AN EXPLORATION OF THE CONTEXT OF
WOMEN’S EXPERIENCE OF UNWANTED SEX
IN COUPLE PARTNERSHIPS

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

The present study explores women’s experience of unwanted sex in cross-gender couple partnerships. A qualitative design was utilized and in-depth interviews were conducted with 13 participants to explore their experiences of unwanted sex with their life partners as well as to examine the context within which their experiences took place. Grounded theory procedures were used to analyze patterns and themes that emerged from the data. Analysis of the interview transcriptions was aided by the use of the qualitative data analysis computer software program NUD*IST. Categories were generated that detail the descriptions of various power issues which underlie participants’ experience of unwanted sex.

The central phenomenon to emerge from this study concerns the nature of the connection between the structural and ideological organizational context of the participants’ couple relationships and their experience of unwanted sex. Three main patterns of this phenomenon have emerged as well as three types of “negative case” which provide both support for and a challenge to the developing theory. This theory posits that there is a connection between the presence of a hierarchical structure within the couple relationship and the experience of unwanted sex. The study shows that the problem of unwanted sex is an aspect of the problem of gender-based power imbalance in traditional couple/family life as well as being part of a continuum of sexual coercion in couple relationships. The study report concludes with a discussion of the study’s contribution to the literature and implications of the findings for social work research and practice.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Feminist analyses of the family contend that gender-based power imbalance is entrenched in the normative structures of cross-gender couple partnerships and family life. Thus, the traditional family can be defined by its structure of gender hierarchy. We know from research and clinical practice wisdom that couple satisfaction is lower among women than it is among men. Explorations of this discrepancy reveal that this imbalance in power is a primary source of women's dissatisfaction as well as being the source of many couple and family problems (Avis, 1991; Goodrich et al., 1988). The study of the impact of gender hierarchy on couple and family relations is, however, a relatively recent area of family study. Gender equity research has identified the gendered distribution of domestic labour and financial resources as two central areas in traditional (hierarchical) couple relationships in which gender-based power imbalance can be found (Bird, 1999; Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983; Hochschild, 1989; Schwartz, 1994). These power issues have emerged as central for understanding the socio-political context that shapes and constructs couple and family life.

Another central but neglected site of couple life where gender-based inequality may be located is in the area of sexual relations. Within this area gender hierarchy may be manifested both in extreme and in more subtle ways in the form of sexual coercion, ranging from unwanted sex to wife rape. To date, however, the empirical study of coercive sex in couple relationships has been limited to wife rape while the study of the more subtle forms of sexual coercion, such as unwanted sex, has been generally overlooked. Studies reveal that somewhere between 10% and 14% of wives are raped (Finkelhor & Yllo, 1985; Russell, 1982). Although this research establishes that wife rape may be the most prevalent kind of rape, more common than either stranger or
acquaintance rape (Hanneke et al., 1986; Koss et al., 1987), this exclusive focus on forced sex overlooks the fact that a further 12% (at least) of women are subjected to sexual coercion by their life partners which does not involve the threat or use of physical force (Russell, 1982).

Little has been written in the social science literature about couple sexuality generally, and even less has been written about coercive sexual practices. Part of the reason for this is due to the fact that in North America couple sexuality has historically been veiled in secrecy. The traditional nuclear family has been considered to be a private institution which was assumed to be a safe and protective place within which family members lived in peace and harmony. Feminist critiques of the family have challenged such structural-functional portrayals of the family and argue that, by assuming an egalitarian balance of couple power, such perspectives obscure the fact that marriage is an institution that does not equally serve the interests and needs of both men and women. One of the most important contributions of the contemporary women’s movement has been to make visible the prevalence of abuse and violence within the family. The current study attempts to make visible some of the more imperceptible elements of male dominance and female subordination manifested in the experience of unwanted sex.

The theoretical frameworks which underlie the couple/family therapy literature have been based on functionalist theories. These theories usually consider the couple sexual relationship from a systems theory framework, which assumes an egalitarian balance of couple power and places much emphasis on the complementary nature of couple relations (Schnarch, 1991). In addition, within the sex therapy literature couple sexual problems tend to be viewed from a medical perspective with a focus on specific sexual problems such as impotence, premature ejaculation, and frigidity (Kinsey et al., 1953; Masters and Johnson, 1970; Tavris, 1992).
The cultural ideology of family privacy, the myth of the home as a haven, and theoretical frameworks based on structural-functional perspectives have meant that what transpires within the “master” bedroom has remained largely inaccessible to social scientific study.

Although the feminist research literature has devoted some attention to the problem of sexual coercion, most of this literature has focused on the problem of wife rape. The fact that even within this literature relatively little attention has been given to the broader problem of sexual coercion may not be so surprising, given the fact that throughout most of Western history rape in marriage has been considered legally and socially impossible. Efforts to reform these archaic laws have played an important part in shaping empirical research on the problem of sexual coercion. Over the past two decades feminist activism supported by empirical research has resulted in the achievement of criminalizing wife rape in Canada and throughout most of the United States (Russell, 1990). It appears, however, that once this specific goal was accomplished the impetus for ongoing research on the problem of sexual coercion declined precipitously. Yet, in the process of conducting research on the problem of wife rape some feminist researchers have noted the presence of women in their studies who felt compelled to have unwanted sex but who were excluded from the category of wife rape because they did not meet the studies’ criteria requiring the use of threatened or actual physical force (Finkelhor & Yllo; 1985 Russell, 1982). The present study seeks to bring the experiences of these women out of the margins and make them a central focus of the analysis.

Because of the power differential in hierarchically structured couple relationships, women may be coerced into having sex with their life partners through various forms of coercion other than physical force. For example, verbal coercion such as threats of economic retaliation or of
affairs may compel compliance with the demand for sex (Finkelhor & Yllo, 1985). In addition, ideological beliefs about masculinity, femininity, couple and family life may also contribute to women feeling obligated to have unwanted sex with their life partners (Finkelhor & Yllo, 1985; Muehlenhard, et al., 1992). Like other forms of male dominance and female subordination, sexual coercion can be considered one of the possible outcomes of the unequal distribution of power between men and women living in traditional (hierarchical) couple relationships.

The present study explores women’s experiences of unwanted sex in cross-gender couple relationships. Unwanted sex is conceptualized as being an extension of the patriarchal power structure in society and an outcome of the gendered organization of power relations in couple and family life. The intent of this study is to contribute to a broader understanding of the socio-political context that shapes and constructs couple and family relationships. More specifically, the study seeks to contribute to an understanding of how both the structural and ideological organizational context affects the area of couple sexual relations and contributes to women’s experience of unwanted sex.

One of the primary objectives of this research concerns the need to recognize the area of sexual relations as an important but neglected site where gender-based power imbalance may be located. The issue underlying sexual coercion in couple relationships concerns the loss of women’s sexual autonomy within traditional (hierarchical) couple relationships. Any level of sexual coercion involves issues of dominance and subordination. Further, given the intimate and ongoing nature of couple relationships, any kind of coercive sex can be expected to have

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1I use the word couple to refer to both married and cohabiting couples. Where possible I will use the concept couple because it is more inclusive. However, most theories and research have assumed or been carried out with married women.
significant negative emotional repercussions on the affected women on an individual level, as well as having an adverse impact on their couple and family relationships (Finkelhor & Yllo, 1985).

If clinicians are to work toward improving family life for all concerned, we must work toward the restructuring of the couple relationship to meet the needs of both members equally. In order to do this we must first determine the power issues that shape and construct couple and family life. The clinical impetus underlying this study concerns the need for clinical practice to be informed by research which identifies and explores the central areas of couple/family life in which gender-based imbalances of power are located.

Another objective of this research is to establish an empirical base for conceptualizing unwanted sex along a continuum of sexual coercion ranging from nonviolent to violent sexual coercion, thereby addressing a gap in the research literature. A further aim is to reveal the full dimensions and significance of what has previously been regarded as a minor or relatively limited problem. When the prevalence of both violent and nonviolent sexual coercion is considered together, the result is that more than one-quarter of women have experienced sexual coercion by their life partners (Russell, 1982). By any standard, this constitutes a significant social problem that merits further investigation.

The ideological perspective guiding this study is postmodern feminism. Although feminism offers an internally diverse set of theories and perspectives, there are some fundamental points of agreement. Feminists have subjected the family to social and historical analysis and have developed an understanding of the relationship of families to other institutions (Boss & Thorne, 1989; Thorne, 1982). The family with its power structure is therefore considered within the context of the larger society with its power structures. Thus, feminist perspectives contend that
male dominance within families is part of a wider system of male power (Ferree, 1990).

Until recently, there has been consensus that gender is the fundamental category of women's oppression. Postmodern thinking challenges this assumption and in so doing challenges mainstream feminism's concepts of "woman" and "gender." The notion of an essential womanhood, common to all women and which is different from the category of man, is disputed for its modernist tendency to universalize human experience, as well as for feminism's failure to attend to issues of diversity (McNamee, 1992). Thus, while cultural feminists concentrated their efforts on critiquing the androcentrism present in male theories of human development, pointing out how "man" stood for "human" and illustrating the ways in which women were excluded from the notion of "universal man," they failed to notice either the gynocentrism or the ethnocentrism contained in their own female-oriented theories, such as how "woman" stood for "white woman" or how women of colour were excluded from the notion of "global woman."

A postmodern feminist framework of the concept of gender provides a meta-perspective on two potential biases in mainstream feminist theory: the tendency to exaggerate gender differences, found in cultural feminism, and the tendency to ignore such differences, found in liberal feminism (Hare-Mustin, 1987; 1991). A postmodern feminist analysis of the concept of gender difference illustrates that power and gender have been confused and contends that it is power rather than gender per se which mediates social relations (Hare-Mustin, 1987). Thus, it is gender derived power, rather than gender, which mediates cross-gender couple relationships.

Chapter 2 begins with an analysis of the theoretical frameworks which underlie the area of sexual coercion generally and more specifically the problem of unwanted sex. This will be accomplished through an examination of the institution of marriage and the family in its historical
context. An analysis of the contemporary family reveals that although laws have changed over time the legacy of patriarchal marriage prevails in cultural ideologies. Gender equity research demonstrates that despite social and legal changes the family continues to institutionalize inequality between males and females. In considering the theoretical conceptions of couple power a feminist framework for the analysis of power will be presented which addresses not only the overt manifestations of domination and control but also the more subtle underlying power structures which may be operating to support and maintain male dominance and female subordination and which may be manifested in women's experience of unwanted sex (Komter, 1989).

Chapter 3 provides a review of the research literature on sexual coercion in cross-gender couple relationships. A challenge in conducting this review arises from the fact that there is very little empirical literature that takes a sufficiently broad perspective in its approach to this area. The research literature can be divided into four small bodies: the first examines wife rape as part of the spectrum of wife battering; the second considers it within the spectrum of acquaintance rape; while the third examines wife rape as a problem in its own right. Within these three literatures there is periodic (albeit limited) references to unwanted sex in couple relationships. Thus, the fourth body of research has been gleaned from the others, considering the problem of unwanted sex in couple relationships.

Chapter 4 provides a review of the study's methodology and design. The methodology is informed by a feminist postmodern ideological perspective combined with a grounded theory approach. In the quest to uncover what organizes women's experience of unwanted sex the research questions are: What are women's experiences of unwanted sex in couple relationships?
What is the organizational context of the couple/family relationships in which unwanted sex occurs? And, What part does this context play in women's experience of unwanted sex?

Chapters 5-10 detail the qualitative findings of the study. The central phenomenon which emerges from this study concerns the nature of the connection between the organizational context of the participants' couple relationships and their experience of having unwanted sex with their life partners. Chapter 5 outlines the structural and the ideological organization of study participants' couple relationships. Chapter 6 provides an overview of the three main patterns to emerge from the study. Chapters 7 through 9 delineate each of these three patterns and their variations. Chapter 10 details the analysis of the three types of "negative cases" emerging from the study which provide both support for and a challenge to the developing theory.

Chapter 11 forms the concluding chapter of the study report. The first part of the chapter presents a summary and a discussion of the findings. It then links the problem of unwanted sex in cross-gender couple relationships to two literatures: the literature on sexual coercion in couple relationships, and the literature on gender-based power imbalance in couple/family life. Finally, implications of the study's findings for theory, research and clinical social work practice are outlined.
Chapter 2: Analysis of Theoretical Frameworks

Patriarchy was once formally entrenched not only in Canadian laws and institutions but in the Canadian cultural and belief systems as well. Historically, men were empowered with legislated rights to discipline the women in their household and thus held coercive authority over them. Only since 1983 has wife rape been considered a criminal offense in Canada (Gunn & Minch, 1988). Feminist activism supported by empirical research findings resulted in law reforms. Laws have changed over time, but the legacy of patriarchal marriage prevails in cultural ideologies. There has been, for example, little or no change within the home, where women still carry the primary responsibility for both childcare and the instrumental tasks of family life (Hochschild, 1989; Rabin, 1994).

A History of Patriarchal Marriage

Consideration of the institution of marriage and the family in its historical context provides a framework for considering how gender-based power differences within contemporary traditional couple relationships support and maintain all forms of male dominance and coercion including sexual coercion. The ideology of wives-as-property underlies a spectrum of coercive sexual practices including the problem of unwanted sex. Further, it also becomes apparent that the history of patriarchal marriage provides a legacy for this prevailing cultural ideology.

The conceptual framework developed by Russell and Rebecca Dobash (1979) provides a comprehensive analysis of the relationship of patriarchy to contemporary traditional couple relationships. Their analysis provides a theoretical framework for considering how gender hierarchy perpetuates all dimensions of male dominance and control. The foundation of
patriarchy includes both a structural and an ideological ingredient. The structural component is evident in the hierarchical organization of social institutions and social relations, while the ideological component serves to maintain and support this structure. (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). Patriarchal ideology is contingent on a generalized social acceptance of the principle of a hierarchical order, which is achieved through the process of socialization. Thus, once people have been socialized into an acceptance of the ideology of a hierarchical order (rather than an egalitarian order) radical challenges to inequities seem to be outside the "natural order" of things (Dobash & Dobash, 1979).

In their analysis the Dobash team posits that it is within the traditional family context that gender-based power differentials are established and reinforced (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). The traditional patriarchal family structure is defined by men's dominance and women's subordination. These authors contend that the process of socialization operates to make dominant-subordinate relationships appear not only acceptable but natural to both sexes (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). In their analysis they consider gender-based differences in the socialization of male and female children, the differing gender-role expectations for men and women, and the gender-based power differentials between husbands and wives. This process of socialization, combined with the legitimization of power and authority vested in the husband, is considered to provide the interactional context for male coercion and control (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; 1988).

History demonstrates that the marital hierarchy and the subjugation of women through force were openly supported by legal and religious institutions. The rise of the nuclear family following the Middle Ages resulted in the entrenchment of male dominance and female subordination. British common law concerning marriage denied married women the most basic
civil liberties given to other citizens. This was because once married, the wife was considered the "property" of the husband. The parallel rise of Protestantism led to the "sanctification of marriage," which included the husband's moral rights to physically "chastise" his wife should she fail in fulfilling her marriage vows to love, honour and "obey" her husband (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). An unwritten injunction in common law, the "doctrine of separate spheres" served as the justification for the lack of legal protection given to married women. It held that the domestic sphere was under the control of the male head of the family and, therefore, state-controlled public law should not interfere with this private sphere (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Reid, 1992). Thus, while the Church provided the ideological and moral supports for patriarchal marriage, the state served to codify this hierarchical relationship into law.

The Legal History of Wife Rape

The British common law establishing wives-as-property served to not only legitimize wife battering, but also constituted the foundation for legitimizing wife rape. The legal justification for the omission of wife rape is found in 17th and 18th century British common law and stems from two historical roots: the principle of "matrimonial unity" and the dictum of "irrevocable consent" (Reid, 1992). The precedent for the principle of matrimonial unity dates back to the 18th century when a British judge, Sir William Blackstone, decreed that upon marriage, the man and the woman become "one". He further asserted that the "very being" of a woman was removed during marriage, with the result that only the husband remained thereafter. Therefore, on the basis that a man and woman are united into one legal body in marriage, a man could not be found guilty of raping himself (Reid, 1992; Scheyett, 1988; Scutt, 1983). The precedent for the dictum of
“irrevocable consent” dates back even further, to the 17th century, when Chief Justice Sir Mathew Hale interpreted the marriage contract to mean that, since the wife has willingly “given herself” to her husband, any possibility of wife rape was negated (Reid, 1992; Russell, 1991).

The Contemporary Family

By viewing the family in its historical context, its contemporary prevailing hierarchical power structure and ideology is also made visible. Within contemporary marriage male dominance and female subordination remains a cultural legacy of the patriarchal family (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; 1988). The ideology of wives-as property remains embedded in many contemporary institutions, including our religious, political, social and legal systems. Legal policies based on common law have influenced the writing of many contemporary statutes in Canadian and American law. These laws have served to support the ideology that wives — and their bodies — belong to their husbands. This is demonstrated by the fact that until 1983 (and until even more recently in most countries of the world) Canada included a “marital rape exemption” clause in its rape laws (Gunn & Minch, 1988; Russell, 1990). This clause, which protected husbands from prosecution for wife rape, stemmed from laws which defined rape as forced sexual intercourse with a woman who is not the wife of the perpetrator (Russell, 1990). Although important changes have been made in the past two decades in the legal system’s treatment of wife rape, the ideology of wives-as-property still prevails and underlies the practice of both violent and nonviolent forms of coercive sexuality.

Beyond Law: The Importance of Social Reform

The criminalization of wife rape has been a most needed reform providing a way for
partnered women who have experienced violent sexual coercion to seek justice. Yet while having the option of laying criminal charges is obviously necessary, social reforms may better address the problem of unwanted sex in cross-gender couple relationships.

Although many people would likely now agree that wife rape is a serious problem, the same opinion may not be widely held in relation to unwanted sex. To accept the view that unwanted sex is also a significant problem requires acceptance of the premise that partnered women are independent persons with rights over their own bodies. Yet this notion of individual autonomy and equality stands in direct contradiction with many of our society’s valued images of marital sexuality. The legacy of the “unities” theory can be seen to prevail in the ideology contained in some Christian religions which hold that, upon marriage, husbands and wives spiritually become “one.” This belief has served to emphasize the notion that married women lack personhood except in relation to their husbands (Reid, 1992). The legacy of “irrevocable consent” prevails in contemporary traditional marriage when saying “I do” during the marriage ceremony is taken to mean that the wife has agreed to fulfill an “obligation” to provide sexual satisfaction to her husband on demand. Under the ideology of obligation, husband and wife are melded together in a unitary bond. Sex is part of the sacred glue of this union (Reid, 1992). Thus, one of the central issues underlying the problem of sexual coercion in cross-gender couple relationships concerns women’s sexual autonomy. This autonomy is premised on women’s right to say ‘no’ to unwanted sex not only outside of, but also within, committed couple relationships.

In addition to social reforms addressing the patriarchal ideologies which maintain and support the practice of sexual coercion, the hierarchical structure of most contemporary couple relationships needs also to be addressed. While the contemporary family no longer conforms to a
patriarchal model, it does not fit an egalitarian one. Thus, even though the institution of marriage is in flux, it continues to institutionalize inequality between men and women (Jack, 1991).

Research suggests that once marriage is commenced, its basic framework takes over to shape the relationship and the behavior of the partners within it, particularly following the entry of children into the family (Blumstein & Schwartz 1983; Hare-Mustin, 1987). Contemporary middle-class couples seem to start out in a more equal way than they did historically. They probably have a similar level of education and training and their entry-level jobs have roughly similar incomes. However, research demonstrates a loss of wives’ power relative to their husbands’ after the birth of the first child (LaRossa & LaRossa, 1981). Further to this, the woman’s power in the family diminishes, relative to her partner’s, with the birth of each additional child (Hess-Biber & Williamson, 1984; Tichenor, 1996). Contemporary hierarchical couple relationships can be characterized by the unacknowledged privileging of the man’s desires and the unacknowledged subordination of the woman’s desires (Hare-Mustin, 1991).

It has been well documented that marriage is a more negative experience for women than it is for men (Avis, 1985; Bernard, 1972; Miller, 1976). Research into this discrepancy establishes a link between couple dissatisfaction, women’s depression and gender-based power imbalance.

Research on Gender and Power:

The Distribution of Domestic Labour and Monetary Resources

Although the sharp division that once existed between the world of work (male) and the home (female), at least among white middle-class families, no longer exists, the hierarchical structures which exist in both the world of work and the home have remained. Despite the
entrance of women into the paid work force the vast majority still work in low-paid, traditional “women’s” jobs (Bird, 1999; Hochschild, 1989). Adding to this imbalance, couples tend to protect the salary and career opportunities of the male partner at the expense of that of the woman (Steil & Weltman, 1991). The income disparity this creates between life partners is considered a major contributing factor in the establishment and maintenance of gender hierarchy within couple and family life (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983; Schwartz, 1994). Further, despite the fact that today most women are employed outside the home there has been little or no change within the home — women still carry the primary responsibility for both childcare and the instrumental tasks of family life, while men’s contribution has remained largely unchanged (Coverman, 1985; Gershuny & Robinson, 1988; Hoschshchild, 1989; Rabin, 1994). Although some studies have found black families making more progress in role sharing than white families (Beckett & Smith, 1981; Ross, 1987), others fail to find these differences (Coverman & Sheley, 1986; Spitz, 1986). Thus, most women across ethnic and racial boundaries have two jobs, one in the marketplace and one in the home (Hochschild, 1989).

Studies on the division of domestic labour reveal that in most two income families, the woman is responsible for the day-to-day maintenance of the home and family relationships. This research reveals a clear pattern of women spending more hours on household tasks and child care such as housework, food buying and preparation, arrangement of babysitters, and other instrumental tasks than their partners (Bernado, Shehan & Leslie, 1987; Blair & Lichter, 1991; Domineli & McLeod, 1989; Rabin, 1994; Walczak, 1988). Adding together the time for paid labour, the household work and childcare, it is estimated that most women work approximately 15 more hours each week than do their partners, which over the course of a year, is equivalent to
an extra month of 24-hour days (Hochschild, 1989).

In response to women's double work shift men's contribution to the household work has changed very little (Blair & Johnson, 1992; Coverman, 1985; Gershuny & Robinson, 1988; Hochschild, 1989; Starrels, 1994). Although there is some evidence that more men share the household work when they get married, research shows that such equitable distribution of tasks changes drastically following the birth of the first child (LaRossa & LaRossa, 1981; Tichenor, 1996). Studies have shown that, on average, husbands of full-time employed women do little more domestic work than do husbands of full-time homemakers (Hartmann, 1981; Mortimer & Sorensen, 1984). A Statistics Canada study (Frederick, 1995) found that fathers had one hour more of leisure time each day than mothers.

Evidence of gender inequality is also apparent in how money is allocated and managed within North American families. Much of the early research on financial resources within families has been premised on the view that there is an egalitarian balance of power in couple relationships. Thus studies on "family income" have been based on the assumption that there is gender parity in terms of which member of the couple manages the money and that money is shared equally among family members (Pahl, 1980). Research on how money is allocated and managed within families demonstrates that women are most likely to have financial control in lower income families, where this "control" often means dealing with shortages. However, when income is high enough to allow a surplus, men typically control it (Pahl, 1983). This research also shows that women do not necessarily share the same standard of living as their partners (Pahl, 1983).

Much of the research on equality in cross-gender couple relationships has been based on
an underlying assumption that equality is necessarily tied to earning power. Research suggests, however, that gender roles can be very durable and that the links between power and money appear to be most complicated. Although there are some data supporting the idea that when a woman’s salary approaches that of her partner he does more in the home (Model, 1982), other research indicates that even among high income dual career couples women have less decision-making power than would be expected from their earning power (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983). Other research indicates that even when women earn more than their partners, they still perform most of the household work (Schwartz, 1994; Starrels, 1994). One explanation for this apparent contradiction is that when men lose power over women in one area, such as by earning less money, they make up for it in another area, such as by doing less housework (Starrels, 1994). Another explanation is that although men may welcome the financial contribution that their partner’s employment makes to the family this approval is most often based on the premise that her contribution is merely “supplementing” his income. It seems that when this “provider” role is reversed it may pose a threat to the relationship and the woman may try to compensate for this by taking on more responsibilities at home (Parker, 1998; Schwartz, 1994).

Gender equity research demonstrates that the distribution of domestic labour and money within households remain two central areas in couple partnerships in which gender-based power imbalance is located. This lack of change does not bode well for women. The study of the differential experiences between members of the same family establishes that traditional or hierarchically structured couple/family life has a protective effect for men but a detrimental effect for women in terms of both mental and physical health (Avis, 1985; Bernard, 1973; Schwartz, 1994; Sobel & Russo, 1981).
Gender Hierarchy and Mental Health

Gender hierarchy limits a woman's ability to be an equal participant in the couple's decision-making process, it undermines her ability to parent effectively and negatively affects her mental health (Avis, 1988; Bernard, 1973; Jack, 1991; Miller, 1976; Sobel & Russo, 1981). Research on the relationship between gender and mental health has given consideration to the impact of traditional female socialization, female role expectations and, particularly, the hierarchical structure of traditional couple relationships in predisposing many women to becoming symptomatic. The most notable symptom appears to be to become depressed (Gove, 1972; Jack, 1991; McGrath, Keita, Straightland, & Russo, 1990). Married women are more prone to depression than any other group (Guttentag, Salasin, & Belle, 1980; Radloff, 1975; Stiver & Miller, 1988; Weissman & Klerman, 1977). Studies indicate that almost half of all unhappily married women report feelings of depression (Radloff, 1980; Weissman & Paykel, 1974). While most studies merely establish a relationship between couple relationship problems and the development of depression in women (Fowers, 1991; Rounsaville et al., 1980 Weissman & Klerman, 1977), other researchers have delved deeper and found that the source of these problems appears to be inequality (Jack, 1991; Pleck, 1985; Ross, Morosky, & Huber, 1983). This research establishes a connection between the equitable distribution of household work and relationship and personal well-being for women. The number of hours spent on such tasks was considered less important to emotional well-being than how equitably the work was distributed (Bird, 1999).

Egalitarianism and Couple Relationship Satisfaction

Research on couple satisfaction reveals that equality in the family and, particularly, equal
distribution of household responsibilities may be the most promising basis for couple and family life. These studies show sharing an ideology of egalitarianism is strongly related to relationship satisfaction (Beavers, 1986; Li & Cadwell, 1987; Mashal 1985; Nicola & Hawkes, 1986; Rabin, 1994; Schwartz, 1994). Sharing an ideology of egalitarian couple relationships has been found to have many benefits: it is predictive of better couple communication and problem solving (Pollock et al., 1990); it indicates a greater commitment to working on the relationship (Altrocchi, 1988); as well as being protective against wife abuse (Crossman et al., 1990). Research also shows that a couple’s ability to negotiate conflict successfully is the best predictor of the longevity of a relationship (Markman & Kraft, 1989; Markman, 1991).

Marital equity research reveals that equal division of household responsibilities correlates with higher couple satisfaction (Nicholas & Hawkes, 1986). Other research indicates that men who share in the household work were less avoiding of conflict, and had lower heart rates during couple conflicts, than men who did not participate (Gottman, 1991). Thus, research shows that men also benefit from having egalitarian relationships.

**Feminist Perspectives of the Family and Family Therapy**

Family therapy theorists have drawn upon frameworks from mainstream sociology in developing conceptions about families. Many conventional family therapy theories were developed in the 1950s, when functionalist theories prevailed. These theories assumed the permanence of the nuclear family, emphasized equilibrium and order and assumed that the family has two basic structures: a hierarchy of generations and a differentiation of adults into “expressive” and “instrumental” roles. (Boss & Thorne, 1989; Thorne, 1982). Over the last
twenty-five years feminists have challenged these assumptions. Thus, the ideology of the "monolithic" family has been disclaimed and the legitimacy of alternative family forms has been emphasized instead (Eichler, 1988). Further, the functionalist emphasis on equilibrium and order has been rejected and, instead, power and conflict have been revealed (Boss & Thorne, 1989; Thorne, 1982). By assuming an egalitarian balance of couple power, structural-functional perspectives have obscured the fact that cohabitation/marriage does not equally serve the interests and needs of both men and women. In addition, the Parsonian assumption concerning the differentiation of adults into "expressive" (female) and "instrumental" (male) roles has been criticized for translating this sexual division of labour into a language of gender roles (Boss & Thorne, 1989; Thorne, 1982).

While functionalist theories posited that sex and generation are the underlying axes of family relations, feminists have contested this assumption and theorized about the nature of sex and gender. Feminist scholars such as Nancy Chodorow (1978) have challenged the view that family arrangements are determined, in some immutable way, by biological factors. They contend that the sexual division of labour that designates women as primary parents is anchored not simply in biology but also in social structure (Boss & Thorne, 1989; Thorne, 1982). Thus, although sex is a biological category, gender is revealed as a social category. Gender and generation have been tracked as sources of power and conflict within families. Accordingly, traditional gender arrangements in couple relationships are seen as establishing and maintaining a power difference between men and women (Goodrich, et al., 1988; Goodrich, 1991).

Theoretical frameworks which underlie the practice of couple and family therapy have been based on functionalist theories and, thus, conventional family therapy has been reproached
for its uncritical acceptance of a traditional family model and prevailing gender roles (Boss & Thorne, 1989; Goodrich et al., 1988). In addition, although families are structured around gender and generation, traditional approaches to family therapy have acknowledged hierarchy based only on generation. Feminist critics contend that family therapy's reliance on systems theory for its theoretical foundation has enabled clinical practitioners to ignore issues of gender and power in families (Bograd, 1988; Boss & Thorne, 1989). Family therapy must, therefore, move beyond purely systemic, circular formulations of relationships, where power is seen as moving from one to the other and back again, to an understanding of the impact resulting from the gender-based power differential that characterizes most traditional couple and family relationships (Bograd, 1988; Boss & Thorne, 1989). Feminist perspectives hold that gender-based power is an organizing principle of family life and, therefore, the problems of most couples cannot be addressed or resolved until the basic inequality of their relationships is acknowledged.

The Emergence of Gender Perspectives

By taking gender as a basic category of analysis, feminist scholars have made important contributions to family theory. The concept of gender emerged in the 1980s as the dominant feminist model. The feminist belief — that what we know and how we know is determined by gender — created a paradigm shift away from a liberal feminist approach that minimized gender differences toward one emphasizing gender difference (DiStefano, 1990). Growing out of radical feminism, cultural or “gender” feminism continues to have a strong presence today. In this woman-centered approach, gender differences are explored and highlighted and women's experiences are redefined and validated. The belief that knowledge is gendered led academic feminists to challenge
the universality of traditional (masculine) forms of knowledge. The works of theorists such as Jean Baker Miller (1976), Dorothy Dinnerstein (1977), Nancy Chodorow (1978), and Carol Gilligan (1982) revealed the gendered nature of history, culture and society (Bordo, 1990). Their work exposed the error of evaluating women against male norms. Gender hierarchies were revealed that associated reason and rationality with men and emotion and irrationality with women (Gorman, 1993). A new feminist ideology emerged which was based on the valorization of feminine values, which is the opposite of masculine values. Much of this feminist ideology is based on disowning those characteristics considered to be “male.”

**Feminist Critiques of “Gender” Feminism**

Postmodern feminism is skeptical about universal claims of any sort including those of mainstream feminism (DiStefano, 1990). Assumptions concerning the existence of an essential womanhood, which is common to all women and which is different from the category of man, have been challenged in the 1990s by both feminists of colour and postmodern feminists. Postmodern feminists have questioned mainstream feminism's construct of identity and caution that by defining identity in masculine/feminine terms, we may be accepting differences that we have been taught to see rather than differences that do in fact exist (Farganis, 1994).

**A Postmodern Feminist Analysis of the Construction of Gender Difference**

A deconstruction of the stereotypes of male and female that describe men as rational and women as relational demonstrates that an emphasis on gender differences operates in practice to maintain a social system based on power (Hare-Mustin, 1987).
In her analysis of the concept of gender difference Rachel Hare-Mustin identifies two kinds of gender-bias. On the one hand, "beta-bias" minimizes gender differences and posits that there are no significant differences between males and females. On the other hand, "alpha-bias" magnifies gender differences and holds that there are no significant similarities between males and females. The tendency to minimize gender differences is considered characteristic of liberal feminism and systems theories while the tendency to magnify gender differences is characteristic of cultural feminism, psycho dynamic and sex-role theories. Both standpoints are considered to be problematic, since construing masculinity and femininity as equal ignores current inequities, while construing them as opposites leads to hierarchy with one considered superior to the other (Hare-Mustin, 1992).

Hare-Mustin uses the concept of women's dual socialization to provide a challenge to the construct of gender opposition. This concept is premised on the view that subordinate groups always experience dual socialization, that of their own group and that needed to survive in a society whose themes and rules are those of the superordinate group. Superordinates (men) are often simply less motivated to observe carefully many aspects of subordinates' (women's) behavior and activity because women's behavior does not usually affect what men propose to do. Seen in this light, characteristics such as the masculine trait to be "mystified" by women reveals simply that men are less observant of women than vice versa and therefore develop little understanding of them. By contrast, almost everything men do will affect what women have to do and thus women are highly motivated to observe men's behavior (Goode, 1982). Thus, characteristics such as "women's intuition", rather than being a "female trait", can be seen to result from the vigilance shown toward superordinates (men) required by subordinates (women).
for survival.

Drawing on research which demonstrates that those in subordinate positions tend to hold values such as justice, compassion and relatedness, while those in superordinate positions tend to value control, rationality and rules, Hare-Mustin points out that whether one is rational or relational depends on the power one holds in the relationship rather than whether one is male or female. In a study examining the interactional styles of family members in resolving conflicts, it was found that in couple conflicts, men use logic while women appeal for understanding; however, in parent-child conflicts, both parents emphasize rules, while it is the children who appeal for understanding (Zuk, 1972).

Hare-Mustin draws a parallel between cultural feminism's construct of the rational (male)/relational (female) dualism, and Parsons' instrumental (male)/expressive (female) dualism. She criticizes Gilligan's well known research on moral development for being a re-invention of Parsons' duality, in its description of men as principled and women as relational when faced with moral dilemmas. Hare-Mustin challenges the assumption that this outcome reflects primarily a gender difference and charges that it more likely reflects a power differential. It is not, then, that males are principled and females are relational, but men and women alike may be both principled and relational depending upon who holds the power in an interaction. From this frame of reference, women's concern with relationships can be better understood as the need to please others when one lacks power; while men's concern with independence can be better understood as the freedom to pursue one's personal agenda when one has power. Whether one is rational or relational, then, has less to do with gender than with positions of dominance and subordination.

A postmodern feminist conceptualization of gender highlights the process of the social
construction of maleness and femaleness as oppositional categories with unequal social value. However, gendered thinking has served to obscure these power differences. This is because gender and power are so inextricably tied they have been confused. Stereotypical feminine and masculine roles are seen as fitting together in such a way as to guarantee more power for male partners and less for female partners. Thus, in this analysis, the power hierarchy is considered to be more central to gender differences than is any particular set of gendered behaviors (Horst & Doherty, 1995). Postmodern feminists contend that the focus on gender difference rather than on power difference has obscured the extent of male power over women in society as well as obscuring the extent of male power over women within the family (Hare-Mustin, 1992).

The Social Construction of Masculinity and the Eroticization of Dominance

Hare-Mustin’s analysis of gender-opposition and the stereotypes of masculinity and femininity can be applied to the problem of sexual coercion. In our culture masculinity is defined in terms of dominance and aggression while femininity is defined in terms of submissiveness and passivity (Russell, 1982). Feminist theory has linked a critique of heterosexuality as currently socially constructed, with sexual coercion (Brownmiller, 1975; Russell, 1982). These writers have drawn a connection between sexual coercion and more common, everyday aspects of male behaviour. Sexual coercion is seen as part of a continuum of cross-gender sexual practices and an extension of traditional male-female exchanges. Sexually coercive behaviour is seen to contain the rules and rituals of traditional cross-gender encounters, such as seduction and conquest. Thus, the use of coercive means to achieve sexual conquest may be considered to reflect an exaggeration of prevailing norms rather than a departure from them (Herman, 1990).
Other feminist writers posit that the common myth that male sexuality is unlearned and
completely beyond male control also serves to justify sexual coercion (Hare Mustin, 1991; Tavris,
1992). From this perspective pornography can be considered the cultural eroticization of sexual
aggression (Russell, 1982; 1988; Stock, 1991). For some adolescent males, pornography serves as
a major socializing influence since through it they may learn to define what is sexually arousing.
Pornography can be seen to provide the social constructs of what is later assumed as inherent in
male sexuality.

The research literature on sexual coercion among cross-gender acquaintances provides
empirical support for the view that sexually coercive behaviour is not anomalous but rather is part
of the repertoire of "average" men. Studies involving samples of college students suggest that
"rape without force" may be the most common kind of sexual coercion (Muehlenhard & Linton,
1987; Rapaport & Burkhart, 1984). Some studies have found that the most common strategies
used by males to obtain sexual intercourse with an unwilling female was "just doing it," even after
the woman expressly indicated her non-consent, as well as the use of "unrelenting arguments and
pressure" in order to get sexual compliance (Koss et al., 1987). In a study of college students,
more than one quarter of the male respondents acknowledged using some form of coercion to
have sexual relations with an unwilling partner (Koss et al., 1987). The findings from these studies
indicate that even before men enter into committed couple relationships a significant percentage of
them already hold the view that it is acceptable behaviour to be sexually coercive with women.
Thus, although traditional marriage is an institution which supports the practice of sexual
coercion, it appears that traditional male gender socialization — by promoting sexually aggressive
men — provides a mechanism for the creation and maintenance of an ideology that legitimizes
sexually coercive behaviour by men.

Some feminist writers note that it is the eroticizing of the dominance in male-female relationships which makes subordination tolerable to women (Goldner, 1988). The popular media contain covert if not blatant messages promoting the view that sexually coercive behavior is erotic. A myth commonly portrayed in movies and on television is that women enjoy being dominated, sometimes going so far as to suggest that women find sexual coercion erotic. Examples of this can be found on television soap operas such as the popular General Hospital which depicted the rape of Laura by Luke and then developed a story line in which they became romantically involved with each other. Such myths can even be found in such classic movies as Gone With the Wind in the scene depicting Scarlett O’Hara’s apparent contentment following being raped by Rhett Butler.

Theoretical Conceptions of Power in Cross-Gender Couple Relationships:

Consistent with functional perspectives, early theoretical frameworks assumed that most couple relationships begin with partners at a basically egalitarian level. Thus, differentials in couple power were considered to be due to the interpersonal relationship. This emphasis on the interpersonal level of analysis neglects both the structural character of the unequal distribution of power between men and women generally as well as neglecting that this inequality is ingrained in the normative structure of couple and family life (Duffy 1988; Gillespie, 1971). In their well-known study Husbands and Wives, Blood and Wolfe (1960) laid the basis for a body of research in which decision making was the main indicator of couple power. What this research failed to notice is that women derive most of their decision-making power from items not considered very
important by either themselves or their partners, while men tend to make the decisions on items important to both (Safilos-Rothschild, 1970). Thus, it is not the number but the kind of decisions made that reveals the power structure.

Feminist critics charged that conceptual frameworks which stress the interpersonal level of analysis were inadequate since they ignore the fact that women are structurally blocked from potential power-based resources by social, legal, economic, educational, and physical bases of greater male power — all of which prevent them from gaining as much power as their partners (Gillespie, 1971). Aafke Komter (1989) builds upon this early feminist conception of couple power by positing that in addition to the overt structural bases for gender-based power imbalance in couple relationships, there are also underlying power structures that need to be acknowledged.

Komter’s (1989) schema posits that in cross-gender couple relationships the superordinate partner (usually the male) is in a position to define the situation, needs, and wants of the subordinate partner (usually the woman) while she is in a position to accept the definition. In this way the interests of the male partner are met without conflict. Komter’s (1989) framework identifies three levels of couple power: manifest power, latent power and invisible power.

The manifest level of power is apparent in visible effects such as overt manifestations of domination and control. This level of power is most easily identified and is therefore quite amenable to empirical study (i.e., wife abuse).

The latent level of power is less overt than the manifest level. When power is operating on this more subtle level, the woman does not attempt to risk conflict for fear of negative reactions on the part of her partner or for fear of jeopardizing the relationship. Thus, conflicts concerning power issues are not raised for examination. Instead, conflict is avoided — by the
woman taking a resigned position. This avoidance of conflict operates to serve the privileged interests of the male partner. Thus, a lack of overt conflict around power issues between a couple should not be taken to indicate that there are no power issues.

Like latent power, the invisible level of power is also more subtle than manifest power. It appears in the implicit values and beliefs about gender and couple/family life that confirm and justify gendered inequality and which make gender-based power differences seem natural and unchangeable (Komter, 1989). Thus, when men and women hold beliefs about masculinity, femininity and couple partnerships that are subtly defined and supported by power relations, those power relations will be sustained without question and overt forms of coercion will not be necessary to maintain them (Komter, 1989). The concept of invisible power is similar to the Dobashs’ (1989) notion of the ideological component of patriarchal marriage which operates to provide support for the structural component.

Komter’s three-dimensional schema provides a theoretical framework for conceptualizing the spectrum of sexual coercion. While it seems clear that the level of couple power operating in the case of violent sexual coercion is manifest power, such overt manifestations of domination and control may not be operating in the case of nonviolent sexual coercion. By tapping into the more subtle levels of gender-derived power, Komter’s schema provides a framework for considering the underlying power structures which may be operating in women’s experience of unwanted sex.

The Meaning of Consensual Sex

Komter’s analysis of couple power calls into question the conventional meaning of consensual sex. Because conventional perspectives have assumed an egalitarian balance of couple
power (barring the presence of manifest power as in the case of wife battering), couple sexual relations have also been assumed to have a consensual basis. In contrast to this view, some feminist critics question whether women can ever truly consent to sex in a male-dominated culture that affords women little economic or political power (Dworkin, 1987; MacKinnon, 1982; 1987). Although it seems evident that women who have been battered are unlikely to be in a position to give genuine consent to sex (or perhaps to anything), it cannot be assumed that all women who are in cross-gender couple relationships are equally dis-empowered. Although it must be acknowledged that there is usually a power differential — the extent of this differential will vary. Thus, although within contemporary traditional couple partnerships the woman's power usually is not equal to that of her partner, this should not be taken to mean that she is powerless. It appears that while conventional perspectives ignore the presence of a power differential, some feminist perspectives take an equally extreme position when they discount the possibility that power can be redistributed more equally within couple relationships.

The question of consent to sexual relations becomes complicated when power is operating on a more subtle level, such as on the latent level. Consensus concerning any issue cannot be genuinely reached when latent power is operating because the woman feels constrained against raising her issues, needs and concerns with her partner. Considered in this light, consent to sexual relations is not genuine if the woman feels there are dangers or risks involved in expressing her non-consent. If, for example, she fears that her partner will be angry with her if she declines and if this wariness leads her to acquiesce, then the sexual relations that follow can be considered coercive rather than consensual. Consent can genuinely be given provided the wife feels fully free to decline to engage in sexual relations. Thus, it is only when wives feel safe enough to say "no"
to unwanted sex, that they are also in a position to say "yes" (Finkelhor & Yllo, 1985).

Dana Jack (1991) points out that gender-hierarchy also interferes with the possibilities for intimacy between life partners. This is because when a woman’s experience of love chronically intersects with issues of dominance and subordination she is left with the impossible dilemma of how to attain emotional intimacy within a relationship based on inequality. Jack (1991) posits that this contradiction contributes to a pattern of “compliant relatedness” in which women accommodate in order to connect emotionally with their partners. Paradoxically, this willingness to accommodate in the pursuit of intimacy contributes to the maintenance of this unequal distribution of couple power, which in turn contributes to the problem of women’s depression.

Types of Nonviolent Sexual Coercion

Nonviolent sexual coercion can take various forms; it can include “verbal coercion,” such as threats of infidelity or threats to end the relationship should the woman not comply with her partner’s demand for sex. It can also include “economic coercion” such as threatening to withhold needed financial support. Finkelhor and Yllo (1985) have identified these nonviolent threats as *interpersonal coercion*.

The concept of nonviolent sexual coercion also includes coercion that results from social norms and gender roles, as well as beliefs about masculinity and femininity (Muehlenhard & Schrag, 1991). These forms of coercion may be operating when, for example, a woman believes that she must have sex with her partner because it is her “duty” or part of her marital role. It may also be operating when a man holds the related belief that he is “entitled” to have sex on demand. These forms of coercion may also be rooted in assumptions about the nature of male sexuality,
such as the belief that the male sex drive is beyond rational male control (Hare-Mustin, 1991). These beliefs and cultural norms serve to justify coercive male sexual behaviour. They also contribute to women feeling obligated to have unwanted sex. The pressure women feel as a result of these social expectations has been identified as social coercion (Finkelhor & Yllo, 1985).

Historically, this type of coercion was institutionalized in the culture as laws, customs, and religion. Although these ideologies are no longer institutionalized, they remain embedded in our cultural norms concerning the nature of sex in cross-gender couple relationships (Muehlenhard & Schrag, 1991).

A Framework for Conceptualizing Sexual Coercion in Cross-Gender Couple Partnerships

Finkelhor and Yllo’s (1985) typology of sexual coercion is useful in conceptualizing a continuum of sexual coercion, ranging from nonviolent to violent sexual coercion. The four types of sexual coercion which they identify — actual physical force, threatened physical force, interpersonal coercion and social coercion — can be combined with Komter’s schema of couple power — manifest, latent and invisible power — to provide a framework for conceptualizing sexual coercion in couple relationships.

The manifest level of power will be most evident in the problem of wife rape, but it may also be apparent in some forms of nonviolent sexual coercion. For example, manifest power may be evident in some instances of “interpersonal” coercion such as when explicit threats are made to end the relationship, to have an affair, or to withhold needed economic support. The latent and invisible levels of power will be most evident in cases of nonviolent sexual coercion. The latent level of power becomes operative when, for example, the threat to end a relationship, have an
affair or to withhold necessary economic support is implicit rather than explicit. The invisible level of power becomes apparent when sexual coercion occurs as a consequence of beliefs about the nature of male-female relationships, couple sex or about the nature of the male sex drive.
Chapter 3: Review of the Research Literature on Sexual Coercion in Couple Relationships

A major constraint in reviewing the literature on sexual coercion within cross-gender couple relationships is the paucity of research focusing on the full spectrum of sexual practices encompassed by this term. Although there is a research literature on the problem of wife rape, there has been virtually no research specifically directed to other forms of sexual coercion, such as the problem of unwanted sex in couple partnerships. Given the limitations of the existing literature, studies on wife rape, which provide the main extant research casting some (albeit indirect) light on the problem of unwanted sex, form the basis for most of this critical review.

As noted earlier, efforts to reform the marital rape exemption laws have played a significant part in shaping empirical research on the problem of sexual coercion. In the mid-1970's feminist activists began to lobby for laws making it a criminal offence for a man to rape his wife. However, social attitudes, such as the belief that wife rape was nothing more than a "bedroom quarrel" or the view that wife rape was less serious than rape by a stranger, were an obstacle to legislative reform (Gelles, 1977; Jeffords and Dull, 1982; Pagelow, 1988). This tendency to minimize the severity of the problem can be viewed as the residue of a traditional patriarchal system and ideology in which a woman was viewed as the property of her father and, later, of her husband (Brownmiller, 1975; Clark and Lewis, 1977; Dobash and Dobash, 1979; Russell, 1982). Feminist activism supported by empirical research findings which challenged these beliefs eventually resulted in legal reforms throughout most of North America.

Definitional Issues

A difficulty which arises in examining the available research on wife rape concerns the variations in definitions used across studies. For example, there are differences between studies as
to what behaviours constitute *rape* or the meaning of the term *marital*. There is, however, a general consensus of opinion that the concept of "force" constitutes a major criterion in the definition of wife rape.

Since most studies have been conducted in the United States where there may be variation between states as to what behaviours legally constitute wife rape, many of the studies have definitional ambiguities reflective of these legal ambiguities. Thus, definitions of wife rape range from an act involving only forced vaginal intercourse (Russell, 1982; Shields & Hanneke, 1983) to forced sex involving vaginal intercourse as well as forced oral, anal, and digital penetration (Bergen, 1996; Finkelhor & Yllo, 1982) to forced sex involving any forced sexual behaviour committed by a husband against a wife's will (Bowker, 1983; Frieze, 1983). In addition, there are conceptual disagreements over the meaning of the term *marital*. In some studies, only couples who are or were legally married have been studied (Russell, 1982); while in others, the term *marital* also encompasses couples who have cohabiting relationships (Finkelhor & Yllo, 1985; Bergen, 1996).

Despite the variations in definitions between studies, what appears to be consistent across the majority of studies is the use of the concept of *threatened or actual force* as a major criterion in the definition of wife rape. On the other hand, what becomes noticeable by its absence is the concept of *non-consent* as a determining factor in this definition. An exception to this generalization can be found in the literature on acquaintance rape, where emphasis has also been placed on non-consent. In addition, the definition of wife rape has been broadened in studies of acquaintance rape to include *any unwanted sexual activity* that is carried out by a spouse without the consent of the other spouse (Weihe & Richards, 1995). When the determining factor is
consent rather than force the possibility of rape without force comes into view. In this situation the woman does not want to engage in sex and she makes this clear to the man and yet sex occurs anyway without the man's using or threatening force (Muehlenhard et al., 1992). It appears however, that most of the existing research on wife rape has not defined the issue in this manner and has generally held that the issue in rape is not primarily one of consent but, rather, is an issue of force.

Discussion

The primary factor in determining rape should be the issue of consent rather than the use or threat of force. Thus, the definition of wife rape should be broadened to include rape without force. However, for the purposes of analyzing the research literature a conventional definition of wife rape will be used and forms of sexual coercion other than threatened or actual forced sex will be considered as “nonviolent sexual coercion.” In addition to unwanted sex this will include “rape without force” which is part of the continuum of sexual coercion but not part of the definition of wife rape. In addition, women who are in cohabiting relationships should be included in research on sexual coercion in couple relationships. This is because a legal marriage does not necessarily change the dynamics of sexual coercion within an ongoing couple partnership. This will be especially true in cohabiting relationships with children, given that a major shift in gender-based power occurs with the entry of children into the family (Hess-Biber & Williamson, 1984; LaRossa & La Rossa, 1981).

Four Small Bodies of Research
The empirical literature on sexual coercion in couple relationships can be divided into four small bodies of research. The first and largest, examines wife rape as part of the spectrum of wife battering; the second considers it within the spectrum of acquaintance rape; the third examines wife rape as a problem in its own right; and the fourth body of research has been gleaned from the others, considering the problem of nonviolent sexual coercion in couple relationships. Although many of these studies have little direct relevance to the topic of unwanted sex, this volume of research provides a context for understanding the lack of development of the study of the problem of sexual coercion in couple relationships in general and the problem of unwanted sex in particular.

Wife Rape: Part of the Spectrum of Wife Battering

The most frequent sources of empirical evidence of wife rape are found in studies that have been designed to examine the problem of wife battering (Bergen, 1996; Bowker, 1983; Browne, 1987; Campbell, 1989; Campbell & Alford, 1989; Frieze, 1983; Johnson, 1993; Pagelow, 1981; Shields & Hanneke, 1983). These studies note that somewhere between 25% and 50% of battered women have been subjected to wife rape, in contrast to the observed occurrence of "force-only" wife rape which ranges between 1% and 4% (Resnick, et al., 1991).

These studies demonstrate that wife rape can be among the most brutal of rapes. The co-occurrence of battering and wife rape has been found to occur at the extreme end on a continuum of wife battering, in that these women have experienced more severe forms of nonsexual violence and stronger emotional reactions in the aftermath (Frieze, 1983; Russell, 1982; Shields & Hanneke, 1983). Only one study found no more overall severity of physical abuse with the co-
occurrence of wife rape (Bowker, 1983).

Several studies provide support for the view that wife rape occurs at the extreme end of the continuum of wife battering. In a sample of women who were ‘battered and raped’ Campbell and Alford (1989) found that in addition to forced vaginal intercourse, other types of forced sex were: anal intercourse; being hit, kicked, or burned during sex; and having objects inserted into the vagina and anus. Browne (1987) notes that a combination of battering and wife rape were features of violent marriages that culminated in homicide. More than three-quarters of her sample of battered women who committed homicide had been ‘battered and raped’ by their partners. These acts included bondage, forced sex with others, and forced sex with animals (Browne, 1987).

In a study comparing the psychological impact of battering, wife rape, and stranger rape, Shields and Hanneke (1992) found that the co-occurrence of wife rape and battery is associated with serious mental health effects and impairment in sexual functioning. The combined occurrence seems to have a more profound effect on the victims’ self-esteem, their attitudes toward men, and sex with their partners than the single occurrence of either wife rape or battery (Shields & Hanneke, 1983).

Bergen (1996) conducted in-depth interviews with 40 women who had been “battered and raped.” These women described a wide range of experiences, from assaults that involved little physical force to sadistic, torturous episodes that lasted for hours (Bergen, 1996). She categorized the rapes into three types: “battering rapes,” “sadistic rapes” and “force-only rapes.” Although all of these women were physically battered at other times in their relationship, approximately 70% also experienced “battering rapes” involving visible injuries (Bergen, 1996).
Approximately 22% experienced "sadistic rapes" at some point in their relationships. These women characterized their experiences not only as physically violent but also as involving acts such as forced sex with others, bondage or torture. Approximately 25% of the women described "force-only rapes" or rapes not generally characterized by physical battering. However, these women described their fear of physical violence if they resisted their partners' sexual demands, and it was this fear that motivated many of them to not resist. Bergen (1996) is one of the few studies to include data from in-depth interviews with women who have experienced wife rape. Although this sample is over representative of battered women, her research is valuable for gaining a more comprehensive understanding of women's lived experiences of wife rape.

Among studies of wife rape with samples of battered women only one study included a question concerning nonviolent sexual coercion. In this study in addition to the over one-third of the respondents in a sub-sample of 137 women who had been both battered and raped, over two-thirds reported they had been "压ured" into having sex (Frieze, 1983).

Discussion

Battered women are clearly over represented in the samples of these studies. Keeping this limitation in mind, these studies indicate that wife rape occurs in a large proportion of battering relationships. Further, it seems clear that women who have been both battered and raped can be found at the extreme end of the continuum of wife battering.

This literature holds that there are two distinct groups of battered women: those who have been raped and battered by their partners; and those who have been battered but not raped. However, as discussed in the last chapter, a woman who has been battered by her partner is
unlikely to be in a position to give genuine consent to sex. This is because she is also living with the ongoing threat of being physically forced to submit to sex — a criterion which is part of most definitions of wife rape. Frieze’s (1983) study provides support for this view with the finding that virtually all of the women in the battered group reported experiencing some form of sexual coercion. Considered from this vantage the findings regarding the percentages of battered women who are also raped, although high, are likely underestimates. When the definition of wife rape is broadened to include the concept of non-consent it becomes clear that most women who have been battered will also have been raped. When viewed in this light, the distinction which these researchers make between battered women who have been raped versus those who have not been raped can be seen as indiscernible.

This body of research provides a challenge to the myth that wife rape should be considered little more than a “bedroom quarrel.” It appears, however, that in their attempts to counter such public attitudes by demonstrating that wife rape frequently occurs at the extreme end of a continuum of wife battering, some researchers have given theoretical weight to the concomitant finding that wife rape rarely occurs in the absence of nonsexual battery. This, in turn, has led to the view that the problem of wife rape can be subsumed under the problem of wife battering, rather than being considered as part of the broader problem of sexual coercion. The unfortunate result of such a view is that the possibility of regarding sexual coercion as existing on a continuum is, in effect, precluded.

Wife Rape: Part of the Spectrum of Acquaintance Rape

In studies designed to examine the problem of acquaintance rape among college students,
Researchers have discovered that for some of these women their acquaintance-assailants were their husbands or cohabiting partners (Koss et al., 1988; Weihe & Richards, 1995). This small body of research provides a challenge to the myth that rape in dating, cohabiting, and marital relationships is less traumatic than rape by a stranger (Kilpatrick et al., 1988; Koss et al., 1988; Weihe & Richards, 1995).

Research on acquaintance rape reveals that when a woman is raped by a non-stranger whom she trusted, she must redefine not only the situation in which the rape occurred but also her relationship with this individual (Weis & Borges, 1973). These women experience shock and betrayal at what has occurred. Furthermore, this trauma is considered to increase when the assailant is her life partner (Shields & Hanneke, 1983). This is because daily interaction with the partner produces chronic stress caused by being constantly reminded of the experience as well as fearing the possibility of another attack (Shields & Hanneke, 1983).

In a study designed to examine the differences in the experiences of women raped by strangers and those raped by acquaintances among college students, Koss et al. (1988) discovered that 44 of the 489 acquaintance rape survivors had been raped by their husbands. Although no significant differences were found between the experiences of the survivors of stranger rape and those of acquaintance rape in terms of emotional trauma, some differences emerged when survivors of wife rape were compared with survivors of acquaintance rape. The women who had experienced wife rape rated themselves as more angry and more depressed than survivors of acquaintance rape. The findings also indicated that wife rape was often recurrent and was less likely to be reported to the police or discussed with another person than either acquaintance rape or stranger rape.
As part of a larger study on acquaintance rape among college students Weihe and Richards (1995) found that 40 of the 278 women who had been raped were survivors of wife rape. One difference that was noted among the partnered women was that they were more frequently forced to perform other sexual acts with their partners (such as oral and anal sex) compared to those raped by acquaintances who reported forced vaginal intercourse.

Drawing from a representative community sample, Kilpatrick, et al. (1988) compared marital, stranger, and date rape survivors. They found no significant differences across the three survivor groups in terms of physical injury sustained, the perceived threat experienced by the victimized women, or in terms of the potential mental health impact on the respondent on any of the disorders assessed including major depression, social phobia, obsessive-compulsive disorder, or sexual dysfunction.

Discussion

Most of these studies were not intending to study wife rape per se and as a result some of the sub-samples of wife rape survivors are quite small. However, these studies demonstrate that women who have been subjected to wife rape may be found elsewhere than among samples of battered women. Thus, these studies challenge the contention that wife rape should be subsumed under the rubric of wife battering by demonstrating that it is also part of the spectrum of acquaintance rape. However, none of these studies include any mention of unwanted sex in acquaintance or couple relationships.

Studies of Wife Rape as a Problem in its Own Right
Few researchers have studied this problem directly using samples that can be considered less selective (Doron, 1980; Finkelhor & Yllo, 1985; Hanneke et al., 1986; Russell, 1982). Diana Russell (1982) and David Finkelhor and Kersti Yllo (1985) have carried out the most comprehensive research in the area of wife rape to date. These studies combine surveys as well as in-depth interviews with women who have experienced wife rape.

Russell's (1982) study is considered the most credible research on the problem thus far. Using a random sample of 644 women combined with in-depth interviews she found that 14% of American women who have ever been married have been raped by a husband or ex-husband. Of these women, 10% were ‘raped and battered’ and 4% were ‘raped only’ or were subjected to forced sex in an otherwise nonviolent context. She also interviewed 87 survivors of wife rape which provide a more in-depth picture of women’s lived experiences of wife rape.

Using a random area sample of 323 ever-married or cohabiting women who were also parents, Finkelhor and Yllo (1985) found that 10% of these women had experienced wife rape. Based on in-depth interviews with 50 of these women they found that 40% of wife rape involves “force-only” rape. These rapes differed from the battering rapes in that they were often precipitated by conflicts over the type and/ or frequency of the couples’ sexual relations. Thus, the partner’s goal was to accomplish the sexual act rather than to harm the woman, as appears to be the case with battering rapes (Finkelhor & Yllo, 1985). This figure provides empirical support to challenge the view that wife rape should be subsumed by the problem of wife battering. In addition, because their sample was not comprising women who had been identified as battered, their in-depth interviews with these women provide a more comprehensive understanding of women’s experiences of wife rape per se than the few other studies containing interview data.
(Bergen, 1996; Bowker, 1983; Russell, 1982). These latter studies provide detailed descriptions of the experiences of women who had usually been both raped and battered.

This body of research provides support for many of the findings made by studies which examine wife rape as part of the spectrum of wife battering, most notably the frequent co-occurrence of wife rape and battering (Doron, 1980; Finkelhor & Yllo, 1985; Hanneke et al., 1986; Russell, 1982). With the exception of Finkelhor and Yllo (1985), this literature also generally supports the finding that wife rape occurs less frequently (1% to 4%) in the absence of nonsexual battery. However, rather than interpreting this finding as indicating the presence of a minor problem, some researchers have suggested that the low observed occurrence of "force only" wife rape may reflect a problem with disclosure (Finkelhor & Yllo, 1985; Koss et al., 1988; Russell, 1982). This problem of disclosure will be discussed in more detail later in this review.

"Nonviolent Sexual Coercion"

Only three studies (Doron, 1980; Freize, 1983; Russell, 1982) have been found within the research literature which give consideration, and in a limited way, to the broader spectrum of sexual coercion in couple partnerships.

In a study on wife rape using a sample of battered women Irene Frieze (1983) also included a question concerning women’s experience of nonviolent sexual coercion. She found that within a control group of 97 non-battered women over one-third of the respondents reported that they had experienced being "pressured" to have sex by their partners.

Julie Doron’s (1980) study, involving 505 women responding to a newspaper survey on intimate violence, included questions concerning rape as well as nonviolent sexual coercion in
“ongoing relationships.” In addition to the 8% of respondents reporting rape, a further 65% reported having had “unwanted sex” with their life partner or lover, while 48% reported feeling “pressured” to have sex with their life partner or lover.

Russell’s (1982) study dealt also with “nonviolent sexual coercion,” albeit in a limited way. In addition to those women subjected to wife rape, a further 12% reported experiencing “unwanted sex.” Russell (1982) offers some anecdotal data on their experiences of unwanted sex. These women provide various reasons as to what circumstances made their sexual experiences unwanted. Among these are chronic/temporary discrepancy in sexual interest; being disinterested in sex during or following an argument, dislike of being awakened for sex; and wanting to discontinue sexual relations once separation/divorce has been decided upon (Russell, 1982).

Others reasons study participants gave for engaging in unwanted sex were: a desire to please their husbands, to stop or avoid an argument, to try to prevent their husband’s infidelity, or to avoid being overpowered (Russell, 1982).

Discussion

Doron’s (1980) figures regarding “non-violent sexual coercion” are very high and, although potentially of much significance to the present study, her findings are limited by the fact that she makes no distinction between cohabiting and non-cohabiting relationships. No distinctions need be made between married and cohabiting relationships, in terms of the level of emotional commitment or the difficulties in terminating such relationships, especially when there are children involved. There are however, some important differences between cohabiting and non-cohabiting relationships in terms of the structure of the relationship and the implications
arising from this. Research demonstrates a progressive loss of the woman’s power relative to that of her partner’s upon marriage/ cohabitation, with the entrance of the first child, and with the entrance of each additional child into the family (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983; Hess-Biber & Williamson, 1984; LaRossa & LaRossa, 1981). Thus, it is not clear to what degree her figures reflect the prevalence of non-violent sexual coercion in acquaintance relationships versus marital/ cohabiting relationships.

The manner in which these researchers conceptualize unwanted sex is not at all clear. Russell makes no distinctions between various forms of non-violent sexual coercion, categorizing all forms as “unwanted sex”. Given her restricted definition of wife rape, it is not clear whether Russell considers “rape without force” to be “unwanted sex”. While Freize (1983) refers only to the experience of being “pressured” to have sex, Doron (1980) makes a distinction between “unwanted sex” and feeling “pressured” to have sex. Although the experience of being “pressured” to have sex may connote a more active form of coercion than having “unwanted sex” the exact meaning of the difference is not articulated. Thus, it is not clear whether Doron considers “rape without force” to be “pressured sex” and consensual but unwelcome sex to be “unwanted sex”.

When we consider the following findings: that 40% of wife rape is “force-only” (Finkelhor and Yllo, 1985); that more than one-third of the women in a non-battered control group reported being “pressured” to have sex with their partners (Frieze’s, 1983), that 65% of women in a geographical survey reported having had “unwanted sex” with their spouse or lover, while 48% reported feeling “pressured” to have sex (Doron, 1980); and that 12% of ever-married women report experiencing “unwanted sex” (Russell, 1982), it becomes apparent that there is empirical
evidence which demonstrates the presence of a continuum of sexual coercion ranging from violent sexual coercion (including "battering rape" and "force-only" rape) to nonviolent sexual coercion (including "rape without force," "pressured sex" and "unwanted sex"). Thus, although it is clear that wife rape is part of the continuum of wife battering, it is also part of the continuum of sexual relations in couple relationships (Finkelhor & Yllo, 1985; Russell, 1982).

The Prevalence of Sexual Coercion

Because wife rape has been such a neglected area of investigation, most of the research to date has focused on determining its incidence / prevalence (Hanneke & Shields, 1985). However, with the exception of Russell (1982), the existing research has seldom been adequately designed to address the actual prevalence of wife rape in the absence of nonsexual violence. Most of the described survivors of wife rape have been essentially stumbled upon in the course of research focused on some other topic, either battered women or survivors of acquaintance rape who were married to their assailant. Other researchers (Campbell, 1989; Doron, 1980; Finkelhor & Yllo, 1985; Frieze, 1983; Hanneke et al., 1986) have used agencies, referrals, and advertisements to generate a sample of survivors of wife rape. These studies are less representative of the total population and thus not as helpful for establishing the prevalence of wife rape.

An examination of the prevalence rates of wife rape reveals that studies need to be differentiated in terms of those conducted with community samples, and in terms of those carried out with more select samples such as samples identified for the presence of wife abuse. The average frequency of occurrence found in studies of less select samples is about 10% overall. Within more select samples, identified because of the presence of wife abuse, approximately 25%
to 50% of battered women report being subjected to wife rape.

**Definitional Problems**

Because the few studies on wife rape define it differently, comparisons of the studies are difficult to make; this is particularly the case with respect to comparisons of incidence/prevalence rates. The prevalence of wife rape will be lower in those studies which limit the definition of rape to forced vaginal intercourse (putting aside for the moment the exclusion of the concept of non-consent), and/or which limit the definition of "wife" to married women, and/or which require an occurrence of more than once to meet the criteria for inclusion in the study.

Russell's (1982) study is the only one which has utilized a random sample and her figures are generally considered to be valid. Her research indicates that wife rape crosses all socioeconomic boundaries; ages, races, educational levels, and length of marriage (Russell, 1982). However, despite the fact that her figures are the highest, they are also considered by some critics to likely be an underestimate of the prevalence of wife rape. For one thing, Russell's (1982) definition of wife rape is among the more conservative ones. In keeping with the legal definition in California, her definition was limited to not only threatened or actual forced sex, but also to forced vaginal penetration. Russell also limited her definition of marriage to exclude cohabiting relationships. Thus, the actual prevalence of rape in couple partnerships may be significantly higher than these figures suggest (Muehlenhard, et al., 1991).

**Problems of Disclosure**

The conclusion that wife rape in the absence of non-sexual battery is a rare phenomenon
has been questioned by some researchers. These critics have suggested that the low prevalence rates of wife "rape only" may instead reflect a problem with disclosure. Research indicates that women who have experienced wife rape are more reluctant to discuss it with researchers than incest by family members, battering by husbands or rape by strangers (Koss et al., 1988; Pagelow, 1988; Russell, 1982). Some of the reasons for non-disclosure are the same as those reported by many survivors of non-partner rape such as: a fear of retribution by the assailant; an attempt to avoid the stigma of victimization; and a fear of being blamed for their own victimization (Hanneke & Shields, 1985). There is also evidence to suggest that when women do disclose wife rape they are more likely to minimize the assaults than to exaggerate them (Russell, 1982). In addition, the sensitive nature of the topic makes it difficult to determine its actual prevalence. Many women who have experienced wife rape appear to refuse to admit, perhaps even to themselves, that the incident was rape (Hanneke & Shields, 1985). Women living in current couple relationships are particularly unwilling to participate in research (Bergen, 1996; Finkelhor & Yllo, 1985; Kelly, 1988). One explanation for this may be that these women may need to deny that their sexual relations have been coercive rather than consensual in nature in order to remain in the relationship.

In considering the reasons why so few women report the "raped only" pattern some researchers have suggested that incidents of battering may be necessary to sensitize the women to identify the behaviour as forced sex or rape (Hanneke et al., 1986). Similarly, women who experience wife rape without battery may have more difficulty recognizing their experiences of forced sex as rape. There is still a myth in contemporary culture that stranger rape is "real rape." Women are often advised against going out alone at night and to mistrust strangers in order to
protect themselves against sexual assault. The implication of this message is that women are safe from sexual coercion in close relationships (Muehlenhard, et al., 1991). Thus, women who have experienced sexual coercion within couple relationships may hold biases about what constitutes rape that reflect these stereotypes concerning “real rape.”

Other research shows that many women submit to sex because they hold beliefs concerning marital obligation (Finkelhor & Yllo, 1985; Russell, 1982). Russell (1982) and Frieze (1983) noted that many of the women they interviewed saw it as their “marital duty” to submit to sex with their husbands, even when they had no wish to have sex. Russell (1982) found that many of the women in her study had always complied with their husbands’ expectations and speculated that such compliance may account for the fact that many of these women had never been “raped.”

Some researchers have suggested that many women who are economically dependent on their partners may redefine the event as one not involving forced sex if they believe that they have no option other than to remain in the relationships (Gelles, 1977; Finkelhor & Yllo, 1985; Russell, 1982; Shields & Hanneke, 1983).

If, as the theoretical literature contends, wife sexual coercion is indicative of women’s loss of sexual autonomy upon marriage, Russell’s findings (despite the likelihood that they underestimate the magnitude of the problem) are most disturbing. When her prevalence rates of wife rape (14%) and unwanted sex (12%) are combined it reveals that more than one-quarter of ever-married women report having experienced some form of sexual coercion (Russell, 1982).

The Emotional Effects and Behavioural Consequences of Sexual Coercion

Research on the emotional aftermath of sexual coercion in couple relationships is limited.
While there has been some research on the effects of wife rape, virtually nothing is known about the effects of nonviolent sexual coercion in couple relationships. The available research suggests that women's reactions to wife rape may be similar in some respects to reactions to both non-partner rape and wife battering (Shields & Hanneke, 1983). This emotional aftermath includes feelings of anger, depression, anxiety, self-blame, somatic complaints and problems with sexual functioning (Finkelhor & Yllo, 1985; Kilpatrick et al., 1988; Koss et al., 1988; Russell, 1982; Shields & Hanneke, 1983). The research also suggests that because of the ongoing nature of couple relationships the experience of wife rape may produce more negative long-term effects than rape by a stranger or an acquaintance. These long-term effects include depression, developing more negative attitudes toward men in general, becoming fearful about new relations with men, and developing negative attitudes toward sex (Finkelhor & Yllo, 1985; Russell, 1982; Shields & Hanneke, 1983; 1985).

According to the findings of several researchers, women who have been both battered and raped by their partners are more likely to separate from them than women who have been battered only (Bowker, 1983; Frieze, 1983; Russell, 1982; Shields & Hanneke, 1983). However, there appears also to be a greater likelihood that separation will be followed by such women returning to the husband (Frieze, 1983; Russell, 1982). A lack of economic resources has been posited as one explanation for this phenomenon (Russell, 1982).

Although there are some similarities, there are also some important differences between women who have been subjected to wife rape and those subjected to non-partner rape. For one thing, wife rape is likely to be recurrent (Weihe & Richards, 1995). While reactions to non-partner rape are more likely to be acute and short term, survivors of wife rape, like battered
women, are more likely to develop such chronic problems as depression (Hanneke & Shields, 1985; Koss et al., 1988). This research suggests that it is more difficult to move past an emotional trauma when, rather than living with a memory, a woman is living with her assailant (Finkelhor & Yllo, 1985; Russell, 1982).

Almost nothing has been written about the children in families in which there is wife sexual coercion. In a study of wife rape among battered women it was found that 18% of the sample reported that their children witnessed the sexual attacks (Campbell, 1989). We know from research on the effects of wife battering on children that children who have witnessed their mother's battering have been found to have a level of adjustment which is comparable to that of children who are physically abused themselves (Jaffe et al., 1987). Extrapolating from this research it can be assumed that the emotional and behavioural effects of witnessing wife rape will have a comparable detrimental effect on children. Due to the absence of overt violence, it can perhaps be assumed in the case of unwanted sex that the children may be less consciously aware of their mother's experience of sexual coercion. However, they may be highly aware of other forms of coercion which might be associated with it, such as economic control and/or threatened or actual extramarital relationships.

Discussion

Extrapolations from studies on the emotional effects of wife rape to the effects of unwanted sex are difficult to make. We may be able to extrapolate with more confidence by drawing also on the feminist theoretical and clinical practice literatures. These literatures contend that the gender inequality which characterizes traditional (hierarchical) couple/family life has a
negative effect on women's mental health, with depression being the most common symptom (Avis, 1988; Bernard, 1972; Jack, 1991; Miller, 1976). While any kind of coercion is considered to have a detrimental impact on the woman because it involves issues of power and control, any level of sexual coercion can also be expected to have negative emotional effects because of the intimate nature of couple sexual relations (Finkelhor & Yllo, 1985). From this frame of reference it can be assumed that women who have experienced unwanted sex would experience feelings of anger and/or depression.

As has been noted, women who have experienced sexual assault, including wife rape, often feel anger toward the assailant (Burgess & Holstrom, 1974; Finkelhor & Yllo, 1985; Russell, 1982) and/or exhibit symptoms of depression (Koss et al., 1988). Because of the ongoing nature of couple relationships these women may feel required to choose between hiding the anger they feel in order to remain in the relationship and expressing their anger to their partner, which may terminate the relationship (Finkelhor & Yllo, 1985). Denial of such anger may contribute to or exacerbate feelings of depression (Jack, 1991). Given the nature of couple sexual relations the development of depression can be considered to be a natural result of the efforts made by women to achieve intimacy within the context of inequality (Jack, 1991).

Gender-based power imbalance also compromises a woman's ability to contribute equally to the couple's/parents' decision-making process (Avis, 1988). It can be surmised that this inequality will not only negatively affect the couple relationship, but will have an adverse effect on her relationship with her child(ren) as well. In families in which the power differential between the parents is so disparate that the woman does not feel safe enough to refuse unwanted sexual relations, she can be considered to be on the same generational level as the children. A mother in
such a position is likely to be so dis-empowered that she may have little or no parental authority.

The Couple/Family Context of Sexual Coercion

The problem of rape in general was initially studied as an aspect of sexual deviancy. In this research, investigators operated on the assumption that sexual assaults were perpetrated by a few psychologically deviant men. Consequently much of the early research focused on sexual aspects of rapists' personality and behavior (Groth, 1979; Groth & Gary, 1981). This early work also focused on the predisposing characteristics of women who had been raped that "precipitated" the assault (White & Farmer, 1992.) Feminist perspectives have challenged these assumptions and put forward the view that sexual assault is better understood as an act of violence. This shift in research focus enabled aspects of sexual coercion that had previously been ignored, such as the role of structured gender inequality and patriarchal ideologies in couple relationships, to come into view.

Data on the couple/family context are very limited. Information on the characteristics of women who have experienced sexual coercion, their partners, and on the structural and ideological organization of these couple relationships has been gleaned mainly from studies designed to examine wife battering. Those studies which have included in-depth interviews are useful in providing some description of the family context of wife rape.

The co-occurrence of wife rape and abuse: As has been noted, research shows that wife rape is most likely to occur in the context of wife battering. The research suggests that in addition to this, many of these women also have a past history of abuse such as child physical or sexual abuse, or having been previously raped by someone other than the partner (Bidwell & White,
1986; Doron, 1980; Frieze, 1983; Randall & Haskell, 1995). Although in the early research this finding has sometimes been interpreted to be an indication that the woman somehow precipitated the assault through her behaviour, feminist perspectives have charged that such interpretations are victim-blaming (Bidwell & White, 1986). More recent interpretations have suggested that victimization may provoke aggression and that, for example, awareness of a previous rape may lead some men to assume that they can subject their partners to forced sex since it has happened before (Bidwell & White, 1986; Russell, 1990).

Adherence to an ideology of traditional gender roles: Although there is no direct relationship between a woman's adherence to traditional gender role attitudes and the likelihood of her partner sexually assaulting her, there is research which provides support for linking masculinity and patriarchal values with committing wife rape (Koss & Dinero, 1988; Muehlenhard & Linton, 1987). Some studies have found that the partner is dominant in the marriage and that he appears to adhere to the belief that he has an entitlement to sex on demand as a conjugal right (Bergen, 1996; Russell, 1982; Finklehor & Yllo, 1985). One of the most common explanations offered by women who were interviewed about their experience was that their partners felt a sense of ownership that gave them the sexual rights to their wives' bodies at all times (Bergen, 1996; Finklehor & Yllo, 1985; Russell, 1982). This research further suggests that because these men assume that it is their right to have sex on demand, they do not consider their behaviour to be rape (Russell, 1982; Finklehor & Yllo, 1985).

Research suggests that women who hold an ideology of traditional (hierarchically structured) couple relationships may be more willing to submit to the sexual demands of their partners. Some researchers have noted that many of the women they interviewed regarded sex as
a "marital duty" and, thus, had always complied with their partner's demands (Finkelhor & Yllo, 1985; Frieze, 1983; Russell, 1982). This notion of marital obligation is a remnant of the ideology of wives-as-property. Because these women feel obliged to comply with their partner's expectations concerning sexual relations, the question of consent is unlikely to occur to them, and therefore "wife rape" is not a possibility (Russell, 1982; Hanneke et al., 1986). It is not surprising however, that the question of consent simply does not seem to occur to many women when we consider that so few studies have placed an emphasis on the issue of consent.

Economic factors: Although there is no relationship between a woman's financial dependence on her partner and the likelihood of his sexually assaulting her, there is some evidence that economic need can pressure women into engaging in unwanted sex with their partners and that it may also make it difficult for such women to leave oppressive relationships (Finkelhor & Yllo, 1985; Russell, 1982).

Alcohol abuse is another factor that has been shown to be associated with wife battering and wife rape (Barnard, 1990; Bowker, 1983). Some researchers have noted that rape often occurs when the male partner arrives home in an inebriated state and demands sex, and the woman objects because of his condition (Bidwell & White, 1986; Bowker, 1983).

Influence of pornography: Some researchers have noted the influence of pornography on the partner's sexually coercive behaviour (Finkelhor & Yllo, 1985; Russell, 1982). Finkelhor and Yllo (1985) found that 12% of the wife rapes in their study could be characterized as "obsessive" or involving sex characterized by these women as "bizarre" or "pervasive" and which often involved pornography.
Discussion

An evaluation of the couple/family context of wife sexual coercion is constrained by a limited amount of data. Most of the data have been found in select samples of women who have been identified as battered and subsequently found to have also been raped. This research makes the assumption that the couple/family context of wife rape is similar to that of wife battering. Although generalizations from these studies to the couple/family context of wife rape can perhaps be made, it is more difficult to generalize from these studies to the context of unwanted sex. However, we can perhaps extrapolate from the assumption made that the couple/family context of wife rape is similar to that of wife battery in order to make some assumptions concerning the structural organization of couple/family relationships in which there is unwanted sex.

As we have seen, research shows that wife rape frequently co-occurs with wife battery, often with the most extreme levels of wife battering. Thus, the context of wife battering and wife rape can be considered comparable in terms of the degree of domination and control which is present. Because any level of sexual coercion involves the abuse of power, unwanted sex can be seen to occur along this same continuum, although probably at a less extreme point. It can therefore be surmised that the degree of gender-based power imbalance which is present within couple/family relationships will be commensurate with the degree of sexual coercion. A central focus of the present study is to consider the degree of gender hierarchy which is present in the couple relationships of the research participants in order to provide an examination of the organizational context of the couple/family relationships in which unwanted sex occurs.

Conclusion
A review of the research literature reveals that the general problem of coercive sex in couple relationships has been insufficiently considered. In considering this neglect however, it should be remembered that the criminalization of wife rape might not have occurred without empirical research dispelling the myth that wife rape is simply a “bedroom quarrel.” This has been accomplished by emphasizing the use of force rather than non-consent in definitions of wife rape as well as by emphasizing the co-occurrence of wife rape and battery. Unfortunately, this emphasis not only implies that wife rape is a problem affecting only battered women, it also implies that all sex which does not involve actual or threatened force can be considered consensual.

Feminist perspectives hold that women’s experiences of sex in cross-gender couple relationships cannot and should not be analysed in such categorical terms. Sexual experiences are conceptualized as occurring along a continuum moving from choice to nonviolent coercion to violent coercion (Finklehor & Yllo, 1985; Kelly, 1987; Russell, 1982).

With the successive progress in criminalizing wife rape, interest in the empirical study of this problem has waned. As a result, wife rape has been relatively understudied compared with other forms of violence against women and children. This contrasts, for example, to the study of wife abuse which has undergone a thorough critique by feminists (Yllo & Bograd, 1988). Within this literature, the use of narrow definitions has been successfully challenged. As a result of this scrutiny, feminist definitions of wife abuse have been expanded to include moderate levels of abuse as well as many forms of emotional abuse. The study of wife rape has not, however, undergone similar scrutiny. It appears that as a result, its empirical study has not developed much beyond the stage of initial research.
The question of how sexual coercion is defined is an important one. However, in order for women to be able to define their experiences of sexual coercion, words have to exist with which to name it. As we have seen, women may have difficulty identifying their experiences as partner rape when they hold biases about what constitutes rape that reflect stereotypes such as that "real rape" is stranger rape. In this review, a distinction has been made between violent and nonviolent sexual coercion. This distinction has been intended to differentiate "wife rape" when it is defined as "threatened or actual forced sex" from other nonviolent forms of sexual coercion. However, when the definition of wife rape is expanded to include the concept of non-consent, the distinction between violent and nonviolent sexual coercion becomes a less useful one.

Thus far we have few terms to capture the experience of unwanted sex. The term "nonviolent" sexual coercion, although accurate, seems less than adequate in terms of the present study since it encompasses both "rape without force" and unwanted sex. The term "non-consensual sex" appears at first glance to be more acceptable, especially as it highlights the importance of the element of consent. However, the concept of "consent" is a complicated one especially when couple power is operating on a more subtle level. When power is operating on the "latent" level, for example, consent to engaging in sexual relations is not considered to be genuine since the woman feels there are dangers or risks involved in expressing her non-consent. Thus, the term "non-consensual sex" also appears to be inadequate because it may be construed in such a way as to exclude those women who technically consent to sex through submission to some form of coercion. The term "unwanted sex" may be the most accurate term that we have in common usage. However, it does not seem to fully capture the coercive element of women's lived experiences of this form of sexual coercion in couple relationships.
The question of how sexual coercion is defined includes not only how women define their experiences, but also how theorists and researchers conceptualize sexual coercion. The manner in which it is conceptualized will, as we have seen, significantly affect the results of empirical research. Studies on wife rape have been directly credited with helping to change the rape laws throughout North America (Campbell, 1989; Russell, 1982; 1990). While this process of law reform illustrates the link between empirical research and legislative action, it also illustrates how social activism can shape empirical research and have the effect of inadvertently limiting the study of a social problem. Thus far only the presence of physical force or threat of physical force has been included in formulating the definition of rape. As we have seen, there may be other very real threats aside from physical force involved in wife rape, such as threats of loss of the relationship or needed financial support (Finkelhor & Yllo, 1985). If, for example, a woman needs the economic support of her partner to support herself or her children and if she knows that her partner expects her to engage in sex with him, then she may feel that she has no option other than to comply with his sexual expectations. These and other types of coercion have thus far been largely overlooked within the context of couple relationships.

Most of the existing research has focused on the association of wife rape with battering. This research demonstrates that wife rape is a serious problem with very real consequences for the women who are violated by their partners. It appears, however, that in attempting to shift perceptions of rape from mainstream psychological perspectives (which have viewed the problem as an aspect of sexual deviancy) to sociological perspectives (which contend that it is an act of violence), theoretical weight has been given to the finding that wife rape rarely occurs in the absence of nonsexual battery. This conclusion appears to have prevented researchers from either
broadening their definition of wife rape or from examining a broader spectrum of coercive sexual practices experienced by women in couple relationships. Thus, although the view in the feminist theoretical literature establishes the link between wife rape and everyday cross-gender sex, there remains a controversy in the research literature as to whether wife rape is even a problem in its own right apart from the problem of wife battering.

Part of the problem appears to lie in the way that wife rape has been conceptualized in the research literature. When it is conceptualized as a violation of consent rather than as an act of force, it becomes clearer that the manner in which consent is violated may vary and range along a continuum of coercion ranging from nonviolent to violent sexual coercion. In contrast, when wife rape is conceptualized primarily as an act of force, the continuum disappears and virtually any sexual practice not involving force or the threat of force can be considered as “consensual sex.” In other words, how wife rape has been conceptualized appears to have given rise to a certain degree of complacency. Although it seems clear that a very high proportion of battered women have also been subjected to wife rape, when the problem is subsumed under the rubric of wife battering only 1% to 4% of wives are considered to be survivors of wife rape in the absence of nonsexual battery. Alternatively, when the problem is expanded to include a broader spectrum of women (such as women who have not been identified as battered), but remains conceptualized in terms of threatened or forced sex, somewhere between 10% and 14% of women have experienced wife rape. However, when the problem is reconceptualized as occurring along a continuum, then 26% of women who are or have been married have experienced coercive sex. Reconceptualized in this way, the scope of the problem becomes difficult to overlook — a problem that is experienced by more than one-quarter of ever-married women cannot be dismissed as
insignificant. And if the definition of "married" were to be expanded to include women in cohabiting relationships, the magnitude of the problem would likely become even more difficult to ignore.

Viewing wife rape as part of a continuum widens the range of possible forms of sexual coercion women may experience. As a result, research becomes both a wider and a more complex area of investigation. The concept of a continuum draws attention to this wider range of forms of abuse which women experience, illustrating the link between more common, everyday male behaviour and behaviour that can be considered a difference in quality but not a difference in kind. The concept of a continuum of sexual coercion enables women to specify the links between typical and aberrant behaviour and therefore enables women to locate and name their own experiences (Kelly, 1987). The existence of a continuum of events which are not easily distinguishable also allows for the possibility that women may not share the same definition of a particular event.

The attention in the research literature which is devoted to providing evidence that wife rape occurs at the extreme end of the continuum of wife battering contrasts sharply with the absence of attention that has been given to the study of wife rape per se as well as to other forms of sexual coercion, such as unwanted sex. This review illustrates that although there is a need for more research on wife rape which is defined in broader terms and conducted with samples of women who have not been identified for wife battery, there is also a need for research on the problem of unwanted sex in couple relationships.
Chapter 4: Study Methodology

Purpose of Study

The primary purpose of this exploratory study is to understand women's experience of unwanted sex within the context of the couple/family relationships in which it occurs. The specific focus is to examine the link between the organizational context (structure and ideology) of cross-gender couple relationships and unwanted sex in order to identify how this context is operating in the area of couple sexual relations in the experience of women having unwanted sex with their life partners. The secondary aim of the study is to link these observations to the development of clinical social work practice approaches that address gender-based power imbalances within couple/family relationships.

Research Questions

Based on a review of the literature the questions that are addressed in this research include:

1) What are women's experiences of unwanted sex in couple relationships?

2) What is the organizational context of the couple/family relationships in which unwanted sex occurs?

3) What part does this context play in women's experience of unwanted sex?

Research Design

The research questions seem best answered by conducting in-depth interviews with women who have experienced the problem. In-depth interviewing allows the investigator to fully explore the responses of women who have experienced unwanted sex and to examine those
experiences within the context of their couple/family relationships. Further, a qualitative methodology is able to tap into the more subtle manifestations of sexual coercion. This study is guided by a feminist postmodern perspective. This ideological perspective, which combines postmodernism's critique of universalism with feminism's social analysis and call to action, provides a potent means for examining women's experiences in cross-gender couple relationships (Baber & Allen, 1992). The study's methodology is informed by the grounded theory method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The primary objective of grounded theory is to generate interrelated hypotheses or theory that is grounded or based in real life data (Gilgun, 1994). Thus, the use of this method is considered to be able to contribute to the development of theory in an area which is poorly developed.

**Rationale for Selecting Grounded Theory**

Although feminist researchers use a range of research methods, it is the "application" of these methods which gives a methodology its feminist character (Cook & Fonow, 1986). Grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) has been chosen as an appropriate method for studying how women's experience of unwanted sex is linked to gendered inequality in couple relationships. By starting with the lived experiences of women, grounded theory moves beyond description to developing a theory that explains the phenomenon being studied (Wuest, 1995). Thus, grounded theory has the adaptability to become congruent with the main epistemological principles of a feminist postmodern methodology. In presenting a rationale for the selection of grounded theory, some clarification of these epistemological premises will be provided as well as how grounded theory can be adapted to these principles.
1) Gender-based power imbalance is acknowledged as a basic feature of social life. An analysis of this feature involves defining women as the focus of analysis (Cook & Fonow, 1986; Neysmith, 1995).

Although grounded theory was not developed to give women a voice, its theoretical underpinnings of phenomenology and symbolic interactionism reflect an ingrained respect for the meaning that people attribute to experience (Charmaz, 1990; Wuest, 1995).

2. The researcher is considered an active presence in the process of inquiry and in the construction of findings. Thus, how the researcher uses a method will shape the results (Neysmith, 1995).

Having a feminist perspective cues the grounded theory researcher to look for constructions around gender and power. This position will be evident in how questions are formulated, how the data are collected, how categories and concepts are constructed and how these processes mold the investigator’s analyses (Charmaz, 1990).

3. Subjective experience is situated within a social context. Research which only describes women’s experience is considered to have limitations because it leaves largely unexamined the social processes lying behind the descriptions (Acker et al., 1991).

A feminist-informed grounded theory study thus places women’s experiences into the study’s theoretical framework — which situates these experiences within the context of the structured gender-based inequality found in hierarchical (traditional) couple relationships (Charmaz, 1990).
4. The aims of feminist research are evaluated in terms of their potential for developing knowledge that can advance the elimination of gender-based oppression (Neysmith, 1995).

Feminism provides postmodernism with a political position (Flax, 1987). Without feminism's commitment to social change postmodernism tends toward relativism. However, the feminist assertions that power mediates social relations, that gender-derived power thus mediates cross-gender couple relationships and that this imbalance must be redressed take precedence over the postmodernist contention that all claims to truth are equally valid.

Development of the Interview Guide

A subset of questions based upon the research questions defines the boundaries of the study and forms the basis of the interview guide. A general interview guide has been developed which is based on a priori assumptions from the theoretical literature as well as on factors identified in the research literature on sexual coercion. The use of open-ended questions allows for detailed tracking of elements from the perspective of the respondents and also allows as many themes as possible to emerge.

In order to develop a more thorough understanding of how the participants interpret, understand, and define unwanted sex in their lives interviews were not structured with predetermined definitions of unwanted sex. This allowed for the exploration of both ends of the continuum of unwanted sex, as well as for extending inquiry beyond these parameters. For example, it became clear during the interview process that one respondent's perceived experience
of unwanted sex more accurately met the definition of wife rape, in that it included having sex while she was asleep. This participant was subsequently excluded from the study because her experience did not meet the study’s criteria for unwanted sex. In contrast, another participant’s perceived experience of unwanted sex fell beyond the other end of the continuum and thus, more accurately met the definition of wanted sex. This was because her sexual relations, albeit not entirely enthusiastic, could be considered to be fully consensual. Although her experience also did not meet the study’s definition of unwanted sex, this participant’s experience was used in the study to provide an example of a negative or alternative case.

Because the study is grounded with an emerging research design, modification of the research questions are an expected part of the process. Thus, the interview guide was revised after the first set of participants were interviewed. For example, initially the impact of having unwanted sex on the participants’ relationships with their children was included in the interview guide. Inclusion of this area of inquiry was based on the identification of this being a gap in research conducted on the problem of wife rape. This area of inquiry however, was dropped following the first set of interviews when it became apparent that this was not an area that particularly resonated with the study participants.

In the exploration of participants’ experiences of unwanted sex information was obtained about the structural and ideological bases of power which were operating at the time of their experience. Exploration of structural aspects included asking participants about areas of couple/family life where gender-based power imbalance are often located — such as in the division of domestic labour and the allocation of financial resources. Exploration of ideological aspects included gathering information concerning the extent of gender-based socialization which
was present in participants' families of origin, as well as exploring their perceptions of the influence this has had on their couple/family life. The interview guides summarized in Appendix C present questions that were formulated to address these areas of inquiry with the participants.

**Sampling Procedures**

Research participants include ever-married/cohabiting women who identified themselves as having experienced "unwanted sex" or as having felt constrained against saying "no" to engaging in sexual relations with their life partners. This definition does not extend to violent sexual coercion or descriptions of threatened or actual forced sex. In addition, women who have been physically abused by their husbands/partners are also excluded from this definition. This is because such women are considered unlikely to be in a position to give genuine consent to engaging in sexual relations as they live under the threat of potential violence should they not comply with their partner's demand for sex. As a result, their sexual relations more accurately meet the definition of wife rape (the use of threatened or actual force). Thus, it would be a contradiction to include women who have been wife battered in a sample of women who have experienced nonviolent sexual coercion. It should perhaps be noted that although for the purposes of analyzing the research literature a conventional definition of wife rape was adopted, in the present study the definition of wife rape has been broadened to include "rape without force" because the primary factor in determining rape should be the issue of consent rather than the use or threat of force.

As noted, the sampling frame includes ever-married / cohabiting women. Although no distinctions have been made between women who are/ have been married and women who are/
have been cohabiting, a criterion for inclusion is that the relationship be an "established" couple partnership of some duration (at least one year). Both women with and without children were interviewed. Although there is some research which demonstrates that the structure of the relationship can become hierarchical upon cohabitation/marriage, there is other research which shows that many contemporary couples are able to establish and maintain egalitarian relationships following this event. This research demonstrates, rather, that a major shift in gender-based power occurs with the entry of children into the family (Hess-Biber & Williamson, 1984; LaRossa & La Rossa, 1981; Schwartz, 1994).

Developing a grounded theory about unwanted sex in couple relationships requires participants with a range of views and experiences. Women’s experiences of the nature of their couple sexual relations undoubtedly will vary according to many factors such as age, years in the relationship, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, and other social and demographic factors. It is important in theoretical sampling of participants to remain cognizant of the need to find a suitable balance between having enough homogeneity to permit common patterns to be identified in order to generate theory, while also having enough heterogeneity to capture some of the diversity among women’s experiences (Cannon et al., 1991). To this end, and while accepting the impossibility of fully realizing the goal of inclusiveness within the confines of a small sample, participants were selected so as to ensure inclusion of persons with intersecting diversities and social characteristics that seemed important in the context of the study in order to increase the heterogeneity of the sample.

A preliminary sample of four participants was selected. Two of these were subsequently excluded on the basis that they did not meet the study’s inclusion criteria (one has been explained
above and the other did not meet the study’s criteria in terms of being an “established” couple relationship in that it was both short-term as well as one which more closely resembled a roommate relationship). Following this theoretical sampling was used in which additional participants continued to be selected to test emerging working hypotheses until theoretical saturation was reached.

The following theoretical sampling procedures were used: Following their agreement to participate in the study, potential participants completed a Biographical Information Questionnaire in which they were asked to provide some basic demographic information. This information was used in the selection of participants based on characteristics which were considered theoretically relevant such as: cultural factors; whether the couple relationship was a current or former relationship; or whether they were parenting children at the time of their experience of unwanted sex. These characteristics were used to confirm/disconfirm concepts emerging from the previously collected data (see Biographical Information Questionnaire contained in Appendix C).

Sample Characteristics

The sample as it turned out was comprised of thirteen women, ranging in age from 24 years to 55 years. The length of their couple relationships extends from two years to thirty-nine years in duration. Eight respondents described their experience of unwanted sex within a current marital/cohabiting relationship, while five are referring to a former relationship. Eleven of the respondents were parenting children at the time of their experience. Two of the respondents are members of a visible minority, while one other is a recent immigrant to Canada. Three participants
have completed highschool, six have completed community college or undergraduate university programs while four have completed graduate degree programs.

**Recruitment Procedures**

Participants for the study were recruited from two sources. The first of these was the University of Toronto student body and the second were women in the Toronto community. Respondents were located through women’s athletic and health centres in Toronto. Advertisements were placed on bulletin boards at various women’s athletic and health centres at the University of Toronto and in the Toronto community (see Appendix A for recruitment flyer). Potential participants were asked to indicate their interest in participating in the study by contacting the researcher by telephone. In this first communication, potential respondents were informed of the nature and rationale of the study. Some screening was also done at this point to ensure that the participant met the study’s inclusion criteria. If she did, arrangements were made for her to receive the study’s Information Package containing the Letter for Participants and the Biographical Information Questionnaire (see Appendices A and C).

After she had received the Information Package, the potential participant again contacted the researcher by telephone. The researcher discussed the research protocol in detail and any questions those potential participants had concerning the study were addressed. The Biographical Information Questionnaire was completed over the telephone with the researcher. Interviews were scheduled and participants were given the option to be interviewed in an office setting on campus or at another location which was mutually agreed upon.

**Ethics Protocol**
The researcher discussed the research project with potential participants. Information that was given to participants included details of the risks and benefits associated with involvement in the research project. This information was provided in writing (information protocols and consent forms). Each participant was provided with a copy of this material. All participants were informed that their participation was completely voluntary. They were informed of their right to withdraw from the research at any time, to speak off the record and/or have part or all of their tape erased. Free and adequately informed consent was achieved in writing in all cases.

Interviews were commenced with a review of the consent form, the purpose and rationale for the study, and the respondent's rights as a subject (see Consent Forms contained in Appendix B).

The subject of unwanted sex is considered a "sensitive topic" and due to the possibility that some participants might experience some emotional discomfort as a result of talking about their experiences of unwanted sex, participants were provided with a list detailing clinical resources available to them (see Resources Providing Counselling Services to U. of T. Students and Resources Providing Counselling Services to Women in Toronto contained in Appendix D).

**Data Collection Methods**

The data were collected through in-depth open-ended interviews with participants. Participants were interviewed over one or two sessions for approximately two hours. The interview was guided by a set of open-ended questions following a general interview guide approach. The use of open-ended questions provides an opportunity for the participants to introduce and clarify elements they consider to be most relevant. Interview data was captured through the use of audiotapes which were then transcribed.
Data Analysis Procedures

In grounded theory the stages of data collection and analysis alternate. Consequently, in this study, every new act of investigation intentionally included and benefitted from what had come before (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Data analysis involves a "constant comparative" method of analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This process entails juxtaposing categories of data and searching for similarities and differences in order to construct patterns both within individual interviews as well as across interviews. These patterns became the themes of the research and form the bases of the working hypotheses which were formulated. These emerging working hypotheses were examined with subsequent interviewees in an inductive, deductive, inductive iterative process. Each stage of data collection and analysis therefore results in the honing of emerging working hypotheses (Gilgun, 1992; Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Grounded theory data analysis procedures are conducted in two stages and include three levels of coding. These three levels of coding include open coding for developing categories of information, axial coding for interconnecting the categories, and selective coding for building a story that connects the categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In the initial stage this coding procedure allows for breaking down, examining, comparing, categorizing and conceptualizing the data. This process involves the construction of codes to note not only what participants emphasize, but to note as well what they minimize or ignore (Charmaz, 1983). In the second stage the data is reassembled by making connections between categories and contextualizing the information. This process involves validating connections between categories and refining and enhancing those categories.
Analysis of the interview transcriptions was aided by the use of the qualitative data analysis computer software program NUD*IST (Richards & Richards, 1994). This is a program that aids researchers in handling nonnumerical and unstructured data. It is like an on-line filing system that allows the researcher to organize, then store data as they are analysed. As such it not only assists in the mechanical tasks in the management of data but also can result in increased accuracy (Richards & Richards, 1994). Although such programs can serve as an organizational tool, the conceptual decisions (the thinking, deciding, interpreting) remain the tasks of the investigator.

Following transcription, each transcript was read while listening to the tape of the interview. This was done in order to discern any errors on the transcript, so as to maintain accuracy when quoting respondents. Next, the interview was perused noting initial, broad themes and patterns on the transcript. Each interview was then examined for themes and potential categories that seemed to capture the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). While each subsequent interview was inspected for new codes, it was examined also for what themes and categories held up from the previously coded interviews. The themes and categories were then labeled and entered into NUD.IST. Each interview was scrutinized until no more new categories could be perceived.

Next the emerging categories were reviewed and analysed using the constant comparative strategy (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1990). During this process the categories generated seemed to point to what Glaser & Strauss (1967) call the “core category.” This emerging core category is a more abstract category in that the participants did not discuss this notion per-se, but the essence of what they were describing related to this. It was my impression
of what they were communicating to me. This emerging core category had to do with how the participants understood the connection between the distribution of power within their couple relationships and their experience of having unwanted sex with their life partners.

Next I began the process of refining categories. In this phase of the coding process, which is more focused coding, codes were organized into patterns. These patterns were then linked and coded sequences of data were selected for the purpose of developing and expanding the emerging theory. (Charmaz, 1983; 1990). The data was examined and compared for the influence of gender-based power imbalance in an attempt to develop a grounded theory that links the organizational components of the participants’ couple relationships with their experiences of unwanted sex to help understand and explain their experiences. Data management was accomplished through “content analysis”, a process which was aided by three major procedures: coding, the use of observer comments and memos, as well as previous research and theory.

**Memo-writing and Observer Comments:** During the research process I engaged in memo-writing which involved the process of drawing my theoretical background to the data. This enabled me to deepen the analytic insights of the developing grounded theory (Charmaz, 1990).

**Previous Research and Theory:** Empirical findings were linked to the literature throughout data collection and analysis. Such linking aids in the hypothesis generation process and raises the level of abstraction of findings. Thus, the openness of induction was combined with the more deductive processes of hypothesis testing and cross-validation of empirical research findings with existing literature (Charmaz, 1990).

The Establishment of Trustworthiness and Authenticity
In grounded theory verification is built into the process of research and becomes part of the criteria used to ascertain the quality of the study (Cresswell, 1998). In feminist research however, data analysis is usually based upon the application of an *a priori* interpretive framework to the data (Drisko, 1997). This interpretive framework often contains a value perspective, which shapes the interpretation of the data. It is therefore the responsibility of the researcher using a critical perspective to make every effort to verify data and to warrant interpretation in order to avoid the potential criticism that such research reveals little more than the researcher’s self-serving ideology (Drisko, 1997). Several procedures for determining the trustworthiness (credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability) as well as the authenticity of the study were used (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, Lincoln, 1995).

Credibility has been ensured through *prolonged engagement*, a procedure whereby trust is built and a rapport developed with the participants, in order to achieve the depth and scope of data collection and analysis required to present a credible description of women’s experiences (Erlandson et al., 1993; Hall & Stevens, 1991; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In addition, my own previous experience as a professional working in the field of child/family mental health services provides me with a history of prolonged engagement. Having more than fifteen years of experience working with individuals, couples and families gives me a deep and rich understanding of the field not available to those without this prior experience.

The use of theoretical sampling to locate *negative cases* (participants who can challenge preliminary theories) was used to ensure credibility. The search for and consideration of contradictory evidence is important in establishing the transferability of research findings (Drisko, 1997). *Negative case analysis* was used for the purpose of ongoing refinement of the emerging
hypotheses until all instances have been satisfactorily accounted for (Creswell, 1998; Schwandt, 1997).

Transferability has been strengthened through the use of *thick description*, a procedure whereby the researcher specifies everything that a reader may need to know in order to understand the findings and to make decisions regarding their applicability to other situations (Erlandson et al., 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

*Peer debriefing sessions* were used to ensure credibility. This procedure which involves the establishment of a review process conducted with knowledgeable colleagues provided an external check of the research process (Erlandson et al., 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These sessions, which were conducted with members of my thesis committee as well as with peer research colleagues, involved sharing my evolving descriptions and analysis of the data for the purpose of helping me to be more fully aware of any implicit biases or points that needed further clarity. This procedure also provided the opportunity for initial conversations about hypotheses as well as subsequent method decisions.

*Member checks* were used to help confirm my interpretations and enhance the study’s overall credibility. In using grounded theory member checking was achieved through the constant comparative method. In this way emergent hypotheses were checked out in interviews with subsequent participants and by returning to previously interviewed participants in order to establish credibility of the emerging theory.

Authenticity was ensured by the use of researcher “reflexivity.” This standard refers to the researcher’s heightened self-awareness throughout the research process (Lincoln, 1995). Since social researchers cannot avoid the social location within which we experience events, the
acknowledgment of assumptions that may influence data gathering and analyses become an important part of the process of inquiry (Neysmith, 1995). To this end I created both an audit trail and a reflexive journal which were used to support credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the study. The audit trail recorded the process of the research including theoretical sampling decisions, any alterations to the research design or interview guides and emerging working hypotheses of the grounded theory that have occurred. The reflexive journal, a kind of diary in which the researcher records information about herself on a regular basis, provided information about my insights and reasons for methodological decisions (Erlandson et al., 1993). While my previous clinical experience provides me with a history of prolonged engagement which I've been able to use to ensure credibility, I was aware that it also has the potential to interfere with my task as a researcher. The use of reflexivity has kept me cognizant of the difference between the clinician's role and interviewer's role.
Chapter 5: Determining the Organizational Context of Participants' Couple Relationships

A first step in analyzing the context of women's experiences of unwanted sex involved undertaking an assessment of the power structure within participants' couple relationships. The conceptual schema developed by Russell and Rebecca Dobash (1979) in their analysis of patriarchal marriage provides a basis for developing a conceptual framework for understanding the organizational context within the respondents' couple relationships. This schema identifies both a structural and an ideological component to male dominance and female subordination within couple relationships. The structural aspect is evident in the hierarchical organization of couple relationships while the ideological aspect is based on an internalized acceptance of the principle of a hierarchical order, rather than an egalitarian one. This schema can be expanded in order to apply it to contemporary couple/family life which, although no longer conforming to a strictly patriarchal model, has not yet evolved into a fully egalitarian one. Extending the Dobash' framework, it can be posited that there is both a structural and an ideological component to power in couple relationships. The structural aspect will be apparent in the degree of hierarchical/horizontal organization of couple relationships while the ideological aspect is based on the degree to which one holds the principle of a hierarchical/egalitarian organization of couple/family life.

Aafke Komter's conceptual framework of power in cross-gender couple relationships (1989) can be used to build further on this two-dimensional framework. Her three-dimensional schema identifies three levels of couple power: manifest power, latent power and invisible power.

The manifest level of power is apparent in overt signs of domination and control. Although this level of couple power is operating most obviously in problems such as wife abuse
and wife rape, it is also operating in less overt signs of domination such as control and/or emotional abuse. Komter’s concept of latent power extends the structural component and the notion of manifest power by tapping their underlying dimensions. The latent level of power is less overt than the manifest level and is evident less through the overt behaviour of the male partner than through the avoidance of conflict on the part of the female partner. This level of power is operating when the woman avoids conflict for fear of negative reactions of her partner or for fear of jeopardizing the relationship. Thus, conflict is avoided by the woman resigning herself to the situation. Komter’s concept of invisible power builds upon the ideological component of gender-based power imbalance. Invisible power, like the concept of the ideological component, emerges in the implicit beliefs about gender and couple/family relationships that confirm and justify gender inequality and which makes such inequality seem both natural and unchangeable (Komter, 1989). In contrast to latent power, in which the woman does not negotiate conflict because she has resigned herself to the inequity of the situation, in the case of invisible power she does not negotiate inequities because she accepts these as being part of the “natural order.” Thus, with both the latent and invisible levels of power an unequal distribution of couple power is maintained in part by this non-negotiation of conflict. Conversely, the ability to engage in an open process of negotiation concerning power issues is considered to be an essential aspect in the establishment and maintenance of egalitarian relationships (Schwartz, 1994).

Determining the Structural/Ideological Context of the Participants’ Couple Relationships

In order to understand the organizational context within which participants’ experience of unwanted sex occurs an assessment of the structural and ideological organization of their couple
relationships was conducted. It should be acknowledged that these assessments are based on information provided by the study respondents without direct input from their partners.

When some degree of gender-based power imbalance was found to be present within the relationship, the structure of the couple relationship has been considered to be hierarchical, whereas when the power has a more even distribution, then the structure of the relationship has been considered to be more horizontal or more egalitarian. The incentive for establishing a horizontal relationship usually comes from having an ideology of egalitarian couple partnership (Schwartz, 1994). Thus, one of the elements that was taken into consideration in determining the type and degree of the structure of the respondents' relationships was the degree to which the respondents appear to adhere to either an ideology of hierarchical or egalitarian couple relationships. In making this determination consideration was given as to whether and/or the degree to which respondents reported attempting to negotiate power issues, specifically in the division of domestic labour and/or concerning the allocation of money.

Although gender-based power imbalance may be manifested in extreme ways, such as in the problem of wife abuse, it may also manifest itself in more subtle ways, such as through the gendered division of domestic labour and the gendered management of financial resources. Studies of domestic labour identify the division of household work and child care as a central area in couple relationships in which gender-based power imbalance can be found (Hochschild, 1989). In addition, studies on family income have identified the generalized income disparity between husbands and wives, as well as the gendered allocation of the couple's financial resources (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983; Pahl, 1983; Schwartz, 1994) to be major contributing factors in the establishment and maintenance of gender-based inequality within couple and family life. Thus,
these areas can be considered the material bases of power in couple relationships (Parker, 1998).

In this study the type of structure, whether hierarchical or horizontal, has been determined by gathering information from participants concerning the material bases of power within their relationships. In addition, the degree of this structure has been determined by the presence or absence of a process between the couple of negotiating the distribution of these power issues, as well as noting the presence of domination or control. To this end the following elements were coded and entered into NUD*IST: division of domestic labour (including household work and childcare), allocation of financial resources, ideology of couple relationship, negotiation of the material bases of power and the level of couple power. These codes were then categorized in terms of whether each element was indicative of a hierarchical or a non-hierarchical relationship structure. These categories were then refined in terms of the degree to which each indicated a hierarchical versus a more horizontal structure.

In conducting these assessments when respondents described an inequitable distribution of power in one or more of these areas, the relationship was considered to be hierarchical. Participants who described inequities in more than one of these areas were considered to have relationships that were more hierarchical than those who described inequities in only one area. A further distinction was made on the basis of whether the participants described having engaged in a process of negotiating power issues. Those participants who had not engaged in a process of negotiation were considered to have relationships that were more hierarchical than those who had engaged in such a process. Among the participants who had engaged in a process of negotiation, those who reported having some success in moving toward a more equitable distribution of power were considered to have relationships that are less hierarchical than those who reported having
little or no success. In the process of gathering this information issues of control and/ or emotional abuse was sometimes found to be present. When present, it can be considered a factor which is indicative of the presence of manifest power and thus, a high degree of gender hierarchy. Those participants who reported the presence of control and/ or emotional abuse in addition to the absence of negotiation or unsuccessful negotiation were considered to have the highest degree of gender hierarchy among the participants.

In contrast to these participants, some respondents were found to have relationships that were considered to be more horizontal or non-hierarchical in structure. Within these relationships there was a more equitable distribution of responsibilities in all or most of the three areas considered: household work, childcare, and money. In addition, these participants also described having engaged in a process of successful negotiation concerning issues of inequity. Those respondents whose partners appeared to share their ideology of egalitarian marriage were considered to have the most egalitarian couple relationships.

The type and degree of this structure are shown in Table 1 (see next page) as occurring along a continuum depicting the distribution of gender-based power ranging from extremely hierarchical to extremely egalitarian.
Table 1  Distribution of Gender Derived Power

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<th>Hierarchical Structure</th>
<th>Horizontal Structure</th>
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<td>Extremely Hierarchical</td>
<td>Highly Hierarchical</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gendered Allocation of Money</td>
<td>Gendered Allocation of Money</td>
<td>Egalitarian Allocation of Money</td>
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<tr>
<td>Process of Negotiation: None</td>
<td>Process of Negotiation: None/Unsuccessful</td>
<td>Process of Negotiation: High success</td>
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The Hierarchical Relationships: Highly Hierarchical Structure:

The structure of three respondents' relationships can be considered to fall within this range of gender hierarchy. In these cases in addition to there being a gendered division of domestic labour, a gendered allocation of the couple's financial resources and little or no process of negotiation, there is also the presence of control and/or emotional abuse:

Participant Four is a 29-year-old Russian immigrant who is describing her experience of couple life within a current marital relationship of seven years. She and her husband came to Canada approximately three years ago. Although they are both working, neither of them is earning the kind of income that they had been expecting and this appears to be a major source of
conflict between them.

She describes that their relationship changed quite abruptly upon getting married:

*P4: He, it's, when his friends come to our place, he didn't want me to be there. In the kitchen I am supposed to stay . . . in the kitchen read a book, in another room. But, T, (the former cohabiting partner) at least he helped me in the kitchen. My husband never help me . . . he'll never touch anything, no cup, no anything in the kitchen, he never cleans. For example, if I wanted to, he can say to me, "I, I want tea, with milk, with everything," and I have to go to him. He'll never touch it. I just used to it.

*Int.: So he thinks it's your job to serve him the tea?

*P4: Yeah, yeah, not just the tea. Everything.

The timing of this change from a non-hierarchical to a more hierarchical structure is supported by research which suggests that even though the institution of marriage is in flux, it continues to institutionalize inequality between men and women (Blumstein & Schwartz 1983; Jack, 1991).

Not only is there no negotiation concerning the division of household work and the allocation of money, the couple relationship can also be considered to be a highly controlling one:

*P4: And when I ask permission to go to my city to my mother for one week, because I was so tired then and I couldn't work and I just wanted to get out sometimes, and he wouldn't let me go to visit my mother. And I was so, "Why? I'm used to. We spent a lot of time together in university. When I had the time, I used to go visit my parents, would stay there for three, five days, it was okay." "But now you are my wife." "What, as a wife, I cannot visit my mother?" "I don't want you to go there alone." My mom, I miss her very much. And I didn't understand this from beginning but after some time, I find out that he didn't want me to see my mother, and, uh, he thought that my mother has influence on me, very strong influence, and he didn't want me to listen my mother. He just want me to listen to all he, he, almost one year I lived there and I didn't, couldn't get opportunity to see my mother. I couldn't get out.

This couple appear to be involved in a conflict concerning how the relationship will be
structured. She describes that his expectations are that she will not only work but will match or exceed his income and that in addition to this she will carry the full responsibility for the domestic labour. Although she is prepared to accept responsibility for all of the household chores and expects to work she wants him to assume the responsibility for being the primary income earner. Further complicating matters is the fact that despite having a university education, she has been able to find only minimum wage positions given her limited skills and current level of English:

*P4: ... and he thinks this is my fault. I think this is his fault. So this is, uh, this is not our fault. But all our friends who live in Canada, Russian, in all these families, man have good job, they income good, they make a lot of money, they all have a car, they, and all these women, they don't work. They have such good relationship and so, so surprise to me. Because in our family, we both working, and we have, uh, terrible relationship and I don't know why.

An issue which is related to this conflict concerns whether this hierarchical structure will be an overtly oppressive one in which she is subordinated by her partner or whether it will be a hierarchical but non-oppressive structure in which she has a position of respect within the relationship. Thus it appears that she is not working so much to establish a more egalitarian relationship — as much as she is working to establish a less oppressive, albeit hierarchical, one:

*P4: Sometimes he want me be like Canadian women, they're so independent, they make money, they know what they want, so self-confident... But I told him, "Look, you want me, you want me to be confident, uh, independent, etcetera, etcetera, but, in another way, you want me be like Russian woman. You want both things together. You want impossible things. It, it can't happen. I can be all-Russian or -Canadian. You have to figure yourself"... If I should go, I don't know, for an interview, do something, like go at the bank, he like that I should be like Canadian, like self-esteem, and smile and behave like Canadian. He, he want to be proud of me, but, in another situation at home or something, when I cooking something, he want to me, like I have to be like his grandmother, she was great cook, and she want to be, he want to be me, like I have to do everything at home, it's, it's I have to clean, shopping, laundry, cooking, I have to be nice and care for him, and get
out of the bed in 6:00 a.m., and go to sleep to midnight and I have to sleep only six, uh, hours, because his mother sleep only six hours, she's doing everything his mother, his mother did everything, she great at home . . . He wish I should came on the table and everything has to be ready, and he hate, uh, when he's sitting on the table and I have to put something and giving it, it's not ready yet and I can tell, "Can you wait for five more minutes, because it's not ready yet?" "Why you call me for dinner, you not do, you didn't do anything! It's not ready!" He just get angry and so, that's the way he is.

Participant Seven is a 45-year-old woman of American-Jewish cultural background who is describing her experience of daily life in a current marital relationship of twenty years. She is a full-time homemaker who does some part-time freelance work and he is employed as a manager. This couple had a long term child-free relationship prior to the birth of their child eight years ago. The structure of the couple relationship can be considered to be highly hierarchical, and there has been a process of a gradual widening of the power imbalance. She describes their couple relationship as having been more egalitarian in terms of their financial contributions for the first few years of the relationship. However, this structure has changed over time as the increases in her partner’s salary have been matched by decreases in hers. This economic imbalance has become more extreme since the birth of their daughter whose special needs require the participant’s full-time care. She describes how becoming the mother of a child with special needs resulted in creating significant inequities in the couple relationship. In addition, her partner seems to have little understanding of how their daughter’s special needs limit her ability to work and contribute financially to the family. Here she describes the pressure that he puts on her to contribute more financially:

*P7: Well, it's been really, really difficult. Um, it's really posed a lot [of] problems, really, really been hard. Um, it's made everything completely
uneven, first of all, although things were creeping in that direction, as D kept making more money, getting better jobs and I stopped what I was doing, or I was just doing, you know, little freelance things here and there and I was not working anything really. And he was, you know, starting to, things were getting kind of uneven, and I think by the time I got, yeah, and then when K was born, it was uneven completely . . . Yeah, first I had to ask him to pay the whole rent. And I would split half the bills and half the rest of the cost. And I found out eventually I couldn't do that either. So, you know, he's now paying the rent, and the bills, and giving me $50 a week and paying for K's stuff. And he doesn't like that one bit, that's a big, big source of friction. You know, "When are you gonna go out and get a job? You must be able to think of something you can do at home to make money." But, see, it's been a problem, coz our daughter has some developmental difficulties.

Although she describes their relationship as having been more egalitarian when they were both earning money, it also seems that there has always been some degree of gender hierarchy present in that she has always carried out a disproportionate amount of the household work. However, this structure appears to have become problematic for her only since the birth of their daughter whose special needs have interfered with her ability to work and thus to contribute more equally financially:

*Int.: And when you were more equal in terms of what you each brought in, when you were both poor . . . did you have less difficulty negotiating things? *P7: Yeah, yeah. There was no problem at all . . . If I didn't have to ask him for money, there was no problem negotiating it, if everything was 50-50 . . . I mean if it was something like a stereo and he bought a tape deck, I would just buy the turntable the next time, and then so it wasn't exactly even, but it would [be] with big-ticket things like that.

*Int.: But what about, what about deciding what's going to be played on the stereo? Would you feel comfortable to say, "I want to put on my music?"

*P7: No, if he's home, he plays his stuff. When I'm home, you know, without him, I play my stuff. Everything that's mine fits into the time when he's not home. When he's home, everything's his.

*Int.: Okay, and it's always been like that?

*P7: Pretty much. But you know especially since K's been born. . . . money and the division of time became absolutely, uh, things became divided in a certain way.
It seems that her partner is neither willing to share in the childcare responsibilities nor to pay for a sitter so that she can have some time to herself. She identifies the need for some respite from the care of her daughter:

*P7: And it's just so, it's such an imbalance, and you know, when she was a baby, it was really, really difficult, because I had her the whole time and there was no relief, and he wasn't willing to, I mean even now, if I want a babysitter for something, I pay for it. If I want, you know, to go to somewhere to see my relatives, I pay for it. And I don't have the money.

She reveals the presence of a unilateral decision-making process when she explains how the decision was made that he would not participate in childcare responsibilities when he's at home even on the weekends:

*P7: Well, he made that decision. And I, know, I mean I understand it, because he really does work hard. He's gone from seven in the morning till seven at night, and I do have some time when K's in school. I don't have a lot of time, and it's stressful, and you know I do work with her the rest of the time, but you know, if I really, really need some time off, then you know, two or three times a year, I, I do, take a day or a weekend or something.
*Int.: How do you, how do you feel? I, I can hear that you understand why you're giving him these weekends off, or he's taking these weekends off, how do you feel about it?
*P7: Well, it's totally frustrating, because I, I really, you know, there, there are often things that I would really, really like to do and it's really heartbreaking to miss them.

In contrast to Participant Four, the structure of Participant Seven's relationship changed most dramatically upon the birth of a child. The timing of this structural change is supported by research which demonstrates a loss of women's power relative to their partners' after the birth of the first child (LaRossa & LaRossa, 1981). The birth of a child with special needs, as in this case, may result in a more entrenched discrepancy in gender-based power due to the long-term nature of the care involved. Until that time she had been able to work and thus maintain a more equal
(albeit still hierarchical) balance of power.

Participant Two is a 50-year-old woman of Canadian-Swiss background who is presently supported by a long-term disability pension. She is describing her experience of couple/family life within a former marital relationship of eleven years in which there were two young children at the time. For the first half of the relationship her partner was a graduate student and she worked as a nurse. Their two children were born during the last five years of the relationship during which time they lived and worked on a farm.

The structure of the relationship seems to have been highly hierarchical except in the area of the co-parental relationship where there appears to have been more of a shared responsibility for childcare. There seems to have been little or no resentment on her part concerning this inequitable distribution of household labour. She comments that she had been socialized to expect to have the full responsibility for the housework:

*P2: Oh I did all that kind of thing (referring to the housework). He was really good with the kids in terms of caring for them, except that he never emptied a dirty diaper - never - it was left until I found it. But he would change the kids. And he was good with them until they were old enough to start giving him lip and then it was not good after that. When they were little, he was good.

*Int.: You said you did all the meal preparation?

*P2: Yeah I did, and I was only working about 20 hours a week, and he had a pretty insane schedule, so I had no problem with that. . . .When I think about it, there was one year where he was working part-time in the community and I was working full-time in the city and so he had I. (their child) that year with him full days, because he worked evenings, so I was home. So he did the childcare then, BUT he didn't do the laundry or anything like that . . . he didn't . . . if he cooked it was a favour, you know . . . it was waiting for me when I got home.

*Int.: And how did you feel about that?

*P2: I didn't question that - that was the way I was raised. And I enjoy I
relax doing domestic things, so it was only burdensome when I was really tired.

In addition to the gendered division of household work there was also emotional abuse of the participant by her partner. Here she describes his controlling behaviour:

*P2: ... that was the flavor of the relationship (chuckling) in the last two years — he was very angry and quite cruel. He'd always been — I mean he used to tell me things like if I was sitting with my hands relaxed he'd tell me that my hands weren't in the right position — my fingers should be extended when I was relaxed because that's the way his hands were when relaxed ... When I'm relaxed, my fingers are quite flexed, that's the way my fingers are strung. Some people's fingers extend more when they're relaxed and his were like that. And he told me that my hands couldn't be relaxed because my fingers were in that position.

*Int.: And what would you do when he said that?

*P2: Well I'd straighten my fingers - it was like I must be wrong, you know ... And that started before we were married. There's only one possible way of perceiving anything and it's how he does — like the world would be great if everybody just listened to him. So you know I presented all kinds of problems in the relationship but I was up against that all the time — that attitude.

This respondent's traumatic childhood history has relevance for understanding her apparent acceptance of this markedly hierarchical structure. Because of her experience of intrafamilial child sexual abuse she appears to have entered her couple relationship with internalized beliefs about gender and couple/family life which normalize male domination and female subordination (Komter, 1989). The experience of incest thus provided an indoctrination into the acceptance of an ideology of a hierarchical order rather than an egalitarian one. Such indoctrination operates to maintain and support a hierarchical structure since once it has been internalized radical challenges to inequities seem to be outside the 'natural order' of things (Dobash & Dobash, 1979).
Participant Six is a 55-year-old woman of British descent, who presently works as a
volunteer addiction counselor. She is describing her experience within a very long term former
marital relationship of 39 years in which there were two children. She worked as a sales clerk and
her husband was employed as a long distance transport driver which necessitated that he would be
away from home for days at a time. The structure of their couple relationship can be considered to
be highly hierarchical because of the presence of control. Like Participant Five, it appears that her
experience of intrafamilial child sexual abuse also indoctrinated her into accepting an ideology of a
hierarchical order to couple/family life. This ideology has relevance in providing a context for her
apparent acceptance of the hierarchical structure of her couple relationship. She appears also to
have entered her couple relationship holding an ideology of hierarchical rather than egalitarian
couple relationships.

Like Participant Two, she does not appear to have experienced any conscious resentment
concerning the power imbalance at the time of her experience of unwanted sex. She explains this
with the rationale that she was living at a time and in a social context in which gender roles were
more clearly defined:

*P6: No, no, back then, the women did all the taking care of the housework
and the taking care of the baby, um, managing the money. Uh, he went to
work and earn the money. He was good at, um, giving me the money, I'd say
in the beginning, there was very little to manage. But, uh, no, he didn't, uh,
no childcare, housework, that would be all something that I would do.

Although in retrospect she sees his efforts to convince her to not work as controlling
behaviour, at the time she thought that he was acting out of concern for her well-being:

*P6: I couldn't stay, I couldn't, uh, home, I didn't like staying home. But I
did not want me to work. He would tell me anytime I got a job that he could
make double that. "One more run and I could make this fortune. What good are you working?" So he, uh, he would really give me a hard time for me to work. "Why would you want to work? I can give you blah blah blah. You don't need to work."

*Int.: What was it for him, do you think? What was it about having a wife that worked that was making him fight you on it?

*P6: Hmm, today, I can say that, um, he was afraid I would, his biggest fear's come true. You know, it's taken this many years but, uh, all I can think of was that I would find other interests, that I would find that the world was different. Uh, today, I don't know if he would admit it, today that was control.

Over the course of this long relationship she finally began to challenge some of the constraints that she had been accepting. The independence that she gained from learning to drive a car ultimately appears to have enabled her to eventually leave the relationship after 39 years:

*P6: I've had to fight for any independence that I've ever got, to drive a car, "Why would you want to drive a car? We live in the city. The TTC's right out there. Why drive? I'll drive you wherever you want to go. You don't need to drive." "I want to drive." "Well, that's crazy if you drive. You know how many accidents are out there? You know how dangerous it is?"

*Int.: And that felt like control?

*P6: Probably, yeah. It felt like, yeah, it feels like control today, but what it felt like back then was I'm crazy if I want to drive, but I did get my license. I felt like I was trying to get something that, uh, why are you so stupid? I felt stupid. I felt like, why are you so stupid that you want to drive? He can drive you whenever you go. Can you drive? You can't drive! ...But there was another part inside me, that, um, said, well, when I learned to drive I was 37 and I was working full-time, and what I said was, and I quit smoking, I said, I quit smoking. I am now going to treat myself and I am going to get driving lessons and I don't care if it takes me forever to learn how to drive, because he had me convinced that I couldn't do this thing, um, I don't care how long it takes, I will pay for it out of my money. And I did that and I said, so to quit arguing with him, I said, "Maybe I won't get ever out there and drive, but at least then I have a license and I got a choice."

I would never just, he would be a hard one to fight, he would fight within a roundabout way, "I'm doing this for you, right? I mean, I'll drive you. Why would you need a car?" You know, so, yeah, but, "I'm thinking of your safety" is his attitude and it would be what I'd call today, "mind-fucking." Because I'd be thinking, hmm, this wonderful man, and why would I want to do these things? And so, um, it was the best thing that I ever did in my life!
And I think, THANK YOU! A 100% THANK YOU! It did so much for my independence. I wouldn't have been able to leave J. Um, I had started, you know even before leaving him, it continued when we moved off to (new city) as part of the control. I was able to drive back and forth to Toronto. Uh, I just, so much in my independence, to seek help, when we moved out, we moved out there I think about a year after I got my license. I would've been stranded out there, totally dependent on him or other people. And I, my license and driving, to me, has not been an easy job for me. Every time I get somewhere or go somewhere and I drove, I was like, "THANK YOU! IT FEELS SO GOOD JUST TO BE . . .!" Oh, I just never get over the feeling that I can just get into a car and just go!

Quite Hierarchical Structure:

The structure of four respondents' relationships can be considered to fall within this range of gender hierarchy on the continuum. In addition to there being a gendered division of domestic labour and/or a gendered allocation of the couple's financial resources, these participants describe either not engaging with their partners' in a process of negotiating power issues or engaging in an unsuccessful process in these areas. While the first two respondents report little or no process of negotiation concerning these inequities, the last three describe some attempts on their parts to engage in such a process of negotiation, although the outcomes appear to have been quite unsatisfactory.

Participant One is a 31-year-old woman of Canadian-West Indian background, who is describing her experience of couple and family life in a former three and one-half years long cohabiting relationship. She met her partner when her daughter was a year old and describes their relationship as having progressed quickly to becoming a cohabiting one largely out of convenience (they lived in the same apartment building). Although they were both working when they began cohabiting, they each returned to school and were full-time university students throughout most
of the relationship.

She describes their relationship as having had a short "honeymoon" phase during which time she appears to have been pleased with her partner's involvement with her daughter and relatively unperturbed by his lack of shared contribution to the household work:

*Pl: It was, in the very beginning, in the first three months, four months, it was fun, I remember being . . . I even have pictures of him with the baby sleeping on his chest . . . and I remember all three of us making pastries doing fun stuff in the house and me not worrying about how messy the house was or anything. Just doing a lot of nice things together. But not after a little while, no, he became ah, indifferent toward L., (her daughter) very indifferent. There was maybe three or four times when he had difficulty with her being around.

Although she now considers herself a feminist, it does not appear that she entered this relationship holding a conscious egalitarian ideology. They do not appear to have engaged in a process of negotiating issues such as the division of household responsibilities or expenses and it seems that right from the beginning of their cohabitation there was an unequal division of domestic labour:

*Pl: Oh I did everything, like everything. I was 27 years old doing everything for my boyfriend . . . laundry . . . I mean a lot of the things were things I would do anyway for me and L., you know what I mean . . . He didn't share a lot of things because there was this division of um it was my apartment officially still . . . he let friends stay in his downstairs . . . he didn't give it up and he let friends stay and it was still my place.
Int.: So how did that figure into you doing everything?
*Pl: Well, because I guess he felt that it was mostly my responsibility because it was my home. We weren't married . . . and I liked things to be a certain way for me and L.

In addition to the gendered division of domestic labour, there does not appear to have
been shared responsibility with regards to their household expenses. The rationale she offers for this was that he continued to maintain a separate apartment throughout their relationship. She describes that his previous financial contribution dwindled once he stopped working and returned to school:

*P1:  He contributed (to the groceries) while he was still working at (company name). But then he left to go to University as well feeling that I was doing great and he should do the same thing as well and after that he didn't contribute he was very stingy very. He didn't want to accumulate a lot of debt under his name. He just like stopped helping me with food but he'd eat at my house still and I'd let him as well because eating is a social time you know and he helped out here and there like basically he didn't help with the food.

Participant Nine is a 32-year-old African-Canadian woman who is describing her experience of couple life during the first two years of a current cohabiting relationship. Following a two-year separation they have been reunited for the past three years. She is employed as a receptionist and he is a painter.

This participant held an egalitarian ideology of couple relationships upon entering the relationship. She describes that upon moving in together she made efforts to establish an egalitarian relationship in which there would be shared financial responsibility and a shared division of the household work. Although her partner was in apparent agreement with this non-hierarchical structure his motivation to do his share of the domestic labour had tapered off after a few months of cohabitation. In addition, when she attempted to take up these issues with him he was not very receptive to her complaints:

*P9:  When we first moved in, and I don't know, I thought he was pretty enlightened kind of guy, um but I hadn't lived with him. Um, the cleaning, after about six months, the cleaning just kind of went down, like we didn't
really work at a cleaning schedule or anything, just when things would get dirty, I'd do the dishes and then he'd do the dishes and once a week we'd kind of clean with both of us around. And then after yeah about 6-8 months, he kind of just stopped cleaning, so I just continued doing the cleaning for about a year. And then I just started kind of going on strikes, just like not say anything and not doing the dishes, in, "well, if you can leave dishes in the sink for like a week, then I can, too," but then I would always break because I couldn't stand it. So we talked about it, and I just wanted to make up a cleaning schedule coz he'd always say, “Oh, well, I'll do this” but then he never would, so I thought, I don't know, whatever, like “this week I do this, this week you do that. There, if you forget, it's on the fridge.” And he got really offended about that, and “Oh, I don't want to follow rules blah blah blah.”

At the same time that his participation in the household work dwindled he also began to be less reliable in terms of paying his share of the rent on time necessitating that she lend him money which sometimes left her short of money. The conflict concerning the inequitable division of housework appears to have been exacerbated by her growing irritation concerning his lack of financial responsibility.

*P9: Yeah, yeah, just you know, sometimes when, and I admit it too, when I don't have a lot of money, I'm, I generally become more irritated at things, you know that's when the cleaning would really bother me. And things or just you know irritating things that people do, you know I didn't really think that money would make that much of a difference.

Her decision to go on “strike” appears to have escalated the conflict. In the process of arguing with him about these issues, it became clear to her that he held some sexist notions concerning women such as that he considered that the housework was her responsibility:

*P9: And a couple of times when we'd gone out, we'd both been drinking when I was kind of on strike and we'd come back and he'd be drunk and look at the place, he started you know yelling at me, like “Well, you should clean this place up” and blah blah blah and I was like, “I can't believe that's coming out of our mouth.” I was just totally shocked, but again um you know we
fought about it for a while, but I realized it didn't have anything to do with me, it had to do with him and his upbringing his upbringing and maybe really things that he thought about women that had not come out yet, coz he hadn't like lived with someone and in a relationship.

Participant Ten is a 39-year-old woman of Canadian-Polish background who is a sole support parent and presently employed as an outreach coordinator for a nonprofit organization. She is describing her experience of day-to-day life in a former marital relationship in which there was one child who was born in the last year before they separated. Throughout most of their relationship she was a full-time graduate student and her partner worked off and on in his father's business and at times doing carpet installation.

In this case the main power issue concerns her partner’s lack of adequate financial contribution to the family. She describes that his lack of financial responsibility had been a problem since the beginning of the relationship:

*P10: Um, well basically I've since discovered, I mean I had to beg him to have a kid later, um, basically he just didn't and doesn't want any responsibility, you know. None, whatsoever. I mean, he liked to have sex a lot, but he didn't want responsibility. ...And I just, I just felt, I just got started to get really mad, I was working at two jobs, and even when I got my scholarship, um, when I, when I started my Ph.D. or when I got working on my Ph.D. I'd get a scholarship and I would T.A. year round, like it just used to piss me right off.

Although it seems that the issue of his inadequate financial contribution was a problem from the beginning of the relationship it became more of an issue following the birth of their child, three years into the marriage. She recounts her partner's rationale for refusing to get a joint bank account:

*P10: (He) won't do it, won't do it (get a joint bank account) ... We even
talked about it in couples therapy and actually the couples therapist said, “Look, you’ve gotta do this.” Nope, it’s his money. He didn’t want to be, he didn’t want to be pussy-whipped.

Following the birth of their child the scope of the gender-based inequity spread to their coparental relationship. She describes feeling depressed when she realized that he expected her to assume the full responsibility for the care of their child:

*P10: Um, I was just depressed, I don’t know . . . But also with the baby, like I did have child, I did have childcare at that point, but F’s idea was that he shouldn’t have to do anything around the house, ever. And I remember once we went down to Mexico when my son was six weeks old to get him baptized, so he flew us down and one day I was just I was napping on the bed and um and I was so engorged that milk was just spurting from my breast and I said to F, “Could you just take the baby and walk around for a little while?” And he said, “I’m on holidays.” Fucking asshole! . . . and I mean that’s your life. I didn’t know any better, I didn’t think . . . I just felt like I was fucking up. I just couldn’t cope, I was, just couldn’t cope with it, with what other people did all the time, that’s what I thought. . . . But, no, F was like a total piece of work, total, like I, I didn’t think I deserved any better, like one thing, I like to go to church and every Sunday, I moved to the Anglican church um in my late 20’s and I like to go church, I liked the music, I liked to go the place, well, he would get mad at me because in the morning when I was getting dressed I was making noise. And this would be at 10:00 in the morning. Yes, so that was annoying him, he couldn’t sleep.

*Int.: Now where was the baby?

*P10: Um, well after the baby was born, well, I had to take the baby with me, because he needed his sleep.

Participant Five is a 49-year-old woman who is completing a Master’s degree. She is describing her experience of couple and family life within a six-year marital relationship in which there were two young children. She describes the couple relationship as having been somewhat egalitarian before she became a mother and a full-time homemaker. At that time however, the structure of the relationship became a very hierarchical one in which she no longer had access to
their financial resources and was expected to enact the traditional roles of stay-at-home wife and mother.

In her telling of the story of her relationship she describes the first two years of the marriage as having been more egalitarian. During this time she worked and supported her partner while he finished his university education. The structure of the relationship began to change when she became a full-time homemaker following the birth of their first child. She describes the change in how money was managed once she stopped working:

*P5: I was working . . . and he was supported by a student loan, I think, so I was the income earner and things were better then. . . . Well, I had a certain amount of money for rent, for you know our living expenses, but I seem to recall that I had pocket money whereas after when I stopped working, it wasn't just available, I had to ask and justify. And if A. decided that it wasn't a worthy thing to spend money on, I didn't get it. So that was, that was making me pretty unhappy. . . . Um, he was very secretive about finances. He wouldn't tell me what his salary was, or, um, just simple, simple things that I wanted to know. Um, I had to account for everything I did. If I was going to go out, if I was going to use the car, if I needed extra money, I had to tell him why. So I felt quite dependent on A. for everything.

It appears that she initially accepted these gender role expectations; however she soon began to resent having the full responsibility for the domestic work when her partner also became demanding and critical of her efforts.

*P5: I did it all. I did it all . . . All the housework, all the childcare, all the cooking, everything. And A.'s argument was, coz I, I would complain about that. I've been with the kids all day, I wanted to get them to bed at a certain time, so I'd have some, some time in the evening. A. wanted to play with the kids in the evenings, uh. And I remember arguing with him, that his job was nine-to-five, but mine was 24 hours a day, and it wasn't fair and that he should help. So he brought the money in, that was his job, and mine was in the house, a very old-fashioned, traditional perspective . . . he, he was insistent, everything had to be tidy and dinner on the table, and what did I do
at home all day anyway, so why can't she you know get this done? And I remember we had a terrific row over my leaving a vacuum cleaner out. He had to go on a business trip and the vacuum cleaner was out when he left and it was in the same place when he came back. And that was just horrendous, horrendous.

Initially she made some efforts to redress the imbalance of power, by expressing her dissatisfaction concerning some of the issues of inequality to her partner; however, it appears that she was quite unsuccessful:

*P5: Well, I remember trying to get him to change a diaper and he wouldn’t and said, oh, that was my job . . . or words to that effect. It's my job. And I remember having the feeling that he thought I didn’t do anything all day. That, that was, it was my job and it was pretty easy, so don’t complain (laughs). ...And, uh, and they had just come out with, this was, uh, early 70's, uh, disposable diapers were on the market. I remember wanting them just for a holiday. Just to go away, so I wouldn't have to wash diapers (laughs). But that was one of the things that A. wouldn’t give me the extra money for. So, uh, yeah, I had lots of diapers.

She describes a pattern of interaction in which he would respond to her concerns by taking the position that her perspective was not a reasonable one; she would eventually accept that she was wrong and that he was right and she would acquiesce to him on the issue. This pattern later changed to one in which she stopped challenging his authority, feeling that it was pointless to try to change things. The level of couple power that appears to be operating here is similar to that which was operating within Participants Seven’s and Four’s relationships. In all of these cases the level of power can be considered to be “latent” in that the participants have moved into a position of resignation in which they conclude that there is no point in negotiating or arguing with their partners about issues or conflicts. She describes the pattern:

*P5: I could say things, but he, he was quite manipulative, and I used to feel
I talked in circles until I gave up or, or there wasn’t any point in talking anymore. I’d always, I’d always lose, I was always losing and then I just didn’t see any point in talking or wanting things different. In the end, we didn’t, we hardly ever argued. I gave up really early on... for some reason it wasn’t validated. It was, uh, I’d feel, at the end of it, there was no point talking. Um, I just gave up talking.

As with Participant Seven, the structure of Participant Ten’s and Five’s relationships changed most dramatically upon the birth of children. In addition to research which demonstrates a loss of women’s power relative to their partners’ after the birth of the first child (LaRossa & LaRossa, 1981), there is other research which demonstrates that the mother’s power in the family diminishes, relative to her partner’s, with the birth of each additional child (Hess-Biber & Williamson, 1984).

Despite achieving little or no success, those participants who describe engaging in a process of negotiating the inequities concerning the material bases of power have been considered to have relationships that are less hierarchical than those who report not engaging in a process of negotiating these power issues. This is because these participants appear to have held an ideology of egalitarianism at the time about which they are speaking. However, while the impetus for establishing a non-hierarchical relationship usually comes from having such an ideology, there may be a significant discrepancy between holding an egalitarian ideology and being in a position to put it into practice (Schwartz, 1994).

Somewhat Hierarchical Structure:

Those participants who engaged in a process of negotiating the material bases of power and who also had some success were considered to have relationships with the least degree of
gender-hierarchy among the ten participants who were considered to have hierarchical relationships. The structure of two respondents' relationships were considered to fall within this range of gender hierarchy on the continuum.

Participant Three is a 24-year-old woman of Canadian-English background who is describing her experience of daily life in a current marital relationship of three years. The parents of two young children, they moved quickly into the stage of becoming parents when she became pregnant early into their dating relationship. They appear to have very little shared time as a family since she works part-time as a health club instructor during his days off from his sales position. Thus for two days a week he is solely responsible for the care of their two young children which necessitates that he contribute significantly to the housework and child care. It appears however, that when they are together as a family unit they revert to a more hierarchical structure in which she performs the bulk of the domestic labour. Thus although the structure of the couple relationship has some egalitarian features it can be considered to be essentially hierarchical.

Early in their relationship this participant appears to have made a conscious effort to work out a balanced division of household labour with her husband. She describes a process in which she has made some gains as well as some compromises:

*P3: I think the large part of it was that it was a lot “my” problem and a little bit “our” problem. The “our” problem came that the dishes, for instance the dishes, whose responsibility was it and when? My problem was that it wasn't happening as fast as I wanted it to. It wasn't being done the way that I wanted it to in that case. So the “our” problem was the actual task and whose responsibility it was. But then when it came down to the “this day, it's your responsibility,” my problem was that, “Okay, it's not done at 12:00 in the afternoon, what's wrong with you? You know, why isn't it done? Why aren't you doing it? You're sitting here watching tv!” So that was my problem and I had to get over that. So now I kind of leave it in my mind. I assume that nothing will get done. That way I don't get angry with anything related to that.
That, okay, and actually it happened to be working because now I'm not bothering him about it. He mentioned that a lot whenever I said, "Hon., could you please, could you please do the dishes? Make sure they're done by the time I get home, please, you know it makes me uncomfortable." He said, "You know, when you ask me that it makes me frustrated, it makes me not want to do them." And I understand that, I'm glad he told me. So now I say nothing and it gets done. You know I'll go home, I may not expect the dishes to be done, but they will be. So the one thing I do expect is that when I do go to work and when he's making dinner for everybody is that he makes me some too. That's really all I expect now (laughs).

When she says "that's really all I expect now" it seems to suggest that rather than establishing an equitable balance she has adjusted by lowering her expectations in this regard. She describes having gone through a process of resigning herself to the situation. She explains that she has come to understand her partner's need to "relax" at the end of his work day. Over time she's become increasingly understanding of the onerous length of his workday while at the same time she seems to be minimizing the fact that her workday is considerably longer than his and that she too has a need to relax at the end of her workday:

*P3: A couple of thoughts, okay. We had a, we were, at the moment, our relationship is such where if I have to, I remember when he took a week off last year, I almost killed him because I was still in that mode that "I have to do this and this and this and if you're not going to help me and just sit there, I'm going to kill you." (Laugh) And it really came down to that, that I figure, we're in the same room and there's stuff to be done. He's a very (pause) relaxed person, to put it nicely. He will sit down and he will watch tv and he will clean up when there's nothing good on (laugh). Understandably, he's got a full day, he works, well, it ends up being a 12-hour day when you end up looking at it. So he's got four 12-hour days, plus then one of his days, he works 12 hours and so by the time he gets home it's been 14 hours since he's been awake. I used to get angry at it but now I just, now I understand, "No, you just want to relax."

Participant Eleven is a 30-year-old woman of Canadian-Italian background describing her
experience of couple and family life within a current cohabiting relationship with a man who is a recent immigrant from Nigeria. They have lived together for two years and have a daughter who is two and one-half years old. She is self employed as a reflexologist and he works as a cabinet maker.

In terms of the division of household work she describes having worked out a more equitable distribution of responsibility and in this area of family life she seems to be quite comfortable challenging him to participate more fully:

*P11: Okay. We kind of worked it out in a way, maybe it's not really fair, but he does a good washing of the dishes, so he washes the dishes, I cook, he washes the dishes afterwards. He claims he doesn't cook well but he can cook and he does cook, coz I don't cook sometimes, so he cooks. Uh, grocery shopping, we do very well, we together and uh yeah and then there's the cleaning of the house, he cleans well too, so he clean and I clean, whether he gets the kitchen one day and I get the living room . . . it's almost, like, okay, he takes his share, it's almost like well every morn-, every evening, we clean the kitchen together, whether he's doing more one time or I'm doing more one time. Or I'll say "(The) floor hasn't been washed yet, looks really bad. Let's get to it," and he does get to it when it's wet but he's not a good washer of the floor and but he is good at or putting things orderly. Like yeah he has changed a lot, he has.

In this case the unresolved power issue is created by her partner's lack of shared financial contribution to the family. What she had initially believed was a matter of mutual decision-making turned out to be more a matter of economic control when she realized that he was not carrying out his part of their agreed upon financial plans. In accordance with their plan to save money for the down payment on a house she had agreed to move to a less expensive one bedroom apartment, thus necessitating that they share a room with their daughter. In addition, despite earning the smaller income, she had also agreed to pay for all of the rent and most of the living
expenses. She later learned that he had spent the entire house fund without consulting her. She
describes the process of coming to the realization that he had not kept their agreement:

*Pl1: Then he wanted it to change to, “You pay for the rent, I pay for the
bills” and that whatever he has left over, we agreed to keeping for making
ourselves a home and that makes sense to me, I guess sort of. Okay I kind of
like don't sometimes have money and he would give some money here and
there, but he was very, very picky about that and I didn't appreciate that. But
uh I thought okay coz we're saving it will get me by, but it didn't ever make
sense and so I said afterwards when he had done that thing and he just took
off and told me that there's no more savings, and I just said, “Well, then I'll
never ever make the agreement to working out anything with you ever again.
I hope you will have to deal with those consequences because that's what I
choose to do.”

In contrast to the degree of comfort that she appears to feel with regards to addressing
issues concerning the division of the childcare and household work, she does not appear to have
the same degree of comfort when it comes to addressing his lack of adequate financial
contribution. She explains her view that she doesn't put much emphasis on money — and appears
to feel that it would reflect badly on her if she were to admit that she considers it to be an
important issue:

*Pl1: He used all of our savings to go back home and do something with his
family and I didn't appreciate it because he never asked me and I just that's
when things were not good with us were not good. But I you see we get over
things and I care about him and I don't let money bother me, I don't let those
things bother me.

The More Horizontal Relationships:

In cases in which there is a more equitable distribution of power in terms of the material
bases of power the structure of the respondent’s couple relationships was considered to be more
horizontal or egalitarian. Given that holding an egalitarian ideology usually provides the impetus for establishing a non-hierarchical relationship, one of the factors that was taken into consideration in determining the level of egalitarianism among these respondents was the degree to which one or both members of the couple appear to adhere to such an ideology. The effort on the part of these respondents to establish more egalitarian relationships has been successful; however, as with the hierarchically structured relationships, there are also degrees of egalitarianism within the non-hierarchical relationships.

**Somewhat Egalitarian Structure:**

The structure of a respondent’s relationship was considered to be somewhat horizontal when there seemed to be a fairly even distribution of couple power overall although there were also some notable areas of gender inequity. The structure of one respondent’s relationship fell into this range on the continuum.

Participant Eight is a 45-year-old woman of Canadian-Ukrainian background describing her experience of day-to-day life in a former marital relationship of thirteen years in which there were two children. Throughout the marriage she worked as a business executive and he was self-employed. The structure of this relationship can be considered to be somewhat egalitarian in that although there were some areas of inequity the structure appears to have been essentially non-hierarchical. Like those participants living in more hierarchical relationships, she appears to have carried out much of the household work; however, in the area of child care there appears to have been significantly more shared responsibility.

Although his participation in terms of the childcare appears not to have been spontaneous,
his involvement seems to have been significant. Here she describes how they managed the distribution of the domestic work:

*P8: I did the housework, I did the laundry, I sewed the curtains, and did all that stuff, I made all my clothes, I was the perfect person. I baked, I canned . . . And all D did say, "I really don't care if you do any of this, just relax," and he probably meant that, but it never came, like sometimes I just wanted him to really take me away some place, something to take me away, take me some place, you know do something for me without me asking you to do it for me . . . it was never too automatic. Now that being said, over the years, D did contribute a fair bit. Coz there was no choice really, but he did do things. I guess people would often say to me, like "You're really lucky, because D watches the kids, D does that." Uh yeah I can say I was pretty lucky, but you know what I always said that he owns half those kids too, I mean it's not the mother's role only . . . He did a lot with the kids though. Part of that was reinforced, but part of that was simply the reality that I was working and being a mother . . . He got up and in fact, in fact someday he'll recall this to his most precious time, but with S, he got up in the middle of the night and did all the night feedings. That was his time . . . Uh I think he enjoyed doing it, I think he did. I think he enjoyed it, he enjoyed that time.

This respondent was the higher income earner throughout most of their relationship. She agreed early in the relationship to give her partner full control of their financial resources, an arrangement which does not appear to have been particularly problematic for her until much later in the relationship (at the time of the unwanted sex which will be detailed in a later chapter):

*P8: Yeah, it was all in D's account. Um I tried having my own account, and I would always have to give him money and whatever else you know and I got I began to get so busy in my life in my career that when he said, "I'll take care of all the money," that sounded okay to me. Uh I trusted him uh I felt that I could trust him, and then it got to the point where when anytime I needed money I had to ask for money.

Although research shows that power within the family is correlated with income level, the member of the couple who has the highest income is usually the male (Schwatz, 1994). And
although men generally welcome the financial contribution that their partner’s employment makes to the family this approval appears to be most often based on the premise that her contribution is “supplementing” his contribution. When this arrangement is reversed, it may pose a threat to the relationship especially when one or both members of the couple hold a hierarchical ideology (Parker, 1998). When one or both members of the couple feel uncomfortable with the fact that she rather than he is assuming the role of “provider,” the woman may try to compensate for this by taking on more responsibilities at home (Parker, 1998). In addition, they may both collude to maintain the illusion that he is the financial provider even when he is not (Schwartz, 1994). In this case the respondent’s agreement that her partner would have sole control over their financial resources may reflect her/their discomfort with her being the higher income earner.

Quite Egalitarian Structure:

The structure of the couple relationship can be considered to be quite egalitarian when the participant has been markedly successful in her efforts to redress the areas of gender inequity. While for women the incentive for constructing a non-hierarchical relationship often stems from having a feminist ideology, for men this impetus may result from the ideology of an insistent female partner, as opposed to their own egalitarian ideology (Schwartz, 1994). The structure of one respondent’s relationship can be considered to fall within this range of gender-parity.

Participant Thirteen is a 34-year-old woman of French Canadian background who is describing her experience of daily life within a current cohabiting relationship of two years duration. Her adolescent son lives with them. She is employed as an automobile assembly line worker and he is a successful real estate broker. Although she and her partner started out with
what might be considered a "somewhat" egalitarian relationship, the structure of this relationship can be considered to be quite egalitarian because the process of redressing the inequities in which they have engaged has been both quite successful as well as being ongoing throughout the relationship.

This couple's living arrangements can be considered to be less conventional than those of the other participants in the study. Although the relationship is a sexual one, a condition which she placed upon moving in with him was that they would have separate sleeping quarters:

*P13: We sleep in different bedrooms, but, um, we are a couple. I was, I am to respect that. You know, like I wouldn't just go out on dates or whatever, but I have a lot of friends, I have a very busy life, and you know, I just always did what I do. And I told him that, "You know, this will never change."

This participant entered the relationship holding clear expectations concerning the division of household labour and was clear with her partner from the outset that she had no intentions of playing the role of "little housewife." She describes the process that they went through early in their cohabitation around sorting out the day-to-day responsibilities:

*P13: You know, like, "Just because I'm living here doesn't mean that I am now your little housewife, blah blah blah. You know, I'm none of that to anyone." But the cleaning because, he used to be a millionaire, so he never had, he never had to clean house or anything, he doesn't even know what a house looks like dirty, and I wasn't about to teach him that now, and I thought, "You know what, if you're going to live like this, I'm outta here, I'm outta here right now." I said, "Coz I can't live in this pigsty." And then, so he hired a cleaning lady, which he's only ever known. And like to do laundry was just, he never knew how to do laundry, he never knew how to wipe a counter down, you know (laughs). So that was another whole thing.

The structure of their relationship appears to have become increasingly more egalitarian over the course of the two years that they have been living together.
*P13: But see down the road, then he realizes that, I said, "Your cleaning lady is like totally, she's good, but very, very expensive. Right?" Coz I knew a lot of people and I asked around and I knew that she was very expensive. So then he finally got that through his own arrogance and everything, which has been a big, big obstacle in his life. . . . So now, in the two-year period, um, P has done a 360 in his life, um, he's, he's a very excellent man, any woman would die to have my position. He caters [to] me just like royalty, he's just constantly there for me.

**Highly Egalitarian Structure**

When both members of a couple hold an ideology of egalitarian couple partnership the structure of the relationship can be considered to be highly egalitarian. The structure of one respondent's relationship fell into this range of egalitarianism on the continuum.

Participant Twelve is a 44-year-old woman of Canadian-European background who is describing her experience of day-to-day life in a current marital relationship of five years. They are both successful business executives. In contrast to Participant Thirteen's partner who appears to have developed an ideology of egalitarian relationships at least partially at the insistence of his partner, in the case of Participant Twelve her partner appears to have been committed to having an egalitarian relationship right from the start. The incentive to establish an egalitarian relationship may also derive from having witnessed the deterioration of a previous traditional marriage (Schwartz, 1994). In this case this is a second marriage for both in which they have formed a blended family unit with adolescent children from both sides.

She acknowledges that they have not had to struggle with many of the kinds of issues that many couples have to deal with. She notes that because they entered their relationship at a stage of life, level of professional success and financial security where many of the issues that couples
face have been resolved, they are able to be more like partners. She makes specific reference to the fact that they neither co-parent nor have any financial worries:

*P12: So we have the advantage of having been through a couple of relationships and knowing what we want and don't want. So we came in at a level where we laid out our expectations of each other and um so we're much more partners, and though we're not child-rearing together, right? So a lot of the things that are difficult in a relationship we don't have to deal with. We, um we got to know each other when we were both successful professionals, we're both making a lot of money, so we didn't have all the uh problems of poverty and stability, so far we've been lucky. I mean, there's always getting older and old age and all those problems, but it feels like we managed to come in at a level when all those previous conflicts are not an issue. Um, so we've gotten off easy so far.

Like Participant Thirteen she entered this relationship holding clear views concerning the division of household labour:

*P12: Well, when I met D, the first day I met him, I said, "You need to know that I don't cook. So I won't cook. If this is something you expect then forget it." So, um, because of, uh, previous relationship, he was, uh, my first husband, um, he was very, um, upset, that I wouldn't do, um, I wouldn't cook, I wouldn't do housework, um, more than he did. Um, if, if, uh, it was, uh, too alarming, I'd hire somebody, I had no interest in doing that kind of homemaking and that was a big deal for him. So, um, previous husband, yeah, and D said, "Of course, you know, why would you?" So, again, um, he's driven, I'm driven, he has a challenging job, I do, so the household has been, "If you like it, you do it. If I like it, I do it." We do a minimum and then hire people to do the rest. And most of it outsourced. I've even hired cooks, you know if I, I'm not eating nutritiously enough, I'll find somebody to cook and, uh, and then when we, our time demands go down again, then we'll cook ourselves.

She emphasizes that they are both very good decision makers and very good problem solvers. In contrast to respondents who describe having given up trying to negotiate solutions to conflicts, she considers it a pleasure to work through a problem with him:
*P12: But uh but we haven't had a problem with money. We had uh when we were negotiating our premarital agreements and writing in our wills, there was a lot of tension coz these were very hot subjects, and how much would go to S and how much would go to S, and how much would go to N, but it was tension than just we just kept building up until we got settled and then. It was, both of us are hyper-rational and very good problem solvers. So it's like a very pleasure to work through a problem, which is exactly why we connected so strongly.

It is interesting to note that now that she is in a relationship in which there is no expectation that she perform traditional gender roles she seems to have been freed up to develop an interest in cooking for the first time in her life: “And now I've said, ‘My career aspiration is to become a homemaker’ (laughs). It is now safe to do it (laughs). So I'm trying to get into it.” She also notes that this was not something that she was able to consider doing in her previous marriage in which the structure of the relationship was more hierarchical. And although she was able at the time to tolerate her partner’s disapproval of her refusal to do more than half of the household work, she did not apparently feel that it was safe enough to allow herself to consider doing some recreational cooking. This appears to be because had she done so the risk would have been that her partner might have come to expect this of her on a more regular basis, which would have probably taken the enjoyment out of it.

Table 2 (next page) shows a chart of the participants' biographical information. This chart includes each participant's age, relationship status (whether current/former marital/cohabiting relationship), number of children, cultural background, and employment status.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Rel. Status</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Cultural Background</th>
<th>Employment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P 1</td>
<td>31 yrs</td>
<td>Ex-Cohab. 3 ½ yrs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Cdn.-West Indian</td>
<td>Undergrad student</td>
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<td>P 2</td>
<td>50 yrs</td>
<td>Ex-Marital 11 yrs</td>
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<td>Cdn.-Swiss</td>
<td>former Nurse cur. disability pensioner</td>
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<td>Cur. Marital 3 yrs</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Cdn.-English</td>
<td>part-time Health Club Instructor</td>
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<td>Cur. Marital 7 yrs</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>Russian immigrant</td>
<td>former Factory Worker cur. part-time</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Cdn.</td>
<td>was full-time Homemaker cur. Grad student</td>
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<td>part-time freelance</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>Cdn.-Polish</td>
<td>Grad. Student cur. Outreach Co-ordinator</td>
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<td>Cdn.-Italian</td>
<td>Reflexologist</td>
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<td>2 dependent</td>
<td>Cdn.-European</td>
<td>Business Executive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 13</td>
<td>34 yrs.</td>
<td>Cur. Cohab. 2 yrs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Fr.-Cdn.</td>
<td>Auto. Assembly line</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 (below) depicts the range that participants' couple relationships fall along a continuum depicting the distribution of gender-based power. It should be noted that none of the participants’ relationships fall at the most extreme end of this continuum. Potential respondents who might have been considered to fall within the range of “extremely hierarchical” on the continuum were excluded from the study since it includes the presence of physical abuse.

Table 3

Range of Structural Organization Among Participants’ Couple Relationships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hierarchical Structure</th>
<th>Horizontal Structure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extremely Hierarchical</td>
<td>Highly Hierarchical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P. 4</td>
<td>P. 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P. 7</td>
<td>P. 9</td>
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<tr>
<td>P. 2</td>
<td>P. 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P. 6</td>
<td>P. 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quite Hierarchical</td>
<td>Somewhat Hierarchical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P. 8</td>
<td>P. 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highly Hierarchical</td>
<td>Somewhat Egalitarian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P. 12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egalitarian</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Discussion

Although all three levels of couple power are present within the relationships of study respondents, the presence of both invisible and latent power appear to have particular relevance to the present study.

In the cases of Participants Two and Six their traumatic experiences of intra-familial child sexual abuse has relevance for understanding their apparent acceptance of the markedly hierarchical structure of their couple relationships. Feminist analyses contend that it is within the
hierarchically structured family that males are socialized to be dominant and females are socialized to be submissive. When this gender-based power imbalance is extreme male dominance can lead to male domination and female submissiveness can result in female subordination and with disturbing frequency such domination and subordination results in family violence (Duffy, 1988). All forms of intra-familial violence, including incest, can be considered to be linked to the hierarchical structure of traditional family life (Bograd, 1988). Thus, the family as a place where male and female children receive their social training concerning gender and power can be a most oppressive social institution in which children are indoctrinated into accepting the ideology of a hierarchical order. Thus, in addition to the fact that the manifest level of power is operating within both of these couple relationships (as evidenced by the presence of emotional abuse and/ or control) the invisible level of power is also present and appears to be operating to maintain and support this hierarchical structure. It appears that because of their traumatic childhood histories these respondents entered their couple relationships with internalized beliefs about gender and couple/family life which justify male domination and female subordination and which make them seem both natural and fixed (Kompter, 1989). These values and beliefs have relevance also for their experiences of unwanted sex which will be developed in an upcoming chapter.

Although many of the study’s participants have made concerted efforts, especially during the early stages of cohabitation, to risk conflict in order to work toward the establishment of more egalitarian couple relationships; several of these participants later moved into positions of complacency concerning the structure of their relationships. Kompter’s (1989) concept of latent power provides a useful lens for understanding this phenomenon. While some of these participants appear to have come to the view that there is no point in negotiating inequities concerning the
material bases of power and have moved into a position of resignation concerning the
immutability of the hierarchical structure of their relationships, others appear to have justified to
themselves that their partial success in redressing the imbalance of power is sufficient.
Regardless, in both instances conflict is avoided by the female partner and these non-discussions
operate to serve the privileged interests of the male partner. The significance of these non-
discussions to participants’ experiences of unwanted sex will be taken up in more detail in the
next chapters.
Chapter 6: The Organizational Context of Couple Relationships and The Experience of Sex: An Overview of Patterns That Emerged

The central phenomenon which emerges from this study concerns the nature of the connection between the structural and ideological organization of the respondents' couple relationships and their experience of having unwanted sex with their life partners. Three patterns and their variations of this central phenomenon have emerged from the study. In addition, three types of “negative case” have also emerged which provide both support for and a challenge to the developing theory. In each of the three patterns the structure of the couple relationship can be considered to be hierarchical, while in the alternative cases the structure can be considered to be more egalitarian.

Pattern One: “Direct” Connection Between the Structure and Unwanted Sex

Within Pattern One there appears to be a direct connection between the respondents' experience of inequality within the couple relationship and their experience of unwanted sex. These participants have made conscious efforts to establish more egalitarian relationships with only limited success and as a result there is some degree of discontent with the hierarchical organization of the relationships. The connection between the hierarchical structure and their experience of unwanted sex can be considered to be “direct” in that the participants appear to have an awareness of the connection and place their experience of unwanted sex within the context of unresolved conflict pertaining to power issues, such as the negotiation of household work, child care and / or money. Figure 1 (below) depicts Pattern One.
Figure 1

Pattern One: Direct Connection between the Hierarchical Structure of the Couple Relationship and the Participants’ Experience of Unwanted Sex

Pattern Two: Direct Connection with Mediating Elements

In Pattern Two there is also a direct connection between the hierarchical structure of the couple relationship and the participants’ experience of unwanted sex; however a mediating element is also present and is operating to obscure this connection. As with Pattern One there is some degree of discontent with the hierarchical structure of the relationship on the part of the respondents due to the limited success resulting from their efforts to redress this inequity. From this pattern two variations have emerged: a “sidetracking” mediating element and a “blurred” mediating element. In both of these variations the mediating elements operate to deflect the participants’ attention away from the direct connection by drawing their attention to the third element. In the “sidetracking” variation the mediating element is introduced by the participant’s partner, while in the “blurring” variation this element is introduced by the participant. This pattern
is shown in Figure 2.

**Figure 2**

![Diagram showing the relationship between Presence of Hierarchical Relationship, Presence of Mediating Element, and Experience of Unwanted Sex.]

**Pattern Two: Direct Connection with Presence of Mediating Element**

**Pattern Two Variation One: Direct Connection with ‘Side-Tracking’ Mediating Element**

Although the connection between the hierarchical structure of the couple relationship and the participants' experience of unwanted sex appears to be a straightforward one, in this variation the connection has become obscured by a mediating element (such as fear concerning an affair) which has been introduced by their life partners and which operates to deflect the participants' attention away from it. Thus, their initial clarity concerning the connection between their discontent concerning unresolved conflict regarding power issues and their disinterest in having sex appears to have become sidetracked by the reaction of their partners to their diminished sexual responsiveness. Figure 3 (next page) depicts this variation of Pattern Two.
Figure 3

Pattern Two Variation One: Direct Connection with “Side-Tracking” Mediating Element

Pattern Two Variation Two: Direct Connection with “Blurred” Mediating Element

In this variation the connection between the participants’ dissatisfaction concerning the issues of inequality within the couple relationship and their lack of interest in having sex with their partners appears to be mediated by something else (such as a “lack of time for herself” or a “lack of privacy”). While in the case of the “sidetracking” variation the mediating element has been introduced by her partner, in this variation the third element has been introduced by the participant. Although the participants appear to have some awareness of the connection between the hierarchical structure of the couple relationship and their experience of unwanted sex, they do not consistently place their experiences directly within the context of one or more of these power issues, but focus more on the connection between this third element and their experience of unwanted sex. This second variation of Pattern Two is illustrated in Figure 4.
Pattern Two Variation Two: Direct Connection with Presence of "Blurred" Mediating Element

Pattern Three: Indirect Connection with Antecedent Elements

In Pattern Three the connection between the hierarchical structure and the participants' experience of unwanted sex cannot be considered to be a direct one. While in the case of Pattern Two, the connection between this structure and the participants’ experience of unwanted sex has been obscured by a mediating element, within this pattern this connection has been completely obstructed by an antecedent element. Further, while in the “sidetracking” and “blurred” variations the mediating elements can be considered to be directly relevant to the connection between the hierarchical structure of the couple relationship and the participants’ experience of unwanted sex, operating to deflect their attention away from the connection, within this pattern the antecedent element appears to be only indirectly relevant to the connection. This is because its influence on the respondents’ experience of unwanted sex precedes the establishment of the couple relationship. One variation of this pattern has emerged from the study. In this “overriding” variation the participants’ experience of an antecedent element (such as childhood trauma) has the
effect of "overriding" the connection between the hierarchical structure of the relationship and the participants' experience of unwanted sex. Figure 5 depicts this third pattern.

**Figure 5**

![Diagram](image)

**Pattern Three:** Indirect Connection with Presence of Antecedent Element

**Pattern Three Variation One: Indirect Connection with "Overriding" Antecedent Element**

In this variation of Pattern Three there does not appear to be a straightforward relationship between the participants' experience of inequality within the couple relationship and their experience of unwanted sex. Although the structure of the couple relationship can be considered to be hierarchical, the respondents do not appear to have been consciously discontented with the inequality and as a result have not made conscious efforts to establish more egalitarian relationships. In addition, an antecedent element is present which obstructs any connection which might be considered to exist. Thus, at the time of their experience of unwanted sex the participants do not appear to have been aware of a connection between the inequality within their couple relationships and their experience of unwanted sex. It seems that the ability to perceive such a connection has been "overridden" by the antecedent element such as the
participants’ experience of childhood trauma, in this case intra-familial child sexual abuse. Although the participants’ traumatic childhood experience may be considered to be only indirectly connected to the structure of their particular couple relationships, it is considered to be directly connected to a broader analysis of the traditional (hierarchical) family as an oppressive social institution in which there is structured gender-based inequality. From this perspective intra-familial child sexual abuse is viewed as part of the spectrum of family violence and as a manifestation of male domination and control. Accordingly, the connection between the hierarchical structure of their couple relationships and their experience of unwanted sex is considered to be an “indirect” one because these participants were indoctrinated through their traumatic childhood experiences into an acceptance of an ideology of patriarchy and thus to accept male control and domination as a normal part of family life. See Figure 6 below.

**Figure 6**

Pattern Three Variation One: Indirect Connection with Presence of “Overriding” Antecedent Element
The Negative Cases:

Three types of “negative case” have emerged from the study which provide both support for and a challenge to the emerging theory. In each type the structure of the couple relationship can be considered to be horizontal in that there is a more egalitarian balance of power within the couple relationships.

Negative Case 1: Equality Can Mean Quality Sex

The first type of alternative case provides support for the developing theory that there is a connection between the presence of a hierarchical structure and the experience of unwanted sex by demonstrating that within a participant’s egalitarian relationship there is only wanted sex. There appears to be a straightforward connection between this horizontal structure and the participant’s experience of wanted sex in that the respondent places her experience of wanted sex within the context of having established an egalitarian relationship. The participant’s experience provides support for the postulate that there is a direct connection between having an egalitarian relationship and having wanted sex as well as providing indirect support for the supposition that there is an inverse connection between having an egalitarian relationship and having unwanted sex.

Negative Case 2: Equality: Counterproductive to Quality Sex

The second type of alternative case provides a challenge to the emergent theory that there is an inverse relationship between having an egalitarian relationship and having unwanted sex by demonstrating the occurrence of unwanted sex within an egalitarian relationship. In this case there appears to be a straightforward connection between the horizontal structure of the couple relationship and the participant’s experience of unwanted sex in that the participant places her
experience of unwanted sex within the context of having established an egalitarian relationship. In fact it appears that the participant’s increasing professional success and potential earning power relative to that of her partner, combined with her decision to separate from him, has paradoxically placed her in a position in which she has become just as vulnerable to sexual coercion as participants in relationships that have a much more hierarchical structure.

**Negative Case 3: Equality: No Antidote for Lack of Chemistry**

The third type of alternative case provides a second challenge to the emergent theory that there is an inverse relationship between having an egalitarian relationship and having unwanted sex. In this case there appears to be no particular connection between the egalitarian structure of the couple relationship and the respondent’s experience of unwanted sex and it is the participant’s lack of sexual attraction for her partner which seems to account for her experience of unwanted sex. This negative case also provides a challenge to the developing theory that there is a connection between the distribution of power within the couple relationship and the experience of wanted/unwanted sex in that if there is no mutual sexual attraction between the partners, then having or working toward the establishment of an egalitarian relationship may have little or no impact on the couple’s sexual relationship.
Chapter 7: Pattern One: Direct Connection Between the Structure and Unwanted Sex

Three participants provide examples of this pattern in which there appears to be a direct connection between the structure of the couple relationship and the experience of unwanted sex. The structure of the couple relationships can be considered to be hierarchical and according to the participants there is some degree of discontent concerning issues of inequality within the relationships. While they have made conscious efforts to establish more egalitarian relationships in areas such as the division of domestic labour and/or the management of their financial resources, these participants appear to feel that they have had limited success in restructuring their couple relationships. The connection between the experience of inequality within the couple relationship and the experience of unwanted sex can be considered to be a straightforward one in that these participants have an awareness of the connection and place their experience of unwanted sex within the context of the particular power issue(s) pertaining to this gendered imbalance of power.

The first participant to elucidate this pattern is Participant Seven, a 45-year-old woman who is in a current marital relationship of twenty years. As noted earlier, this couple had a long term child-free relationship prior to becoming parents to a child whose special needs have required the respondent’s full-time care. The structure of the couple relationship can be considered to be quite hierarchical with little or no negotiation of power issues. In addition, there has been a gradual widening of the power imbalance over time as the increases in her partner’s salary have been matched by decreases in hers.

Although her experience of having unwanted sex with her partner predates becoming parents, the issue has become more problematic since the birth of their daughter. For example, because her daughter still needs to be put to sleep at night having sex with her partner means that...
she will not have the short period of "time for herself" that she would otherwise have following completion of this lengthy, nightly ritual. She describes on the one hand needing to have this time for herself but feels unable to express this need to her partner because of the economic imbalance and her fear that if she doesn’t have sex with him when he wants her to he may retaliate by withholding needed financial support. This participant’s previous experience can be considered to provide a negative case in that although prior to the birth of their daughter there was some degree of imbalance the structure of the relationship was sufficiently egalitarian as to enable her to be in a better position to negotiate having sex with him:

*P7: Um, you know it was easier before we had K. When we had K, and before we had K, we sorted it out, D being like what I felt like was overly aggressive and always saying, “I want to have sex, I want to have sex,” but I think we had explored ways of having me initiate sex when I was interested, instead of you know always kind of waiting until you know figuring this out, well I sort of get into the phase where I think, “Well, D's going to want to have sex all the time anyway, I suggest that then I'm going to have to have it twice as much.” So we kind of looked at, you know, me speaking out when I was interested in having sex, and you know, trying to balance that out a bit more, so I remember sort of doing that a bit. But, you know, the aspect of having K around makes it just so physically hard you know and so limited to certain times and places you know ... I'm certainly less likely to initiate sex when I know it's going to involve you know, a complicated process and no time for myself. So I kind of do wait now, you know, until the inevitable happens and D suggests it.

She makes a direct link between the economic imbalance of power and her experience of having unwanted sex with her partner:

*Int.: How much of this (the unwanted sex) has to do with the imbalance of power that you feel in terms of not contributing financially?
*P7: A lot, a lot ... Oh, yeah, absolutely. Yeah, definitely. Coz he controls the money completely and it's up to him being in a good mood or a bad mood whether K gets new shoes, or you know, I mean it's not just for me, but it's
for K too, coz I have to ask him for money for everything. Every single little thing. And you know, if, if he thinks that I'm critical of him or criticizing of him, and I don't love him or something, you know, what's going to happen the next time I say, "I want to take K to the Science Center, can you give us 20 bucks?" So, yeah, it's really scary. Or you know, what happens if I want to send K to camp and there's a conflict going between us? It looks, it may look to him like, oh, I just want to have free time and send K to camp. So, why should he know let me have so much fun when he has to work and suffer? So, yeah, there's no guarantee, it's day-to-day, I don't know if I'm going to get the things I need tomorrow.

*Int.: And what impact then does that have on the unwanted sex?

*P7: Well, I'm much more likely to go along with it. Knowing that he'll be in a better mood and feel closer and you know I have more chance of getting what I need, for me and for K. I mean, there's things like camp, aren't just for me, they're for K. You know, she can't sit around all summer, or you know during vacations, or you know things. And there are things that, you know, I have to ask him for everything, if she needs shoes, if she needs to go to camp, if she needs to, you know, rent a movie or something, you know, it's like, everything's dependent on him.

She recounts how having sex with her partner means that she will have no time for herself in the evening. She seems to be less angry than resigned to this situation. Thus, her focus on her need for time for herself may be a strategy for coping with an untenable situation. She likens the feelings that she experiences over the loss of time for herself when she has unwanted sex as similar to grief:

*P7: It involves a little bit of grieving over that lost time. It sounds silly, but it's like, you know, I really, really needed that time, and I'm not going to have it, it's never going to come back again. You know, there's this little bit of grieving over that lost time. And, and you know, I, sometimes I feel really resentful, sometimes I'm more just feel like kind of grieving over the time I won't have by myself. And you know wondering what things I can do to make the time that I do have with myself to meet my needs more or something, so that you know, I'm getting more out of it. Um, and sometimes I just feel really, really resentful.

Although she appears to be resigned to the inequality she also acknowledges that if she
had access to more money that she would feel empowered to say “no” to the unwanted sex:

*Int.: And would it (having more money) have an impact on your ability to say “no” to sex when you don’t want to have sex?

*P7: Yeah, absolutely, yeah. Yeah, I would just say, “Look, I took K up to camp today and I’m tired, you know, we went on a field trip, and I’m just too tired, and you know.” I wouldn’t, I, I would just be much less dependent, yeah. The money, we’re equal, it would make a huge difference. I would just feel like, you know, if he bothered me, I’ll just move out. Like you know, I, I have a say in this too, you know.

The level of couple power that is operating here can be considered to be “latent” power (Kompter, 1989) in that there is an element of resignation on the part of this respondent concerning the immutability of this unequal power structure. She describes a link between how the stress on women from carrying the burden for domestic responsibilities combined with the lack of contribution by male partners results in women feeling overwhelmed and also feeling pressured to have sex. She also considers these stresses and the resulting lack of time that women have for themselves and its effect on their interest in having sex to be a commonplace experience:

*P7: Um, just, you know, kind of, when I first read the poster, my reaction was kind of like, but, you know, why, this is perfectly normal, like why are you studying this? You know, it’s just something that happens every day, you know, it’s just perfectly normal. It’s just the way things are, you know. It didn’t seem, you know, like it was, it’s just the way I live my life . . . That’s the way most people live, or that’s the way you know, yeah, it just, like that’s part of being in a marriage.

*Int.: So how do you know that? In your, in your gut, you know this, how do you know this?

*P7: I don’t, you know, you just have this feeling, um (pause). Well, just like that so many other women I know are in my position physically of you know being in charge of kids and housework and probably other work too. And I know that the burden on women and on men is just you know, the trouble is in the relationships isn’t that men, see men just don’t even notice that it needs to be done or something. There’s just a whole different, and rather than let things go undone, women do them, you know, and get, so I can just imagine, so many women being overwhelmed by stuff. And then having to have to
worry about a husband who wants sex all the time, you know, just seems like it would happen quite frequently, coz I know so many women who are overwhelmed by stuff already.

In their typology of sexual coercion Finkelhor and Yllo (1985) include the use of explicit threats to withhold needed financial support in order to pressure the woman to comply with the demand for sex within their category of "interpersonal coercion." However, in the case of this respondent, this threat appears to be implicit rather than explicit. Despite its tacitness, this threat still appears to wield sufficient pressure to make her feel that she has no option other than to comply with his sexual expectations because she requires his economic support for herself and her daughter.

Participant Four is another respondent who demonstrates this pattern. A 29-year-old Russian immigrant, she is describing her current marital relationship of seven years. The fact that neither of them is earning the kind of income that they had been expecting appears to be a major source of conflict between them. The structure of their relationship is considered to be a highly hierarchical one because in addition to having the full responsibility for the household work and having little access to their financial resources, she is also controlled and emotionally abused by her partner.

There appears to be a straightforward connection between the hierarchical structure of the couple relationship and her experience of having unwanted sex in that she places her experience of unwanted sex within the context of the inequality she experiences within the relationship. In addition to doing all of the domestic labour she was working extremely long hours in a factory in
an attempt to meet his expectations that she earn more money. In her efforts to satisfy all of these
expectations she found that she was too exhausted to participate in sexual relations with her
partner:

*P4: We have some problem (referring to unwanted sex) but so, probably we
had this problem because I used to work a lot, it was a very difficult job, it
was night, day, and 12 hours a day, 14 hours a day, because I'm so tired all the
time, I, I, don't really think about it, so he was, was angry with me. . . . I
constantly wanted only sleep, I went to sleep only couple of hours, and I
couldn't do anything properly at my home, because I cannot do cleaning, I
cannot do cooking. Sometimes summer, it's very hot in the kitchen and after
12, 14 hours work, I was so exhausted and I had to cook and oven it's hot, I
was sweating, and just, he was more angry with me, because I was not at
home, a lot of things was terrible, I didn't have time, because I was, I was
tired. . . . It (sex) was terrible, I didn't want it, I didn't want it, I was too tired,
uh. I wanted it mentally, but I couldn't do it physically. It was, uh, it's just,
anyway, we had problem for maybe half a year.

She eventually quit this job and is presently working part-time while she looks for higher
paying employment. She feels however, that she has simply substituted one problem for another,
for she now feels under enormous pressure to find a well-enough paying job:

*P4: And he said, “Okay, I understand. Quit the job. Find another one” . . .
Actually, he didn't want me to go to this fabric (factory), because, uh, it was
my initiative, because I wanted to make money, and this is the only place
where I can find work. Nobody, no one place will accept me. And this is, he
told me, “Why you always crying? Why you always tell me that you're
exhausted? I didn't push you there, it was your choice. What you want from
me? If you're smart enough to find another job, move, this condition, this
office, I don't mind. But you cannot find anything. What you want from me?
It's your problem.” . . . And I just started to feel the same way as I feel before.
And I, quit this job, I need time for my family, for myself, because I have only
this relationship, so just, it's not my . . . I started to earn less money and
began new problem, but at least I don't have this problem, so I always get
myself in some kind of trouble.

The “new problem” to which she is referring is the criticism to which she is presently
subjected because she is not earning enough money through her present part-time employment. Although she is now able to meet her partner’s expectations concerning the domestic work and is no longer too exhausted to have sex with him, he now berates her for not earning enough money:

*P4:* Maybe I am not happy, I want to change this thing, but all this year, I trying to change and it didn't work. I don't know, sometimes, he, maybe because I am not successful woman, because sometimes I have difficult to find a good job and maybe because I'm part-time working and I don't have success in my career, and a lot of women do have success in their career, they just, I don't know, they like so direct. ...I don't know, maybe if my husband three years was working, and he didn't remind me every minute that he's supporting me and that I should, uh, be working and I didn't bring any money in our house, and if he, maybe if he will be around another way, maybe I will be another way. But it's impossible to change that.

Like Participant Seven, it appears that over time she has resigned herself to the immutability of this oppressive hierarchical structure. Here she expresses a complete lack of optimism that her partner would put less pressure on her to earn more money if he was more financially successful himself:

*P4:* I think no, I will never be like those other women, because these women, my husband can tell, like my mother coz they don't do anything. But, my mother, she's always worked, I don't know, I don't understand why, she's always worked, she just, I don't think she stop for three years when my sister was born, she was always working, and I don't understand why he always compare my mother to women who don't work. ...And he, he says — this is not true because my mother such a good person — that she did everything to fool my father to force him to do things, to make more money, and that, that my mother can live more happy in life. He said a lot of things that isn't true and I don't understand why. But the reason, why I have all this problem, because my husband sometimes, he telling me constantly, "You won't live same life as your mother. I will never allow this. For this life, you have to find another person." He hate my mother. He don't understand that between two person, between husband and wife, it can be such a great relationship. Husband can sacrifice something from him, give it to person he love. He don't understand this. I don't know.
Another respondent to portray this pattern is Participant Ten, a 39-year-old sole support parent whose experience of unwanted sex occurred within a former marital relationship in which there was one young child. The structure of this relationship can be considered to be quite hierarchical based on the lack of success she had in her efforts to redress the inequities present within the relationship. In this case the issue of gender hierarchy concerns her partner’s lack of adequate financial contribution to the family. There appears to be a direct relationship between her resentment concerning this power issue and her experience of unwanted sex.

The problem of her partner’s lack of financial contribution was exacerbated when she went on maternity leave following the birth of their child. Although for a few months she was able to draw on her maternity benefits, this source of income was quickly becoming depleted. She makes a direct connection between the resentment she felt concerning his refusal to share the financial responsibility and her disinterest in having sex with him:

*Int.: Did you ever feel that when he wanted to have sex, that this somehow was encroaching on your (physical) space?
*P10: Yeah. It was encroaching on my resources actually, it was a matter of resources ... Well, it's just like, it just felt like I didn't have anything to give back. It just felt like I was giving everything up to him and I actually to tell you the truth, I did divest myself of responsibility, like I wrote cheques to cover these bills for years. Like other, things had built up on credit cards and that. Just because I sort of felt like, like I almost felt like, well, if I sacrifice myself to him, then I won't have to take responsibility, I really didn't want to have responsibility for things in terms of saving money and that. But um until I had a kid, I really didn't know that I did need something in reserve, like I had nothing in reserve.

By the time their child was approximately one year old the maternity benefits had completely run out and for the first time in their relationship she was in a position of financial dependence upon her partner to support the family. It appears that once she was no longer in a
financial position to cover their instrumental costs a full-blown crisis occurred which led to their separation a short time later:

*P10: I just think he didn't want responsibility. And I find it very interesting that he left me when I stopped paying his bills for him, coz I couldn't. That was after eight years of our being together. That's when he left. I find that very interesting. And I, I don't even say that like sarcastically, I really do find that interesting.
*Int.: How is that interesting?
*P10: Well, for six months, he had to actually pay his own way and actually support his family and he just wouldn't do it.

The final respondent to portray this pattern is Participant Five a 49-year-old woman who is a full-time graduate student. Her experience of unwanted sex occurred many years ago within a six-year marital relationship in which there were two young children. The structure of this relationship which can be considered to be quite hierarchical, appears to have changed quite dramatically following the birth of the couple's first child. At that time she was expected to enact the traditional roles of stay-at-home wife and mother and she no longer had access to their financial resources. Although she initially made some efforts to redress these imbalances, it appears that she was quite unsuccessful and eventually became resigned to the situation.

Although there is a direct connection between the hierarchical structure of the couple relationship and the respondent's experience of unwanted sex; in this case the respondent's awareness of this connection can be considered to be more "visceral" than "cognitive" in that she uses more descriptive imagery to describe the connection. Thus, she differs from the other participants who exemplify this pattern in terms of her level of awareness of this connection. She describes, for example, feeling "suffocated" within this oppressive marriage and she also describes developing an aversion to her partner's natural "bodily scent" which resulted in her becoming
sexually avoidant. Here she uses imagery to describe the oppressive structure of their marriage by portraying her growing feeling of "suffocation":

*P5: Suffocated, that was the word I used a lot back then, suffocated. And I remember taking my wedding rings, my engagement ring and my wedding band off every time I could. Because they felt like, um, a noose around my neck. I had to get them off, and I'd take them off as soon as I could and when A. came home, I'd put them back on. Sometimes I'd forget and he'd notice. And I'd just make an excuse, but it was suffocating... I didn't know who I was, I didn't have any time to myself, I wasn't, I was the kids' mother, I was A.'s prostitute. I didn't have any identity beyond that, I didn't have any interests of my own. I didn't have any time to myself.

She also uses descriptive imagery to portray her growing aversion to her partner's "natural scent" and her experience of unwanted sex:

*P5: I remember sex being morning and night, usually twice a day. Um, but I started getting, I didn't want it so often. That was the first, I didn't want him touching me, I started making up excuses and uh... headache, tired, um, and pretending to be asleep whatever. Probably had a million of them. (Laugh) But then it got worse, and I couldn't stand his scent and I really despised his natural scent and he was clean, it wasn't that, but it was his natural scent. Started repelling me, started feeling repulsive. And I recall what, making excuses, I didn't want to, I was tired, I, and I didn't want him touching me in certain places either. My breasts, I couldn't stand him touching my breasts. Um, and I became supersensitive and irritated me. Uh, not stimulated me, really irritated me. So I couldn't stand him touching me. Um, and then the cajoling, and I guess that's the best word for it, cajoling me into having sex... And I remember feeling like a prostitute. I remember feeling that he just wanted me for my body, he didn't, he didn't care about me as a person anymore. It was just about sex.

When probed she gives meaning to the suffocation and odour metaphors by linking her aversion to his "bodily scent" and resulting avoidance of sexual relations to feeling "suffocated" by the oppressive structure of the relationship. Both images suggest that she couldn't breathe:
*Int.: In terms of the picture you've been drawing for me here . . . how big a part does the unwanted sex play in the picture?

*P5: (pause) Percentage-wise, I'd say 50% was the unwanted sex. I didn't want sex. I just, I didn't want him touching me, I didn't want him near me and the odor thing was huge. Uh, that (was) repulsive to me.

*Int.: Do you have a sense of what it was that was turning you off? It sounds like you were turned off of his natural scent, do you have a sense, looking back on it, what it was that was turning you off?

*P5: Besides everything else I've talked about? (Pause) That the, the body scent was a part of everything. . . . The biggest factor was my feeling of suffocation . . . It was my feeling I didn't have any freedom, I, I wasn't entitled to my opinions, I was always wrong. Um, I didn't have, I couldn't go out when I wanted to, I had to ask permission for everything, . . . and when I was feeling suffocated, I didn't know why. Everything seemed like it should be right. And A. kept telling me I was making a mountain out of a molehill. Whenever I talked to him about any feelings or any problems, he'd say, "You're making a mountain out of a molehill. Don't think about it."

Eventually, no longer able to maintain the position of resignation she had been assuming, she took the decision to leave the relationship. In taking this step she also felt that she was the one to blame for the failure of the marriage:

*P5: I didn't know who I was. All I knew was that I was suffocating and I had to get out. I thought as a mother, I didn't have anything to offer. Here I was, screaming at my 1-year-old, you know, I felt out of control that way. (Pause). I just felt inadequate in everything, in every regard. . . . He was devastated, he didn't want me to leave, he was going to turn himself inside out. And I just felt it's too late. I just wanted out. And, so I took responsibility for the whole, for the whole failure. Coz he was willing to do anything.

*Int.: So did you have a sense of what it was that he would need to do?

*P5: (pause) I don't think so. At that point, I don't think there was anything he could've done. Uh, he was even willing to live as brother and sister, no sex. Uh, I, I didn't quite see that. Yeah, he would've done anything.

Although her awareness of the connection between the hierarchical structure of the relationship and her experience of unwanted sex was mainly a visceral one at the time of the
actual experience, in retrospect she has developed a cognitive awareness of the connection:

*P5: In retrospect? Because at that time, I wouldn’t have seen any, I would’ve said there was no connection — a good connection. If he’s not going to be a partner and a supportive and help and share in this relationship, how can I share in the bedroom? If there’s no, no acknowledgment of my feelings outside the bedroom, it’s not there in the bedroom either.

Discussion of Pattern One

These participants have an awareness of the connection between the hierarchical structure of their relationships and their experiences of unwanted sex and place their experiences within the context of power issues, such as the division of domestic labour and/or the allocation of their monetary resources. While the level of awareness of the first three respondents can be considered to be cognitive, the last participant’s level of awareness can be considered to have been more visceral than cognitive at the time of her experience of unwanted sex. This visceral rather than cognitive awareness may have implications for clinical practice. Prior to their separation this couple was in couples/sex therapy at which time her partner was apparently willing to make any changes necessary in order to save the relationship. Had this couple been working with a feminist-informed therapist this participant might have been helped to become cognitively aware of the connection. Having such a cognitive awareness might have enabled her to articulate the connection between the conflicts concerning the power issues and her experience of unwanted sex, and enabled this couple to work toward the establishment of a more egalitarian relationship.

In contrast to Participants Four and Seven, who have each become resigned over time to the immutability of the hierarchical structure of their relationships, Participant Ten appears to have remained more overtly angry concerning the inequality throughout the duration of their
relationship. In addition, although Participant Five adopted a position of resignation following her unsuccessful efforts to redress some of the power issues, she felt responsible for the break up of the marriage when she was no longer able to maintain this position. While the first two participants are each living in current couple relationships, the other two are separated from their partners. This suggests that the adoption of a complacent attitude toward the hierarchical structure of their couple/family relationships and also toward the power issues which are reflective of this structure may be a coping strategy used by these participants to enable them to maintain the status quo and thus to remain in these relationships.
Chapter 8: Pattern Two: Direct Connection With Mediating Elements

Within Pattern Two there is again a straightforward connection between the hierarchical organization of the couple relationship and the participant’s experience of unwanted sex. However, in these instances a mediating element is also present and is operating to deflect the participant’s attention away from this connection by drawing her attention toward this mediating or third element. As with Pattern One the structure of the couple relationship can be considered to be hierarchical, with tension concerning the unequal division of domestic labour and/or financial responsibility on the part of the participant who has made conscious efforts to establish a more egalitarian relationship with limited success. Two variations have emerged from this pattern: a “sidetracking” and a “blurring” variation of this mediating element. In the first variation the mediating element is introduced by the partner, while in the second it is introduced by the participant herself. Four participants provide examples of this overall pattern, two within each variation.

Variation One: Direct Connection with “Sidetracking” Mediating Element

In this variation of Pattern Two, although the participants initially place their experience of unwanted sex within the context of issues pertaining to gender hierarchy, the connection between their discontent concerning this structure and their experience of unwanted sex has become “sidetracked” by another issue which has been raised by their partners. The participants depicting this variation have become organized by this mediating element which, by deflecting their attention away from their original concerns, serves to maintain the status quo. Two participants provide examples of this variation of the second pattern.
Participant Nine is a 32-year-old African-Canadian woman who is describing her experience of having unwanted sex during the first half of her two stage seven-year cohabiting relationship. The structure of this relationship can be considered to be quite hierarchical based on the unsuccessful outcome of her efforts to redress the power imbalances with her partner. Although she initially saw a direct connection between her resentment concerning the inequitable division of domestic labour and her experience of unwanted sex, her focus on this connection became deflected when he responded to her lack of sexual interest by becoming flirtatious with other women when they were out together socially. Thus, in this case the connection between the issues of gender-based power imbalance and her experience of unwanted sex has become "sidetracked" by her concern that he will have an affair if she does not acquiesce when he wants to have sexual relations.

She recounts that the resentment she felt over the inequities in the household work began spilling over into their sexual relationship. She makes a direct connection between her partner's lack of participation in this work and the emotional nature of their couple relationship. She equates having sex under these conditions as another type of household work:

*P9: Yeah, exactly, coz you're feeling, I have to do everything, like what am I — the maid? Obviously you don't care about me, or that's how I was feeling, if you're not going to help me and you're just going to let me, you don't care about our, I would put it, the cleaning I would think of in a way I kind of superimpose that onto the relationship. Well, if you're not going to help me clean the house, then that means you're not going to, you don't care about our relationship, you know, you're not, you're not going to be a partner, and then on top of it, and then when the sex thing comes up, so have to do all this, I feel like I'm responsible for this relationship, and then I have to you know do some other work, I started looking at sex as work, as more work that I have to do for this relationship and it's all on my shoulders and, which is not a very sensual erotic feeling (laughs) to go into . . . So I'm going into having sex feeling resentment already, feeling that it's work and
something that I that I didn't deal with until I got out of the relationship, was well, why would I go into sex if I was feeling like that?

She describes feeling depressed as a result of her partner's lack of participation in the household work and his expectations of her to have sex with him. The emotional effects that she describes are supported by research linking women's depression, relationship satisfaction and gender-based power imbalance (Jack, 1991; McGrath, Keita, Strickland, & Russo, 1990).

*Int.: Do you see any connection between your feelings of depression and your unhappiness with F.'s lack of participation in just the general day-to-day life?

*P9: Yeah, well, it made me feel unloved, it made me feel that I don't know I was just there to like clean and have sex with but you know, other than that, I wasn't very interesting and so if I didn't do those things then I was worthless . . . I guess it would be we would go out maybe and have a couple of drinks and come back home and I don't know, I wasn't happy in my life at the time and you know when you're unhappy I just just don't feel very sexual if I have things on my mind or I'm stressed out about things in my life and so I wouldn't really feel like having sex.

Her partner's response to her disinterest in having sex can be considered to be the "sidetracking" mediating element which operates to deflect her attention away from the connection she has made between the hierarchical structure of the relationship and her lack of sexual responsiveness. His response was to become more flirtatious with other women when they were out socially at which point she started to feel insecure about the relationship and fearful that he might have an affair if she didn't have sex with him. As a result of this concern the original connection she had made between the inequality concerning the gendered division of household labour and her resulting disinterest in having sex with her partner became diverted by her fears that he would find somebody else if she refused to have sex with him:
...but I did notice also um that he became a lot more flirtatious with other women when our sex life deteriorated um and the stress went up. And then of course that made me feel a lot more insecure and I became a lot more jealous coz I don't really think of myself as a very jealous person... Um, sometimes I think you know if I felt that F. was acting inappropriately uh to this woman I would always wait till we got home and say, "You know what? I think that you know that was inappropriate and uh I felt that you weren't treating me with respect" and so then we'd get into an argument about that.

She describes how over time the effects of "forcing" herself to have sex began to feel worse than her worries about losing him as a result of saying "no." She mentions elsewhere that the reason for this was because she felt that she was not being true to herself:

Well, actually, I always felt really insecure when I said "no," I felt that then he was probably going to leave me for sure and that if I can't even like really, if I'm not even having sex with him, why should he even be with me? Um, so I would say "no" and then of course because it would make him angry it would make me feel really bad and I would feel much more insecure and confused and uh you know feeling that he was going to leave me if I didn't have sex but even with that pressure upon me I couldn't force myself anymore to do it, because I somehow at the back of my mind or in my heart I knew that it wasn't okay, and that it wasn't good for me to force having sex and it wasn't good for him that it affected him too whether he admitted it or not.

Although this participant fits within this "sidetracking" variation, she also provides an instance of a negative case. This is because although she became organized for a period of time by this "sidetracking" element she eventually managed to extricate herself from its immobilizing effects. This occurred when midway through their seven-year relationship she took the decision to separate. The separation itself (as well as the fact that she took the initiative on this rather than he) appears to have changed the balance of power in the relationship. She gave him the freedom to see the other women he seemed to want to see and challenged him to consider whether or not
he wanted to be in a relationship with her. When they came back together (following a one year separation) they met over the course of another year during which time they processed quite extensively the problems in their relationship (something which she had tried to do within the relationship but which hadn’t worked). She decided that in order for the two of them to re-establish a relationship they would need to process the unresolved problems from their couple relationship. Following this two-year separation she was in a better position to redress the power imbalances thereby allowing them to come back together in a different way. She describes the process of reestablishing their relationship:

*P9: And uh so we got together, and basically I guess we started going over the problems in our relationship um that night. We didn’t get together physically um and so I guess we decided that we liked each other so much as friends that we wanted to stay in touch, but to be friends, we had to like forgive each other and to do that, like we had to work, go over the fights that we had, and like, “You did this and it really hurt me.”

From this new position of equality she was able to resolve the question of monogamy in their relationship, as well as the issue of household labour. For her part she seems to have given up the idea that she can prevent him from developing an interest in another woman by having sex with him whenever he wants to. She now takes the position that she cannot control such things, although it’s clear to her that it would mean the end of the relationship. In their second relationship they appear to have worked out some important things: 1) he now participates in the domestic labour; 2) she no longer feels a generalized resentment concerning the relationship (which was contributing to her feeling less available emotionally to have sexual relations); 3) he no longer gets angry when she declines his invitation to have sex, and 4) he no longer flirts with other women when they are out in public.
She eventually came to the realization that it was more detrimental to their relationship to have unwanted sex. Here she articulates her view that although “saying no” may have negative results for the individual woman as well as for the relationship, the effects of “not saying no” can actually be worse for both members of the couple.

*P9: You know, but actually it's not the saying “no” — I think a lot of women have a problem saying “no” — it's going through with unwanted sex, seems to have the same effect on other women as it did on me as other women I've talked to, a feeling of feeling worthless and it makes you feel like a prostitute, or just that is your only worth, so in a way it's like women are damaging themselves and I just, I think it's a really interesting topic, I'm not exactly sure it's really wide ranging topic but I just you know and as women we're taught to be nice and to like take things and not to stand up for ourselves. So I think it does relate completely to women's sexual lives just uh in an emotional sense and I don't know one single woman who's never had sex when she didn't want to with a lover.

They have been reunited for the past three years. In this “second” relationship they have not only established a more egalitarian structure, the problem of unwanted sex appears also to have disappeared. Later in the interview she recounts that since they have resolved their problems she no longer feels the same difficulty with saying “no” as she used to have when she felt that having sex was just another form of domestic “work.” It seems that this change in the power structure has enabled her to be able to say "no" without concern for the “sidetracking” consequences around which she had become organized. In addition because the resentment is now gone with regards to the distribution of household work she now feels better able to reassure him that she's not rejecting him when she declines to engage in sexual relations with him.

Participant One also conforms to the “sidetracking” variation of Pattern Two. A 32-year-
old woman of Canadian-West Indian background, she is describing her experience of having unwanted sex within a former cohabiting relationship of three and one-half years in which there was one young child. The structure of their relationship can be considered to be quite hierarchical in that not only was the respondent carrying the major responsibility for both the domestic labour and the instrumental expenses, they do not appear to have engaged in a process of negotiating these power issues. In this case the connection she had made between the unresolved conflict concerning these power issues and her experience of unwanted sex appears to become deflected by his insinuating that she is frigid (and her underlying fears that he will leave her).

This respondent seems to be somewhat less consciously aware than Participant Nine of the connection between her resentment concerning this structural inequality and her experience of unwanted sex. She describes for example, how once they were past the initial phase of the relationship the “pressures of everyday life” began to interfere with her interest in having sex with her partner.

*Pl: Well meaning that sometimes we'd have an argument or he wasn't nice to me. And I would feel that would change me sexually. I wouldn't be so responsive sexually because I'd had these things on my mind, you know what I mean. And too, once you get into a relationship like I mean I started forgetting and I find that this is a pattern with me at the very beginning of the relationship I'll be all in love and ga, ga, da, da and things that usually matter to me don't matter, like how clean the bathroom is or certain things around the house and then once things settle down I start getting into my own, my old self again my Martha Stewart ways. You know I'm very anal around my house everything has to be nice and clean and perfect and da, da, da. And then other things would start to bother me too within my mind and other things I'd start to worry about different things, whereas when you're in the honeymoon ga ga stage everything tends to take a back seat. Oh, then you get the pressure on you, you know what I mean, like the pressure of everyday life and that too physically exhausts you mentally, emotionally, you're physically exhausted and you don't have the time to be just worrying about sex and the guy all the time and it therefore it just takes a little bit of a back seat and when it comes time
to relax and get down to it, and start being sexual with one another, for me it takes me a lot more to wind down.

Here she makes a more direct link between her resentment concerning his lack of shared contribution to the household work and her resulting disinterest in having sex with him later in the evening:

*P1: It was in a way very oppressive. He never cooked. He never offered to cook. Until much later on in the relationship when I then started to nag, you know, about being liberated from the kitchen, why should I always cook, why didn't he learn to cook. Two years into the relationship this was what a typical day used to be like. Then L. would go to bed and it'd be just B. and I alone there together. It's funny there were never any aphrodisiacs... like he didn't drink. There wasn't any charming me, getting me in the mood, it would be just you know... HAVE SEX... like we'd go to bed and then that's where I would feel obligated to do this... just because he's in sync to do it right then and there. I remember when we were like about nine months into the relationship I actually tried to find ways to get out of having sex with him by trying to find other things to do to please him, that are basically sexual things as well, things that I didn't even want to do sometimes.

The resentment she felt concerning his lack of co-parental involvement with her daughter was another element contributing to her lack of sexual responsiveness:

*P1: I can remember in the whole three and a-half year relationship he took care of L... oh there was a period when I got a summer job as a bartender in my second year after my first year and he was in a precarious position in the relationship and I think he was doing everything he could to please me. I think he took care of L. a few times... but otherwise besides that period he did it about four times. He never took on a fathering role at all. *Int. And what was that like for you? *P1 It was hard, definitely, it was hard and there was a lot of resentment that was built up and I think it showed in many ways — sexually is one.

As with Participant Nine her partner's response to her disinterest in having sex can be considered to be the mediating element which operates to deflect her attention away from the
connection she's made between the hierarchical structure of the relationship and her experience of unwanted sex. In this case he responds by saying that she has a sexual "problem" and by implying that he may look elsewhere for sexual gratification:

*P1: And there was a point too actually well into the relationship, maybe a year a year and a half I stopped wanting to have (sex) . . . OH, I remember he started calling it a problem of mine because I didn't want to have sex. And now if anybody ever said that to me I would retaliate with so many things . . . but it made me feel that I had some frigidity problem and that I would feel that I had to, to prove that I didn't have some frigid problem or that, you know . . . or to help him because that's what he wanted. And I remember in the middle of the act HATING it . . . It was just like HORRIBLE, I would be like begging for him in my mind to finish. I thought it was SO yuck and it's not . . . he never forced me . . . there were no arguments or physical fights, but he would be, he would be like, you know . . . I remember there were nights when I didn't watch him and I would just go to bed. And I could tell that he was frustrated, I could feel the tension, he would never come out and say it.

*Int. Say what?

*P1: Oh, you're not fucking me, or we're not having sex, but I could tell. I could tell that there was some sort of like, like "whatever woman" or like he'd be really like mellow like you know, and then when we had blow outs later on . . . like two years into the relationship he would bring it up. . . . he'd be going, "Well this has being going on for a long time, we've had a problem for a long time" and I remember . . . we separated a year ago, in the summer of '97 . . . we got back together in like September. And he told me, he said, "You know, he said that at my age I'm not going to, I'm a young man I'm not going to put up with this, ok." He was definitely telling me that he's not going to put up with my not wanting to have sex, not having when he wants it.

It appears that once she had become sidetracked by his complaint that she was frigid and the insinuation that he might look elsewhere she felt less able to say "no" to the unwanted sex. In addition to this she appears to have felt less able to talk with him about her concerns as she felt that by doing so she would be acknowledging that she had a sexual problem. Unlike Participant Nine, who was able to extricate herself from being sidetracked by this mediating element, this
respondent appears to have become immobilized by it and they eventually separated:

*P1: All the time that I had to be with him in the last year and a half of our relationship I never wanted to have sex with him a lot of the times. I should have asserted myself by saying what some of the problems were that I didn't think that we got along and that I think that came over sexually you know went over into the sexual part of it or that it was like a, just this whole, just this whole feeling of feeling in this thing where I HAD to do it.

*Int. So did you ever say “no”?

*P1: I didn't come right out ... no ... not like I do now with my partner when I don't feel like it I say, "Honey you know, take care of yourself and do something else.” No I never said that. I made excuses sometimes.

*Int. And your fear if you had said “no” was?

*P1: Would be that I would be actually acknowledging that we have this problem. He might just decide to ACT on something. (Long pause) Come to think of it he probably did. You know actually saying “no” would show maybe too that I had the problem because I'm saying “no.”

Discussion of the “Sidetracking” Variation

In the “sidetracking” variation the mediating element is introduced by the participants’ partners and operates to divert the participants’ focus away from the connection which they have made between their dissatisfaction with the hierarchical structure of the couple relationships and their experiences of unwanted sex. For both of these participants the “sidetracking” mediating element involves the implicit threat to either end the relationship or to have an affair which has been made in response to the participants’ unwillingness to comply with the partners’ expectations for sex. In their typology of sexual coercion Finkelhor and YIlo (1985) have included explicit threats of this kind as “interpersonal coercion,” a form of nonviolent sexual coercion. In the case of Participant Nine, it was her partner's flirtatious behaviour which carried the implicit threat that he might end the relationship or have an affair, while in the case of Participant One it was her partner's insinuation that she might be “frigid” which carried the same implicit threats. Despite the
lack of explicitness, the effect of these implicit threats appears to have placed sufficient pressure on these women to not only comply with their partners’ expectations regarding having sexual relations, but to also retreat from their efforts to redress the other disparities in power in an effort to maintain the relationships.

Variation Two: Direct Connection with “Blurred” Mediating Element

Within this variation of Pattern Two although the connection between the hierarchical structure and the participant’s experience of unwanted sex can be considered to be a straightforward one, the participants do not place their experiences of unwanted sex directly within the context of issues pertaining to this power imbalance. In this variation the connection between their dissatisfaction concerning the unresolved power issues and their resulting lack of interest in having sex appears to be mediated by a third issue which operates to “blur” the connection. While in the case of the “sidetracking” variation the mediating element is introduced by the participant’s partner, in the “blurring” variation this element is introduced by the participant herself. In effect these participants focus their attention on the repercussions resulting from the outstanding power issues (such as a “lack of time for self” or a “lack of privacy”). Thus, they appear to see a clearer connection between this mediating element and their experience of unwanted sex than they see to the unresolved power issues which they had identified previously.

Within this variation there is some degree of discontent with the inequality on the part of the participants who have made conscious efforts to establish more egalitarian relationships. However, the participants who demonstrate this variation appear to be less actively involved in ongoing efforts to restructure their relationships. Although on the one hand they appear to feel
that they have achieved more success in their efforts to restructure their couple relationships than some of the other participants in the study, on the other hand there also seems to be a sense of resignation concerning the immutability of the gender hierarchy. Two participants provide examples of this variation of this second pattern.

Participant Three is a 24-year-old woman who is describing her experience of unwanted sex within a current marital relationship of three years in which there are two young children. The structure of their relationship can be considered to be somewhat hierarchical. Early in their relationship this respondent made a conscious effort to work out a balanced division of household labour with her partner which appears to have been somewhat successful. Although there are some egalitarian features (for two days a week he is solely responsible for the care of their two young children) when they are together as a family unit they seem to revert to a more hierarchical structure in which she performs the bulk of the household work.

Although she is somewhat in touch with the resentment she feels toward her partner when he fails to do his share of the domestic work and how this makes her feel less receptive toward him sexually, the focus of her attention instead is on her feeling of not having enough time for herself. This sense of lack of time for herself can be considered as one of the repercussions of carrying the burden of responsibility for the household work and childcare. Thus, in this case the connection between the power imbalance and the experience of unwanted sex is somewhat obscured or “blurred” by this lack of time for herself.

Initially this respondent has some difficulty identifying the need for some time to herself. Part of the reason for this is that she appears to feel guilty for needing to have some time when she’s not responsible for caring for others. Like many women she does not seem to feel entitled to
have some time to herself.

*P3: You know that, I was telling the kids the other day, I was giving B a hug or I was giving Q a hug and B kind of looked at me with these eyes that were like "Oh, I want a hug too," and I just said opened up my other arm, "Come on in, I've got two arms, and they're really big!" And I hugged them both in. Well, I feel that my arms should be big enough to . . . that's where the guilt is . . . (laugh) Yeah, that's exactly it, I feel bad if . . .

*Int.: That you don't have three arms?

*P3: That I don't and I really don't. And I wish I did. You know I can't really give that physical hug to three people.

In addition to not feeling entitled to have some time to herself, she appears also to feel guilty about the change in their sex life since becoming parents. Perhaps because she is the first among her peers to become a parent, she has no frame of reference from which to compare her situation. Thus, she lacks a family developmental perspective which would place her decreased sexual interest in the context of being the mother of two very young children. This would normalize her experience in terms of understanding that a woman's sexual interest will fluctuate according to the various stresses of daily life that impinge on her level of energy. She describes the guilt that she feels for not feeling "gung-ho":

*P3: Um, it really puts me in a bad frame of mind. It really really does. I feel we're married, it's almost as if, in looking back on our entire relationship, coz at the beginning I had been so forward in relation to sex that, um, kind of, I feel like I've led him on. That I like, okay, this is what I'm promising for the rest of our life, this type of relationship where we're very sexually active and I'm always feeling very gung-ho and very forward and then all of a sudden start to turn around and then I don't feel that way anymore, I feel like I led him on . . . that I gave him the wrong picture of this package . . . that I gave him the picture of a nymphomaniac and then I turn around and then here I am stiff neck collar and black dress, all the way down, um, so it starts, it starts like that. That I feel like I misled him, that I led him on.

She identifies a connection between the "blurred" mediating element and her experience of
unwanted sex. Although she expresses a link between the demands of caring for small children and her lack of interest in having sex, she focuses on her need for time to herself rather than on the need to have a more shared division of the domestic labour, something which might address both problems:

*P3: Uh, yes, at times, (his approaching her for sex feels like more demands on her time) definitely, and those are, those are probably, I can say when it feels like I don't want to give anymore and that it's, I'm done giving for the day, thank you very much! (laughs). Those are, those are definitely, yeah, this is my own time. So that's probably, that's probably very big, is that, yes, I am giving to the kids all day and that when he does come home, when he does, request, asks, initiate, assume, um, sex, foreplay, affection, then I'm done (laughs). I'm all done, and it could just curl up and relax with a good book, I'd be fine (laughs).

*Int.: So you're looking for time to yourself?

*P3: Yeah, me in my own little world. And I do that in the bathroom (laughs).

*Int.: You do what in the bathroom?

*P3: Read! (laughs). I take my book. My books are all in the bathroom. Yeah. And nobody questions it. She's in the bathroom, she's pooping, she's reading ... But yeah, no, that's, um, you're asking me that question about demands on me, about me giving all the time, put it into a little bit better perspective for me, um, because I think that is a lot of it. That, yes, I am giving to the kids all day, and that K coming to me and asking me again, it is a demand for him. Um, (pause), yeah, it's, probably just the fact that, yeah, I don't know, probably that it's more that I was giving, giving, giving all day, nothing, yeah, and I know that sounds really bad, nothing left to give. Because, well, because there should be a balance, even with that.

Her cognitive awareness of the connection seems to be very close to the surface and with some probing she is able to identify a direct connection between her feelings of resentment toward her partner over issues concerning the unequal division of domestic labour and her lack of responsiveness to having sexual relations. Thus although she demonstrates some elements of the “direct connection” pattern, this participant appears to fit most clearly within the “mediating” pattern. Here she acknowledges how her feelings of resentment toward her partner when he
doesn’t carry his share of the responsibility for the domestic labour leaves her feeling
unresponsive toward him later when he tries to initiate sex:

*P3: But the time that I spend with the kids during the day and the amount of
time that I am changing diapers, and that's actually a point of contention
sometimes, with K and I, when he's sitting there, comes home and watches tv,
and then one of the kids is in need of something, and that's not done right
away. That's when I get mad. Yeah, that you know, I'll ask you, "could you
please change B's bum?" "Yeah, after this commercial, after this, (laughs) after
this half-time, or yeah."
*Int.: So you feel irritated?
*P3: Yeah, I do, I really, really do when that happens . . . It, it and it doesn't
happen all the time, but it happens frequently enough, that, yeah, that it's, it
gets me angry, gets me frustrated. Yeah, I think that's, uh, that's big, that I
just don't, yeah I don't want to give anymore. That I'm, that I'm lying in bed,
and I just, I don't necessarily want time for me, but I just don't want to have
to give.

Although there is research which demonstrates a loss of womens’ power relative to their
partners’ after the birth of children (Hess-Biber & Williamson, 1984; LaRossa & LaRossa, 1981)
there may also be a developmental component to consider when examining the connection
between this loss of power and this respondent’s experience of having unwanted sex. This couple
is at an early stage of family development in that their children are both very young and require a
great deal of care. The demands on her time are very great at this time and provide a context for
understanding her preference for some time to herself after the children are put to bed over having
sexual relations. Unlike in the case of Participant Seven, whose need for some time to herself
appears to arise largely out of her partner’s refusal to participate in the childcare responsibilities,
in the case of Participant Three they have established a co-parental relationship in which he
parents the children when she is working. Thus, although she carries out most of the domestic
responsibilities when they are together, her needs for some time to herself are at least partially
connected to their alternating work schedules and the fact that they have no shared weekend in which he is present to spell her off. How this couple manages this developmental stage of family life may determine whether their problem of unwanted sex is a temporary one which they are able to move past or whether it becomes a more entrenched problem around which they become organized.

Another participant who conforms to this variation of Pattern Two is Participant Eleven. She is a 30-year-old woman of Canadian-Italian background describing her experience of unwanted sex within a current cohabiting relationship of two years in which there is one young child. The structure of this relationship can be considered to be somewhat hierarchical in that she describes having engaged in a process of working out a more equitable distribution of the household work. In this case the unresolved power issue is created by her partner’s lack of shared financial contribution to the family. Although this respondent indicates that she has some awareness of the connection between her resentment concerning this power issue and her lack of sexual responsiveness, she does not consistently place her experience of unwanted sex within this context. Rather, the connection between the power imbalance and her experience of unwanted sex is “blurred” by a related issue, in this case by the “lack of privacy” resulting from their child’s presence in the bedroom. Like Participant Three, the focus of her attention is on one of the repercussions resulting from this imbalance — a lack of privacy — which has been created by her partner’s unagreed to spending of their house fund savings. In this case her resentment concerning this issue is further complicated by the fact that there are some cultural differences between this couple in that he does not seem to share her values concerning the need for privacy.
In contrast to Participant Three, she does not appear to feel guilty about the change in their sex life after becoming parents. She has a developmental perspective on how becoming a family of three has changed their couple relationship and made her less physically and emotionally available for the kind of child-free sexual relationship which they enjoyed prior to becoming parents. While she normalizes it and expects her partner to accept these changes he does not appear to share her perspective. For his part he would like to continue to enjoy the kind of carefree sex they had before their daughter was born. It seems that her partner sees no need to alter the timing or location of their sexual activities to accommodate her concerns regarding these privacy issues. Here Participant Eleven describes how becoming parents has affected their sex life:

*P11: All I know is that I'm trying my best every day to make things work out for her and then I think of us. I don't think of us anymore see and that's where the sexual part has changed. See coz before it was very sexual. And then it was me being a mother and me being responsible, my whole, my whole personality has changed, I'm not the person that I was so um it's just about her and me now . . . But there are times where he and I always say, like, come on, we'll like go to uh, so I don't like that, if A.'s anywhere near or someone that I know is coming over. Our love life used to be very very sexual like in the afternoon, in the evening, like we were single, we could do that, we had very part-time jobs, but I feel like more there's more responsibility of me being working and having to work eight hours a day and having to uh I have to now having to feed this child, uh she has to have dinner, just stuff like that, you know, I can't just think of making love . . . There has been a change in me and a change in my life. The change in me is the person, this free, that person that was very spontaneous and free and didn't have responsibilities and lived in the night time and played around, is there's a responsible person, is a person that's committed to a child and a business, uh a place, a home, uh, wanting to be stable and balanced in my life and healthy, that's why I don't drink as much anymore and more pure and um all those things and more spiritual and all those things that weren't in my life before, that when I had raunchier sex, are in my life.
She makes a connection between her resentment concerning his lack of “contribution” to the family and her resulting disinterest in having sex with him — and although she does not specify, it seems clear that the lack of contribution to which she is referring is monetary. His unauthorized spending of their savings is relevant to her experience of unwanted sex because it means that they continue to have very little privacy, something which she had thought would be a temporary inconvenience:

*P11: You know I couldn't give you a date of when it (the unwanted sex) started but I could tell you it was when I started to feel like I had to be on top of things. Like with A, I felt like I lost more every day you lose interest because this person isn't really contributing in any way to raise this child or to his surroundings like "Gosh like wake up! You're here every day with us, we should be meaning a lot to you" where there was one time when we weren't meaning a lot, his family and what he had to deal with was more important than us, that is what I felt was insulting, insulting to the point where oh I'm not very, there's no spark in me as much as I'd like.

Like Participant Three her awareness of the connection between her resentment concerning her partner's unauthorized spending of their savings and her disinterest in having sex with him seems close to being conscious:

*P11: In the in the wintertime, early winter, but before that's when the money kind of separated. So that sort of happened it's it's terrible, I hope to not think that this is only a money issue, it isn't, it's a matter of that beginning thing, it was a matter of respect, if he told me, “Look, this is the situation, this is where I'm at,” but he didn't do that, and I and I really thought, “Look, I'm an adult, you have to talk to me, I'm not a little kid, like where you can dismiss it and go off on your own” and that's what he did.

Like Participant Three she focuses more on the link between the “blurred” mediating element (the lack of privacy) and her disinterest in having sexual relations than upon the more direct connection this disinterest has to do with his unilateral decision-making with respect to their
savings. Although it seems clear that the issue underlying the lack of privacy concerns this unresolved power issue she chooses instead to focus on one of its repercussions. She describes the effect that this lack of privacy has on her experience of having sex with her partner:

*P11: My state of interest. Yes yes yes and that's another thing, he knows that though, I told him, "You keep on doing this and it's really going to make me feel like not wanting to make love with you" and when she's asleep, she's sometimes, she's just close to us in the other bed.

*Int.: Have you got one eye open?

*P11: Both and it bothers me . . . and he's always saying, "She's asleep." I go "What if she wakes up?" "She's asleep." Like she's getting older and she's going to have to understand and we're going to have to explain it to her and that's where our ideals of having a house come to par. See coz we really feel like we need a space, she needs a space, and we need a space, yeah, but it never happens . . . there's no freedom, there's no freedom to express what you need to express and he doesn't get it.

*Int.: How would it be different if A slept in a different room?

*P11: It would have been better and we had that in the first arrangement. But he wanted us to leave, because it was too expensive. See, there always has been in his eyes an issue about finances, but in mine never, never, and you know, that's what the problem is, it is that I told him that.

Discussion of the "Blurred" Variation

While in the "sidetracking" variation of this pattern the mediating element is introduced by the participants' partners, in this variation this element is introduced by the participants themselves. In both variations, these mediating elements operate to deflect the participants' attention away from the straightforward connection between their resentment concerning the unresolved power issues and their experiences of unwanted sex by drawing their attention to the mediating element.

In the cases of Participants Three and Eleven their cognitive awareness of the connection appears to lie just below the surface of consciousness and when probed they were both able to
identify a straightforward connection between their resentment related to issues concerning the outstanding power issues and their lack of sexual responsiveness. Although each of these participants portrays elements of the “direct connection” pattern, they appear, however, to fit more clearly within the “direct connection with mediating elements” pattern. This is because they appear to see a clearer connection between their experience of unwanted sex and a “blurred” mediating element than to issues concerning the gendered inequality they have identified within their couple relationships.

In addition, these participants appear to have moved over time from actively working to address issues of gendered power imbalance into a position of accepting these imbalances and then lamenting their effects. Thus, the lack of ongoing effort to restructure their relationships appears to be due to becoming resigned to the inequities. Their focus on the mediating element rather than on the original source of their concerns may be an attempt to minimize the connection. In the case of Participant Three the issue concerning the lack of time for herself appears to mask the underlying issue pertaining to her partner’s lack of shared participation in the housework and childcare. In the case of Participant Eleven the issue concerning the lack of privacy appears to mask the underlying issue pertaining to her partner’s exercising control over their savings as well as his inadequate financial contribution. By focusing their attention on the “mediating” issues these participants may be attempting to avoid getting into the power struggles which they might face if they addressed more directly the issues underlying these repercussions.
Chapter 9: Pattern Three: Indirect Connection With Antecedent Elements

In Pattern Three, in contrast to Patterns One and Two, the connection between the hierarchical structure of the couple relationship and the participants' experience of unwanted sex cannot be considered to be a straightforward one. As in the case of Pattern Two, the connection between the gender hierarchy and the respondents' experience of unwanted sex is also obscured by a third element which serves to draw their attention away from it. This time however, this third element is an antecedent rather than a mediating element. This antecedent element can be considered to be external to the connection between the hierarchical structure of the couple relationship and the participant's experience of unwanted sex since the impact of this element precedes the establishment of the couple relationship. An "overriding" variation of this pattern has emerged from the study. In this variation the participants' experience of an antecedent element (such as the experience of childhood trauma) has had the effect of "overriding" the connection between the hierarchical structure of the relationship and the participants' experience of unwanted sex. Two participants portray this variation of this third pattern.

Variation One: Indirect Connection with "Overriding" Antecedent Element

In this variation of Pattern Three, although the structure of the couple relationship can be considered to be hierarchical, the participants are more accepting of this structure and do not appear to experience the same degree of dissatisfaction concerning issues of inequality as the participants who portray the other patterns. Nor have they made the same degree of conscious efforts to establish more egalitarian relationships. As a result, these participants do not seem to see a clear link between the inequality within their couple relationships and their experience of
unwanted sex. The ability to perceive such a connection appears to have been “overridden” by the antecedent element. This third element, although predating the establishment of the couple relationship, is nonetheless exerting an effect on the participants’ experience of unwanted sex.

There is not therefore, a straightforward connection between their experience of inequality within the couple relationship and their experience of unwanted sex. The two participants who portray this variation are both survivors of intrafamilial child sexual abuse. Their traumatic childhood experience is the antecedent element which operates to “override” the immediate relevance of any connection between the hierarchical structure of the couple relationship and their experiences of unwanted sex. This is because these participants appear to have been indoctrinated through their traumatic childhood experiences into accepting an ideology of gender hierarchy as well as to accept male domination and female subordination as a normal and expected part of family life. In neither case do they place their experiences of unwanted sex within the context of the hierarchical structure of their couple relationships. Thus, the connection between the hierarchical structure of their couple relationships and their experience of unwanted sex can be considered to be an indirect one.

Participant Two is a 50-year-old woman whose experience of unwanted sex occurred many years ago within a former marital relationship in which there were two young children at the time she is describing. The structure of the relationship can be considered to be highly hierarchical because in addition to the gendered division of household responsibilities and the lack of negotiation concerning these power issues, there was also emotional abuse of the participant by her partner.

This participant learned from her experience of incest that saying “no” to unwanted sex
was simply not an option. This socialized pressure appears to have been stronger than any interpersonal pressure exerted upon her by her partner. Thus any connection there might have been between the hierarchical structure of the relationship and her experience of unwanted sex can be considered to be “overridden” by the experience of the childhood trauma:

*P2: I didn’t say “no” about sex. It didn’t occur to me that it was possible. It just wasn’t an option. I’d had 17 years of training, you know (long pause) yeah. I don’t know how else to say it — saying “no” where somebody had a right to me . . . husband or father. I’m racking my brain, trying to remember — I don’t think that it ever ever occurred to me that it was a possibility.

In addition to being unable to say “no” to unwanted sex it appears that another of the traumatic effects of the incest was to become automatically responsive sexually whenever approached for sex, first by her father and later by her husband. Therefore, she appears to have been highly vulnerable to any pressure, however slight, that her partner placed on her to engage in sex:

*P2: I’m sure he wasn’t (aware that she didn’t want to have sex) and I mean he didn’t know that because I didn’t tell him - I think that I did occasionally but not aggressively, just. I mean you can say “oh I’m too tired,” but you’re responsive, and your behaviour isn’t . . . and I felt compelled to be responsive both physically and emotionally.

*Int. So you didn’t have an option because?

*P2 Because of my unwillingness to deny him anything on the one hand, and on the other hand because of this reflex . . . response . . . cognitive response to arousal was a frantic moving on into it And I think - I hadn’t thought of this before either - I think that he may have been without thinking about it, relying on that in those circumstances, because he knew that if he touched me in a certain way it didn’t much matter, I was with him . . . it wouldn’t matter what was going on if he . . . there was a reliable, consistent response from me.

In their years together before having children the problem of unwanted sex was not apparent to her in the sense that it did not occur to her that saying “no” was an option and in
addition to this she was consistently automatically sexually responsive. It was not until they had young children and she was sleep deprived from getting up during the night with them that she became aware of having unwanted sex:

*P2: When the kids were little and I was working long hours and then coming home and working long hours, the last thing in the world I wanted to do at midnight or 1:00 was have sex, but it didn't occur to me that I could say no — it didn't occur to me that that was a possibility. ...Yeah, it was not a regular thing, but it was quite a few times. I remember it as being something that was a background annoyance over those years that it didn't seem to enter his head to think about me in terms of the timing of sex. He would sometimes wake me up in the middle of the night when I'd been up with the kids an hour before sort of thing. And when we didn't have children, I didn't mind being wakened in the night — I've been known to do that to him. But it was brutal when I was so tired.

She describes what it was like to be awakened for sex when she was exhausted from caring for their two young children:

*P2: (Deep breath) Um . . . He would wake me up just sort of enough to roll over, you know? And then he would go ahead. And I remember falling asleep in the middle of it and almost being too tired to even think about registering any dislike of what was happening. It wasn't the sex itself, it was the timing — the complete disregard for what was going on in my life. He was always that way about other things too. He was that way about talking to me: if he needed to talk it didn't matter what time I'd have to get up in the morning, he'd talk to me until 1:00 in the morning. The same with his papers — it didn't matter that I was going to school too, part of the time he was in school — it didn't matter what school work I had, he expected me to help him and to type his papers . . . And so there was always that, from very early on there was always the knowledge that he didn't consider my situation at all. And so by the time the kids were little and the sex became a problem, it was you know this was just the way life is.

Although in retrospect she considers that the unwanted sex was essentially an extension of the oppression which was present within the relationship, she was not consciously aware of this
connection at the time. She reiterates here that it was not until they became parents and she was too exhausted to be automatically sexually responsive that she experienced the sex as being unwanted. Their relationship ended while they were still in this early stage of family development:

*P2: Hmm, I don't know whether I've made this clear or not, but, although the only time, the only period of time when I had unwanted sex was during those years on the farm, when we had small children, the experience of unwanted sex was in keeping with the relationship — it was just that sex hadn't been problematic in that way before because I had been as interested as he was, but it wasn't something new and different in the relationship, I'd say it was just another manifestation of the way we were living. I didn't see myself as separate from him, so I didn't really have any choices about anything, ultimately that's how I felt — not just with sex. So the period of time when I had unwanted sex with him was not different than the rest of the relationship, it was just that the circumstances were that I was less interested in sex because of the children, and loss of sleep. But it was very much characteristic of my experience of being married to N. to not have a sense of trust and I think all kinds of things that, going back now I'd do very differently, but I didn't know that I had choices. It didn't occur to me that there was a choice or that I had the power to choose. I don't think he has any idea of how completely he controlled me. He does that to the people around him, but I was a superb candidate because I'd been groomed all my life to be a slave, basically and to submit my will completely to somebody else, so that the unwanted sex was in that context.

Another respondent who portrays this variation is Participant Six. She is a 55-year-old woman whose experience of unwanted sex occurred within the context of a thirty-nine year marriage from which she has recently separated. The structure of their couple relationship can be considered to be highly hierarchical because in addition to the gender-based power imbalance and the lack of negotiation concerning power issues, there was also control of the participant by her partner.

Like Participant Two, she also learned from her experience of childhood incest that saying
“no” to unwanted sex was not an option. In addition, the social context within which she was living also exerted pressure on women to have sex with their partners on demand as part of their marital obligation. As a result of these internal and external pressures it seems that she didn’t give much consideration at the time as to whether or not she wanted to have sex when her partner expected it:

*P6: Hmm, he would be on the road, I don’t know if it would be around, three days a week, three days to five days a week. When he’d come home, like I don’t, when he’d come home, it would be an automatic assumption that I would have sex with him, there would be no saying “no.” That he’s staying faithful to me, you know, because of, uh, being out on the road. And that if I wanted to keep him faithful, uh, that I would probably have sex with him.

*Int.: Was that actually spoken or was that understood?

*P6: Uh, I don’t think so. I think that was more understood. I’m trying to remember what would be spoken back then. I think that I knew that that was my role more than anything. Um, I think also, probably I also didn’t know that I could say “no.” Uh, by now, by the middle time, I believe that a lot of my defenses were worn down. That, in the middle time, and listening to other women around that time, that their husbands would go home and want sex every night. They didn’t know they could say “no.” The women that I had coffee with made me believe that that’s a woman’s job. That’s what you’re there for is to, um, have sex.

*Int.: So your friends would talk about this?

*P6: Yeah, probably, like “Oh, my God!” or “Geez, I’m so tired! So-and-so wants sex every night!” And that, uh, again, they acted on the assumption that they couldn’t say “no.” Uh, and I thought, Oh, am I ever lucky!

*Int.: Coz it’s not every night?

*P6: Yeah, that, geez! It’s great!

While other participants have described how the effects of the gendered division of domestic labour have left them feeling that they do not have enough time for themselves, this participant describes using sex to bargain for some needed “down time.” When their children were young, she would agree to have sex in the afternoon in exchange for getting a nap. It does not appear that she felt entitled to this time to herself without “earning” it:
*P6: And again, talking about unwanted sex, uh, to get a break, I would bargain, he would even bargain, that if I give him sex, that I could go have a rest and he would watch the baby.
*Int.: And would you take a nap?
*P6: Yeah. Oh, yes, I got my nap, thank God! That one, the bargain one was good. It was probably the best I had. Not sex, but at least I got something of it. I got to, um, mind you, I had to say, you know, made sure he really took care of the baby, meaning I didn't want to hear any crying, so I don't know how long. You know but that was the deal, coz there's no way I could sleep if I hear the baby crying.

Discussion of the “Overriding” Variation

In this third pattern an antecedent element is present which obstructs the connection between the hierarchical structure of the couple relationship and the participant’s experience of unwanted sex. In this variation of Pattern Three the participants’ histories of intra-familial child sexual abuse is the antecedent element which can be considered to “override” the immediate relevance of the connection between this hierarchical structure and the experience of unwanted sex.

The participants portraying this pattern entered their relationships lacking any sense of sexual autonomy. It seems that because of their traumatic histories of incest these women came into their couple relationships not only with the belief that they could not say “no” to unwanted sex, but also with a generalized dis-empowered stance. In their cases this lack of sexual autonomy appears to have been the primary factor operating for each of them in terms of their experience of unwanted sex. In neither case does there appear to have been any noticeable resentment on their parts concerning the power imbalance at the time of their experiences of unwanted sex. Thus, they do not seem to have seen a direct connection between the inequality in their couple relationships and their experience of unwanted sex.
In the case of Participant Two, it was not until she was in a position in which she was physically unable to be automatically sexually responsive to him (due to exhaustion) that she became cognizant of having unwanted sex. And although in retrospect she considers that the unwanted sex was essentially an extension of the oppressive nature of the relationship, she also indicates that her partner would have been surprised to learn that she considered the sex to be unwanted, since she gave him little verbal indication of this.

In the case of Participant Six, although she did over time develop resentment concerning the hierarchical structure of the relationship, there appears to have been no conscious resentment pertaining to this for many years. Over time, as she gained more power in the relationship, and following therapy focusing on her traumatic history of incest, she was eventually able to say “no” to unwanted sex and to later leave the relationship. However, throughout most of the relationship she appears to have lacked any sense of sexual autonomy. In contrast to other participants who have lamented that the expectation to have sex meant that they would not have the time needed for themselves, it does not appear that Participant Six had any concept of how her partner’s sexual expectations might be competing with her need for time for herself. Rather, she seems to have accepted the premise that she was not entitled to have some time to herself — and would barter to have sex during the day in exchange for her partner’s agreement to care for the children so that she could take an afternoon nap.

Research on wife rape suggests that women who have a past history of abuse, such as child physical or sexual abuse, or have been raped previously by someone other than the partner, may be vulnerable to re-victimization by their life partners (Bidwell & White, 1986; Doron, 1980; Frieze, 1983; Randall & Haskell, 1995). This finding has been interpreted as suggesting that
victimization may provoke aggression and that, for example, awareness of a previous rape may lead some men to assume that they can rape their partners since it has happened before (Bidwell & White, 1986; Frieze, 1983; Russell, 1982). Although it is not possible to conclude that the partners of Participants Two and Six were similarly organized by their awareness of their partners’ histories of abuse into being sexually coercive toward them, nor can such a possibility be ruled out. This is because these participants were able to avoid such potential coercion by always saying “yes” to sex on demand. In contrast to other participants who felt constrained against saying “no” due to their fears concerning the reactions of their partners, these women superceded such possible reactions by denying themselves any right to being sexually autonomous let alone express their non-consent. This finding suggests that women who are survivors of incest may be particularly vulnerable to having unwanted sex because they may lack a sense of sexual autonomy.

The type of sexual coercion that is operating in the case of these participants can be considered to be “social coercion” which manifests itself in the pressure women feel as a result of internalized beliefs about gender and couple sex (Finkelhor & Yllo, 1985). Because of their histories of incest these participants entered their relationships with the belief that they could not say “no” to sex and thus, this lack of sexual autonomy appears to have been the primary factor that was operating for each of them in terms of their experience of unwanted sex. As a result of their ideologies, overt forms of sexual coercion or even pressure would not have been necessary to make them acquiesce to having sex on demand. The notion of sexual autonomy is an important one to consider in the study of unwanted sex. Paradoxically, it is only when a woman feels able to say “no” to unwanted sex that she is also in a position to give genuine consent to wanted sex.
Chapter 10: The Negative Cases

Three types of "negative case" have emerged from the study. In each of these the structure of the couple relationships can be considered to be non-hierarchical in that there is a more egalitarian balance of power. These alternative cases provide both support for as well as a challenge to the developing theory concerning the nature of the connection between the presence of a hierarchical structure and the experience of unwanted sex.

Negative Case 1: Equality Can Mean Quality Sex

In this first type of alternative case the participant’s experience of unwanted sex does not meet the study’s definition of what is considered unwanted sex. This is because there is full if not enthusiastic consent on her part. For example, the participant compares her experience of unwanted sex to reluctantly going to exercise at the gym because she knows that she’s going to feel better afterwards. Acquiescing to sex within an egalitarian relationship might more accurately be considered "persuaded consent" which more accurately falls within the category of wanted sex.

Despite her lack of experience of unwanted sex, Participant Twelve’s experience of having wanted sex can be considered very useful to the study in terms of adding depth to the developing theory concerning the connection between the structure of the couple relationship and the quality of the sexual relationship. This is because in this case there appears to be a direct connection between the horizontal structure of the couple relationship and the participant’s experience of wanted sex, in that the respondent places her experience of wanted sex within the context of having an egalitarian relationship. By providing support for the view that there is a direct relationship between having an egalitarian relationship and having wanted sex, this alternative case also provides indirect support for the view that there is an inverse relationship between having an
egalitarian relationship and having unwanted sex.

Participant Twelve is a 44-year-old successful business executive who is describing her current marital relationship of five years to another successful business executive. The structure of this relationship can be considered to be a highly egalitarian one in which both members appear to have an egalitarian ideology of marriage.

She expresses the view that having unwanted sex is a “fact of life” and describes feeling “neutral” about having sex at those times. However, she also places her experience within the context of an egalitarian relationship. It seems that when there are no significant power issues defining the relationship that it's easier to feel “neutral” and thus acquiesce sometimes for the sake of the relationship. She likens her experience of unwanted sex (which can more accurately be considered as persuaded consensual sex) to eating when you’re not hungry, or accompanying one’s life partner on a walk despite feeling somewhat disinclined. When these metaphors are considered within the context of an equal relationship, it becomes more possible to equate an appetite for sex with an appetite for food. In her case an initial lack of appetite can be awakened in much the same way that the smell of food might awaken an appetite for food. In contrast, other participants have described a lack of sexual appetite as their response to acquiescing to unwanted sex. An exception to this reaction is Participant Two who responded to sexual touch with automatic sexual responsiveness which she related to her experiences of childhood sexual abuse.

*P12: It's pretty much like eating, like if you were looking forward to a meal and then it's hot and you're kind of in a grumpy mood and you sit in front of it and you're not as hungry excited as you thought you'd be, most of the time you'd still eat it and most of the time if it's a nice meal you kind of start enjoying it. It may not be the ecstatic experience you'd hope for, but eating, it's appetite, right? It's the same kind of, you can have the same kind of relationship to sex as you do toward food. Just, you don't eat things that disgust you, you don't
eat things if you feel ill and you're not going to enjoy it, you don't eat things that are morally repugnant to you but you've got a strong appetite, generally speaking, you're willing to eat what's in front of you and to enjoy it.

... It's more like, "You know, I don't feel like going to the gym today, but I know if I go to the gym, after about 10 minutes, I'm really going to enjoy it. I'll really feel better for the whole day." So that's a different kind of unwanted sex and that kind is completely fine. That's right, or I don't feel like doing it, but hey, I'll accompany you, and I might even start enjoying it halfway through. If it's if it's neutrality where you love the person and you're willing to kind of go around the block with them even though you don't feel like it. And even if you don't get turned on at the time, that's something that I found creates a lot of trust in a relationship.

She makes the point that sex is something that couples have to work at. Although she's talking about achieving sexual intimacy, her point illustrates that unless a woman is comfortable with declining the invitation to participate in sex with her partner she will not be able to progress beyond the most basic level of sexual contact to reach the kind of sexual intimacy that she is describing. A related point is that because the sexual relationship is not a static one (there are all kinds of things that will interfere over the course of a long term couple relationship with a person's interest in having sex) and when there is not an egalitarian couple relationship the woman will not be in a position to have her concerns aired. Several participants have mentioned issues that have been problematic (such as becoming parents). While some have been able to see that these difficulties are temporary in nature and have been better able to weather the ebbs and flows, others have allowed such problems to define their sexual relationship and to become entrenched problems:

*P12: ...and uh the other thing is that uh if they value sex, if sex is important to you, it's a skill, it's not something that comes to you from God, you know, it's something you have to build, and with any kind of human endeavor that's important, you have to work at it, and work involves periods where you don't enjoy what you're doing that much. So it's, it's sort of implied that sex is
something that you either liked or didn't like as opposed to something that can require a great deal of skill in all kinds of different areas. You know what I mean?

Here Participant Twelve describes the importance of having good negotiating skills as an important element in having a satisfying sex life. Again, this presupposes that the woman is in a position in which there can be some negotiation. The premise on which some of the participants' experiences of unwanted sex appear to be based is that there is nothing to be negotiated, just as in some of these relationships there is nothing to be negotiated in terms of who handles the money or who does the domestic work and childcare. In addition, it seems that when the premise is that there is nothing to be negotiated within these areas (money, household work and childcare) the stage is set for this premise to be followed into the sexual relationship as well:

*P12: The whole sexual arena is so rife with uh huge difficulties. Everybody has a sexual past, everybody, like it's just the minefields in sexuality are just massive and they come from everywhere, your culture, your family background, your personal background, so yeah to be able to come in and have really good negotiation skills and come in feeling in complete control over your own actions, yeah, absolutely you can't do without it. And so a good negotiator will always have, they'll always know what's of core importance to them and they always know you know what they can give up and what they can't give up and what the best alternative is to a negotiated agreement and on how to maintain the good relationship with an ongoing co-negotiator, same time as getting what's really important. When to move out, when to go elsewhere, yeah, and all of those, and part of that you know, and I don't know if you've taken negotiating before, I've taken negotiating and studied it and uh you cannot be a good negotiator unless you really know your own needs and know it in enough fineness to know exactly what's you can trade off and what is not worth trading off. So if you don't understand your own sexuality deeply, you can't negotiate effectively, coz you don't, you trade off something that turns out to be absolutely essential, that you've lost something that's really important or you may refuse to give up something that is important to the other person and so you end up losing.

She also describes being able to compartmentalize her sexual relationship so that
unresolved issues from one area do not spill over into the sexual relationship. She points out the conditions which she feels need to be present in order to be in a position to be able to compartmentalize sex. The main condition she identifies is to have an equal relationship which she defines in terms of having economic power:

*P12: That's what I meant about compartmentalizing sex. Like this is protected area, it's sacred coz nothing else is allowed to be in it, but you can't do that unless there's lot of other stuff contextually. And the way I was brought up around marriage with my family is never allow yourself to get in that position like that with a man, you have to be completely independent and so part of it for me was uh deciding this is the level I will get to and I want to be able to support it myself. So it's going into life with a, I can barely handle and I don't like spending a lot of money and I don't need that and I earn enough to satisfy my own needs and I don't need more than that and part of that is uh that's how I get control over my life.

Discussion:

This participant demonstrates that acquiescing to sex within an egalitarian relationship is substantially different from acquiescing to sex within a hierarchical relationship. Her experience differs dramatically from that of Participant Seven. Both of these respondents express the view that having unwanted sex is a "fact of life"; however, the context within which they place their experiences differs considerably. While Participant Seven describes a link between how the stress resulting from carrying the burden for domestic responsibilities combined with the lack of contribution by her partner results in her feeling overwhelmed and thus feeling disinterested in having sex, Participant Twelve places her experience within the context of an egalitarian relationship and thus feels "neutral" when acquiescing to have sex with her partner.

In addition to Participant Twelve, Participant Nine's renewed relationship with her partner provides additional support for the developing theory by demonstrating that when the power
imbalance is redressed it may be reflected in the cessation of unwanted sex. Rather than accept the relationship on his terms this participant eventually took the decision to separate from her partner. Following a lengthy separation she was in a position to negotiate a much more egalitarian relationship as well as one in which there is no longer unwanted sex. It seems that when there is no significant power differential the process of accommodating to one’s partner holds no coercive elements.

**Negative Case 2: Equality: Counterproductive to Quality Sex?**

In contrast to the first alternative instance there appears in this case to be a direct connection between the non-hierarchical structure of the respondent’s relationship and her experience of unwanted sex. The respondent places her experience of unwanted sex within the context of having established an egalitarian relationship, one in which she had also achieved significantly more economic success than her partner. This type of negative case provides a challenge to the contention that there is an inverse relationship between having an egalitarian relationship and having unwanted sex. In this case a combination of elements appear to have converged to provide the relational context for this respondent’s experience of unwanted sex. Among these were the respondent’s increasing professional success relative to that of her partner, the fact that her partner had control over their financial resources, and her decision to separate. The combination of these elements appear to have placed her in a position in which she became as vulnerable to sexual coercion as those participants in relationships with a highly hierarchical structure.

Participant Eight is a 45-year-old business executive describing her former marital
relationship of thirteen years in which there were two children. The structure of the couple relationship can be considered to be somewhat horizontal in that although there is a more egalitarian balance of power overall, there are some areas of inequity within the couple relationship. Although on the one hand, she was the higher wage earner throughout the relationship, on the other hand, her partner had managed the money since early in the relationship, an arrangement which seems to have been satisfactory to her until the time of the unwanted sex which occurred late in the marital relationship.

Years before the incidents of unwanted sex occurred the marriage had deteriorated at which time she lost interest in having sexual relations with him. In contrast to the respondents depicting Patterns One, Two and Three she does not appear to have had the degree of difficulty with saying “no” to unwanted sex. She describes that over the years there were long periods of sexual abstinence and eventually they moved to having separate bedrooms:

*P8: I don't think I ever wanted to have sex with D after our relationship really for me, the relationship was really bad, like I would say within the first year of our being married, I realized that the relationship was not what I wanted it to be. ...Oh, it was probably about 10 years ago (laugh)! Coz really, quite sincerely, there wasn't that many times when I would allow him to have, I mean, how many times in a year did we have sex? I don't know, 5, 6 maybe I have no idea. ... I was, yes, (sharing the same bedroom) but then at one point, I just said that was enough, I can't do this any longer.

It seems that in the last few years of the relationship they were essentially separated while living under the same roof. During this period she made the decision to separate but wanted to do it in a planned and secret way:

*P14: There was a lot of fighting, there was a lot of arguing, there was a lot of hurt, um, I remember when I finally needed to make a decision to leave and I remember my sister coming to see me and uh I was in absolute tears about it and she was saying to
me that I had to go and I had to go now, and I said, “I'm not ready to”. I just, that's probably the point where I started to get some self-confidence. ...because she was forcing me to make a decision or else she was gonna go home and tell D I was leaving him, and deep down my heart, I knew that it couldn't happen that way because I was going to get financially screwed, everything that could happen to me would happen to me ... and that's when I started to probably gain the courage that I needed to say “The marriage is ended and I'm leaving. I'm not leaving today, I'm leaving a year from now”.

Her experience of unwanted sex occurred during this last phase of the relationship. At that time the respondent had gone back to school and although she continued to work full-time she was also dependent upon him for paying her tuition because he managed the money:

*P8: ... and at that point I'd already been in my doctorate for a while, D was so annoyed with the doctorate uh for a couple of reasons. One is I was doing something that I wanted to do, I was feeling good about it, I was getting recognition, I mean I was starting to get recognition from a variety of people um including you know the university who wanted me to come and speak on the issue. And uh I had some good colleagues, and they're male colleagues too and that worsened everything for D and in retrospect, I can understand why he was very threatened by everything that was going on. . . . The last time I had sex with him was because it would have been that year, and he said, “If you want your money for school, you'll have to sleep with me or you'll have to make love to me every night”. Oh yeah, for a month, that's not going to happen. But I tell you I did, as much as I could, because I needed that money and yet is that like prostituting yourself? In a way, yeah. But I did it and that was, but that was my fear.

There appears to be a direct connection between her increasing professional and economic potential, her economic dependence, her decision to separate and her experience of unwanted sex. She places her experience within the context of the growing discrepancy in their professional success and in their relative economic power:

*P8: I would say that we started fairly equal.
*Int.: And then it seems as though he was in a bit more of a downward spiral, and meanwhile you were on this...
*P8: I was on this upward swing
*Int.: Looking back on it, is that how big a factor (referring to the unwanted sex)?
*P8: Oh I would say, I would say it was probably the biggest factor but until you step away from it, you can't articulate it at the time, like I think now that I've stepped away from it, I think it was a really big factor.

It appears that his "downward spiral" in relation to her "upward swing" led to his using his control over their money as an opportunity to coerce her into having sex with him:

*P8: ... I think he knew very well what my capabilities were, he was afraid of what, that he was afraid that I would actually use them, and I think, all I know D competed with me very very much and I don't think he realized what kind of strength I had and I don't think he could have ever, he would ever been able to be proud of me, because he didn't feel good about himself so uh I now understand, I think I understand that his putting me down was his way of dealing with his own self-esteem issues where he would always say that he was so bloody self-confident all the time, in fact I don't think you know.

Discussion:

The use of economic coercion to pressure the woman to comply with the demand for sex is considered a form of "interpersonal coercion" (Finkelhor & Yllo, 1985). In addition, given the use of overt manifestations of domination and control the level of couple power that is operating in this case can be considered to be manifest power (Kompter, 1989).

There are some similarities between Participants Eight and Seven that are worth noting. Participant Seven, like Eight, went along with the unwanted sex because she felt had to due to her fears that otherwise her partner might withhold needed financial support. In contrast to her, however, the structure of Participant Eight's relationship appears to have been significantly more egalitarian prior to the episodes of sexual coercion. In fact the pattern seems to be that as she gained more professional power and economic potential in relation to her partner he reacted by
becoming increasingly threatened. Russell’s study (1982) offers some anecdotal data on her own respondents’ experience of unwanted sex, which may provide a context within which to understand Participant Eight’s experience. Among the reasons provided by her study respondents as to what circumstances made their sexual experiences unwanted was wanting to discontinue sexual relations once separation/divorce has been decided upon (Russell, 1982). One explanation for this is that when a woman’s status is in the process of change, she will be most vulnerable to abuse by her partner (Finkelhor & Yllo, 1983). Participant Eight appears to fall into this category. Although she had planned to keep her decision to separate a secret from her husband, on some level he may have come to the realization that she was planning to leave him in the near future. It seems that while the discrepancy in their professional success was an element in the erosion of their relationship, her economic dependence left her in a position of vulnerability to sexual coercion once she had made the decision to end the relationship.

Negative Case 3: Equality: No Antidote for Lack of Chemistry

In contrast to the second type of negative case, in this third type there does not appear to be any clear connection between the structure of the couple relationship and the respondent’s experience of having unwanted sex with her partner. This alternative case provides a challenge to the view that there is an inverse connection between having an egalitarian relationship and having unwanted sex in that it appears that if there is no mutual sexual attraction between the partners, then having or establishing an egalitarian relationship may have little or no impact on the quality of their sexual relationship. Participant Thirteen provides an example of this last type of alternative case in that within this egalitarian relationship she periodically acquiesces to having
unwanted sexual relations with her partner for whom she has no sexual attraction.

Participant Thirteen is a 34-year-old woman who is relating her experience of having unwanted sex within a current cohabiting relationship of two years duration to a successful real estate broker. The structure of this couple's relationship can be considered to be quite non-hierarchical in that she has an ideology of egalitarianism and has achieved marked success in her efforts to establish a more egalitarian relationship. Because there is a more equal balance of power between the partners there is little discontent on her part concerning issues of inequality within the relationship.

There appears to be no connection between the structure of the relationship and her experience of unwanted sex. The unwanted sex which she describes has to do with her lack of sexual attraction for her partner. Despite the fact that he has made several significant changes in himself (in an effort to please her) she remains sexually unattracted to him. Thus, it appears in this case that no amount of changing either on a personal level or in terms of working toward a more egalitarian relationship can transform a couple relationship in which there is no mutual sexual attraction. She describes the dilemma that she finds herself in with regards to her partner:

*P13: It's like, um, like I really feel for him, but it doesn't, it doesn't come out in a sexual way. So I feel like I'm, I'm leading a double life at times. So when I'm with him, I just, I think he's a great guy and everything, but when I have these thoughts at the back of my mind, on how I'm not attracted, I would never have, like my eye would never have gone there, if he, if there was a crowded room with men, my eye would never go there. And even though he's attractive in his own way, he's just not my type. You know, and, but I love him, I love who he is, and what he stands for and his values and stuff. And so it just frustrates me to not be able to share it sexually, like he can do that with me.
In explaining her lack of sexual attraction for him she reports the fifteen year difference in their ages as well as the fact that her partner is shorter than she as being contributing factors:

*P13: And plus not being in love with him like he was loving me, felt like I was lying to myself more and more. But all through this time, I talked to him about it, and all this time, he was, "Don't worry about it, don't worry about it." And it's like, "I do worry about it, you're 50 years old, I'm not attracted to you, (laugh) but you're an excellent person to be with." He's a lot of fun, he's a great friend, he's very emotionally honest, he shares anything... He only stands like maybe, 5'6", which is another thing I can't handle, is a man being shorter than me, I'm 5'7", coz he's maybe like, not even barely eye-to-eye, right? But he walks like he's 7 feet tall, (laughs) and it's like, sometimes I just want to kill him (laughs).

She does not appear to have difficulty saying "no" to unwanted sex and there does not appear to be any significant pressure being exerted by him upon her to engage in sexual relations; however, she describes feeling a sense of obligation to "repay" him for his generosity by having sex with him. She points out that after saying "no" a certain number of times in succession she starts to feel that she has an obligation to have sex:

*P13: There'd be times when I wouldn't be aroused and I would just like, okay, just have sex, right? Especially when it would be like three or four days have gone by, or at least a week, then I'll think, you know, he must be really freaking out with all these back rubs and there's no sex, right? ... I just felt like there was an obligation... that I had to be there for him, and you know, because of everything he does for me, and it's like, no. It doesn't work that way.

The main difficulty she seems to be having is one of accepting that she cannot "make" herself fall in love with this man whom she considers an ideal life partner in very many ways. Here she describes her failure to convince herself that she's sexually attracted to him:

*P13: I am like really tired of like fighting with myself. I am tired of about how I fight with myself and even when I was talking to some friends, and like
our counselors, and I got all kind of qualified people in my life, you know and it's just like, even talking with them, I go, "You know, it's making me sick, talking about this, because I know that I know what I know (laugh)". And it doesn't matter how much I talk about it, it'll still be what it is. Coz I have racked my brain, I'm it, I'm trying to make it another way, like, for so long and I have put so much effort hoping that one day I'd just wake up and it would be like, "Oh, thank God! We can get on with getting married (laughs)". You know, and it's like, please, just let it like, please, just something.

In the process of trying to convince herself to be “in love” with him it seems that she invariably becomes depressed. She describes the emotional toll that the effort takes on her:

*Int.: But even when you have a guy like P, who, as you say, most women would you know fight you to get at, if there's not the attraction, it's not worth it. Is that what you're saying?

*P13: Well, it's not about whether it's worth it, it's just about what it does for me. What is it doing to me? Is it like empowering me, is it serving me, or is it dis-empowering me? You know, and I don't want to live through life just being sick all the time. Because, in my head, I'm going to go, okay, I'm going to handle this, I can handle it, which I've always said to myself. But my body tells me different. . . . Okay, the thing that makes me sick is me saying to myself, because of not feeling satisfied, you know and making myself wrong for wanting it another way or wanting more out of the relationship, so I always say to myself, this is like, what are you being? Selfish. You're being greedy, you're being this, you're being that. It's like, what's your problem? What's the matter with you? You know, so I kind of go, yeah, what is your problem? Like, you know, get into this, right? So I would get into it, I would go, okay, I'm going to be this great loving person and I'm just going to love him and it's all going to be great, and I'm just going to love him to the point where I'd even marry him.

*Int.: And the effort makes you sick, the effort that it takes?

*P13: Yes, the work. So then I end up getting angry and then everything he doesn't say, I just, I just like, so I start picking at him, and it just like, that's it, it's all your fault, where, you know, I even told him that, "I'm not mad at you. Don't worry. I'm like having a really frustrating time here. It's not about you". Because I know, it's not about him. It's about what I'm saying to myself and what I'm going against. Because there's nothing wrong over there.

Like Participant Nine, she describes feeling that she's not being true to herself, a value
which she has achieved through her personal work on herself:

*P13: Uh-hm. Uh-hm. Well, not settling in that, in that area, it would be settling in an area where I just feel like I'd be ripping myself off. Because I've been in love with somebody to the point where it's like you couldn't get enough of the person, you know, and one of them was an unforbidden love, and the other one died on me. So I'm thinking, that's it, it's over, I don't play this game anymore, right? And then I see him in the relationship and I see him feeling those feelings that I know that can be there. Coz I've had them and he's experiencing them and it's like, so, what about me? And then he turns around, and says, "Well, you're just doing this because of, you know, how you think and feel and blah blah blah." And I'm going, "Well it'll only be me up to the end, you know, like I gotta live with me, everywhere I am". You know, so I really don't live according to what other people think. But then there's another side of me, it's like, "Okay, okay, we'll have sex," so you know, so I just feel like I'm like, what is this? What is this dual life of just giving in?

She describes the importance she attributes to having a good sex life:

*P13: Well, I would be way more sexually aroused because that's who I am, right? Because, even in my last relationship, he was a great-looking guy. And I've been with a lot of great-looking guys. You know, so it's kind of weird, so when I'm with a great-looking guy that I'm physically attracted to, I'm very sexually active, wanting sex.

*Int.: So you're really missing something in this relationship?

*P13: Uh-hm. Yeah, big missing. ...that's why I, I give in a lot of the times, because I know that sex will be great, but in my mind I feel like I'm just having sex. I'm having sex with this guy, I'm not making love to P. Where I know, I have made love before. And there are times when I can have sex and have a lot of feelings for him, but a lot of the times, it's, it's, you know, two bodies coming together and just enjoying intercourse.

*Int.: And sometimes when you're having sex with him you are enjoying it?

*P13: Yeah, a lot of the times, I enjoy the sex, right? As sex. But I know that there's something missing when it comes to sharing that with a partner. So that's, that's what I basically long for. I went and saw the movie "Tarzan" the other night, and the way Tarzan was going on about his mother, the ape, I was like, crying and everything, I thought, like I know that, I know that feeling, right? I just cried, and I just, and P was with me, I'm going, "Look at me, I'm a mess," but I could never tell him that about how I feel. ... it's just a pretty empty feeling sometimes. And then you go see movies like Tarzan, you think, oh, my God! It's over for me (laughs). I am lying so bad, like I
can't even lie, I can't even believe my lies. That's just basically it, like it is, it is either there or it isn't.

Discussion:

This alternative case provides support for the contention that having an insistent female partner can provide a strong motivation for the man to develop a more egalitarian ideology concerning the couple relationship. This instance demonstrates the ability of the male partner to make some very significant changes in his behaviour for the sake of the well-being of the relationship. At the same time however, it also shows that the establishment of an egalitarian relationship does not necessarily lead to having a mutually satisfying sexual relationship.

This case also raises the issue of the relationship between sexual attraction and the social construction of masculinity. Not only are women socialized to be sexually attracted to men who are dominant in the relationship, they are also socialized to be sexually attracted to men who are smarter, richer and taller than they (Goodrich, 1991). This respondent describes finding her partner's short stature and the fifteen year gap in their ages to be factors in her lack of sexual attraction. So it seems that although her partner is richer than she, this attribute does not make up for the deficits that she perceives regarding his physical attractiveness.
Chapter 11: Discussion and Conclusion

The central phenomenon to emerge from this study concerns the nature of the connection between the organizational context of the participants' couple relationships and their experience of having unwanted sex with their life partners. The type of theory that emerges from this study can be considered to be "pattern theory". This theory posits that there is a connection between the presence of a hierarchical structure within the couple relationship and the experience of unwanted sex. In addition, there are some data in support of the theory that there is a connection between having an egalitarian structure and the absence of unwanted sex, although there are also some data which challenges this theory. This study has examined the nature of this connection and has identified three patterns with some variations.

Summary and Discussion of Findings

Pattern One depicts a "direct connection" between the hierarchical structure of the couple relationship and the participants' experience of unwanted sex. Pattern Two depicts a "direct connection with mediating elements" in which a third element is present and is operating to obscure the connection between the hierarchical structure and the participants' experience of unwanted sex. From this pattern two variations have emerged: a "side-tracking" mediating element and a "blurred" mediating element. In the "sidetracking" variation the mediating element is introduced by the participants' partners, while in the "blurred" variation this element is introduced by the participants themselves. In both of these variations these elements operate to deflect the participants' attention away from the direct connection by drawing their attention to the mediating element. Pattern Three depicts an "indirect connection with antecedent elements" in which there is not a straightforward connection between the hierarchical structure of the couple
relationship and the participants' experience of unwanted sex and, in addition, a third element is present which is operating to obstruct this connection. A variation of this pattern is an "overriding" antecedent element in which the participants' experience of childhood trauma has had the effect of indoctrinating them into accepting an ideology of male domination and female subordination as a normal aspect of couple relationships and family life.

The Dimensions of Couple Power and the Experience of Unwanted Sex

Komter's (1989) schema of cross-gender couple power has provided a conceptual framework for understanding the connection between the distribution of power within the couple relationship and the presence of unwanted sex. Although all three levels of power are present among the participants, the latent level of power appears to be the most prevalent one operating in this study. Prior to expounding on the possible reasons for this some brief comments will be offered on the way in which the manifest and invisible levels of power appear to be operating among the research participants.

Although the couple relationships of several participants provide instances of the operation of the manifest level of power generally (such as the presence of domination and control), there appears to have been only one participant for whom this level of power was operating specifically in terms of her experience of unwanted sex. This occurred in the case of Participant Eight when her partner coerced her into having unwanted sex by making explicit the threat to withhold needed financial support. The use of this level of power is somewhat of a paradox in light of the fact that this participant was among those considered to have a more egalitarian relationship. This case, however, provides an illustration that holding an ideology of
egalitarianism and working toward the establishment of a non-hierarchical relationship does not necessarily provide an insurance policy against the exercise of male domination and control, especially when a woman decides to leave the relationship.

Those participants who portray Pattern Three provide an example of the operation of invisible power. In these instances the connection between the presence of a hierarchical structure and the experience of unwanted sex is obstructed by the participants' histories of intra-familial child sexual abuse which constitutes an "overriding" mediating element. Because of their traumatic childhood experiences these women entered their couple relationships firm in the belief that they could not say "no" to unwanted sex. In contrast to other participants they appear to have come into their relationships devoid of any sense of sexual autonomy. The level of power that was operating at the time of their experience of unwanted sex is considered to be invisible because this lack of sexual autonomy appears to have been the primary element operating for them, giving secondary importance to the relevance of the concomitant connection between the hierarchical structure of their relationships and their experience of unwanted sex. Thus, as a result of their traumatic experience they held beliefs concerning the nature of couple sex that are subtly defined and supported by power relations. As a result of these entrenched beliefs those power relations could be sustained without question and overt forms of sexual pressure or coercion were not necessary to maintain them (Komter, 1989).

The latent level of power appears to be the most prevalent one operating among the respondents in this study. Although many of the participants made concerted efforts, especially during the early stages of cohabitation, to risk conflict in order to work toward the establishment of more egalitarian partnerships, several of these participants later moved into positions of
resignation or complacency concerning the structure of their relationships. The concept of latent couple power provides a useful framework for understanding this finding. While some of these participants appear to have come to the view that there is no point in negotiating power issues and have moved into a position of resignation concerning the immutability of the hierarchical structure of their relationships, others appear to have over time adopted a more complacent attitude, and seem to have come to the view that that the partial success they have had in redressing the imbalance of power is sufficient.

Those participants holding an ideology of egalitarian couple/family life have tended to make more of an effort to establish an egalitarian balance of power than those adhering to a more traditional/hierarchical ideology. Depending upon their level of success in this endeavour, it appears that when conflicts concerning power issues such as household work, childcare and/or money remain unresolved it leaves them feeling resentful toward their partners generally and thus disinclined to engage in sex with them. Depending upon their willingness to risk their partners’ negative reaction or to risk the possibility of jeopardizing the relationship, they may choose to keep the conflict concerning the power issue(s) on the table or they may choose to abandon it/them. The decision to drop the power issue(s) appears to depend on one of two things. Firstly, when the participants’ partner reacts to her disinterest in having sex by escalating the conflict in some way (such as by intimating that he may have an affair), she may decide to drop the power issue(s) and also to feign interest in having sex because of her fear that the relationship will be in jeopardy unless she does so. Secondly, when the participant herself decides to adopt a position of complacency concerning the power issue(s), she may choose to focus on the repercussions of having unwanted sex, lamenting for example the lack of time for herself that results from
acquiescing to unwanted sex.

A theme to emerge across the study and which appears to be related to this adoption of a position of complacency or resignation concerning the gender hierarchy is the "need for time for self". Several participants express lament concerning the lack of time for themselves that results from having unwanted sex. Perhaps the feeling of lacking time for the self is a by-product of accepting an unequal division of domestic work and/ or financial control. Thus, it may be that in moving from a position of resistance concerning this imbalance to one of resignation results in lamenting the loss of time for the self that accepting a disproportionate allocation of these responsibilities entails.

In contrast to these participants, only two appear to have maintained a position of active resistance concerning conflicts over power issues throughout the duration of their relationships. For example, Participant Nine identifies quite clearly how her resentment over her partner's lack of shared participation in the household work is connected to her experience of unwanted sex. In contrast to those participants who moved into a position of complacency concerning the structure of their relationship and lament the lack of time for themselves that results from having unwanted sex, Participant Nine does not identify having a need for time to herself. Rather than accept the relationship the way that it was she finally took the decision to separate from her partner. After a lengthy separation they began seeing one another again and during this time she was able to negotiate a much more egalitarian relationship as well as one in which there is no longer a problem with unwanted sex.

It is interesting to note the differences between Participant Three, who moved into a position of complacency concerning the structure of their relationship (and also laments the lack
of time for herself), and Participant Nine in terms of their views concerning having unwanted sex. While Participant Three came to the view that it might be more harmful to their relationship to repeatedly refuse her partner’s requests to have sex than to have unwanted sex, Participant Nine eventually came to the opposite view that it is more detrimental to the well-being of the relationship to acquiesce than it is to say “no” to unwanted sex. While both women have attempted to find a solution aimed at ensuring the well-being of the couple relationship, the former has chosen to silence herself in the process while the latter woman has come to the view that when one member of the couple is silenced a real solution has yet to be found.

Both of the women who chose to keep the conflict concerning the power issue(s) on the table separated, one permanently and the other temporarily. Of the women who moved into a position of resignation or complacency, most were still living in current couple relationships at the time of their participation in this study. This suggests that the adoption of a complacent attitude toward the inequilateral structure of their couple/family relationships and thus toward the power issues which are reflective of this structure may be a coping strategy used by these participants to enable them to maintain the status quo and thus to remain in these relationships.

The Levels of Sexual Coercion Found in the Experience of Unwanted Sex

Finklehor and Yllo’s (1985) typology of sexual coercion has provided a conceptual framework for placing women’s experience of unwanted sex along a continuum of sexual coercion, as well as for analyzing the types of sexual coercion that appear to be operating to compel participants to engage in unwanted sex with their life partners. Both of the types of nonviolent sexual coercion which they identify have emerged in this study. The first of these,
social coercion, refers to the pressure women feel as a result of beliefs about gender, couple relationships and couple sex. This form of coercion may be operating also when a woman has no sense of sexual autonomy such as in the case of those participants portraying the “overriding” variation of Pattern Three. As has been noted, because of their histories of intra-familial child sexual abuse Participants Two and Six entered their couple relationships with the belief that they could not say “no” to sex and this lack of sexual autonomy appears to have been the primary factor that was operating for each of them in terms of their experience of unwanted sex.

Interpersonal Coercion, which involves the use of explicit threats to pressure the woman to comply with the demand for sex, is the second type of nonviolent sexual coercion to emerge in this study. Verbal threats might involve the warning of economic consequences. This type of sexual coercion was clearly operating in the case of Participant Eight, whose partner made explicit threats to withhold her needed tuition fees. In the case of Participant Seven, there was also the threat to withhold needed financial support; however, this threat was implicit rather than explicit. Nevertheless, both participants needed the economic support of their partners, both were aware of their partners’ expectations to engage in sex, and neither felt that she had any option other than to comply with his expectations. Thus, although Participant Seven’s partner does not make the threat explicit, it is clear that she nonetheless felt required to have unwanted sex by this pressure.

Interpersonal Coercion can also involve verbal threats to end the relationship or to have an affair. Although threats of this sort were present in the case of those participants portraying the “sidetracking” variation of Pattern Two, the threats were more implicit than explicit in nature. In the case of Participant Nine, it was her partner’s flirtatious behaviour which carried the implicit
threat that he might end the relationship or have an affair, while in the case of Participant One it was her partner's criticism that she might be "frigid" which carried the same underlying threat. For both of these participants the implicit threat to either end the relationship or to have an affair was made in response to their unwillingness to comply with their partners' expectations regarding sex.

The effect of such implicit threats, whether to withhold needed financial support, to have an affair, or to separate appears to have placed sufficient pressure on these women to not only comply with their partners' expectations regarding having sex, but also to retreat from their efforts to redress the other disparities in power in an effort to maintain their relationships. These findings suggest that Finkelhor and Yllo's (1985) typology of sexual coercion should be expanded to include the use of such "implicit" threats used to pressure a woman to comply with the demand for sex. Due to the implicit rather than explicit nature of the threat, such nonverbal threats might more accurately be considered "interpersonal pressure."

The pattern theory developed in the present study contends that there is a connection between the distribution of power within the couple relationship and the experience of both wanted and unwanted sex. The findings suggest that when the structure of the participants' couple relationship is hierarchical, the degree of gender-based power imbalance that is present in the relationship generally may simply be extended into the couple's sexual relationship. More specifically, when there is resentment on the part of the participant concerning unresolved conflict regarding power issues, this resentment may be mirrored, either directly or indirectly, in the experience of unwanted sex. These findings, however, are not generalizable and thus they are not meant to suggest that for couples who have hierarchical relationships the women will necessarily
experience unwanted sex. In fact it appears that when the woman adheres to an ideology of hierarchical couple/family life there may be little or no resentment concerning the gendered division of household work, childcare and/or money, and thus the expectation to have sex on demand may not be experienced as unwanted sex.

There is also some evidence to suggest that when the structure of the participants’ couple relationships is more egalitarian that this mutuality also extends into the area of the couple sexual relationship. These findings, however, are not meant to suggest that for couples having a more egalitarian relationship this will necessarily mean that the sexual relationship will reflect the mutuality that is present in such relationships. For example, as we have seen when there is no mutual sexual attraction the restructuring of the couple relationship toward a more egalitarian balance of power may not result in an improved sexual relationship. Thus, in the absence of “chemistry” the establishment of a more horizontal structure may not be sufficient to address the problem of unwanted sex within couple relationships.

**Trustworthiness of the Study**

Several procedures for determining the credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability as well as the authenticity of the study have been used (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, Lincoln, 1995). Though no claims are being made that the responses of study participants are generalizable beyond the persons interviewed, significant attention has been given to ensuring the trustworthiness of this report. The use of theoretical sampling to locate *negative cases* was used to ensure the credibility and transferability of research findings. This consideration of contradictory evidence was used to give the evolving theory increased breadth and strength.
(Lincoln & Guba, 1985). After completing several interviews it seemed clear that most of the participants were living in relationships that could be considered hierarchical in structure. This characteristic of the sample led to a search for negative cases that would challenge the apparent connection between the presence of a hierarchical structure and the experience of unwanted sex. This search led to the inclusion of a participant whose couple relationship appeared from the point of first contact to be more egalitarian than the other participants. As it turned out the structure and ideology of Participant Twelve's relationship was extremely egalitarian and what became questionable was whether her perception of unwanted sex met the study's criterion of what this constitutes. This alternative case proved to be most useful in providing indirect support for the emergent theory that there is a connection between the presence of a hierarchical structure and the experience of unwanted sex by demonstrating that within an egalitarian relationship there is only wanted sex. From comparing this participant's experience with that of other participants it became clear that just as the presence of a hierarchical structure changes the meaning of consent, the presence of a horizontal structure also changes the meaning of consent. Thus, acquiescing to sex within an egalitarian relationship can be considered "persuaded consent" which more accurately falls within the category of wanted sex. This can be distinguished from acquiescing to unwanted sex within a hierarchical relationship in that the meaning of consent is more at issue.

Two additional types of alternative case have emerged from the study. The second of these, "equality: counterproductive to quality sex?", challenges the postulate that there is an inverse relationship between having an egalitarian relationship and having unwanted sex by demonstrating that unwanted sex can occur within an apparently egalitarian relationship. In this instance the participant's increasing professional success relative to that of her partner and her
concomitant economic dependence combined to place her in a position in which she became vulnerable to sexual coercion once she had made the decision to end the relationship.

The third type of alternative case, "equality: no antidote for lack of chemistry", challenges the emergent theory by showing that sometimes there is no particular connection between the structure of the couple relationship and the experience of unwanted sex, as in cases in which there is no mutual sexual attraction between the couple.

The transferability of the study has been strengthened through the use of thick description. To this end I have included direct access to each of the respondents by using their words and stories. Thus, I have attempted to specify everything that a reader may need to know in order to understand the findings and to make decisions regarding their applicability to other situations, even though doing so has increased the length of the report considerably.

Peer debriefing sessions were conducted with members of my thesis committee as well as with knowledgeable peer research colleagues. This procedure, which involved sharing my evolving analysis of the data, also provided the opportunity for conversations concerning subsequent method decisions. From these discussions for example, it became apparent that I had collected far more data than I would be able to analyse within a reasonable frame of time. In fact it seems that I had probably collected enough data for at least two studies. In my efforts to explore the context of women's experience of unwanted sex a great deal of information was obtained about both the structural and ideological bases of power which were operating at the time of participants' experience. In order to set some limits on the scope of the study I decided against analysing all of the data collected concerning the ideological aspects. Thus, analysis of the data concerning the extent of gender-based socialization present in both the participants' and their
partners' families of origin, as well as its relevance on participants' experience of unwanted sex, was deferred.

An audit trail was created to ensure authenticity as well as to support credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the study. NUD*IST was used in the creation of this audit trail and served as an on-line filing system which stored the entire research process. Its "document system" which is a code-and-retrieve system, was useful for managing documents, while its "index system" allowed for the management of the conceptual process of the project (Richards & Richards, 1994). Thus, it was used as a means of record keeping as well as to facilitate reflexivity about procedures. To this end it was used to keep a reflexive journal in which I recorded information about my insights and reasons for methodological decisions. These conceptual memos enabled me to record my train of thought throughout the process of data collection and analysis. Such memos allowed me to wonder about the meaning of a coded category, and to draw comparisons both within individual interviews as well as across interviews. When within interview patterns were replicated across interviews the use of these memos allowed me to speculate on the emerging patterns, and to engage in the process of theory construction. Much of the completed analysis was based on an integration of these accumulated memos.

**Dilemmas Involved in Gaining Access to a Sample When Researching Sensitive Topics**

Although the size of this sample turned out to be smaller than originally expected (comprising 13 participants), it is still considered to be within an appropriate range for a qualitative study (Kunzel, 1992). The sample however, can be considered to be somewhat selective in that a high proportion of the participants were recruited from a university campus.
Some clarification of the ethical concerns which influenced this site selection will be offered to explain the resulting selectivity of the sample.

The subject of unwanted sex in couple relationships is a “sensitive topic” which has the potential to be emotionally disruptive to participants on at least two levels. As an aspect of the subject of sexual relations in couple relationships it delves into a highly personal experience not generally discussed with non-intimates. Secondly, as an aspect of the problem of sexual coercion it impinges on the exercise of domination and control (Bergen, 1993). Thus, in conducting research on this problem there exists the possibility that participants might disclose information which may be emotionally disturbing and/or which could result in the disruption of relationships that are perhaps emotionally and/or materially sustaining.

As both a clinical social worker and a feminist researcher I was concerned about the potential emotional impact of involvement in the study on participants. An ethical issue therefore concerned how to handle research participants’ possible need of therapeutic support. The ability to be able to offer them assistance by making a referral for counselling became a factor in site selection for the recruitment of participants. In addition, concern for the potentially disruptive effects on them and their couple/family relationships should their life partners become aware of and object to their participation would entail taking measures to safeguard confidentiality, thereby ensuring their protection.

Initially, I sought to ensure that therapeutic support and safety/confidentiality would be secured through conducting the study with women who were clients of a children’s mental health centre. As clients, these women would have access to the clinical services available, and precautions could be taken to ensure that their participation could be kept confidential from their
partners. Despite the possibility that in selecting a mental health centre from which to draw the sample the study could be criticized for the use of a "clinical" sample, it was felt that the rationale for doing so was sufficiently compelling.

Gaining access to women who have experienced unwanted sex and who would also have access to readily available and affordable counselling services was one of the most challenging problems of this research project. Dealing with the directors of mental health agencies and or their research department heads, who were the "gatekeepers" to my access to these women, was a very significant constraint with which I had to deal. During the course of site selection, I presented my research proposal to two child/ family mental health centres. In the process I explained my concerns regarding the sensitive nature of the topic and the need to provide for the therapeutic support and protection of research participants. The measures proposed entailed firstly that only potential participants who attended the centres unaccompanied by their partners would be approached for participation in the study. Secondly, in the event that the issues discussed caused a negative emotional impact on a participant a referral would be made to her clinician at the centre. While I believed that potential concerns regarding participants had been appropriately addressed, I had overlooked the effects that my ethical concerns would have on the agency personnel whom I was addressing. What I had perceived to be primarily a matter of sensitivity, they perceived as a matter of high risk. Thus, in the process of trying to ensure the confidentiality and therapeutic support of the potential participants the unintended effect was to cause alarm in those who were in a position to deny me access to a sample.

Among the unintended effects, one of the agencies offered to provide me with a sample which would change the nature of the whole study. Although they were prepared to give me
access to a sample, it was one comprised of clients who had been identified for the presence of wife abuse and who were involved in a program for domestic violence. However, in designing the study women who have been physically abused by their partners were to be excluded from the sample on the basis that it was considered a contradiction to include women who have been wife battered in a sample of women who have experienced nonviolent sexual coercion. This is due to the fact that battered women live under the threat of potential violence should they not comply with their partner’s demand for sex, and so their sexual relations were considered to more accurately meet the definition of wife rape. This agency informed me that they would be unable to provide me with access to non-identified clients. Their reluctance appeared to stem from their concern regarding the possibility that participants might disclose wife abuse through their participation in the study.

In the case of the other agency the “gatekeepers” appeared to be the front line clinical staff rather than the management of the agency. It appears that because involvement in research was not part of their job description collaboration in the proposed project was left to their discretion. Their collective decision against participating was made on the basis that they did not have the time to give to the project. Although it is understandable that front line social workers might be reluctant to collaborate on such research projects, given the effects that social service cutbacks have had on the size of their caseloads, the omission of research from their job descriptions may have had the effect of providing a disincentive to them to collaborate in research.

Fortunately, I was able to locate a sample and still address the ethical concerns without relying upon the use of a social service agency. Participants who are enrolled as university students also have access to clinical services which are readily available and free of charge.
Participants who were located through women's health centres in the Toronto community were provided with a list of resources providing clinical services on a sliding fee scale. As it turned out none of the participants in this study became emotionally distraught as a result of talking about their experiences of unwanted sex. Thus, although this topic was approached with caution these concerns turned out to have been overstated.

Limitations of the Study

As a result of the precautions taken in selecting a site from which to recruit participants, the sample appears to have a greater number of highly educated women than might otherwise have been the case had the sample been drawn from a child/family mental health centre or only from women's health centres. Level of education is considered by some researchers to be a reflection of ideology, with less education considered to be an indication of more traditional beliefs and more education being assumed to reflect more egalitarian beliefs (Starrels, 1994). Thus, this more highly educated sample may indicate a predisposition among participants toward holding a more egalitarian ideology than women in the general population. Had the sample been drawn from a children's mental health centre, as originally expected, it likely would not have shared this educational characteristic and thus might have been comprised of participants holding a more traditional/hierarchical ideology concerning couple and family life.

Despite the fact that many of the participants in this study hold an ideology of egalitarianism, in most cases their relationships were still hierarchical in structure. This is largely because their life partners did not appear to share this ideology and thus, their success in redressing the gender-based power imbalance was limited. In light of the finding that there seems
to be a connection between the experience of discontent concerning this lack of success and participants’ disinterest in having sex with their partners, the evidence suggests that women who have an egalitarian ideology may in fact experience more dissatisfaction with the quality of their sex lives than women who hold more traditional views. However, the participants who have more traditional ideologies appear to have experienced more overt signs of sexual coercion (such as being woken for sex, intimations of economic/relationship consequences) than participants with the more egalitarian ideologies. Paradoxically, although they appear to be less discontented with the inequality, these participants also seem to have experienced more sexual coercion. Thus, the subjective experience of inequality appears to be a more key element in the experience of unwanted sex than objective indicators of either gender-based inequality or sexual coercion.

The findings of this study suggest that part of the process of consciousness raising involves women experiencing more dissatisfaction in all areas of their couple relationships where power imbalances are manifested, including the area of sexual relations. In conducting further investigations I would want to use a sample comprised of women who might hold more traditional ideologies (such as less highly educated women). Part of this investigation would involve an exploration of whether such women perceive having less unwanted sex and, if so, whether this perception is commensurate with their actual experience.

**Implications for Social Work Research**

In order to advance conceptualizations of clinical practice that are aimed at working toward the establishment of egalitarian couple partnerships, social work needs to be informed by research which goes beyond an examination of the manifest levels of couple power to give
consideration to the ways in which more subtle levels of power may be operating. Thus far most research has focused on the more overt signs of male domination and control. Research on the problem of wife rape examines the obvious signs of manifest power that are evidenced in this form of sexual coercion. However, the problem of sexual coercion in couple relationships may also involve the exercise of more subtle forms of power. The present study has given consideration to the ways in which these more imperceptible levels of power may be operating in women’s experience of unwanted sex.

Although Finkelhor and Yllo’s typology (1985) identifies some of the more subtle forms of sexual coercion, such as verbal threats of economic coercion, affairs and/or separation, this study suggests that forms of sexual coercion that are even more subtle than these verbalized threats may be operating in the experience of unwanted sex. Implicit threats of economic coercion, affairs and/or separation may also contain enough coercive elements to make a woman feel required to comply with her partner’s demand for sex. Thus, it is suggested that the notion of “interpersonal coercion” needs to be broadened to include such implicit threats.

Given the social work profession’s commitment to identifying and remediating oppressive social institutions and circumstances, social work research has a commitment to identify and examine subject areas that are considered to be “sensitive” and/or “high risk”. In order to conduct clinical practice research the investigator may need to gain access to clinical practice sites. Such research may involve the risk that information may be disclosed during the process of inquiry which might need to be followed up by the agency providing access to the sample. The challenge of dealing with “gatekeepers” who have the power to block the researcher’s access to a sample can become a significant constraint when conducting such research. While the investigator needs
to be aware of the need to adequately address the agency's concerns regarding the potential high risk nature of the study for the agency, for their part service providers must not be hesitant about unearthing social problems that have yet to be identified. In order to develop theories and models of treatment clinical social work practice needs to be informed by clinical practice research. What must not be overlooked is the reciprocal nature of the relationship.

**Contribution to the Literature**

The problem of unwanted sex in cross-gender couple relationships belongs to two literatures. As discussed earlier, it forms part of the literature on sexual coercion in couple relationships. In addition, the problem of unwanted sex also is one aspect of the much broader topic of gender-based power imbalance in cross-gender couple partnerships. This study makes a contribution to the feminist literature by showing that the problem of unwanted sex is rooted in gender-based power imbalance. The area of sexual relations can be considered one of the principal bases of power and thus, can be added to the other main bases of power such as the areas of domestic labour and monetary resources. These three areas are central aspects of couple life in which gender-based power imbalance may be located and must therefore be redressed. The negotiation of sexual relations thus, is one of the power issues affecting couple/ family life. Further, like the unequal division of domestic labour and the inequitable allocation of monetary resources, the problem of unwanted sex can be considered to be one of the negative effects of gender hierarchy in couple partnerships.

While the actual experience of having unwanted sex can be considered to be a manifestation of gender hierarchy per se, the *disinterest* in having sex which participants in this
study have described can be viewed as one of the consequences resulting from their failed attempts to rectify this gender-hierarchy. It appears that when there is discontent on the part of the woman concerning the unsuccessful negotiation of power issues, this resentment has the potential to interfere with her level of interest in engaging in sex with her partner. As one participant described, when there is resentment concerning the household “work” the expectation to have sex can begin to feel like just another type of domestic “work.” “I kind of superimpose that (the housework) onto the relationship. . . I started looking at sex as work, as more work that I have to do for this relationship. . . which is not a very sensual erotic feeling to go into . . . So I'm going into having sex feeling resentment already, feeling that it's work.” (Participant 9). Or as another participant remarked, “If he's not going to be a partner and help and share in this relationship, how can I share in the bedroom?” (Participant 5). Thus, unresolved conflicts concerning power issues can interfere not only with a woman's sexual responsiveness, they can interfere also with the possibilities for emotional intimacy.

Social work educators, students, and practitioners need theories and therapy models which recognize the impact of gender-based power imbalance on couple and family life. Our conceptual framework organizes what we see and do not see in families; thus, if we are not aware of gender-derived power, we will not be able to see it in clinical practice. Our conceptual framework also determines what questions we will ask our clients; therefore if we are unaware of the possibility that our female clients may be experiencing a wide range of sexual coercion we are unlikely to assess for this possibility. Research on violence against wives has informed clinical practice that women who have been battered or raped by their partners will not have an effective voice in negotiating couple issues. However, barring the presence of physical abuse, many clinicians still
tend to assume that both partners are equally empowered to negotiate issues and conflicts that arise in daily life. However, there may be other, more subtle, forms of coercion operating to silence the woman (Goodrich et al., 1988). In order to understand how a woman’s subordinate status in relation to her partner operates to constrain the positions that she takes regarding issues and conflicts, clinicians need to go beyond assessing for the presence of overt manifestations of domination and control and look as well for the more subtle manifestations of power which may be operating.

Relevance to Social Work Practice

Feminist clinical practitioners contend that gender-derived power is an organizing principle of family life. This is so because power mediates social relations and thus, gender derived power mediates cross-gender couple relationships. The reason that couple satisfaction is lower among women than it is among men is because gender hierarchy pervades couple and family life. This study lends support for the view that unwanted sex, like many of the problems that couples and families bring to therapy, is rooted in this inequality. Feminist clinical practice is committed to the task of restructuring cross-gender couple relationships to equally serve the interests and needs of both members. It is committed to facilitating the establishment of egalitarian couple and family relationships.

The Need for “Pillow Talk”

While an unequal distribution of couple power is maintained in large part by the non-negotiation of issues and conflicts, the ability to engage in an open process of negotiation concerning power issues is considered an essential aspect in the establishment and maintenance of
egalitarian partnerships. Couples who strive to establish such relationships must be willing to negotiate many aspects of couple and family life, such as working toward an egalitarian division of domestic labour and distribution of financial resources. The findings of this study suggest that they must also be willing to negotiate their sexual encounters. Part of this process may entail a challenge to prevailing attitudes concerning masculinity, femininity and what is considered sexually erotic. This is because the eroticizing of the dominance in cross-gender relationships is what makes sexual coercion tolerable to women. This has implications also for the way in which boys and girls are socialized. When boys are taught that being dominant and aggressive is masculine and girls are taught that being subordinate and submissive is feminine these gender stereotypes can form the groundwork for adolescence and adulthood making it difficult for both females and males to recognize that sexual domination is not erotic because it meets the social definition of what is considered normal male and female sexuality.

Negotiation plays a fundamental role in all aspects of egalitarian couple relations, including the area of sexual relations. However, negotiation and thus, mutuality, is missing in couple relationships where any type of coercion is operating to get compliance. While the findings of this study indicate that the dissatisfaction concerning unresolved conflict concerning power issues may spill over into disinterest in having sexual relations, the clinical implications of these findings suggest that working with couples to establish more egalitarian relationships may have positive effects in the area of sexual relations. To accomplish this women need to identify for themselves and then be able to talk with their life partners about the source of their disinterest in having sex. They need to feel no hesitation about making their partners aware of the connection between their discontent concerning any unresolved power issues and their lack of sexual interest.
Thus, they need to feel no wariness about expressing the link between their lack of sexual interest and their dissatisfaction concerning the inequitable division of household responsibilities, and/or child care and/or the allocation of money.

One of the dilemmas encountered by feminist clinicians concerns how to motivate the person with the power (the man) to relinquish some of it for the benefit of the relationship. It is well known that those in positions of power generally do not give it up without some strong incentive to do so. Given that it is much easier to work toward the establishment and maintenance of couple relationships that are horizontally structured when both members of the couple share an ideology of egalitarianism than when only one member (the woman) holds this ideology, a central task becomes how to motivate men to adopt a more egalitarian ideology. Research has identified some of the circumstances that seem to provide an incentive for some men to adopt a more egalitarian ideology. Among these are having an insistent female partner; having a previous life experience such as a failed couple relationship which they want to avoid repeating; or having had an experience from their family of origin such as a distant father-son relationship that they want to avoid replicating (Schwartz, 1994). Perhaps if men were made aware of the toll that their resistance to resolving conflicts over power issues may be having on their sexual relations, such an awareness could provide another powerful incentive for them to adopt a more egalitarian ideology. Just as there are studies which show the link between inequality and women's couple relationship dissatisfaction, there are studies which show the link between egalitarianism and couple relationship satisfaction for both men and women. For example, marital equity research reveals that equal division of household responsibilities correlates with higher couple satisfaction (Gottman, 1991; Nicholas & Hawkes, 1986). Thus, it's not just women who benefit from a more
shared distribution of power; men also benefit. This study suggests that there is a link between the distribution of power within the couple relationship and the level of not just couple satisfaction but also sexual satisfaction. Awareness of this link might provide another source of motivation for men to relinquish some of their power and work toward establishing more egalitarian relationships.

Conclusion

Social workers working with couples need to address the socio-political context within which the problems which clients bring to therapy are embedded. To do so we must address the disparities in the distribution of power and influence in couple/family life. Couple and family therapists who still think that it is possible to remedy the problems that couples bring to therapy by focusing on their emotional interactions to the exclusion of the power dynamics and issues underlying these problems may be reinforcing the constraining roles that have limited men and especially women for centuries. Feminist clinical practice recognizes the necessity of dealing with the power issues along with the other issues couples bring to therapy. It offers a forum for men and women to learn to negotiate the inescapable conflicts concerning the material bases of power that occur in day-to-day couple/family life. Thus, questions such as how household work, child and/or elder care responsibilities are divided, who earns the money and how it is allocated form an integral part of the therapeutic work. Inquiring into how sexual relations are negotiated needs to become part of this therapeutic agenda. The problem of unwanted sex in couple relationships concerns women's right to decline to engage in sexual relations with their life partners without the accompanying concern or fear that there will be some form of repercussion. Ultimately, it is
only when women are in a position to say “no” freely to unwanted sex, that they are also in a position to voice an authentic “yes”.

This study shows that the area of sexual relations is another site where gender-based power imbalance may be located. It is hoped that this study makes a contribution to the feminist project of working toward the establishment of egalitarian couple and family relationships. The redressing of coercive sexual practices into fully consensual and mutually satisfying sexual relations complements the clinical task of working toward establishing the egalitarian management of money and the shared division of domestic labour. The synthesis of these three domains in clinical social work practice has unlimited potential to transform couple partnerships and, by extension, family life.
APPENDIX A

RECRUITMENT FLYER

and

INFORMATION LETTERS
RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS NEEDED

We are conducting a study on "women's experiences of unwanted sex in marital/cohabiting relationships". The purpose of this study is to understand women's experiences of unwanted sex as well as to understand the couple/family context in which this problem occurs.

Although many women have experienced forced sex by their intimate partners this is not a study about sex in which physical force has been threatened or used to make the woman have sex, but rather, this is a study about sex which may be considered consensual but which is also unwanted. Although forced sex is a serious problem, unwanted sex in couple relationships also is a problem -- one which is not only common but which is unrecognized as well.

We are looking for research participants who are willing to be interviewed about their experiences. Interviews will take approximately 1-1/2 to 2 hours. Participants will be paid $20.00 as compensation for their time.

If you have experienced having unwanted sex with your current or former husband/partner or if you have had sex with him because you felt that you could not or should not say "no" to him you may qualify for participation in this study.

If you are interested in receiving more information about being a participant for this study please telephone Monica at (416) 781-2131. I will also need to communicate with you to discuss the study in more detail. If you do not reach me directly you may leave me a message (confidentiality is ensured). In your message please let me know if I may contact you by telephone and if so, a telephone number where you may be reached. If you do not want me to phone you please let me know how we may communicate.

Thanks very much.
INFORMATION LETTER FOR PARTICIPANTS
(WHO ARE U of T STUDENTS)

Project Title: An Exploration of Women's Experiences of Unwanted Sex in Marital/Cohabiting Relationships

Investigator: Monica Monahan M.S.W., C.S.W., Ph.D. (candidate)

University of Toronto Affiliation: Doctoral Candidate in the Faculty of Social Work

Thesis Supervisor: Prof. Howard Irving Ph.D.

Introduction

I am conducting a study about women’s experiences of unwanted sex in marital/cohabiting relationships. The purpose of this study is to understand women's experiences of unwanted sex as well as to understand the couple/family context in which this problem occurs.

If you have experienced having unwanted sex with your current or former husband/partner or if you have had sex with him because you felt that you could not or should not say "no" to him you may qualify for participation in this study.

Although many women have experienced forced sex by their intimate partners this is not a study about sex in which physical force has been threatened or used to make the woman have sex, but rather, this is a study about sex which may be consensual but which is also unwanted. Although forced sex is a serious problem, unwanted sex in couple relationships also is a problem which is not only common but which is unrecognized as well.

You will be asked questions over one or two interviews and each interview will take about one and a half to two hours. I will be asking about your experience of having unwanted sex and about your couple and family life. Some examples of these questions are: Can you describe a typical day in the life of your family — things like money, meals, laundry, childcare? Can you tell me about your experience of unwanted sex — what was it like for you? Can you tell me what you think about sex in married/cohabiting relationships? When you were growing up what were you taught about marriage? What do you think your (former) husband/partner was taught about marriage? What are your thoughts about the relationship between the way you/he were raised and your life together?

The interviews will be audio recorded with your permission so that I do not miss anything that you have to say. This will help me get a clearer picture of what women in couple relationships go through when they experience unwanted sex. This information will be useful in finding out how
professionals can be most helpful to women in families. The tapes will be stored and secured in a locked cabinet. Once the tapes are transcribed they will be erased.

If you agree to be a participant I will provide you with a short Biographical Information Questionnaire which will provide me with some basic information about yourself and your family. This information will be helpful to me in determining how participants will be selected for interviews. Following completion of this questionnaire I will be in contact with you to discuss the study in more detail and to answer any questions that you may have.

If you want to be part of this study the interview can take place in an office setting on campus such as at the Faculty of Social Work (located at 246 Bloor St. West) or at the University’s Women’s Centre (located at 563 Spadina) or at another location which is mutually agreed upon. Your participation is completely voluntary. If you decide to take part, you can stop at any time.

**Risks**

One possible risk is that you may feel uncomfortable talking about yourself or you could feel upset after talking about events related to your experience of having unwanted sex and how this has affected you. All participants therefore, will be provided with a list of various counselling services which are available to you free of charge through the University of Toronto.

**Benefits**

We hope that what is learned from this study will help clinicians who are working with women in families to be more aware of the problem of unwanted sex in couple relationships. We also hope that this information will improve professionals’ understanding of how to help women who have experienced unwanted sex with their partners as well as how to help couples for whom unwanted sex has been a problem. I am not aware of any direct benefits for you in taking part in this study. It is possible that some people might feel good about talking about their experiences and in being part of research that may help others.

Compensation totaling $20.00 will be offered to participants to offset any costs associated with your participation in the study (such as transportation and child care) and as compensation for your time (total interview time).

**Confidentiality**

The information you give me will be confidential. This means that I cannot tell others anything that a particular person has said without that person’s permission. Any reports that I write will not identify people who have participated in the study, but will tell their stories in a general way.

There are a few situations where I will not be able to keep confidentiality. These are: if someone tells me that a child under 16 is being hurt, or if someone tells me that they are going to harm themselves or someone else. I will be obliged to contact professionals who will be required to contact you and assess the risk of harm to you, or your child and/or others.
Feedback
Throughout the duration of the study I would be glad to answer any of your questions about the study. You can reach me at (416) 781-2131. If at the end of the study you would like a short report on what I found, I will send you a copy. Please let me know.

This study may have importance for all women living in marital/cohabiting relationships because we know so little about women’s experiences of having unwanted sex. This study fulfills part of my doctoral requirement at the University of Toronto.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Monica Monahan M.S.W., C.S.W.
Doctoral Candidate, Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto

Response
If you are willing to be part of this study please call me at (416) 781-2131. If you do not reach me directly you may leave me a message (confidentiality is ensured). I will also need to communicate with you to discuss the study in more detail as well to have you complete the Biographical Information Questionnaire. Please let me know if I may contact you by telephone and if so, the telephone number(s) where you may be reached. If you do not want me to contact you by telephone please let me know how you would like us to communicate.

If I have your permission to call you I also need to know how I should refer to myself (in order to protect your privacy). Please let me know how you would like me to leave a telephone message:
University of Toronto, about the research study on couple sexual relationships
University of Toronto
Monica Monahan
Other:
Project Title: An Exploration of Women’s Experiences of Unwanted Sex in Marital/Cohabiting Relationships

Investigator: Monica Monahan M.S.W., C.S.W., Ph.D. (candidate)

University of Toronto Affiliation: Doctoral Candidate in the Faculty of Social Work

Thesis Supervisor: Prof. Howard Irving Ph.D.

Introduction
I am conducting a study about women’s experiences of unwanted sex in marital/cohabiting relationships. The purpose of this study is to understand women’s experiences of unwanted sex as well as to understand the couple/family context in which this problem occurs.

If you have experienced having unwanted sex with your current or former husband/partner or if you have had sex with him because you felt that you could not or should not say “no” to him you may qualify for participation in this study.

Although many women have experienced forced sex by their intimate partners this is not a study about sex in which physical force has been threatened or used to make the woman have sex, but rather, this is a study about sex which may be consensual but which is also unwanted. Although forced sex is a serious problem, unwanted sex in couple relationships also is a problem which is not only common but which is unrecognized as well.

You will be asked questions over one or two interviews and each interview will take about one and a half to two hours. I will be asking about your experience of having unwanted sex and about your couple and family life. Some examples of these questions are: Can you describe a typical day in the life of your family — things like money, meals, laundry, childcare? Can you tell me about your experience of unwanted sex — what was it like for you? Can you tell me what you think about sex in married/cohabiting relationships? When you were growing up what were you taught about marriage? What do you think your (former) husband/partner was taught about marriage? What are your thoughts about the relationship between the way you/he were raised and your life together?

The interviews will be audio recorded with your permission so that I do not miss anything that you have to say. This will help me get a clearer picture of what women in couple relationships go through when they experience unwanted sex. This information will be useful in finding out how professionals can be most helpful to women in families. The tapes will be stored and secured in a
locked cabinet. Once the tapes are transcribed they will be erased.

If you agree to be a participant I will provide you with a short Biographical Information Questionnaire which will provide me with some basic information about yourself and your family. This information will be helpful to me in determining how participants will be selected for interviews. Following completion of this questionnaire I will be in contact with you to discuss the study in more detail and to answer any questions that you may have.

If you want to be part of this study the interview can take place in an office setting on the University of Toronto campus such as at the Faculty of Social Work (located at 246 Bloor St. West) or at the University’s Women’s Centre (located at 563 Spadina) or at another location which is mutually agreed upon. Your participation is completely voluntary. If you decide to take part, you can stop at any time.

**Risks**

One possible risk is that you may feel uncomfortable talking about yourself or you could feel upset after talking about events related to your experience of having unwanted sex and how this has affected you. All participants therefore, will be provided with a list of various counselling services which are available to women in the community.

**Benefits**

We hope that what is learned from this study will help clinicians who are working with women in families to be more aware of the problem of unwanted sex in couple relationships. We also hope that this information will improve professionals’ understanding of how to help women who have experienced unwanted sex with their partners as well as how to help couples for whom unwanted sex has been a problem. I am not aware of any direct benefits for you in taking part in this study. It is possible that some people might feel good about talking about their experiences and in being part of research that may help others.

Compensation totaling $20.00 will be offered to participants to offset any costs associated with your participation in the study (such as transportation and child care) and as compensation for your time (total interview time).

**Confidentiality**

The information you give me will be confidential. This means that I cannot tell others anything that a particular person has said without that person’s permission. Any reports that I write will not identify people who have participated in the study, but will tell their stories in a general way.

There are a few situations where I will not be able to keep confidentiality. These are: if someone tells me that a child under 16 is being hurt, or if someone tells me that they are going to harm themselves or someone else. I will be obliged to contact professionals who will be required to contact you and assess the risk of harm to you, or your child and/or others.
Feedback
Throughout the duration of the study I would be glad to answer any of your questions about the study. You can reach me at (416) 781-2131. If at the end of the study you would like a short report on what I found, I will send you a copy. Please let me know.

This study may have importance for all women living in marital/cohabiting relationships because we know so little about women’s experiences of having unwanted sex. This study fulfills part of my doctoral requirement at the University of Toronto.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Monica Monahan M.S.W., C.S.W.
Doctoral Candidate, Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto

Response
If you are willing to be part of this study please call me at (416) 781-2131. If you do not reach me directly you may leave me a message (confidentiality is ensured). I will also need to communicate with you to discuss the study in more detail as well to have you complete the Biographical Information Questionnaire. Please let me know if I may contact you by telephone and if so, the telephone number(s) where you may be reached. If you do not want me to contact you by telephone please let me know how you would like us to communicate.

If I have your permission to call you I also need to know how I should refer to myself (in order to protect your privacy). Please let me know how you would like me to leave a telephone message:
University of Toronto, about the research study on couple sexual relationships
University of Toronto
Monica Monahan
Other:
CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS
(WHO ARE U of T STUDENTS)

Title of Study: An Exploration of Women's Experiences of Unwanted Sex Within Marital/Cohabiting Relationships

Investigator: Monica Monahan, M.S.W., C.S.W.
University of Toronto Affiliation: Doctoral Candidate in the Faculty of Social Work

The study procedures have been explained to me by the researcher listed below as described in the Information Letter for Participants of which I have a copy. I understand the possible risks and benefits and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. One possible risk is that I may feel uncomfortable talking about myself or I could feel upset after talking about events related to my experience of having unwanted sex with my husband/partner. I have been informed that the researcher will provide me with a list of resources on campus providing counselling services to students. I may also contact the researcher (at 416-781-2131) throughout the duration of the study should I have any questions or concerns about the study.

I have been told of the possible benefits of the study and that this information may be of help to other women who have experienced unwanted sex within couple relationships and may improve professionals’ understanding of how to help those who have had similar experiences.

I have been assured of confidentiality and that no information will be released or printed that would disclose the identity of myself or any of my family members without my permission.

1) The information is used only by Monica Monahan, who keeps it in a safe place.
2) Codes are used in place of real names for all information and all information that identifies me is altered.
3) The final report contains no names or other identification.

The conditions under which confidentiality cannot be guaranteed have been explained to me. I have agreed to have the interviews audio recorded but I may also choose to speak off-the-record at any time during the interview and/or have part or all of my tape erased.

I know that $20.00 (total) is offered to me to offset any costs associated with my participation in the study (such as transportation or childcare) and as compensation for my time (total interview time).

I understand that my participation in this study is completely voluntary and it has been explained to me by the researcher that I can withdraw from the study at any time without penalties of any kind. My signature below signifies my willingness to participate in the study.

____________________  ____________________
Print your name  Your signature
Title of Study: An Exploration of Women's Experiences of Unwanted Sex Within Marital/Cohabiting Relationships

Investigator: Monica Monahan, M.S.W., C.S.W.

University of Toronto Affiliation: Doctoral Candidate in the Faculty of Social Work

The study procedures have been explained to me by the researcher listed below as described in the Information Letter for Participants of which I have a copy. I understand the possible risks and benefits and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. One possible risk is that I may feel uncomfortable talking about myself or I could feel upset after talking about events related to my experience of having unwanted sex with my husband/partner. I have been informed that the researcher will provide me with a list of resources providing counselling services to women. I may also contact the researcher (at 416-781-2131) throughout the duration of the study should I have any questions or concerns about the study.

I have been told of the possible benefits of the study and that this information may be of help to other women who have experienced unwanted sex within couple relationships and may improve professionals' understanding of how to help those who have had similar experiences.

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1) The information is used only by Monica Monahan, who keeps it in a safe place.
2) Codes are used in place of real names for all information and all information that identifies me is altered.
3) The final report contains no names or other identification.

The conditions under which confidentiality cannot be guaranteed have been explained to me. I have agreed to have the interviews audio recorded but I may also choose to speak off-the-record at any time during the interview and/or have part or all of my tape erased.

I know that $20.00 (total) is offered to me to offset any costs associated with my participation in the study (such as transportation or childcare) and as compensation for my time (total interview time).

I understand that my participation in this study is completely voluntary and it has been explained to me by the researcher that I can withdraw from the study at any time without penalties of any kind. My signature below signifies my willingness to participate in the study.

Print your name  

Your signature
APPENDIX C

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION QUESTIONNAIRE

&

INTERVIEW GUIDES
Biographical Information Questionnaire

Participant’s Age:_____________          Participant Code:_____________

Birth Place:_____________________

Ethnic Background:_________________

Religion:_____________

how religious: strong__ moderate__ inactive__ indifferent__

Participant’s Education (highest level)_____________

Employment Status:

unemployed ____ employed ______ occupation ____________ income _______

Marital Status and History:

Are you presently living in a marital/cohabiting relationship?_____________

married: length of relationship?_________

cohabiting: length of relationship?_________

(Ex)Husband / Cohabiting Partner

Unwanted sex has occurred with: husband____ partner____ ex-husband____ ex-partner____

His Age:_________

His Birth Place:_____________________

His Ethnic Background:_________________

Religion:_____________

how religious: strong____ moderate____ inactive____ indifferent____

Education (highest level):_____________

His Employment Status:

unemployed ____ employed ______ occupation ____________ income _______

Children:

Do you have any children?______

1st age:______ gender:______  3rd age:______ gender:______

2nd age:______ gender:______  4th age:______ gender:______
Initial Interview Guide

I would like to understand the context in which unwanted sex occurs. So I’d like to begin by having you tell me generally about your relationship with your (former) husband/partner and about your family life.

1. **Can you tell me about meeting your husband/partner and your early life together?**
   Probe: Did your relationship remain the same or did it change over time? How?

2. **What is/was a day in the life of your family like?**
   Probe: Can you tell me about how everyday life was/is managed — things like money, meals, laundry, childcare?

3. **How would you describe your couple relationship? your family life?**

   Now that I have a good description of your family life I’d like you to move to the main reason why you’ve come here today — to tell me about your experience of having unwanted sex with your (former) husband/partner.

4. **Can you tell me about your experience of unwanted sex — what was it like for you?**
   Probe: What has it meant/did it mean for your relationship with your partner?

5. **Tell me about saying/not saying “no”**
   Probes: What was that like for you?
   What happens/happened/ might happen when/if you say no?

6. **What has this experience meant for your relationship with your child(ren)?**

7. **Can you tell me what you think about sex in married/cohabiting relationships?**
   Probe: How does it compare with sex in dating relationships?

8. **What do you think your husband/partner thinks about sex in married or cohabiting relationships?**

   I’m interested in family decision-making patterns and how they develop. Now I’d like to ask you to provide me with a description of the families that you and your (former) husband/partner grew up in.

Participant’s Family of Origin

9. **Would you describe your parents’ couple relationship? your family life?**

10. **Can you tell me about how day to day life and decisions were managed?**
    Probe: things like — money, meals, laundry, childcare?

11. **What was it like for you being a girl in your family?**
12. **What were you taught about sex?**

13. **What were you taught about marriage?**
   Probe: about marital sex? about being a wife? about being a mother?
   Probe: What were you taught to expect about men / husbands / fathers?

*Former Husband's / Partner's Family of Origin*

14. **How would you describe his parents' relationship? his family life?**

15. **Can you tell me about how day to day life and decisions were managed?**
   Probe: things like — money, meals, laundry, childcare?

16. **What do you think it was like for him being a male in his family?**
   Probe: How does it compare with the way that you were raised?

17. **What do you think he was taught about marriage?**
   Probe: about marital sex? about being a husband? being a father?
   Probe: What do you think he was taught to expect about women / wives / mothers?

18. **What are your thoughts about the relationship between the way you/he were raised and your life together?**

19. **Is there anything about your experience of having unwanted sex that I haven't asked you about that you think is important that I know?**
   Probe: Is there anything you would like to tell me that's important that I have not asked about?

20. **If I have any more questions after listening to the tape, may I talk with you again?**

    Thank you, this has been invaluable. We know very little about women's experiences of unwanted sex in couple relationships — and this has been very helpful.
Revised Interview Guide

I would like to understand the context in which unwanted sex occurs. So I’d like to begin by having you tell me generally about your relationship with your (former) husband/partner and about your family life.

1. **Can you tell me about meeting your husband/partner and your early life together?**
   Probe: Did your relationship remain the same or did it change over time? How?

2. **What is/was a day in the life of your family like?**
   Probe: Can you tell me about how everyday life was/is managed — things like money, meals, laundry, childcare?

3. **How would you describe your couple relationship? your family life?**

   Now that I have a good description of your family life I’d like you to move to the main reason why you’ve come here today — to tell me about your experience of having unwanted sex with your (former) husband/partner.

4. **Can you tell me about your experience of unwanted sex — what was it like for you?**
   Probe: What has it meant/did it mean for your relationship with your partner?

5. **Tell me about saying/not saying “no”**
   Probes: What was that like for you?
   What happens/happened/ might happen when/if you say no?

6. **Can you tell me what you think about sex in married/cohabiting relationships?**
   Probe: How does it compare with sex in dating relationships?

   I’m interested in family decision-making patterns and how they develop. Now I’d like to ask you to provide me with a description of the families that you and your (former) husband/partner grew up in.

**Participant’s Family of Origin**

7. **Would you describe your parents’ couple relationship? your family life?**

8. **Can you tell me about how day to day life and decisions were managed?**
   Probe: things like — money, meals, laundry, childcare?

9. **What was it like for you being a girl in your family?**

10. **What were you taught about sex?**

11. **What were you taught about marriage?**
Probe: about marital sex? about being a wife? about being a mother?
Probe: What were you taught to expect about men / husbands / fathers?

(Form) Husband's / Partner's Family of Origin
12. How would you describe his parents' relationship? his family life?

13. Can you tell me about how day to day life and decisions were managed?
   Probe: things like — money, meals, laundry, childcare?

14. What do you think it was like for him being a male in his family?
   Probe: How does it compare with the way that you were raised?

15. What do you think he was taught about marriage?
   Probe: about marital sex? about being a husband? being a father?
   Probe: What do you think he was taught to expect about women / wives / mothers?

16. What are your thoughts about the relationship between the way you/he were raised
    and your life together?

17. Is there anything about your experience of having unwanted sex that I haven’t asked
    you about that you think is important that I know?
    Probe: Is there anything you would like to tell me that’s important that I have not asked
    about?

18. If I have any more questions after listening to the tape, may I talk with you again?

Thank you, this has been invaluable. We know very little about women’s experiences of
unwanted sex in couple relationships — and this has been very helpful.
APPENDIX D

LIST OF CLINICAL SERVICES AVAILABLE TO PARTICIPANTS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO STUDENT BODY

and

LIST OF CLINICAL SERVICES AVAILABLE TO PARTICIPANTS FROM THE TORONTO COMMUNITY
RESOURCES PROVIDING COUNSELLING SERVICES TO UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO STUDENTS

Counselling and Learning Skills Service
Room 111, Koffler Student Services Centre
214 College Street
Tel (416) 978-7970
Hours: Mon. to Fri. 9:00 a.m. — 5:00 p.m. (Thurs. 9:00 a.m. — 8:00 p.m.)

The Counselling and Learning Skills Service (CALSS) is the professional counselling service available free of charge to all students of the University; services include short-term crisis counselling and brief psychotherapy for individuals, couples and groups. CALSS provides a clinical consultation usually within a week of the request for service and ongoing clinical service is usually provided within four weeks of the consultation. CALSS also provides an on-call service for students needing to be seen immediately.

Psychiatric Service, University Health Services
Koffler Student Services Centre
214 College Street
Tel: (416) 978-8070
Hours: Mon. to Fri. 9:00 a.m. — 5:00 p.m.

The Psychiatric Service is a student service offering assessment and/ or treatment for students with emotional and psychological concerns. In addition, the Psychiatric Service provides an on-call service for students needing to be seen immediately. This service is fully covered by the Health Services Plan of Ontario, other Provincial Insurance Plans or the University Health Insurance Plan.

The Women’s Centre
563 Spadina
Tel: (416) 978-8201
Hours: Mon. to Thurs. 1:00 p.m. — 5:00 p.m.

The Women’s Centre is a resource centre for women University of Toronto students. The centre provides peer counselling for women as well as interim clinical support for women who are on a waiting list for clinical services at either the Counselling and Learning Skills Service or The Psychiatric Service.

Sex Education and Peer Counselling Centre
2nd Floor, Coach House
42A St. George Street
Tel: 978-8732

The Sex Education and Peer Counselling Centre is a student-run collective dedicated to promoting healthy perspectives on human sexuality. Services provided include phone-in counselling and one-to-one peer counselling.
RESOURCES PROVIDING COUNSELLING SERVICES TO WOMEN in the TORONTO COMMUNITY

Family Service Association of Toronto
355 Church Street, Toronto (main office). Tel: 595-9618
The Family Service Association provides counselling for individuals, couples and families seeking support in dealing with relationship and family problems, depression, anxiety, separation, divorce, violence, sexual abuse, or a variety of other issues. There are several community locations. Fees are based on a sliding scale geared to the individual’s income.

Brief Psychotherapy Centre for Women
2 Carlton St, Ste 1806 Toronto Tel: 591-2000
The Brief Psychotherapy Centre for Women is part of the Women’s College Campus (formerly Women’s College Hospital). This service provides individual and group psychotherapy (free of charge) for women who have undergone trauma or a difficult life transition.

Breakthrough Program
80 Woodlawn Ave. E.Toronto (main office) Tel: 961-8100
The Breakthrough Program is one of the Community programs offered by the YMCA of Greater Toronto. This service offers counselling groups (free of charge) for women who have experienced or are experiencing abuse or violence in their lives.

The Women’s Centre
563 Spadina Toronto Tel: (416) 978-8201
Hours: Mon. to Thurs. 1:00 p.m. — 5:00 p.m.
The Women’s Centre is a resource centre for women living in the community as well as for women University of Toronto students. The Centre provides peer counselling for women as well as interim clinical support for women who are on a waiting list for clinical services elsewhere.

Women’s Counselling, Referral and Education Centre
525 Bloor St. West, 2nd Fl. Toronto, Ont. Tel: 534-7501
Telephone and in person assessment and referral to services sensitive to women’s needs, including screened therapists and counsellors with fees on a sliding scale.

Assaulted Women’s Helpline
Tel: 863-0511
This service provides 24 hour Telephone crisis counselling, information and support for women who have been assaulted/abused.

Gerstein Centre
100 Charles St. E. Toronto Tel: 929-0149
The Gerstein Centre offers 24 hour nonmedical crisis intervention for acute psychosocial crises.
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