Just Sex: Feminism, Gender Equality, and Casual Sex

by

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i

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

This dissertation submitted by Rene Brown has been read and approved by three faculty members of the American Academy of Clinical Sexologists.

The final copies have been examined by the Dissertation Committee and the signatures which appear here verify the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that this dissertation is now given the final approval with reference to content, form and mechanical accuracy.

The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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ABSTRACT

Over the past several decades, the feminist movement has influenced female work patterns, academic achievement, and sexual behavior. This study examines the connection between expanded career choices for women and the flexible sexual behavior expectations they face today. With so little data available on this topic, this researcher needed to use the grounded theory method (Auerbach and Silverstein, 2003) to gain insight into motivations and feminist beliefs behind the sexual behavior; In interviews with four professional women who self-reported having casual sex with men, it was found that the participants recognized and accepted the idea of feminism as a concept. Most of the participants did not identify themselves as feminists because of negative associations with the term. Their main objective was not to find casual sex partners but to give themselves the freedom to accomplish their chosen life goals without the added complication of being involved in a committed relationship. Since this study uses only four participants, the findings cannot be generalized to a particular population, but a practical application of this study shows that some women's social behaviors have changed since women began struggling for equality. Further study is needed in the area of women and casual sex to explore the research concerns that the researcher uncovered.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION

This qualitative study investigates the lives of four career-focused women who participate in sex without emotional attachment or commitment to a relationship. These women and their lifestyle choices illustrate on a small scale the evolution of gender equality as it relates to sexual behavior and career choice. The investigation uses semistructured interviews to explore women's backgrounds and motivations for sex without attachment as a step toward formulating a hypothesis regarding this phenomenon.

Using Granzig's (2002) definition of *sexology* as "the rational and systematic study of humans and other animals as sexual beings, i.e., of their biological properties as members of one or the other sex, of their sexual behavior in the broadest sense, of what they do sexually and how they feel about it," this researcher explores the lifestyle choices of four sexually active single women—especially their behaviors and feelings—to find connections between their sexual behavior and career choices on the one hand and feminism on the other. Because research on this topic is almost nonexistent, this researcher begins without a working hypothesis, instead working from the raw data (interview transcripts) to research concerns using Auerbach and Silverstein's (2004) grounded theory method.

II. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the Problem

Over the past several decades, the feminist movement has influenced female work patterns, academic achievement, and sexual behavior. This study explores the connections among women's expanded career choices, changing expectations for women's sexual behavior, and feminism.

This researcher examined the motivations of a sample of four career-focused women in their 20s and 30s who have casual sex to determine the influence of feminist ideology on their lifestyle choices.

Elements

Rather than formulating an initial hypothesis, this researcher used Auerbach and Silverstein's (2003) grounded theory method to search for feminist influence on the career choices and sexual behavior of the four women in the research sample. The grounded theory method enabled the interviewer to discover and explore themes in the interview transcripts that might shed light on the relationship between invested career decisions and flexible sexual behavior options for the participants.

Delimitations and Limitations of the Study

This study explores the motivations for having casual sex and choosing a career-focused lifestyle of a small cross section of women. It is not a longitudinal study of the outcomes or impacts of these choices, nor does it attempt to define *feminism* for the participants. Instead, the participants self-defined *feminism* and discussed the relationship between their sexual behaviors, their career choices, and their identities—feminist or not—in response to interview questions.

2

The small sample size limits the conclusions of this study to the four participants. Use of the grounded theory model, in which this feminist researcher interprets the interviews to find themes and arrive at research concerns, may further limit the applicability of the conclusions. Consequently, neither the themes nor the conclusions can be generalized to women in general or any larger population of women.

Definition of Terms

Sex without attachment, for this study means, sexual intercourse with a partner with whom there is no romantic tie, no preconceived notion of establishing a romantic relationship, and no possibility of marriage or family. The term *sex without attachment* will be used interchangeably with the term *casual sex*.

Feminism means "the theory of political, social, and economic equality of the sexes" (LeGates, 1995).

Summary

Feminism has influenced historical changes in the ways women work and play, offering more flexible lifestyle choices in multiple arenas. This study asks the questions: When women choose to pursue careers, are they making a feminist choice? When those women choose to have sex that is unrelated to romance or reproduction, are they making a choice related to their careers? Using semistructured interviews and Auerbach and Silverstein's (2003) grounded theory method, this study seeks connections between feminism and the modern lifestyle choices of four career-focused women who have casual sex.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Theory

Granzig (2002), in Course 401: Social Foundations of Sexology, defines sexology as "the rational and systematic study of humans and other animals as sexual beings, i.e., of their biological properties as members of one or the other sex, of their sexual behavior in the broadest sense, of what they do sexually and how they feel about it." This definition acknowledges the value of studying sexual behavior outside marriage and family. Using Granzig's (2002) definition of sexology is the foundation for this research; Investigating women's sexual behavior regarding casual sex and to recognize their motivation is to study change in societal behaviors and gender roles.

Research

Women at work: feminist history and identity. Works by historians show marked changes in the lives of working women beginning in the 1940s and continuing into the present century. During World War II, more than six million women took wartime jobs in factories or replaced men on farms. Three million women volunteered with the Red Cross, and more than 200,000 women served in the military (Hartmann, 1982). By the summer of 1942, men had disappeared almost completely from the workplace, having been drafted or enlisted into the U.S. military. Women were needed to occupy positions in factories as well as hospitals, and help out even in the military. In May 1943, Rosie the Riveter appeared on the cover of the *New York Post* (Honey, 1984). Posters of Rosie encouraged women to join the workforce as a patriotic duty, and even supported the femininity of women who took on nontraditional jobs. According to Hartmann (1982), an American War Manpower Campaign urged, "If you've used an electric mixer in your kitchen, you can learn to run a drill press." For the duration of the war, women

held the seams of the country together. According to Anderson (1981), a survey of women who worked in defense centers during the years of 1944 to 1945 by the Women's Bureau showed that 75 percent of them planned to continue working. However, problems arose when the war ended and male soldiers returned home to reclaim their jobs (Honey, 1984).

Studies of American women in the mid-twentieth century show no one typical feminine response to the postwar era. Some women returned home—not because they wanted to but because their husbands and much of American society believed that they should. Other women chose to continue working. Those women appreciated their newfound independence and their income.

Analyses of the postwar years show that women felt the effects of World War II for decades afterward. Milkman (1987) notes that "the war allowed women to make decisions, and it gave them a chance to fight for their rights." When it ended and the men returned to their pre-war jobs, many women suffered discrimination, job cuts, and wage inequalities. These conditions led to the development of many of the later civil rights movements (Milkman, 1987).

Pressure from feminist activists in the early 1970s led to the enforcement of existing legislation protecting women's employment rights (Campbell, 1999; Chodorow, 1989; Freeman, 1971). Although Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibited employment discrimination based on race, sex, religion, and other criteria, women's employment rights were not actually enforced until the early to mid-1970s (Ferree & Hess, 1985; Freeman, 1973; Kessler-Harris, 1994). However, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) initially lacked any intention to protect women's rights and largely disregarded complaints of sexual discrimination (Mills, 1994). In response to this lack of regard, Betty Friedan and about two dozen others founded the National Organization of Women (NOW), the first civil rights organization

specifically focused on women, in 1966 (Ferree & Hess, 1985; Freeman, 1973). By the early

1970s, women's groups successfully forced the federal government to enforce the laws against

male-only occupations (Costain & Costain, 1987; Kessler-Harris, 1994). With Title IX of the

Higher Education Act and the Equal Rights Amendment passed by Congress in 1972, many

women registered in both law and business schools. This prepared women for higher paying jobs

in nontraditional careers (Blair-Loy, 2003; Cancian & Ross, 1981; Shu & Marini, 1998).

Furthermore, as Katzenstein and Mueller (1987) note:

> 1970 marked the turning point [for women's rights] as massive demonstrations were held
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> across the country on the fiftieth anniversary of women's suffrage. Women who had not
>
> been active before marched and picketed . . . . Feminist protests spread through the
>
> churches, the professions, [and the] academic disciplines.

From this social stand against gender inequality and prejudice against women, a feminist

identity emerged. According to Offen (2000), the French reformer Charles Fourier (1772–1837)

coined the word *féminisme* (later anglicized to *feminism*) in his *Théorie des quatres mouvements*

et des destinées généralises, written between 1808 and 1837. *Feministe* was first used as a

derogatory term in 1872 by the French writer Alexander Dumas the Younger, but a few years

later in 1882, was embraced by European suffragists which led to its introduction into the

American political arena in 1910.

Equal rights for women in the workplace and the academic arena led many college

women to pursue high-status, nontraditional careers rather than choose professions typically

thought of as feminine (Rossiter, 1982; Treiman & Hartmann, 1981; White & Cooper, 1994). A

table in a report by the National Center for Education Services shows that graduation rates for

young American women attending graduate and professional schools increased dramatically

between 1967 and 2001 (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

Despite such marked progress toward equal rights, Aronson (2003) found that by the

1980s, many women who were in their late teens, twenties, and early thirties had become

disenchanted with feminism. Other research shows an increase in importance for the social

recognition of gender equality despite the reluctance of many young women to self-identify as

feminists (Buschman & Lenart, 1996; Cowan, Mestlin, & Masek, 1992).

For example, a study of undergraduate women conducted by Myaskovsky and Wittig

(1997) found that 51 percent of the studied population agreed with most or all of the ideals of the

feminist movement, yet more than half of the 51 percent declined to call themselves feminists.

Liss, Hoffner, and Crawford (2000) discovered that as women's social equality became more

pronounced, liberal feminist attitudes were no longer "a measure of feminism." In other words,

women had rejected the label but not the philosophy.

Recent studies suggest that young women may not fully appreciate the connection

between feminism and advances in women's rights. Baumgardner and Richards (2000) state,

"[W]omen of this generation [those born after the 1960s] . . . never knew a time before 'girls can

do anything boys can!' . . . . For our generation, feminism is like fluoride. We scarcely notice

that we have it—it's simply in the water." Davis, Smith, and Anderson (2007) imply that young

women no longer worry about fitting in with society's traditional expectations for women when

considering their career or family goals.

Embracing career and postponing marriage. Other researchers explore the question:

When feminism opened the door for women to work outside the home and pursue careers, did it

close a door on women's traditional roles as wives and mothers? According to Hoffnung (2004),

"[I]ncreased commitment to career has led to the postponement of marriage and childbearing and to a decrease in the number of children born to educated women." This phenomenon began in the post-World War II era, when the age at first marriage for women began to rise in industrialized and industrializing countries, a trend that continued throughout the 20th century (Wong, 2003). According to Wong:

> In the United States, the median age at first marriage among women increased from 20.8 years in 1970 to 25.1 years in 2000, an impressive increase of 4.3 years over a 30-year period. Over that same period, the proportion of women 20 to 24 years old who had never married doubled, from 35.8 percent to 72.8 percent. The increase was even greater in relative terms for women 30 to 34 years old, having tripled from 6.2 percent in 1970 to 21.9 percent in 2000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001).

Wong correlates this increasing age at first marriage and the increasing number of women who stay unmarried with the notion that more women are forgoing marriage, at least temporarily, to develop a career.

Other studies, for example, Bledsoe, Casterline, Johnson-Kuhn, and Haaga (1999), have found a correlation between women's educational attainment and fertility. According to Mare and Maralani, 2006, "The most prevalent relationship is a negative correlation, typically interpreted as arising from delays in marriage, improved labor market opportunities, increased use of contraception, and a weakening of women's traditional childbearing roles". In other words, women who postpone marriage and childbirth through birth control have more employment opportunities than their married counterparts do.

Marriage and family interfere with women's work progress (Gutek, 1988; Moya, Expósito & Ruiz, 2000). Miller and Garrison (1982) found that working married women have

8

challenges with their own careers, due to conflicts that arise with their husbands' careers. Kotkin (1983) established that married women career challenges are from "geographical mobility, contributions to their husbands' central work activities, economic support, and postponement of their own career and career adjunct roles." In particular married women who have children scale back their career goals even further; this was not found to be the case for men (Betz, 1994). Similarly, Stroh, Brett, & Reilly (1992) found that employers are less likely to promote and relocate married women as compared with their single counterparts.

Some researchers agree to the benefits of combination of holding a career and having a family but they also acknowledge that women's career goals are negatively impacted (Crosby, 1991; Hoffnung, 2004; Metz & Tharenou, 2001). With the increase of women pursuing career interests, the correlation between being married and career development is diminishing (Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 2004; Wong, 2003). Apart from being married, mothers are also negatively affected in terms of career achievement. Mothers have fewer career achievements with the more children they have (Betz, 1994; Metz & Tharenou, 2001).

Baber and Monaghan (1988) studied 250 college women who planned to delay marriage and childbearing to establish their careers. However, their research showed that the idea of being a mother and being career focused were not succinctly joined as one reality. The women in Baber and Monoghan's study anticipated placing family needs over their careers once they had children. In addition, women projected lengthy maternity leaves, and to return to work on a part time basis (Hoffnung, 2004). Women today still find themselves in a double bind when it comes to careers and parenting (Symonds, 1979). Olarte (2000) states: "If [mothers stay] at home, they feel devalued and taken for granted; if professionals, they experience guilt, ambivalence, and self-devaluation for not being able to be a 'superwoman.'"

Research conducted in the 1990s shows that many young women in that decade had become more alert to the complications of balancing family and career. Katchadourian and Boli's 1994 study found that the majority of young adults were not as prepared for raising a family as they were for the world of work. Summarizing Katchadourian and Boli's 1994 study, Hoffnung (2004) states:

> The career-oriented men in their sample married partners who would stay at home and raise the children; the career-oriented women married partners who were also career-oriented, and thus they were more likely to reduce their career commitment as a result of family needs. Consequently, men were freer [than women were] to pursue their careers.... Becker (1993) refers to expenses (such as education, work experience, and subsequent training) that increase a person's knowledge and skills as "human capital." Applying this concept to American women, he shows that the more women invest in themselves, the more opportunity they have for career advancement and financial opportunities throughout their lifetimes.

According to Becker, after women choose to accomplish a particular level of "human capital investment," they prefer to complete that investment as early in their lives as possible to maximize the lifetime return on that investment. In addition, Becker shows that women who make this choice sacrifice less income than women who work maximum hours before investing in education or other forms of human capital.

As Wong (2003) notes, the years from late adolescents into the 30s are also the stage in life when women enter their marriageable years. Women who are investing in their careers are postponing marriage, due in large part to the potential of school and training interference (Costello & Stone, 2001; Felmlee, 1995; Oppenheimer, 1988; Williams, 2000).

10

Using Becker's human capital approach, Wong (2003) found evidence that rising educational and economic opportunities led the women in her sample to postpone but not abandon marriage to complete more human capital investment early in life. Wong found that "higher educational attainment and career commitment [have] led to lower rates of marriage among the women in [her] sample, but this effect [diminished] over a woman's life course," meaning that it was consistent with postponement of marriage and not with abandonment of marriage altogether.

Wong (2003) also found that women who attained higher education and experienced greater career commitment were more desirous of marriage than their peers although they expressed a preference for marriage at a later age to allow time for career development.

The human capital theory shows how expanding economic opportunity for women influenced their marriage patterns. Becker (1993) found that human capital theory applied to many facets of marital behavior, but it was particularly relevant in the analysis of the effect of women's educational attainment on their marital timing.

According to Wong (2003), under the standard assumptions found in economic theory regarding "preference and production technology," women as a group will continue to acquire more education and engage in more labor market activity as a result of the increased opportunities available to them. The number of women in labor market production began to increase, and with this increase came self-investment through schooling and career building (Becker, 1993).

Wong (2003) sees the process of career-building as analogous to schooling in that "both are part of a continuous process of investment in human capital encompassing schooling, job

11

placement, and on-the-job training [with the purpose of amassing] both firm-specific and industry-specific human capital, including . . . 'networking.'"

The human capital approach does not result only in a delay of marriage and family. Studies conducted in the last two decades show that as women attain higher levels of financial independence, they also have a multitude of lifestyle alternatives. Raymo (1998) concludes that the "rising absolute income among women [made] singlehood a viable alternative to marriage." Women's participation in the United States labor force has increased significantly, from 43.3 percent in 1970 to about 60 percent in more recent years (Costello & Stone, 2001). Wong (2003) notes that "better-educated women could well be more attractive marriage partners than their less-educated counterparts and therefore more sought after in an assortive mating setting, thus resulting in a positive relationship between education, earnings, and marriage formation." It reasonably follows, that the more invested women are in their career training and education, the later she may decide to marry (Wong, 2003).

Feminism and sexual expression. Recent research shows that prefeminist ideology not only altered women's career and marriage paths, it also influenced how and when women had sex. Bolzendahl and Myers (2004) state:

> A strong movement for gender equality, the increased presence of women and especially mothers in the public workforce, shifting demographics of family and parenthood, and open laws and norms regarding birth control, sexuality, and abortion have all contributed to a dramatic and widespread liberalization of gender role attitudes [in recent decades].

Bolzendahl and Myers indicate that attitudes relating to sexual behavior, "public sphere gender roles," and family responsibility have become more liberal, in contrast to attitudes toward abortion, which have remained constant.

12

These studies indicate that feminism delayed marriage and family but allowed more flexibility in sexual behavior options. Wildavsky (1987) argues that work status actually predicts the existence of feminist ideologies because employed women benefit from improving women's collective position in the workplace. He adds that younger women's attitudes are more supportive of feminism principally because they are less likely to invest in conventional life arrangements; and they are more likely to have careers outside the home, financial independence, fewer children, and so forth (Bolzendahl & Myers, 2004).

These career-focused, educated women chose to delay marriage and family, or sidestep it altogether, in order to achieve their career goals and aspirations (Becker, 1993; Wong, 2003). Educated women possess necessary tools or knowledge to propel themselves into their chosen fields (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987). Numerous other studies indicate that education breaks down the structure of gender roles and stereotypes, creating more liberal views, feminist ideologies, and relaxed sexual principles (see, for example, Betz, 1994; Bolzendahl & Myers, 2004; Brooks & Bolzendahl, 2004; Maybach & Gold, 1994; Reiss, 1986).

Education has played a major role in the prevalence of feminist attitudes because it provides exposure to egalitarian ideas and discourages internalization of gender myths and stereotypes, (Brooks & Bolzendahl, 2004). Kinsey, Pomeroy, Martin, and Gebhard's (1953) book, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*, shed light on women's sexual activity, assisting in the rejection of societal standards for female sexuality. Education shaped attitudes in another way as well: women with higher levels of education desired careers and had more to gain by working to eliminate discrimination, such as the glass ceiling effect (Bolzendahl & Myers, 2004; Caffarella, Clark, & Ingram, 1997).

Some sources find that identifying as a feminist may lead to "[more] egalitarian and assertive role expectations" for women involved in "committed and sexual partnerships, respectively" (Yoder, Perry, & Saal, 2007). In their survey of 165 female U.S. undergraduates, Yoder et al. found that "nonfeminist, passive acceptance [correlated with] low egalitarian expectations overall and across all seven subscales of the marriage role expectation inventory." This attitude was also linked to "depressed sexual assertiveness overall and specifically in initiating sexual encounters and engaging in safe sexual practices. These negative associations were nonsignificant or positive for women with stronger feminist identification." Similarly, Impett, Schooler, and Tolman (2006) found that adolescent girls who internalized conventional ideas about femininity were less likely than their peers to act on their own initiative in a sexual relationship and less likely to protect themselves from unwanted pregnancy.

If feminism gave women permission to say no, did it also give them permission to say yes? Eagly (1978) found that women who conformed to traditional sex roles and women who focused on preserving interpersonal relationships free from conflict were more likely than other women to submit to undesired sex. As Stacey (2006) remarks:

> Why should feminists reject out of hand the possibility . . . that chromosomes, hormones, and anatomy contribute to average differences in what we identify as female or male traits, interests, behaviors, and desires? Difference should not be the enemy. Domination, exploitation, injustice, and unfair interpretations of difference are the problems, and these are abundant all around.

Similarly, Wood, Koch, and Mansfield (2006) point out that "sexual desire has traditionally been viewed, and mostly measured, as spontaneous sexual thoughts and fantasies [combined with] biological urges creating a need to self-stimulate or initiate sexual activities with a partner"

14

(Basson, 2002; Leiblum, 2002). Tiefer (2000) found a discrepancy pertaining to gender and sexual desire. Men appeared to be more desirous of sex than women when researchers applied male standards for desire. But these standards "ignore the gendered division of social power," making gender differences appear natural or nonexistent (Wood et al., 2006).

It is assumed that women are not as desirous of sex as men. Diamond (2004), however, finds that both men and women experience romantic love and sexual desire simultaneously, as well as experiencing romantic love and sexual desire as separate entities, so both sexes can separate romantic feelings from sexual desires and actions.

Wood (2004) found that as women age, they are more willing to express themselves sexually. The process to overcome the early sexual silencing, which Wood terms as, "institutional sexism" is challenging. Researchers support the belief of *institutional sexism*, and have also found that women have been socialized to perceive their own sexual desire negatively (Heiman & LoPiccolo, 1988; Wood, Barthalow-Koch, & Kernoff-Mansfield, 2006). Wood states that:

> [These] sexist messages . . . included the sexual double standard . . . , sex as
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> dichotomized (e.g., women should have sex only for love), sexual silence (e.g., women
>
> should not express interest in sex), sex as reproduction (e.g., pleasure was not expected),
>
> and women's bodies as objects of desire (e.g., high expectations of attractiveness leading
>
> to body image concerns).

Marks and Fraley (2006) found that belief in the double standard, which suggests that sexual behavior is admirable for men but disreputable for women, is widespread among the general public but that little empirical evidence supports the existence of the double standard.

Although feminist researchers have contested the concept of the double standard by challenging its social meaning and language, Cram and Jackson (2003) found that the double standard still dominates "young women's negotiation of (hetero)sexuality." They also found that "voices of resistance to the sexual double standard may be muted and individual rather than collective." This result matches the findings of other researchers. For example, Milhausen and Herold (1999) found that 93 percent of the university women they surveyed believed that criticism was more severe for women than men for having numerous sexual partners.

Interestingly, some studies show that women are less understanding of other women who participate in casual sex than they are of men who do likewise (Hynie, Côté, Lydon, & Weiner, 1998). Spreadbury (1982) found that women labeled other women as promiscuous when they exhibited certain sexual behaviors more often than they labeled men who exhibited the same sexual behaviors. Milhausen and Herold (1999) deduced that women in general support the double standard concept. In a later study, Milhausen and Herold (2001) discerned an incongruity between women's awareness of the sexual double standard at the societal level and their own attitudes toward it. This study found that women subscribed to the double standard more than men, but women with histories involving numerous sexual partners were more tolerant of men who had a large number of sexual partners than other women were. However, Homer (1971) found that the gender role requirements of women directly contradict the overarching values of American culture, including self-reliance, achievement, and independence, leading to internal conflict among women.

Society is so reliant on gender roles that it creates concern regarding the equality of gender roles and social constructs. For example, ethnographic research principally has focused on the social regulation of premarital sex for women, which is difficult to separate from the

examination of the cultural construction of female sexuality, its confinement within the institution of marriage, discussions concerning female purity and sexual pollution, and the cultural acceptance of sexual double standards (Schlegel, 1995).

Manderson, Bennett, and Sheldrake (1999) conclude that research examining female heterosexuality seldom focuses on desire and pleasure. This absence of attention mirrors not only the primary concerns of researchers with prostitution, but it also demonstrates how "culture and social institutions instruct women to repress autonomous female desire and/or require them to engage in subterranean pursuit of sexual pleasure." Grello, Welsh, and Harper (2006) report that casual sexual encounters among the college students they studied occurred more frequently between so-called friends than between strangers. Education tended to have a relaxing effect on sexual principles subsequently encouraging less restrained sexual activity (Lenton, Bryan, Hastie, & Fischer, 2007; Reiss, 1986). Further, more highly educated individuals had more sex partners from which to choose given their higher status (Reiss, 1986).

Is access to education a way in which feminism unlocks sexuality? Grello et al. (2006) found that college students who reported having casual sex usually began having sex at a younger age than those who did not report a casual sexual experience. Dickson, Paul, and Herbison (1993) also discovered a decreasing age at first sex and increasing number of sexual partners for heterosexual young women in their sample and heterosexual activity equivalent to that of young men. Although the behavior was similar to that of young men, the motives behind the women's behavior were very different. According to Bell, O'Neal, Feng, and Schoenrock (1999):

> Striving to explain her own engagement in out-of-role sexual behavior, a woman may be
> more likely than a man to minimize the amount of risk involved in the situation, to define

17

herself as a risk-taker, a game-player, or a sensation-seeker, and to incorporate these characteristics into her self-concept.

Anderson's (1998) study of women's self-reported accounts of initiation of sexual contact showed that women engaged a full range of strategies conventionally attributed to men in an attempt to initiate sex for motives ranging from sexual aspiration to a desire to gain something apart from sex such as having power over someone.

According to Grello et al (2006), "awareness of the pervasiveness of casual sexual relationships is just beginning to emerge in empirical literature, as well as in popular discourse." Impett and Peplau (2003) found that women and girls may consent to casual sex if they want the relationship to develop into a romance. They also found that women upheld sexual practices based on traditional sex roles, such as, being receptive and compliant to the sexual desires of men, and that women who comply sexually believe that they may be rewarded with a blossoming romantic relationship.

Summary

Many researchers explore the history of feminism and feminist identity in relation to the nature of women's work. Other research focuses on women and marriage. Their findings suggest that since the spread of feminist doctrines in the 1960s, increasing numbers of women have postponed marriage and family in pursuit of accomplishing their own career and life goals. A third group focuses on the relationship between feminism and sexual expression in relation to the double standard, gender roles, and women's reasons for compliance in casual or unwanted sex. However, no researcher has studied the sexual behavior of women in relation to their individual goals. This study approaches that topic by interviewing four women and investigating the factors motivated them to have sex without emotional attachment or commitment to a relationship.

IV. RESEARCH DESIGN

This study investigated the motivations and feminist beliefs behind the sexual behavior of four professional women who have casual sex with men. This researcher used a semistructured interview and qualitative approach to guide the study. This approach allowed this researcher to probe deeply into each participant's responses to gain a comprehensive understanding of her worldview and perception pertaining to sex without attachment.

General Method

Since no hypothesis was being tested, this researcher used the grounded theory method (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003) to conduct the project. As explained in the next section of this chapter, this method uses themes discovered in the participants' answers to the interview questions to create a hypothesis by means of theoretical coding (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003).

Specific Procedures

This researcher used convenience sampling to select the participants. Convenience sampling is just that, using participants with whom the researcher has contact (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). The criteria for the participants are as follows: 1) female, 2) between 25 and 35 years of age, 3) bachelors degree or higher 4) career focused, 5) no interest in or intention of being involved in a committed relationship 6) seeking sexual gratification without attachment.

The age requirement of 25 to 35 was crucial because these are the transitional years in adult development when women are attaining their independence and financial stability through their chosen careers (Wong, 2003).

After locating the four research participants who fit the requirements, this researcher scheduled the interviews to be conducted through an online chat and e-mailed a consent form to

each participant. The participants then mailed the signed and dated consent forms to this researcher (See Appendix A).

This researcher began each interview by answering any questions the participant had regarding the form or the study. The interviews lasted approximately one hour, with participants answering semistructured interview questions (See Appendix B). All interviews were saved as computer files and comprehensively analyzed using Auerbach & Silverstein's (2003) coding method to organize the texts and discover patterns.

The steps in grounded theory coding, from most basic to most complex, are:

Raw text

Relevant text

Repeating ideas

Themes

Theoretical constructs

Theoretical narrative

Research concerns (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003)

After interviewing the four participants, this researcher examined the *raw text* (transcripts of the participants' answers) looking for *relevant text*, that is, portions of the transcripts pertinent to the interest of the research project (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). This researcher was looking specifically for *repeating ideas*.

To find these repeating ideas, this researcher reviewed all the phrases and words that the participants used to describe certain events, feelings, or ideas looking for *themes*. If the participants expressed similar ideas, a theme emerged. Auerbach & Silverstein (2003) define

theme as "an implicit topic that organizes a group of repeating ideas." With each step in the process comes a deeper understanding and clarification of the hypothesis.

Once the themes had been extracted from the repeated ideas, this researcher could determine the *theoretical constructs* that appear as subheads in chapter III, the literature review: "women at work: feminist history and identity," "embracing career and postponing marriage," and "feminism and sexual expression." In grounded theory, theoretical constructs enable the researcher to move away from the participants' concrete description and subjective experience to a higher, more abstract, plane by grouping themes into categories consistent with the researcher's theoretical framework (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003).

The final phase of coding is the *theoretical narrative*, which summarizes what this researcher learned from the interviews, using the participants' words to discuss and link the overall research concerns with the extracted concepts from the theoretical constructs. Here, the hypothesis emerges.

Research Population

The four women who volunteered to take part in this investigation ranged from 25 to 33 years old, with a mean age of 29. Their academic achievements ranged from a bachelor's degree to a doctorate. One participant was in the process of completing a master's program. Three participants were Caucasian; one was African American. All four women were single and reported having frequent casual sexual encounters. One woman lived in rural Alaska, one in urban Alaska, one in urban Florida, and one in suburban North Carolina. The participants' current yearly incomes ranged from $0 to $80,000.

Instrumentation

Each participant completed a semistructured interview consisting of the following six

questions:

1. What are your most important life goals, and how do you plan to achieve them?

2. What societal barriers, if any, do you struggle with regarding your gender and sexuality?

3. Who were the most influential people in your life growing up and why? Did those

   influential people have an impact on how you live your life today?

4. What is the connection between your life goals and your sexual lifestyle?

5. In your own words, define *feminism*. What advancements have you seen improve for

   gender equality in your lifetime?

6. Would you define yourself as a feminist? Why or why not?

Data Collection

Once participants signed the consent forms, the researcher arranged the interview

logistics. All participants chose to complete the interviews via internet and were saved on a

computer file for further analysis.

Treatment of the Data

This researcher will save the transcripts and the consent forms for at least three years.

The interview data were examined to establish certain themes and, from them, the theoretical

constructs introduced in chapter III ("Literature Review") and discussed in chapters V and VI

("Results" and "Discussion").

Summary

In semistructured interviews, four women selected through convenience sampling

discussed the influence of feminism on their work, education, and sexual behavior. Using

Auerbach and Silverstein's (2003) grounded theory method, this researcher discovered common themes that suggest directions for further research in the area of female sexual behavior. This approach reflects Blair-Loy's (1999) finding that "case-based approaches cannot make general statements of empirical regularity about large populations [, but] they can uncover and interpret constellations of social and individual forces that change or reproduce social processes," The goal for this investigation is not to generalize these findings but to explore a connection between sexual behavior and feminist identity for women.

V. RESULTS

Four sexually active, career-focused women participated in semistructured interviews conducted via the Internet. They answered the six questions listed in the "Instrumentation" section of chapter 4 (See Appendix B).

The researcher assigned numbers to the participants rather than using names to maintain anonymity.

Participant 1 earned her PhD in Conflict Resolution. She was 33 years old at the time of the interview and identified as heterosexual and Caucasian. Originally from Pennsylvania, she moved to Florida to pursue her postsecondary education. She was the third of six sisters. Although her parents remained married, she had a poor relationship with her father. At the time of her interview, she was doing consultant work with international agencies assisting those in developing agricultural areas and developing a model of teaching to enhance relationship tactics. Participant 1 disclosed that she had been having sex without attachment for at least eight years.

Participant 2 earned her BS in Economics. She was 26 years old at the time of the interview and identified as heterosexual and Caucasian. Raised in Kentucky, she had one older brother. Her father died of a heart attack when she was 17 years old, and this loss deeply affected her. At the time of the interview, participant 2 lived in rural Alaska and worked for the National Park Service where she taught children and adults about the local ecosystem. She disclosed that she had been having sex without attachment for the last four years.

Participant 3, who had earned her MBA, owned and operated her own accounting company. She was 31 years old at the time of the interview and identified as heterosexual and Black. She was raised in rural North Carolina, and at the time of her interview lived in suburban

North Carolina. She never knew her father and was raised by her mother and grandfather as an only child. Participant 3 reported that she had been having sex without attachment for four years.

Participant 4 earned her BA in Biology and at the time of the interview was a full-time graduate student working on her MA in Natural Resource Management. In addition to supervising undergraduate students in rural Alaska, she was conducting research on reindeer breeding ecology on the Seward Peninsula in Alaska. Participant 4 was 27 years old at the time of the interview and identified as heterosexual and Caucasian. Raised in urban Arkansas, she moved to Alaska to pursue her master's degree. She had a younger brother and sister. Participant 4's parents divorced when she was 17 years old. Her mother remained in Arkansas, and her homosexual father moved to New York City. She reported having sex without attachment for the last six years.

Coincidentally, all four participants come from backgrounds with weak paternal relationships. That is, their biological fathers were not involved in their lives as much as the participants would have liked. However, the circumstances between the participants and the relationships with their father's were all different. Another demographic similarity was that all four women moved away from home in pursuit of their careers and education. Also, all four reported making their decision to have sex without attachment between the ages of 21 and 27.

The semistructured interview questions completed and transcribed and raw data evaluated for relevance, repeating ideas emerged (See Appendix C for complete interview transcripts.).

Using the grounded theory method to code the participant responses, this researcher reviewed the repeating ideas and arrived at the following themes that fall under the theoretical constructs outlined in chapter III, the literature review: 1) positive male influence, 2) educating and inspiring others, 3) foundations of feminism, 4) feminist identification as individual, 5)

defying society's expectations of traditional gender roles, 6) turning goals into reality, 7) creating a legacy of achievement, 8) workplace challenges as a woman, and 9) reasons for sexual freedom.

Women at Work: Feminist History and Identity

The first four themes relate to work, education, or feminism, the same topics to which the majority of the literature on feminism are devoted.

Theme 1: Positive male influence. Men were somewhat more influential than women in the lives of the participants. Two of the four identified men in their lives as guides who believed in the participants and let them know that nothing should stop them and that they could do anything that men could do. Participant 4 recalled, "My [ex-boyfriend] friend Dean, who I dated in high school, probably has influenced me the most. He had a life of adventure and travel and made me believe I could have the same. He also supported me and believed in me." Participant 2 reported, "The most influential person in my life was my father. He encouraged me to do what I wanted regardless of others [sic] thoughts or feelings. . . . He let me make the decision about whether I wanted to stick with these pursuits. He never felt a door should be closed to me simply because I was a girl, or I was too small." Participants 1 and 3 made similar statements about the men in their lives that left a remarkable positive impact.

Theme 2: Educating and inspiring others. Two participants noted that they aspire to educate other women to develop a greater sense of self and to take the steps necessary to achieve their goals. Participant 2 stated, "I know that each time a young girl comes into a visitor center where I am working, I put a little extra effort in opening their eyes to the beauty and accessibility of the great outdoors, and I hope I am successful at influencing at least a couple girls to step out of their parents [sic] car and explore. I think that setting examples is a . . . valuable tool for

26

today's strong women." Regarding the conflict-coaching business that she intends to open, Participant 1 stated, "The relationship application [that I am developing] will instruct women and men how to approach each other for dates or sex, how to communicate effectively in their relationships, and how to make meaning of their romantic interaction." Discussion of women educating women and becoming mentors or role models for other women appeared in all four interviews.

Several participants noted that being in academic or other environments that foster individual thought and growth made them feel safer and less judged for how they lived their lives. Participant 4 stated, "I don't feel the same [societal] barriers [that she faces in "a male dominated management regime"] are present in the academic community, at least not at the university level." Participant 2 commented, "The Park Service is full of smart, strong, independent women and men who generally embrace those women. The Park Service family almost encourages casual relationships since so many people are seasonal workers, and park management realizes the importance of these relationships and tends to overlook them and almost supports them." Participant 1 states "My sexual lifestyle has given me the interest, willingness, and ability to discuss sexual topics in an intelligent manner and this puts me in conversations with millionaires and business owners who are valuable contacts for my future goals in philanthropy." Most of the participants appeared to feel that well-educated people were more tolerant than others of their sexual lifestyles.

Theme 3: Foundations of feminism. The study participants discussed significant changes in academia, the workplace or sports for women in general but did not acknowledge their personal experiences of equal opportunity. Participant 2 said, "I think there have been great strides in gender equality in my life time. Women have excelled at traditional men's activities

including soccer, hockey, basketball, adventure pursuits, car racing and of course there are women executives in most major companies." Participant 4 said, "I have seen a higher percentage of women in graduate level education" and participant 3 made a similar comment regarding "women in positions of power in corporate America." It was clear that the participant's could easily recognize societal changes for women, and all were in agreement of what *feminism* stood for.

When asked to define *feminism*, all participants agreed that feminism involved equality for women and men. Participant 1 said, "To me, feminism is a set of ideals that seek to establish more equitable conditions for both sexes." Participant 4 defined feminism as "[t]he belief that women can do anything a man can do." All participants agreed that the feminist movement began as the fight for women's equality and all four cited positive changes and improvements for women since the start of the movement.

Theme 4: Feminist identification as individual. Participant comments regarding self-identification as a feminist varied widely. Participant 1 said, "Yes, I would now [define myself as a feminist] because I understand what it means." Participant 2 answered, "No. I see 'feminist' as a dirty word in today's usage. I see myself as a strong, independent woman who is (almost always) confident in her actions. I hope that through my actions I open people's eyes to the ability of myself (and therefore other women) to achieve anything I set my mind to and deserve the chance to try any[thing] and everything." Participant 3 reported, "To some extent yes, I am a feminist. I want women to have an equal playing field as men. I want to be respected and not have my ideas dismissed because of my gender." Participant 4 said, "I don't really consider myself a feminist. I realize that there are some things men are better at than women, and vice-

versa." Despite similar lifestyle patterns, some participants were reluctant to identify themselves as feminists varied, suggesting controversy around the word.

Two participants shared their personal image of feminists. Participant 1 said, "Growing up and being very Republican, I was taught and firmly believed that feminists had military haircuts, were probably lesbians, and were very angry about something." Participant 3 said, "I want to be respected and not have my ideas dismissed because of my gender. But on the other hand I don't want to man bash." All of the women in this study stated that they knew that feminism is about equality of the sexes and having equal rights pertaining to careers, education, and recreational activities, but half of the participants were uncomfortable identifying as feminists because of societal biases and negative images of feminists.

Embracing Career and Postponing Marriage

Themes 5 through 8 relate to another topic frequently discussed in feminist literature, the decision of many modern women to delay marriage to pursue their careers.

Theme 5: Defying society's expectations of traditional gender roles. Most of the women in this study stated that their own happiness or pleasure was their most important priority. All of them emphasized liberation from societal norms or family expectations. Participant 3 stated, "In the past I have down played [sic] my wants and needs to satisfy others[;] that day is finally gone." Participant 3 also stated, "My most important goal is to make sure I remain on the path that makes me happy . . . by taking jobs that suit me rather than advance my career path at the expense of happiness . . . by doing what I enjoy rather than stressing out about menial things." The other participants made similar statements. To find their own happiness, realize their dreams, and accomplish their goals, they stepped away from the expectations that society and/or their families had set for them.

29

Breaking gender role expectations and societal norms did have consequences, however. Participant 3 remarked, "I hear from time to time . . . that I am too ambitious." Elsewhere she stated, "I am 31; a lot of peoples [sic] concern is that I will be alone for life. My thought is if I am happy being alone it is a good thing." Participant 1 discussed her sexual lifestyle and the criticisms she has received about her choice:

> [I experience] prejudice . . . in regards to my social life. I do enjoy having sex with men who I am not in a relationship with. This does not interfere with my work. But it has a social stigma attached to this as well. Many of my colleagues, even the women, judge me for this. They think that I am a complete "party girl" and think negatively of me due to my sexual lifestyle which I have no problem discussing if asked openly.

Participant 2 stated, "My first few minutes in open discussions with girls as young as second or third grade will eventually turn towards my relationship status. . . . As I try to explain, the next question is inevitably: What is wrong with you?" Although these criticisms appeared to create stress, the participants preferred to find happiness within themselves, instead of pleasing others and following societal expectations.

Theme 6: Turning goals into reality. The participants emphasized the importance of their life goals, most of them listing happiness, financial stability, career success, or independence. All participants desired autonomy and specified the actions necessary to achieve their goals. For example, Participant 3 said, "I have always had a dream of owning rental properties. I have begun researching this idea and plan to act on it within the year." The participants easily expressed their goals and plans to accomplish them. All four women had taken some action toward accomplishing their goals.

Theme 7: Creating a legacy of achievement. Participants discussed leaving a legacy through writing, educating others, excelling in chosen fields, and achieving goals. They also discussed working hard and working smart as ways of leaving a legacy. For instance, Participant 4 identified her life goal as **"**[t]o secure a career related to wildlife-human interactions, allowing for opportunities to travel and explore the world." She apparently regarded networking as an important tool for reaching her goals, stating, "This institution [University of Alaska at Fairbanks] and [the national resource management] program are allowing me the opportunity to make contacts (individuals and institutions) that will support my goal to travel and study throughout the circumpolar north." Networking appeared to be an important tool for reaching goals and introducing new ideas and opportunities. As the participants approach their goals, they also want to leave a lasting impression. Participant 2 commented, "Another goal I would like to accomplish is to leave a lasting imprint. Whether it is coming up with a new program idea, writing new materials, or simply providing memorable moments, that will ensure that even the smallest piece will remain at each place I live." Participant 2 also discussed another way of creating a legacy, **"**I hope that I do set an example for young girls that you can be independent and happy, or you can pursue a traditional men's job and excel." The participants believed these impressions would assist them in the future, in networking for career gains and standing out for their achievements at work.

Theme 8: Workplace challenges as a woman. Workplace challenges inspired more focused discussion than any other interview topic. The biggest challenges for most of the participants involved getting other people, both coworkers and consumers, to take them seriously as professionals, especially in positions of authority or knowledge. Participant 1 discussed her

31

difficulty in getting men, in particular, to consider her as having the capacity to think because of her sexual attractiveness:

> This is a constant struggle that is only extinguished when I prove to them that I am knowledgeable and competent. It is through my actions and words that make this possible even though I have to work a lot harder than men it seems just in order to be taken seriously.

Participant 2 also remarked the challenges on being viewed as a competent professional:

> It is not uncommon for people to come in and see me standing in my full ranger uniform and ask to speak to a "real" park ranger. I have had men openly disobey my requests or demands simply because they don't believe that I have the authority to make them stop.

Most of the participants had discussed their competency in their career field being continuously challenged from both men and women, and reported having to work harder to prove themselves than their male counterparts.

Feminism and Sexual Expression

Only one theme relates to the theoretical construct least explored in the literature reviewed in chapter III- sexual expression as it relates to feminism.

Theme 9: Reasons for sexual freedom. All four participants stated that their choice to avoid romantic relationships gave them pleasure or a sense of control over their lives. Several of the women found that sexual freedom gave them freedom in other areas of their lives. Participant 2, for example, wrote:

> Early on in my sexual history I conformed to the idea of monogamy and marriage, but as I realized that my life wasn't happy that was one of the earliest things I changed. Now my sexual lifestyle would be described by many as promiscuous but to me it is exactly what I

am looking for. When I have an amazing connection with someone I feel no need or pressure to not explore that relationship to its fullest, whether it means having sex once, twice, or hundreds of times. I have found that embracing this attitude has made me more open both in my own life and how I view others.

Participant 4 similarly states, "I want to have fun and enjoy life, so naturally sex is part of that fun." The participants reported that embracing the option of sexual freedom had given them more opportunities to focus on themselves.

All four participants reported that being part of a couple or having children interfered with the pursuit of their individual goals. Participant 3 stated, "My goal oriented personality has hurt many of my relationships in the past, so now I have steered clear of romantic relationships in order to get what I want . . . . The freedom I have to be with sexual partners is enough, any more than that it gets too complicated." Participant 4 said, "My goals don't involve settling down and having kids, so my sexual lifestyle is basically a result of trying to find people who share my goals." Participants also cited uncomplicated convenience as a reason for staying single and having sex without any relationship or attachment. Remaining uninvolved with a romantic partner freed these women to invest in themselves and in the achievement of their goals.

Summary

The participants in this investigation embraced themselves not only as women but also as individuals. Stepping away from traditional gender role expectations despite criticism and social stigma created a path that helped lead them to their goals. All of the participants recognized and accepted the idea of feminism as a concept; however, most of the participants either did not identify themselves as feminists or only partially accepted the label because of the negative connotations associated with the term. The most influential in their lives were the men who

supported them and showed them that they could do anything if they only believed in themselves. The participants in this study said little about sex so that only one theme arose on this topic: their reasons for choosing a lifestyle involving sex without attachment. Their main objective was not to find casual sex partners but to give themselves the freedom to accomplish their chosen life goals without the added complication of being involved in a committed relationship.

VI. DISCUSSION

The small sample of women that this researcher interviewed described their motivations for having sex without emotional attachment or commitment to a relationship and the connections they perceived among casual sex, feminism, and career choices. The participants chose to pursue careers while forgoing romantic involvement, relating their choice to have sex without attachment to their careers and goals. Even though the participants' attitudes about feminist identity varied, they related similar ideas about feminism and its effect on their lives.

Because of the small sample, the findings presented in this study cannot be generalized to all women, women who self-identify as career-focused, women who have casual sex, or women who identify themselves as feminists. Rather, the themes that emerged from these four interviews offer a jumping-off point for future study of relationships between sexual lifestyle, feminism, and women's pursuit of careers.

Women at Work: Feminist History and Identity

Themes 1 through 4 identify commonalities between the participants which surrounds their overall lifestyle decisions.

Theme 1: Positive male influence. More questions than answers rose about the role that men have played in the participants' lives and whether that role related to the participants' lifestyle choices. The most striking finding relates to supportive male influence. The participants had weak relationships with their biological fathers in one way or another, and yet all four women cited the support of men close to them as the most significant in their life decisions. This researcher expected to read stories of strong positive female role models, but most of the anecdotes in the interviews show males supporting, encouraging, and guiding the participants to follow their dreams. Two of the participants did identify women as influential, but one example

is undeveloped and the other presents a model that the participant rejected. Participant 4 mentions a sixth-grade teacher "who showed me how a professional woman should act and that there was nothing a woman could not do." Participant 1 identified her mother as the most important influence on her life, stating that she "dedicated her time, her life, her energy, and all her resources to make sure that her six daughters (one family, all biologically related) developed into quality people." The participant appreciated her mother's struggle and selflessness in providing for her family but chose a different path from that of her mother, commenting, "Her life would be my hell." Further study regarding the influence of male and female role models might uncover other surprising relationships between feminism, sexual lifestyle, and career choices.

Theme 2: Educating and inspiring others. Several participants discussed educating other girls and women who are looking for guidance by introducing them to a new way of thinking. This finding conforms to the existing literature, which shows that education plays a noteworthy role in gender equality. Historically, education has assisted in the breakdown of gender role stereotypes while it has created more liberal views, feminist ideologies, and relaxed sexual principles (Betz, 1994; Bolzendahl & Myers, 2004; Brooks & Bolzendahl, 2004; Maybach & Gold, 1994; Reiss, 1986). Participant 2's positive experience with her fellow park rangers supports the idea that education leads to greater understanding and empathy for women in nontraditional roles as does participant 4's remark that she doesn't face the same barriers "in the academic community, at least . . . at the university level," that she faces in "a male dominated management regime."

Although participants 1 and 2 both discussed educating others to become aware of an alternative way to look at the world, This researcher expected the participants to have had strong

female role models but instead found that at least two participants identified themselves as strong female role models for young girls. A further study should explore the connection between mentoring, both given and received, and the choice to have sex without attachment.

Theme 3: Foundations of feminism. Although each participant connected the feminist fight for equality to improved opportunities for women, they did not necessarily view their own life choices as a result of the feminist movement. Though the fight for equal rights for women created many opportunities for women to pursue academics, as well as high-status nontraditional careers (Rossiter, 1982; Treiman & Hartmann, 1981; White & Cooper, 1994), the participants' career decisions can be defined as nontraditional, and all the participants have acquired at least a bachelor's degree, none of the participants offered themselves as examples of achievements for gender equality. This finding, along with the reluctance of several participants to identify themselves as feminists discussed in the next subsection, supports Aronson's (2003) finding that many young women have become disenchanted with feminism.

Theme 4: Feminist identification as individual. Participants varied in self-identifying as feminists. Only one fully accepted the label and two rejected it outright because of its negative connotations. These results match the findings of researchers in recent decades. Several studies have shown reluctance for women to self-identify as feminists despite their agreement with the ideals of the feminist movement (Buschman & Lenart, 1996; Cowan, Mestlin, & Masek, 1992; Myaskovsky& Wittig, 1997). According to some of the participants, the word *feminist* conjures negative images of "butch" lesbians, man-haters, or protesters for some women, a description matching the view of feminists that Participant 1 learned in her youth. This research supports the assertion by Liss, Hoffner, and Crawford (2000) that as gender equality became more

37

mainstream, liberal feminist attitudes would no longer be "a measure of feminism." Again, rejecting the label, not the philosophy.

Perhaps women of the participants' generation have, as Baumgardner and Richards (2000) wrote, become so accustomed to gender equality that they no longer appreciate the contribution of the feminist movement to the successes that women have achieved.

Embracing Career and Postponing Marriage

Themes 5 through 8 discuss the participants' challenges and stressors pertaining to goal achievement and their perseverance.

Theme 5: Defying society's expectations of traditional gender roles. All four participants expressed happiness with the chosen direction of their lives even while dealing with stress associated with criticism from others. This finding is in agreement with Davis, Smith, and Anderson's (2007) study, which established that young women are not concerned with fitting into society's gender role norms, especially while planning their future careers and family goals. The participants found that their chosen lifestyle, which rebelled against society's expectations for women, had some unpleasant consequences. Participant 1 commented that her colleagues, even other women, criticized her sexual lifestyle. Ninety-three percent of the women surveyed by Milhausen and Herold (1999) believed that women suffer harsher criticism than men for having multiple sexual partners. Hynie et al. (1998) found that women were less understanding of other women who chose to have casual sex than they were of men. These findings indicate that although accepting gender role expectations can be stressful, so is rejecting them; therefore, women face a double bind regarding societal expectations.

Theme 6: Turning goals into reality. The participants discussed their plans to achieve their goals, demonstrating investment in what Becker (1993) terms "human capital." Becker

38

writes that women who invest in themselves through education, work experience, and training early in their lives have at the very least postponed the pursuit of marriage and the idea of family. Wong (2003) questioned the human capital theory, finding that the women in her study simply married later than less invested women, rather than avoiding marriage entirely.

This study examined only the participants' current lifestyle choice as opposed to the impact their choices make on their future longitudinally. The participants sacrificed romantic relationships to focus on their careers. Financial security was very important to the participants, and their drive for financial independence also affected their choice of a life without romantic relationships. Participant 3 states, "My most important goals right now are to ensure my education and find a means to pay for it as well as getting more financially secure." The participant was solely focused on education and becoming financially stable.

Theme 7: Creating a legacy of achievement. The participants pursued career goals because they wanted to leave their mark on the world, creating a lasting legacy through their efforts at work and using their abilities to excel in their chosen field. Participant 2 remarks, "I hope that through my actions I open people's eyes to the ability of myself (and therefore other women) to achieve anything I set my mind to and deserve the chance to try any[thing] and everything." This researcher suggests further studies to examine the motivations of women who fit this subgroup and lifelong career recognition.

Theme 8: Workplace challenges as a woman. Most of the participants remarked in general terms on some of the advances that American women have made since the 1970s, but only participant 2 specifically mentioned advances in sports and politics as well as those in education or career choice. This lends support to the idea that the participants may take equal rights for granted. However, all four women commented on the treatment they received as

individuals in the workplace or in an academic setting. Three of the four women (participants 1, 2, and 4) discussed what it was like to work in their chosen field, and those three women provided similar feedback: They were not taken seriously in the workplace and had to work harder than their male counterparts to gain recognition. Participant 1 noted "a constant struggle that is only extinguished when I prove to them that I am knowledgeable and competent. . . . I have to work a lot harder than men it seems just in order to be taken seriously."

The research discussed in the literature review (chapter III) does not cover treatment of women in the workplace, so this topic should be further examined. Even though women have come a long way toward achieving equal rights since the start of the women's liberation movement, it appeared that the participants still struggled against traditional expectations in the workplace. This researcher wonders if the lack of respect for women in the workplace drives them to strive even harder to achieve their ambitions, a topic that merits further exploration.

Feminism and Sexual Expression

The participants agreed that staying clear of romantic relationships to achieve their goals was less complicated than emotional commitment. They chose to remain single so that they would not have to compromise their career goals. All four study participants shied away from creating their own families to avoid distraction from accomplishing their goals.

Theme 9: Reasons for sexual freedom. These four women chose to engage in sex without attachment as a lifestyle primarily to avoid complications in the pursuit of their happiness and goals. All four participants felt that being in a relationship stifled the achievement of their desires and goals and equated being in a relationship with the loss of freedom or individuality.

Diamond (2004) writes that both sexes can experience romantic love and sexual desire as separate entities and both can separate romantic feelings from purely sexual feelings, a finding

40

that fits well with the results of this study. Impett and Peplau (2003), however, find that women who engage in casual sex do so to please their partner for the potential of building a romantic relationship. This finding does not apply to the women interviewed for this study, whose motivation for sex without attachment was to avoid romantic relationships altogether. These women had casual sex with uncommitted sex partners for the sheer enjoyment of the experience, a result that fits with Anderson's (1998) finding that women's sexual behavior was similar to that of young men but their motivations were very different. Based on the four interviews with career-focused, educated women who participate in sex without attachment this researcher finds new, previously unexplored motivations resembling those traditionally attributed to men. Further exploration of gendered motivation for casual sex may uncover more similarities than differences.

This researcher finds that for the participants in this study, the motivation for casual sex is not about sex. For them, sex without attachment is not about so-called "free love" or being sexual with a man in hopes of building a relationship. It is about freedom and equality. The interviews did not explore specific details of the women's sex lives, instead focusing on the goals and desires of the women themselves.

Summary

As Grello et al. (2006) stated the understanding of casual sexual relationships has just begun to appear in empirical literature. This study used the grounded theory method outlined by Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) and Granzig's (2002) definition of sexology as "the rational and systematic study of humans and other animals as sexual beings, i.e., of their biological properties as members of one or the other sex, of their sexual behavior in the broadest sense, of what they

do sexually and how they feel about it" to gain insight into women's motivations for a specific sexual lifestyle: sex without attachment.

Because only four women, all active in casual sex and all identifying themselves as career focused, participated in this study, no generalizations about women, career-focused women, women who have casual sex, or women who identify themselves as feminists can emerge. This researcher's interpretation of the interviews using the grounded theory model described by Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) also limits the scope of the conclusions, which can apply to the four women who participated in the interviews.

A larger sample size could have yielded more conclusive and accurate results. A longitudinal study might offer a better understanding, through the analysis of their experiences and thought processes at each stage of their lives, of how the participants choose their lifestyle and the outcomes of such decisions. A litmus test to define feminism and feminist identity would also contribute greatly to further research in this area.

Still, this study does have practical applications because it shows that some women's social behaviors have changed since women have been struggling for equality. For these four women, gender equality has made possible a choice to continue their education, pursue nontraditional careers, forego the idea of marriage and relationships, and have casual sex. Further research might lead to a theory about casual sex as a means for women to follow their goals unencumbered by the complications of a romantic relationship. Other research could investigate the connection between supportive male role models for women, even if they had weak ties to their biological fathers, and the investment in further education to become financially independent and self-sufficient. Women may be choosing this path because working in

nontraditional careers and participating in casual sex to realize their life goals have become more

socially acceptable as women continue to obtain equal rights in our society.

APPENDIX A

Information Provided to Study Participants

The American Academy of Clinical Sexologists

Investigator: Rene Brown, MS, Investigator

The American Academy of Clinical Sexologists (PhD candidate)

Renecbrown@aol.com

(907) 434-1306

What is the reason for this study?

Before you agree to participate in this study, we want you to know the reason for the study. We

would also like you to know exactly what to expect if you decide to participate. Being a part of

this study is entirely your choice. You are free to withdraw at any time. There are no penalties.

Feel free to ask about anything you do not comprehend.

The reason for this study is to better understand what individual women think about their

own experience of having sex without attachment. Your feedback will be used to compare and

contrast other research that has been created on this topic.

Rene Brown, MS, is a PhD candidate at The American Academy of Clinical Sexologists

and will direct this study. Four women will be asked to participate.

What will happen?

1. You will be given a written explanation of the study.

2. You will then be given a verbal explanation of the study to ensure you fully understand
   what you have read.

3. If you are interested in becoming part of this study, you *must* provide us your signed consent to participate in an audio recorded interview and/or an online chat.

4. Once you have signed the consent you will be interviewed by Rene Brown, principal investigator.

How long will the interview take?

The interview will last approximately one hour with a break in the middle.

Will anything bad happen to me?

We do not anticipate any negative consequences. *You have the right to stop answering questions or leave the interview without any penalty.* You may share any concerns with Rene Brown at (907) 434-1306 or Renecbrown@aol.com

What will I gain?

You will not benefit directly from this study.

Is this study confidential?

Yes, this study is confidential. The records of this study are confidential. Each volunteer is given a number. We may write about what we discover but your real name will not be used. Your personal information will remain confidential unless we have to reveal it based on the requirements of the law (for example, mandatory reporting of child abuse, elder abuse, or if you pose an immediate danger to yourself or others).

The voice recording will be typed onto paper, and the online chat will be saved. All notes, audio recordings, and records will be kept in a locked file cabinet and destroyed when the study is over. Consent forms will be stored in a secure place for three years after the study is completed and then will be destroyed.

Who do I call if I have any questions?

If you have any questions about this study, please call Rene Brown at (907) 434-1306 or Renecbrown@aol.com. If you have any questions about your rights or giving your permission, you may call The American Academy of Clinical Sexologists at (407) 645-1641.

Signature

I have read the permission form, which explains the reason and details of this study. I have been given adequate time to review the information and fully understand its contents. I have been encouraged to ask questions and have received answers to my questions. Being a part of this study is voluntary. I give my written consent to be a participant in this study. I have received (or will receive) a copy of this form for my records.

_____   _____

Signature of participant   Date

_____   _____

Signature and title of person obtaining consent   Date

APPENDIX B

Interview Questions

1. What are your most important life goals and how do you plan to achieve them?

2. What societal barriers, if any, do you struggle with in regards to your gender and sexuality?

3. Who were the most influential people in your life growing up and why? Did those influential people have an impact on how you live your life today?

4. What is the connection between your life goals and your sexual lifestyle?

5. In your own words, define *feminism*. What advancements have you seen improve for gender equality in your lifetime?

6. Would you define yourself as a feminist? Why or why not?

APPENDIX C

Interview Transcripts

The following transcripts appear as they were submitted except for bracketed insertions to clarify the respondent's intended meaning. Any errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, or capitalization are those of the participants.

Participant 1: Interview

1. What are your most important life goals and how do you plan to achieve them?

My goals are to achieve financial independence, impact funding decisions for international development programs, and educate women about the social arrangements that relegate [sic] our sex lives and personal relationships. The first step in achieving my goals is that I am opening a conflict coaching business that applies these core concepts to romantic relationships, work life, and other interactions. The relationship application [that I am developing] will instruct women and men how to approach each other for dates or sex, how to communicate effectively in their relationships, and how to make meaning of their romantic interaction. The work life application will focus on teaching new undergraduates the social dynamics of work settings and how they should behave at the workplace. One module talks explicitly about the pitfalls of dating and or sleeping with coworkers. The financial component will be developed in time, and will stem from applying conflict coaching in a family governance setting. (The information will be distributed in instructional DVDs, talks and classes at universities, training sessions, and private clients.)

2. What societal barriers, if any, do you struggle with in regards to your gender and sexuality?

There are two social barriers I encounter repeatedly. The first is a prejudice about my appearance. I have a difficult time having men, especially, take me seriously, or that I even have a thought in "my pretty little head". This is a constant struggle that is only extinguished when I prove to them that I am knowledgeable and competent. It is through my actions and words that make this possible even though I have to work a lot harder than men it seems just in order to be taken seriously.

The second prejudice is in regards to my social life. I do enjoy having sex with men who I am not in a relationship with. This does not interfere with my work. But it has a social stigma attached to this as well. Many of my colleagues, even the women, judge me for this. They think that I am a complete "party girl" and think negatively of me due to my sexual lifestyle which I have no problem discussing if asked openly.

3. Who were the most influential people in your life growing up and why? Did those influential people have an impact on how you live your life today?

My mother. She dedicated her time, her life, her energy, and all her resources to make sure that her six daughters (one family, all biologically related) developed into quality people. The academic translation is that she recognized our ability for upward social mobilization and did all she could to facilitate that. She worked a slimy job and spent every cent on the orthodontist bills. We all 6 needed braces—I needed them twice. She worked in food service for 18 years, supervised by and working alongside fucking moronic idiots whose bullshit made her work hours miserable. She kept that job because a union benefit was full tuition reimbursement. We all 6 attended college there. She stayed with her husband, who is one of the most worthless human beings I have ever known, because she understood that we would be living in poverty [if

she left him]. Every ounce of her energy went to us. I am in awe for her because of that, and I never want to be like her. I am not selfless. Her life would be my hell.

My father. He hated girls. Our father was cruel to us, wanted very little interaction. My mother made us kiss him good night when we were young and it developed into habit. He unfailingly stared straight ahead at the television, never once—never once in all those years—acknowledged me. I stopped around 14, when it made me physically ill to be so near him. He made no mistake about wanting a son, so I tried to be the boy for a while. I hunted and played sports. Sports I liked, hunting I did not, but even at the age of 8 I got it that he wasn't making the effort. If I wanted a relationship, it was up to me. He idolized the son of his friend. That kid's name was Doug. Doug could do no wrong. I never got it. I was involved in politics, speaking on panels and getting invited to strategy meetings when I was 16. The father wanted nothing to do with me, but he couldn't get enough of Doug. It's not that Doug was bad, there was nothing interesting about him. Last I knew he worked at Burger King, going to community college. I never understood it until a day in undergrad when I was writing a paper about it and everything cliqued [sic]. It was nothing special about Doug; it was just that he is a boy. From him I learned that fathers don't necessarily love, and that gender alliances come before all else.

A boyfriend. Coincidentally, his name was also Doug. He was my fourth long-term monogamous relationship (by long-term, I mean lasting between 18 months and 3 years). He weathered my introduction to feminist ideas from a philosophy class and my first bout in counseling. He loved me and continued just to love me. I broke up with him because of my physical attraction to him and then I didn't like him to touch me at all. But he is the bar I hold for how a good relationship should be (his traits combined with the physical aspect). He was the first

50

guy who made me feel like we were a team. We confided in each other, and all subjects were open. He is now a clinical psychologist.

4. What is the connection between your life goals and your sexual lifestyle?

At first I did not see the correlation, but as I have finished my PhD and continued to have repeated experiences with men, I have decided to make it part of educational focus. Interestingly, my major professional leads at this point are a direct result of my sexual lifestyle. A man with whom I had regular [casual] encounters is introducing me to a high-ranking UN officer; the second is an investor with whom I had a [casual] relationship who wants me to build a matchmaking business; and an international company that teaches men pick-up [techniques] wants me to teach that skill to women.

My sexual lifestyle has given me the interest, willingness, and ability to discuss sexual topics in an intelligent manner and this puts me in conversations with millionaires and business owners who are valuable contacts for my future goals in philanthropy. The same applies to my access to lifestyles such as fetishism and swinging. People like to hear about these things and seem fascinated with the combination of intellect and sex.

5. In your own words, define *feminism*. What advancements have you seen improve for gender equality in your lifetime?

Growing up and being very Republican, I was taught and firmly believed that feminists had military haircuts, were probably lesbians, and were very angry about something. To me [now], feminism is a set of ideals that seek to establish more equitable conditions for both sexes. Since the world is largely androcentric, this usually entails advancement for women and girls which is considered by some to be advancing females only.

6. Would you define yourself as a feminist? Why or why not?

Yes, I would now because I understand what it means.

1. What are your most important life goals and how do you plan to achieve them?

I think my most important life goal is to be happy. I spent a great deal of my high school and college days wanting to fulfill the goals that others had set for me. I went to the college that my teachers and friends thought would be best, I majored in Economics because I had been told I was one of the best intro students my professor had ever had and he told me I had a great aptitude for it. I did internships that professors suggested, I took tests suggested to me, I almost went to law school because everyone said it was the perfect path for me. But in my effort to make everyone else happy I had lost my sense of self. I spent the year after graduating college traveling the country and volunteering at parks across the country. I realized that I wasn't meant to be a 9–5 lawyer, accountant, or other cubicle-bound person. I was supposed to be outside. I made the conscious decision at that point to only go after what I wanted and what would make me happy. I broke up with my college boyfriend whom I had planned to marry and settle down with back home and hit the road. I haven't looked back since.

My most important goal is to make sure I remain on the path that makes me happy. I am continually trying to strive towards that by taking jobs that suit me rather than advance my career path at the expense of happiness, by surrounding myself with friends that I enjoy, and by doing what I enjoy rather than stressing out about menial things.

Another goal I would like to accomplish is to leave a lasting imprint. I have come to think of this as my goal in each place I visit. Whether it is coming up with a new program idea, writing new materials, or simply providing memorable moments, that will ensure that even the smallest piece [of me] will remain at each place I live.

2. What societal barriers, if any, do you struggle with in regards to your gender and sexuality?

       I face several barriers in regards to my career choice and my gender. When most people think Park Ranger they don't think of a woman. I first noticed it in small things: letters from children are almost always addressed Dear Mr. Park Ranger. But as I have gone to other places and held a variety of positions it seems that most people do not believe that I am on the same caliber as male counterparts. It is not uncommon for people to come in and see me standing in my full ranger uniform and ask to speak to a "real" park ranger. I have had men openly disobey my requests or demands simply because they don't believe that I have the authority to make them stop. It is extremely difficult to make an impression and have a strong presence within the organization when the first thing people notice is not that you are a figure of authority but rather as a woman. While it is true that my job provides an environment that can be difficult [for me] as a woman, the attitude and leanings of fellow coworkers make up for it. The Park Service is full of smart, strong, independent women and men who generally embrace those women. The Park Service family almost encourages casual relationships since so many people are seasonal workers, and park management realizes the importance of these relationships and tends to overlook them and almost supports them.

       Living in Rural Alaska has also proved challenging. Living as a single woman in her mid-twenties is a concept that many of the young women and girls around here find it unbelievable. My first few minutes in open discussions with girls as young as second or third grade will eventually turn towards my relationship status. In this area it is not uncommon for women to have multiple children by the time they are in their mid-twenties. I am constantly asked whether I am married, have a boyfriend, or have any children. These girls and women find

it extremely odd that the answer to all of those questions is no. As I try to explain, the next question is inevitably: What is wrong with you? Trying to explain my lifestyle to them is extremely difficult because it [is] a position in their culture that is extremely rare.

3. Who were the most influential people in your life growing up and why? Did those influential people have an impact on how you live your life today?

The most influential person in my life was my father. He encouraged me to do what I wanted regardless of others [sic] thoughts or feelings. He enrolled me in Cub Scouts when I was younger, and seemed to cry a little when I decided that I wanted to be a Girl Scout instead. He signed me up for baseball, basketball, soccer, and even cheerleading the moment I was old enough. He let me make the decision about whether I wanted to stick with these pursuits. He never felt a door should be closed to me simply because I was a girl, or I was too small. My father had felt extreme pressure as the oldest child in a large family to do what was best for his family rather than what he wanted to do. As a result he tried very hard to encourage both my brother and I to do what [we] wanted and follow our own paths. After his death, I lost that path and instead went towards a path that would be easiest on my family and would lead in a direction of guaranteed financial success, but it was never fulfilling. Getting back towards the ideas and ways that my father instilled in me I consider one of my greatest success in life.

I would never be in the position I am in today were it not for my father. He introduced me to the great outdoors and fostered a love and passion for it that continues to grow in his absence. I think I chose my career and even individual job locations because I knew they were places he loved and going to them would make [me] understand him more. Now I follow my heart (which is undoubtedly influenced by him) and have fallen in love with landscapes and people all across the country.

4. What is the connection between your life goals and your sexual lifestyle?

My life goal is to be happy and a large part of that is having a strong and happy sex life. Early on in my sexual history I conformed to the idea of monogamy and marriage, but as I realized that my life wasn't happy that was one of the earliest things I changed. Breaking up with the man I lost my virginity to and was certain I was going to marry was extremely difficult. I was convinced that I was losing a part of myself that I would never be able to regain. But as soon as I moved away both physically and emotionally from that relationship I realized it played a large role in my unhappiness. I was meeting amazing brilliant people and had immediately dismissed deeper relationships with them based on some preconceived notion that I was supposed to marry my college sweetheart.

Now my sexual lifestyle would be described by many as promiscuous but to me it is exactly what I am looking for. When I have an amazing connection with someone I feel no need or pressure to not explore that relationship to its fullest, whether it means having sex once, twice, or hundreds of times. I have found that embracing this attitude has made me more open both in my own life and how I view others. I believe some of my favorite memories of my sexual life were made simply because I didn't hold back regardless of preconceived notions, whether mine or what others would think of my actions.

I won't go as far as saying my sexual lifestyle is perfect, but I guess the more you practice the more you learn and the practice sure is fun. ☺

5. In your own words, define *feminism*. What advancements have you seen improve for gender equality in your lifetime?

Feminism was an important tool in allowing women to have equal rights. Feminists of the early twentieth century (and even before) fought tooth and nail to guarantee that women had

equal rights to pursue what they wanted in life, whether it be careers, voting, and general freedom of choice. However, feminism today is only a vague shadow of those fore-"mothers" of the movement. I see feminists of today as women who use the freedoms we gained to complain and campaign for women to be "given" equality. I feel the early feminists fought for the right to try and the feminists of today are fighting for the right to be given.

I think there have been great strides in gender equality in my life time. Women have excelled at traditional men's activities including soccer, hockey, basketball, adventure pursuits, car racing and of course there are women executives in most major companies. Hillary Clinton herself made great strides for women not just in being the first serious women contender for president, but in being a woman who made a serious run for the presidency that was not based on the fact that she was a woman. To me that is the greatest stride. Now that those early feminists have made it possible for women to try any career, hobby, or pursuit, it is no longer the top statement that they are a woman. We no longer achieve in spite of being a woman or because of being a woman, but achieve because of the merits of our actions.

6. Would you define yourself as a feminist? Why or why not?

No. I see "feminist" as a dirty word in today's usage. I see myself as a strong, independent woman who is (almost always) confident in her actions. I hope that through my actions I open people's eyes to the ability of myself (and therefore other women) to achieve anything I set my mind to and deserve the chance to try any[thing] and everything. I hope that I do set an example for young girls that you can be independent and happy, or you can pursue a traditional men's job and excel. This was the role of feminists in the past, which was to lead by example. I know that each time a young girl comes into a visitor center where I am working, I put a little extra effort in opening their eyes to the beauty and accessibility of the great outdoors,

and I hope I am successful at influencing at least a couple girls to step out of their parents [sic] car and explore. I think that setting examples is a much more valuable tool for today's strong women.

Participant 3: Interview

1. What are your most important life goals and how do you plan to achieve them?

My most important goals right now are to ensure my education and find a means to pay for it as well as getting more financially secure. Since I am a well educated [woman] already, I need to find a way to have some residual income that can help me reach my goals in the near future. I have always had a dream of owning rental properties. I have begun researching this idea and plan to act on it within the year. In addition I want to continue to excel at my current accounting company.

2. What societal harriers, if any, do you struggle with in regards to your gender and sexuality?

I really don't face too many societal barriers. The only thing I hear from time to time is that I am too ambitious. And since I am 31, a lot of peoples [sic] concern is that I will be alone for life. My thought is if I am happy being alone it is a good thing.

3. Who were the most influential people in your life growing up and why? Did those influential people have an impact on how you live your life today?

I suppose my family. I grew up in a single parent household, and my grandfather took the place of my dad. As a child I always saw him furthering his education (before his passing he was credits shy of a PhD) and working hard. As long as I could remember he always had at least 2 jobs. He was an elementary school principle and sold real estate, owned an assisted living home, and a tax service. He always showed me that you should never be content with your life. You

should always strive for more.

4. What is the connection between your life goals and your sexual lifestyle?

My goal oriented personality has hurt many of my relationships in the past, so now I have steered clear of romantic relationships in order to get what I want. In the past I have down played my wants and needs to satisfy others, that day is finally gone. The freedom I have to be with sexual partners is enough, any more than that it gets too complicated.

5. In your own words, define *feminism*. What advancements have you seen improve for gender equality in your lifetime?

I have seen more women in positions of power in corporate America. More women are in the workplace not just as maids and childcare providers.

6. Would you define yourself as a feminist? Why or why not?

To some extent yes, I am a feminist. I want women to have an equal playing field as men. I want to be respected and not have my ideas dismissed because of my gender. But on the other hand I don't want to man bash.

Participant 4: Interview

1. What are your most important life goals and how do you plan to achieve them?

To secure a career related to wildlife-human interactions, allowing for opportunities to travel and explore the world. To achieve this goal I am obtaining a Master's degree in Natural Resource Management at UAF [University of Alaska at Fairbanks]. This institution and program are allowing me the opportunity to make contacts (individuals and institutions) that will support my goal to travel and study throughout the circumpolar north.

2. What societal barriers, if any, do you struggle with in regards to your gender and sexuality?

I am faced with the challenge of demonstrating my commitment and capabilities to a male dominated management regime, especially in the [Alaska Native] villages. I don't feel the same barriers are present in the academic community, at least not at the university level.

As far as travel, there are places I would not feel comfortable going to without a male counterpart.

3. Who were the most influential people in your life growing up and why? Did those influential people have an impact on how you live your life today?

I was first influenced by a sixth grade teacher who showed me how a professional woman should act and that there was nothing a woman could not do.

My [ex-boyfriend] friend Dean, who I dated in high school, probably has influenced me the most. He had a life of adventure and travel and made me believe I could have the same. He also supported me and believed in me. It was his suggestion that I travel to Mongolia which eventually lead [sic] me to Alaska. I owe him a lot! We are still close friends today.

4. What is the connection between your life goals and your sexual lifestyle?

My goals don't involve settling down and having kids, so my sexual lifestyle is basically a result of trying to find people who share my goals.

I want to have fun and enjoy life, so naturally sex is part of that fun.

5. In your own words, define *feminism*. What advancements have you seen improve for gender equality in your lifetime?

The belief that women can do anything a man can do. I have seen a higher percentage of women in graduate level education.

6. Would you define yourself as a feminist? Why or why not?

59

I don't really consider myself a feminist. I realize that there are some things men are better at than women, and vice-versa.

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