpersonal cognition or behaviour, and individuals or couples in therapy could be encouraged to be aware of the assumptions they make about their partners based on gender, and to question whether these assumptions are accurate.

The results of the current thesis also have clinical implications for working with individuals who are rejection-sensitive. There is substantial evidence from this thesis that those who are rejection-sensitive comply with their partners’ perceived sexual desires. The link between rejection sensitivity and sexual compliance is also likely to apply to compliance in other areas of negotiation between partners. For example, compliance may be linked to sacrifice in romantic relationships, or willingness to forgo one’s own need for the benefit of one’s partner (Van Lange et al., 1997). In some cases, compliance may be seen as a form of sacrifice for one’s partner and may benefit relationships (Rusbult & Buunk, 1993). However, when sacrifice is seen as being harmful to oneself, the outcome may not be so favourable, with demonstrated links to lowered relationship functioning and greater depressive symptomology (Whitton, Stanley, & Markman, 2007). Rejection sensitivity has also
been linked to other undesirable outcomes, such as hostility and negative conflict
behaviour (Ayduk, Downey, Testa, Yen, & Shoda, 1999; Downey & Feldman,
2004). If rejection sensitivity is contributing to undesirable outcomes for
individuals, the findings are relevant for therapists working with couples, in which at
least one partner is rejection-sensitive. In particular, therapists could work to
minimize rejection sensitivity in individuals in order to decrease hostility and
compliance, and increase relationship satisfaction.

The link between rejection sensitivity and pressured sex that was found in
this thesis has clinical implications for young adults negotiating sex with their
partners. Firstly, it is important to ask young adults about their reasons for engaging
in unwanted sex. For example, engaging in sex for avoidance motives, such as
preventing one’s partner from getting angry or losing interest, has been linked to
negative emotions, relationship conflict and reduced relationship satisfaction (Impett,
Peplau, & Gable, 2005). In contrast, having sex for approach motives, such as to
please one’s partner and produce intimacy, was linked to more positive emotions and
greater relationship wellbeing. Therefore, when working with young people, it
appears important to explore their reasons for having sex. If young people report
avoidance motives, this may indicate to clinicians the potential for the existence of
negative emotional and relationship experiences.

**Limitations**

There were a number of limitations in this thesis that should be addressed.
Firstly, in Study 1, it would have been ideal to compare single participants to
partnered participants; but the analysis was based only on single participants. This
limitation arose because the analyses were conducted on a pre-existing dataset and
thus, there were some restrictions inherent in the sample and measures used.
Examining the sexual behaviour of single individuals is an important area of research, and because many studies focus on romantic relationships, or do not take relationship status into account, focusing on single participants fills a gap in past research. However, it was unknown who the partners of the participants were, and it was possible that single participants’ reported sexual behaviour were based on recollections that occurred in a variety of relationship contexts. For example, it is possible that some young adults were responding to the questionnaire with a previous romantic relationship partner in mind.

Another limitation related to Study 1, and indeed to all research using continuous measures of relationship views, is related to dichotomizing participants into groups. In this study, participants were split into three groups based on the importance respondents placed on relationships (low, medium and high). However, the mean level of relationship importance across samples of participants may vary substantially. This may be especially true when comparing individuals who are single versus partnered or even individuals of different age groups. For example, if single individuals place less importance on relationships than partnered individuals, it is possible that ‘high relationship investment’ individuals in a study of single participants are similar to ‘low relationship investment’ individuals in romantic relationships. The same principles can be applied to dichotomizing rejection sensitivity in groups of single and partnered individuals. Thus this limitation applies to many areas of research that split participants into ‘high’ and ‘low’ groups without having any normative data to inform how the participants would compare to a larger population.

One limitation that was identified in Study 1 and rectified in the subsequent studies was the way that condom use was measured. The research question for this
thesis was concerned with sexual compliance. By just measuring condom use on its
own, it could not be determined whether the behaviour was compliant, or simply
consistent with the individual’s own desires. In the subsequent chapters, condom use
desire was also measured to enable sexual compliance to be more accurately
measured. Although some past research has taken this approach (Tschann, Adler,
Millstein, Gurvey, & Ellen, 2002; Wang, Wang, & Hsu, 2007), this is not common,
and thus the consideration of condom use desires in Studies 2, 3, and 4 is a strength
of this thesis.

The way that relationship types were measured in this thesis had benefits, but
also limitations. Given that relationship type is often overlooked in studies on sexual
behaviour, the attention to romantic and casual relationships was certainly warranted.
It was also a strength of this thesis that a broad range of casual relationship types
were examined. Unfortunately, few males in casual relationships responded to the
survey and so the findings may not generalise well to this particular subgroup. The
results are still valuable however, given the lack of attention to non-romantic sexual
encounters in the literature. Past research has identified a variety of casual
relationships whereby sexual behaviour occurs outside of a traditional relationship,
but is not considered to be a ‘one-night stand’. These include ‘bed buddies’ and
‘friends with benefits’ relationships (Ellen, Cahn, Eyre, & Boyer, 1996; Furman &
Hand, 2006; Giordano, Manning, & Longmore, 2006; Hughes, Morrison, & Asada,
2005). Thus, the online survey used in this thesis asked participants about not only
one-night stands, but also sex with a friend, sex with ex-romantic relationship
partners, and sex within ‘unofficial’ casual relationship contexts. The latter three
relationship types are important to study because although they are not characterized
by sexual exclusivity, they are characterized by a high level of familiarity between
the partners which may facilitate the impression that the ‘relationship’ is safe enough to forgo condom use (Giordano et al., 2006). Therefore, attention to a variety of non-romantic sexual relationships was given. However, it is not known whether the specific definitions that were presented to participants in the current research excluded some types of casual relationships.

Finally, the measurement of unwanted consensual sex could have been clearer. Study 1 examined having sex due to feeling pressured or feeling that sexual activity was expected, and Study 4 used the same measure of pressured sex. The measure asked participants to rate on a scale of 1 to 5 how frequently they had sex because they were pressured into it. The measure was intended to ascertain how often participants voluntarily had sex with their partners mainly because the partner wanted to, rather than because the participant wanted it. However, the measure did not specify from whom this pressure was experienced. Although it can be expected that most participants would interpret this question to mean pressure from their partner (and indeed, the participants were instructed to answer the items with their partner in mind), some participants may have interpreted the item as meaning internal pressure from themselves, or even external pressure from friends or society. Future research could address this limitation by specifying the sources from which young adults perceive pressure. Additionally, one-item measures were used for condom use and pressured sex, which is less than desirable. However, significant results were obtained. If anything, measurement weakness should bias against significant results; therefore, this limitation should not detract from the importance of the findings of this thesis.
Future Research

Although this thesis has answered many questions, inevitably, it has also raised questions for future research. These include examining in greater detail the role that gender may play in forming expectations of our partners and building on the methodological approach of this thesis by using couples to gain an understanding of the perspectives of both partners negotiating sexual encounters. Additionally, future research could investigate the nature of the links between romantic views to further our understanding of the complexities of the romantic views that individuals hold, and links to interpersonal behaviour.

This thesis investigated the moderating role of relationship investment on the link between rejection fears and pressured sex, and found evidence that the interaction between romantic views had an impact on behaviour. There was also correlational evidence to support a link between rejection sensitivity and power, with those who were more rejection-sensitive holding less emotional intimacy power (Appendix C). Although it was beyond the scope of this thesis, the relationship between rejection sensitivity and power appears to be an interesting question for future research. For example, perhaps the link between rejection sensitivity and sexual compliance could be explained by rejection-sensitive individuals having less power in their relationships and thus power could play a mediating role in the link between rejection sensitivity and sexual compliance. It would also be of interest to investigate the reasons why rejection-sensitive individuals perceive themselves as having less power. Since they perceive a discrepancy between their own and their partner’s investment in a relationship, rejection-sensitive individuals could either be more invested in relationships than most people, or they may see their partners as being much less invested in the relationship than they actually are.
Future research could also extend our understanding of the role of gender in shaping romantic views. This thesis revealed some interesting links suggesting that gender plays an important role in the formation of the expectations that individuals hold of their partners. These links were found in regards to the expectations individuals held regarding their partner’s desires to use condoms, and the manifestations of power in relationships that suggested that condom use and sex have different meanings for men and women. Future research could extend this line of inquiry by taking into account the gender role expectations that people hold, both in terms of whether they expect men and women to comply with traditional gender roles, and in particular, whether individuals expect men and women to comply with traditional gender roles in sexual encounters. It could be that adherence to traditional gender roles could play a moderating role in the link between power and sexual behaviour for men and women.

It would also be informative for future research to use both members of couples to investigate the relationship context of sexual behaviour. This thesis focused on individuals’ perceptions of their partners. Although it can be argued that it is the perceptions of their partners that are of the most importance to behaviour, intervention efforts in particular could benefit if more information were available on the accuracy of individuals’ partner perceptions. For example, in Study 3, it was suggested that women may have underestimated their partners’ desires to use condoms. As there was no data on the women’s partners’ condom use desires, we could not test the accuracy of their perceptions.

Additionally, studies investigating the link between power and pressured sex in relationships could benefit from having data from both couples to determine whether the same act of intercourse is perceived to be pressured by both partners.
Also of interest would be determining whether one partner desired sex as often, or with as much intensity as the other partner expects. Similar work using couples has been completed by Miller and Byers (2004) who found that the perceptions of how long women thought their male partners wanted to engage in foreplay were more closely linked to women’s stereotyped expectations of men, rather than their partners’ actual desires. Similar patterns could emerge with regards to the frequency of sex and condom use.

**Concluding Remarks**

In summary, romantic views were found to link to the sexual behaviour of young adults in romantic and casual relationship contexts. The results highlight the need to consider the multiple interpersonal implications of sexual behaviour. Interpersonal concerns were found to guide sexual behaviour, with young adult expectations about partners relating to both condom use and engaging in unwanted sex. Young adults’ concerns, or lack thereof, about health has often been examined as an important factor when predicting unsafe sexual behaviour. However, this thesis presents strong evidence that interpersonal concerns are also important when negotiating sex in both romantic and casual relationship contexts. In particular, the romantic views that individuals hold play a role in how they negotiate condom use and whether they engage in pressured or expected sex. The romantic views included fears of rejection, expectations about whether partners wanted to use condoms, and expectations about whether their partners were invested in the relationship. It was demonstrated that, guided by these romantic views, it was demonstrated that young adults across a variety of relationship contexts considered the relationship implications of their behaviour, and made decisions about sex and condom use based on the relationship context of sexual behaviour.
When examining factors that predict human behaviour, it is important to consider factors that are likely to be of concern to individuals engaging in the behaviour, rather than factors that we think individuals *should* be concerned about. In the case of sexual behaviour, it is unlikely that health consequences are of immediate concern to young adults, and rather relationship factors are likely to be of higher importance. As Baumeister and Leary (1995) pointed out, the need to belong is one of the most fundamental of human needs, and this thesis has certainly supported this notion. Understandably, the relationships in which young adults are involved, together with their romantic views, act as guiding factors that shape sexual behaviour.
References


Appendix A consists of selected MSALT items
THIS SECTION (PAGES 2 TO 14) IS FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT MARRIED, LIVING TOGETHER, OR INVOLVED IN A COMMITED RELATIONSHIP.

How old were you when you first began to date or go out with people? _______ years old

In the past four weeks, how often have you been going out or dating? (CHECK ONE)

____ every day
____ almost every day
____ once or twice a week
____ once or twice in the past four weeks
____ not at all

Has this been more or less than usual? (CIRCLE ONE)

A lot less About the same A lot more
1 2 3 4 5

Has this been a lot more or less than you would like?

A lot less About The same A lot more
1 2 3 4 5

In the past four weeks, how many different people have you gone out with? (CHECK ONE)

____ None
____ One person
____ Mainly one person but others as well
____ A number of persons

How many people do you usually date at one time?

____ None
____ One person
____ Mainly one person but others as well
____ A number of persons

How satisfied are you with your dating life? (CIRCLE ONE)

Not at all satisfied Very satisfied
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

How important is it to you to date regularly?

Not at all important Very important
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

How important is it to you to be involved in a steady, committed relationship with one person?

Not at all important Very important
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

How do you feel about not being involved in a steady, committed relationship with one person?

Very unhappy Very happy
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
### A. ATTITUDES ABOUT SERIOUS, COMMITTED RELATIONSHIPS

*For this set of questions, please use the following scale: (WRITE A NUMBER ON THE LINE FOR EACH ITEM)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not at all important</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>Very important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

You have told us you are not in a serious relationship with one person. How important are the following reasons for your not being in a serious relationship right now?

1. **I want to date a variety of people**
2. **I am afraid of getting hurt**
3. **I want to be independent**
4. **Relationships are too much work**
5. **I don't want to lose control of my free time**
6. **I'm having a hard time meeting people**
7. **I don't want the responsibility involved in commitment**
8. **I want to be alone**
9. **Commitments never last**
10. **Relationships are too expensive**
11. **I have had bad experiences in relationships**
12. **Relationships are a hassle**
13. **I have witnessed too many bad relationships**
14. **I don't enjoy sex**
15. **I'm not attracted to people who are attracted to me**
16. **One person is not enough to satisfy me**
17. **I'm not ready to settle down**
18. **I'm scared of dating**
19. **I have not found anyone who interests me**
20. **Relationships never work anyway**
21. **My parents had a bad relationship and I don't want to repeat their mistakes**
22. **I'm too shy**
23. **I don't have time for someone right now**
24. **It is too hard to meet good people**
25. **My education or career is too important to make sacrifices for a relationship**
26. **I don't want anyone to be dependent on me**
27. **Dating is more fun than committed relationships**
28. **I am not willing to compromise in order to meet someone else's demands**
29. **I don't know anyone I'd want to have a relationship with**
How often do you have sex for the following reasons?: (CHECK ONE FOR EACH ITEM)

How often does it happen because you are forced into it?  

never  ___  about 3/4 of the time  [24630]  
once in a while  ___  almost always  
about half the time  ___  always  

How often does it happen because you are pressured into it?  

never  ___  about 3/4 of the time  [24631]  
once in a while  ___  almost always  
about half the time  ___  always  

How often does it happen because you want it to happen?  

never  ___  about 3/4 of the time  [24632]  
once in a while  ___  almost always  
about half the time  ___  always  

How often does it happen because it is expected of you?  

never  ___  about 3/4 of the time  [24633]  
once in a while  ___  almost always  
about half the time  ___  always  

How often does it happen because you plan for it to happen?  [24634]  

never  ___  about 3/4 of the time  
once in a while  ___  almost always  
about half the time  ___  always  

How often does it just happen?  [24635]  

never  ___  about 3/4 of the time  
once in a while  ___  almost always  
about half the time  ___  always  

The last time you had sex, what birth control method(s) did you use?

124 636 11:23 Pill  
124 637 11:24 Condom or rubber  
124 638 11:25 Withdrawal, pulling out  
124 639 11:26 Foam, jelly or cream only  
124 640 11:27 Rhythm or safe period by calendar  
124 641 11:28 Sponge, suppository or insert  
124 642 11:29 Diaphragm with jelly or cream  
124 643 11:30 Douching after intercourse  
124 644 11:31 IUD, coil, loop  
124 645 11:32 Operation—female sterilization  
124 646 11:33 Operation—male sterilization  
124 647 11:34 Something else? (SPECIFY):  

__________________________
The online survey, as presented to Murdoch University students appears in Appendix B. The number of participants who responded to the survey was 1144, which resulted in a response rate of 15.3% based on university enrolment numbers at the time of data collection. The survey was constructed in such a way that participants skipped sections depending upon their relationship and sexual experience. The points at which participants may have either continued completing the section, or skipped to the next, are indicated by hand.
Welcome to the Sex and Relationship Survey. Please read the letter of consent and then proceed to the survey.

I am a PhD student at Murdoch University studying relationship experiences of young people under the supervision of Professor Bonnie Barber and Dr Suzanne Dziurawiec. Questions will be asked about the types of relationships you may have experienced, how you feel about relationships, how you feel about your friends, and also about your sexual experiences. The questions on sex will include whether you wanted to have sex, and whether any protection was used. You do not need to have had any sexual experience to participate in this study.

You can help in this study by completing a survey. It is expected that the time taken to complete this questionnaire will be no longer than 15 minutes. The survey contains some questions about sexual behaviour that may be considered personal and private. Please remember that you are free to skip any of the questions that you may feel uncomfortable answering. You are also free to stop completing the survey at any time if you feel uncomfortable. All responses are anonymous. The results from this study may be published, but there will be no way that the information will be able to be connected to you.

To enter the MP3 player lottery, you will be required to enter some identifying information after you have completed the survey. Please be assured that this information will be kept confidential and separate from your survey response at all times. There will be no way that the lottery information could possibly be used to identify your survey responses.

If you wish to find out about the results of the study, findings will be placed on the School of Psychology website at a later date. Follow the 'Sites of Interest' link from http://www.psychology.murdoch.edu.au/

If there are any questions you wish to ask about this study, please feel free to contact myself, Gaynor Edwards, on 9360 7382 or my supervisor, Professor Bonnie Barber on 9360 2879.

My supervisor and I are happy to discuss any concerns you have on how this study has been conducted, or you may contact Murdoch University’s Human Research Ethics Committee on 9360 6677.
The Relationship Experiences of Young People :: Informed Consent Information

Survey

The Relationship Experiences of Young People
0% [ ] 100%

Informed Consent Information

Please note that by completing the survey, you are agreeing to the following:

I have read the information on the previous page. Any questions I had about the study have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this study, however, I understand that I may change my mind and stop completing the survey at any time. I also understand that my participation is voluntary and anonymous. If I feel uncomfortable answering any questions, I may respond with "No Answer".

I understand that all the information I provide is confidential and will not be released by the investigator unless required to do so by law.

I agree that any information collected from this study may be published as long as information that may be used to identify me is not used.

*Consent to Participation
I have read the consent form, and I voluntarily consent to participate in this research study.

[Exit and Clear Survey]  Save your responses so far and logout  << prev  next >>

This survey is not currently active. You will not be able to save your responses.

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Survey

The Relationship Experiences of Young People

Part A
Background Information

Are you a guild member (financial or non-financial)?
- Yes
- No
- No answer

How old are you?
*Choose only one of the following*
- 18
- 19
- 20
- 21
- 22
- 23
- 24
- 25
- Other
- No answer

In what country were you born?

If you were not born in Australia, how long have you lived here (in years)?

*Only numbers may be entered in this field*

What is your gender?
- Female
Male
☐ No answer

What is your postcode?

What is your field of study?
Choose only one of the following
Please choose..

Do you identify primarily as?
Choose only one of the following
Please choose..

What is the highest level of education that your father has received?
Choose only one of the following
Please choose..

What is the highest level of education that your mother has received?
Choose only one of the following
Please choose..

Are your parents married/together?
Choose only one of the following
☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ One parent has passed away
☐ Both parents have passed away
☐ Other
☐ No answer

Are you an undergraduate student?
What year of your undergraduate degree are you currently completing?

Choose only one of the following

- First year
- Second year
- Third year
- Fourth year (including honours)
- Fifth year
- Sixth year
- Other
- No answer

Please note: part-timers to use full-time equivalent

This survey is not currently active. You will not be able to save your responses.

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Survey

The Relationship Experiences of Young People

Part B
Friends and Family

Please rate the following, on a scale of 1 to 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>No answer</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How satisfied are you with the</td>
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<td>support you receive from your</td>
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<td>group of friends?</td>
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<td>How close do you feel to your</td>
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<td>How lonely do you feel?</td>
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<td>(1=Not at all lonely, 6=Very lonely)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Survey

The Relationship Experiences of Young People

Part C
You and Other People

Please rate the following, on a scale of 1 to 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 - Not really true of me</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4 - Really true of me</th>
<th>No answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel that being involved in romantic relationships is important.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I find it relatively easy to get close to others</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am somewhat uncomfortable being close to others</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like to feel close to others</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that it is not important to be close to others</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[Exit and Clear Survey] Save your responses so far and logout << prev next >>

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Survey

The Relationship Experiences of Young People

0% [ ] 100%

Part D
How Others See You

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 - I am not very desirable</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5 - I am very desirable</th>
<th>No answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Generally, how desirable a romantic partner do you think you are to other people?</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generally, how desirable a casual partner do you think you are to other people?</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[Exit and Clear Survey]  
Save your responses so far and logout  
<< prev  
next >>

This survey is not currently active. You will not be able to save your responses.

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Survey

The Relationship Experiences of Young People

Part E
Interaction With Others

Each of the items below describes things university students sometimes ask of other people. Please imagine that you are in each situation. You will be asked to answer the following questions:

1. How concerned or anxious would you be about how the other person would respond?
2. How do you think the other person would be likely to respond?

You go to a party and notice someone on the other side of the room and then you ask them to dance.

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not the person would want to dance with you?

(1=Very unconcerned, 6=Very concerned)

I would expect that he/she would want to dance with me.

(1=Very unlikely, 6=Very likely)

You ask someone you don’t know well out on a date.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Person would want to go out with you?</td>
<td>1-6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1 = Very unconcerned, 6 = Very concerned)</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would expect that the person would want to go out with me</td>
<td>1-6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1 = Very unlikely, 6 = Very likely)</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You ask your boyfriend/girlfriend to move in with you.

| How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not the person would want to move in with you? | 1-6 | 9 |
| (1 = Very unconcerned, 6 = Very concerned)                                                                 |
| I would expect that he/she would want to move in with me                                                          |
| (1 = Very unlikely, 6 = Very likely)                                                                            |

Your boyfriend/girlfriend has plans to go out with friends tonight, but you really want to spend the evening with him/her, and you tell him/her so.

| How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your boyfriend/girlfriend would decide to stay in? | 1-6 | 9 |
| (1 = Very unconcerned, 6 = Very concerned)                                                                 |
| I would expect that the person would willingly choose to stay in.                                              |
| (1 = Very unlikely, 6 = Very likely)                                                                            |
### You call your boyfriend/girlfriend after a bitter argument and tell him/her you want to see him/her.

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your boyfriend/girlfriend would want to see you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
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<th>4</th>
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</table>

(1=Very unconcerned, 6=Very concerned)

I would expect that he/she would want to see me.

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<th></th>
<th>1</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

(1=Very unlikely, 6=Very likely)

---

### You ask your boyfriend/girlfriend if he/she really loves you.

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your boyfriend/girlfriend would say yes?

<table>
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<th></th>
<th>1</th>
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<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>No answer</th>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1=Very unconcerned, 6=Very concerned)

I would expect that he/she would answer yes sincerely.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>No answer</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

(1=Very unlikely, 6=Very likely)

---

[Exit and Clear Survey]  [Save your responses so far and logout]  [<< prev]  [next >>]

This survey is not currently active. You will not be able to save your responses.

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Survey

The Relationship Experiences of Young People

Part F
Relationship Types

Please note: when we refer to sex, we mean sexual intercourse.

In this part of the survey, we will ask you about different types of relationships that you may or may not have experienced during the LAST YEAR. These are:

1. **Romantic Relationships**: This is when you have had a boyfriend or girlfriend. You are both aware that you are in an actual relationship together. You may or may have not have had sex.
2. **Other Relationships**: This will include a variety of casual relationships and casual sex encounters including:
   1. A **one night stand** (sex with someone you have just met).
   2. **Sex with a friend** (you are primarily friends but also have had sex).
   3. **Sex with an ex-partner** (having sex after you have broken up).
   4. **Casual Relationships**: You have been seeing someone casually, but the relationship may not be ‘official’. You may be still seeing other people or may be unsure about where you stand with each other. You may or may not have had sex.

Think about people with whom you may have had these sorts of experiences in the last year.

Have you been in a romantic relationship?

- Yes
- No
- No answer

With how many people during the last year have you been in a romantic relationship?

*Only numbers may be entered in this field*
Survey

The Relationship Experiences of Young People

Part F
Relationship Types

⚠️ Please note: when we refer to sex, we mean sexual intercourse.

In this part of the survey, we will ask you about different types of relationships that you may or may not have experienced during the LAST YEAR. These are:

1. **Romantic Relationships**: This is when you have had a boyfriend or girlfriend. You are both aware that you are in an actual relationship together. You may or may have not have had sex.
2. **Other Relationships**: This will include a variety of casual relationships and casual sex encounters including:
   1. A one night stand (sex with someone you have just met).
   2. Sex with a friend (you are primarily friends but also have had sex).
   3. Sex with an ex-partner (having sex after you have broken up).
   4. Casual Relationships: You have been seeing someone casually, but the relationship may not be 'official'. You may be still seeing other people or may be unsure about where you stand with each other. You may or may not have had sex.

Think about people with whom you may have had these sorts of experiences in the last year.

Have you been in a romantic relationship?

- [ ] Yes → Part G
- [ ] No → Finish Part F and then to Part J
- [ ] No answer

Have you had a one night stand?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No


16/08/2007
Have you had sex with a friend?
- Yes
- No
- No answer

Have you had sex with an ex-partner?
- Yes
- No
- No answer

Have you been in a casual relationship (excluding the experiences above)?
- Yes
- No
- No answer

This survey is not currently active. You will not be able to save your responses.
Survey

The Relationship Experiences of Young People

Part G
Romantic Relationships

We will now ask you some questions about your romantic relationship experiences. Here we will refer to your boyfriend or girlfriend as your 'partner'.

Are you currently in a relationship with your partner?

Choose only one of the following

☐ No, we broke up
☐ Yes, we are still together
☐ No answer

How long did you know your partner before you began your relationship?

Please specify days, weeks, months or years.

Do you live with your partner?

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ No answer

Are you engaged to your partner?

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ No answer
Please rate the following, on a scale of 1 to 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>No answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How much do you like/love your partner? (1=Not much, 5=A lot)</td>
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<tr>
<td>How much commitment do you want in this relationship? (1=Not much, 5=A lot)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>How important is it to you to share your feelings with your partner? (1=Not important, 5=Very Important)</td>
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<tr>
<td>How important is it to you to feel close to your partner? (1=Not important, 5=Very important)</td>
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<tr>
<td>How possessive do you feel toward your partner? (1=Not at all possessive, 5=Very possessive)</td>
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<tr>
<td>How much do you need your partner? (1=Not much, 5=A lot)</td>
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<tr>
<td>How much do you feel you give to the relationship with your partner? (1=Not much, 5=A lot)</td>
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<tr>
<td>How easily do you think you could find a new romantic partner? (1=Not very easily, 5=Very easily)</td>
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</table>

Now we will ask you some questions about your partner
Is your partner

- Female
- Male
- No answer

How old is your partner?

Choose only one of the following

- Less than 16
- 16
- 17
- 18
- 19
- 20
- 21
- 22
- 23

- 24
- 25
- 26
- 27
- 28
- 29
- 30
- Don’t know
- Other

Please rate the following, on a scale of 1 to 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>No answer</th>
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<tr>
<td>How much does your partner like/love you?</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


16/08/2007
The Relationship Experiences of Young People :: Part G

(1=Not at all possessive, 5=Very possessive)

How much does your partner need you? 

(1=Not much, 5=A lot)

How much do you feel your partner gives to the relationship with you? 

(1=Not much, 5=A lot)

Generally, how desirable a partner is your partner to other people? 

(1=The are not very desirable, 5=They are very desirable)

How easily could your partner find another partner? 

(1=Not very easily, 5=Very easily)

Did you have sex with your partner?

☐ Yes → 0
☐ No → 8
☐ No answer → 9

[Exit and Clear Survey]    Save your responses so far and logout    << prev    next >>

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16/08/2007
Survey

The Relationship Experiences of Young People

Part G
Romantic Relationships

We will now ask you some questions about your romantic relationship experiences. Here we will refer to your boyfriend or girlfriend as your 'partner'.

Are you currently in a relationship with your partner?

Choose only one of the following

- No, we broke up
- Yes, we are still together
- No answer

How long have you been in a relationship with your partner?

Please answer the following questions with your current boyfriend/girlfriend in mind.

How long did you know your partner before you began your relationship?

Please specify days, weeks, months or years.

Do you live with your partner?

- Yes
- No
- No answer
Survey

The Relationship Experiences of Young People

Part G
Romantic Relationships

We will now ask you some questions about your romantic relationship experiences. Here we will refer to your boyfriend or girlfriend as your 'partner'.

Are you currently in a relationship with your partner?

Choose only one of the following

☐ No, we broke up
☐ Yes, we are still together
☐ No answer

How long did this relationship last?

Please answer the following questions with your most recent partner in mind.

Think back to what the relationship was like and how you felt in the relationship. Please answer the following questions as you would have done at that time. Questions will be worded as if you are still in the relationship.

How long did you know your partner before you began your relationship?

Please specify days, weeks, months or years.

Do you live with your partner?
Survey

The Relationship Experiences of Young People

Part H
Sex With Your Partner

How long after the relationship began did you start having sex with your partner?

Please specify days, weeks, months or years.

Generally, how often do you have sex with your partner?

Choose only one of the following

- Every day
- Almost every day
- Once or twice a week
- Once or twice a month
- Less than once a month
- No answer

Please rate the following, on a scale of 1 to 5.

1 - Never 2 - Once in a while 3 - About half the time 4 - About 3/4 of the time 5 - Always No answer

- How often do you have sex because it is expected of you?
- How often do you have sex because you are pressured into it?
- How often do you have sex because you are forced into it?


16/08/2007
Generally, do you use:  

**Choose only one of the following**

Please choose one of the following:  

- [ ] We don’t use protection or birth control  
- [ ] A Condom only  
- [ ] The Pill only  
- [ ] A Condom and the Pill  
- [ ] Another form of birth control only  
  (please specify in the box on the right)  
- [ ] Another form of birth control and a condom  
  (please specify in the box on the right)  
- [ ] No answer  

Please enter your comment here:  

When you have sex:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 - Never</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3 - About half the time</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5 - Every time</th>
<th>No answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

- How often do you use a condom?  
- How often do you want to use a condom?  
- How often do you think your partner wants to use a condom?  

Is there anything else you would like to add about your experience with this particular partner?  

[Exit and Clear Survey]  

Save your responses so far and logout  

This survey is not currently active. You will not be able to save your responses.

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Survey

The Relationship Experiences of Young People
0% [ ] | 100%

Part I
Sexual Issues in Your Relationship

Please rate the following, on a scale of 1 to 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 - NO, not at all</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5 - YES, very much</th>
<th>No answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you want to have sex?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you feel that sex is expected of you?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you feel pressured to have sex?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think your partner wants to have sex?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think your partner feels pressured to have sex?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Is there anything else you would like to add about your experience with this particular partner?

[Exit and Clear Survey]  Save your responses so far and logout  << prev  next >>

This survey is not currently active. You will not be able to save your responses.

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Survey

The Relationship Experiences of Young People

Part J
Other Relationships

We will now ask you about other relationship or sexual experiences you may have had during the last year.

Remember, the 'other relationships' that were described before include:

- A one night stand (sex with someone you have just met).
- Sex with a friend (you are primarily friends but also have had sex).
- Sex with an ex-partner (having sex after you have broken up).
- Casual Relationships: You have been seeing someone casually, but the relationship may not be 'official'. You may be still seeing other people or may be unsure about where you stand with each other. You may or may not have had sex.

Please do not refer to the same person who you may have described in the previous 'romantic relationship' section.

Do you have anyone else to report about?

☐ Yes  ⇒ continues
☐ No  ⇒ End
☐ No answer

Please think of your current or most recent experience from one of the above categories.

We will refer to this person as your partner.
Survey

The Relationship Experiences of Young People

Part J
Other Relationships

We will now ask you about other relationship or sexual experiences you may have had during the last year.

Remember, the 'other relationships' that were described before include:

- A one night stand (sex with someone you have just met).
- Sex with a friend (you are primarily friends but also have had sex).
- Sex with an ex-partner (having sex after you have broken up).
- Casual Relationships: You have been seeing someone casually, but the relationship may not be 'official'. You may be still seeing other people or may be unsure about where you stand with each other. You may or may not have had sex.

Please do not refer to the same person who you may have described in the previous 'romantic relationship' section.

Do you have anyone else to report about?

☑ Yes
☐ No
☐ No answer

Please think of your current or most recent experience from one of the above categories.

We will refer to this person as your partner.

Which item best describes your current or most recent partner:

Choose only one of the following

☐ A one night stand (sex with someone you have just met)?
☐ Sex with a friend (you are primarily friends but also have had sex)?
☐ Sex with an ex-partner (having sex after you have broken up)?
Casual Relationships: You have been seeing someone casually, but the relationship may not be 'official'. You may be still seeing other people or may be unsure about where you stand with each other. You may or may not have had sex.

- Other
- No answer

Please check the item that best describes your current situation:

Choose only one of the following

- We are still seeing each other.
- We are no longer seeing each other.
- No answer

For how long had you known your partner before you started seeing each other?

Please specify in days, weeks, months or years.

Please rate the following, on a scale of 1 to 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>No answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are you hoping to have a more serious relationship with your partner?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1=NO, not at all, 5=YES, very much)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How close do you want to be to your partner?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1=Not close at all, 5=Very close)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much do you like your partner?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1=Not much, 5=A lot)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How emotionally intimate do you want to be with your partner?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1=Not emotionally intimate at all, 5=Very emotionally intimate)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Now we will ask you some questions about your partner.

Is your partner

- Female
- Male
- No answer

How old is your partner?

Choose only one of the following

- Less than 16
- 16
- 17
- 18
- 19
- 20
- 21
- 22
- 23
- 24
- 25
- 26
- 27
- 28
- 29
- 30
- I don't know
- Other
- No answer

Please rate the following, on a scale of 1 to 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>No answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you think your partner is hoping to have a more serious relationship with you?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1=NO, 5=YES)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much do you think your partner likes you?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1=Not much, 5=A lot)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How emotionally intimate do you think your partner wants to be with you?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


16/08/2007
(1=Not emotionally intimate at all, 5=Very emotionally intimate)

How close do you think your partner wants to be with you? (1=Not close at all, 5=Very close)

Generally, how desirable a partner do you think your partner is to other people? (1=They are not very desirable, 5=They are very desirable)

How easily do you think your partner could find another partner? (1=Not very easily, 5=Very easily)

Have you had sex with your partner?

○ Yes → Part Y
○ No → Part L
○ No answer

[Exit and Clear Survey]  Save your responses so far and logout  << prev  next >>

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Survey

The Relationship Experiences of Young People

Part K
Sex With Your Partner

This section will refer to sex specifically with your partner that you have just described.

Have you had sex with your partner more than once?

- Yes
- No → PART M
- No answer

How long have you been having sex with your partner?

Please specify in days, weeks, months or years.

If you are no longer seeing each other, for how long were you having sex under these circumstances?

Please ensure that you specify either weeks, months or years.

Generally, how often do you have sex with your partner?

Choose only one of the following

- Every day
- Almost every day
- Once or twice a week
- Once or twice a month
- Less than once a month
- No answer
Please rate the following, on a scale of 1 to 6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 - Never</th>
<th>2 - Once in a while</th>
<th>3 - About half the time</th>
<th>4 - About 3/4 of the time</th>
<th>5 - Always</th>
<th>No answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How often do you have sex because you want to have sex?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often do you have sex because it is expected of you?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often do you have sex because you are pressured into it?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often do you have sex because you are forced into it?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Generally, do you use:

*Choose only one of the following*

Please choose one of the following:

- We don't use protection or birth control
- A Condom only
- The Pill only
- A Condom and the Pill
- Another form of birth control only
  (please specify in the box on the right)
- Another form of birth control and a condom
  (please specify in the box on the right)
- No answer

Please rate the following, on a scale of 1 to 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 - Never</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3 - About half the time</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5 - Every time</th>
<th>No answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When you have sex, how often do you use a condom?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often do you want to use a condom?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often do you think your partner wants to use a condom?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


16/08/2007
Survey

The Relationship Experiences of Young People

0% [ ] 100%

Part L
Sexual Issues With Your Partner

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 - NO, not at all</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5 - YES, very much</th>
<th>No answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you want to have sex?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you feel that sex is</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>expected of you?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you feel pressured</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to have sex?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does your partner want</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to have sex?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does your partner feel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pressured to have sex?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Is there anything else you would like to add about your experience with this particular partner?

[Exit and Clear Survey]  Save your responses so far and logout  << prev  next >>

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Survey

The Relationship Experiences of Young People

Part M
Sex With Your Partner

When you had sex with your partner:

Please rate the following, on a scale of 1 to 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 - NO, not at all</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5 - YES, very much</th>
<th>No answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did you want to have sex?</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you feel that sex was expected of you?</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you feel pressured to have sex?</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were you forced to have sex?</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Did you use:

Choose only one of the following

Please choose one of the following:

- ○ We didn't use protection or birth control
- ○ A Condom only
- ○ The Pill only
- ○ A Condom and the Pill
- ○ Another form of birth control only
  (please specify in the box on the right)
- ○ Another form of birth control and a condom
  (please specify in the box on the right)
- ○ No answer

Please enter your comment here:

Please rate the following, on a scale of 1 to 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 - NO, not at all</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5 - YES, very much</th>
<th>No answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did you want to use a condom?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think your partner wanted to use a condom?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Is there anything else you would like to add about your experience with this particular partner?

[Exit and Clear Survey]

This survey is not currently active. You will not be able to save your responses.
Thank You

You have completed answering the questions in this survey.

Click on [submit] now to complete the process and save your answers.

submit

If you want to check any of the answers you have made, and/or change them, you can do that now by clicking on the [<< prev] button and browsing through your responses.

[Exit and Clear Survey]
MP3 Player Lottery

We appreciate the time you have spent completing this survey. If you wish to enter the draw to win an MP3 Player, please enter your name and email address below. Please remember that this information will not be kept with your survey responses and so there will be no way to identify your response.

Thank you and good luck!

Name: ____________________________________________

Email address: _____________________________________

Results of the Study
Survey findings will be placed on the school of psychology website at a later date. Follow the ‘Sites of Interest’ link from http://www.psychology.murdoch.edu.au/

Health and Counselling Services

Please also note that there are many heath and counseling services for young people available. Selections of such services include:

Murdoch Health and Counselling Services
Located on the Murdoch University South Street campus in Bush Court.
Opening hours: 8.30-4.30 weekdays.
To make an appointment call: 9360 2293
Website: http://health.murdoch.edu.au/

B2 Clinic
B Block, Alma Street
Fremantle, 6160
By Appointment. Phone: 9431 2149.

FPWA
70 Roe Street Northbridge WA 6003
Ph (08) 9227 6177
Fax (08) 9227 6871

Quarry Health Centre for Under 25s
Health and Counselling Services.
7 Quarry Street (rear)
Fremantle WA 6160
Ph: (08) 9430 4544
Fax: (08) 9430 8114
http://www.fpwa.org.au/services/quarry/

Further Information
And an interesting website for further information on sex and relationships:
www.yoursexhealth.org

The FPWA website above also has information on sex and relationships.
APPENDIX C

Correlational matrix of the main constructs under investigation using data from the online survey.
Bivariate associations between romantic views and sexual behaviour, for participants who had sex with their partners. Romantic and casual relationships are presented on the lower and upper diagonals respectively†.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Gender</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>-.30**</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>-.18*</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Rejection Sensitivity</td>
<td>.08*</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>-.24**</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>-.18*</td>
<td>-.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Emotional Intimacy Power</td>
<td>-.14**</td>
<td>-.25**</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Participants’ Condom Use Desire</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.13**</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>.46**</td>
<td>.44**</td>
<td>.23**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Perceived Partner’s Condom Use Desire</td>
<td>-.20**</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.65**</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>.76**</td>
<td>-.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Condom Use Frequency</td>
<td>-.09*</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.71**</td>
<td>.72**</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>-.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Pressured Sex</td>
<td>.11*</td>
<td>.12**</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>-.12**</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05.  **p < .01.

†Note: Italicized correlations between emotional intimacy power and sexual behaviour are presented for those who had sex with their partner more than once. Gender: 0 = male, 1 = female.