Complexities of sexual consent: young people’s reasoning in a Swedish context

Charlotta Holmström, Lars Plantin and Eva Elmerstig

Centre for Sexology and Sexuality Studies, Department of Social Work, Faculty of Health and Society, Malmö University, Malmö, Sweden

ABSTRACT

Although previous research and public debate argue that partnered sexual activity is construed in terms of being consensual or not, we know little about young people’s own reasoning on sexual consent. This study aimed to investigate how sexual consent and sexual negotiations are interpreted by young people in Sweden. Forty-four female and male participants, ranging from 18–21 years old, took part in 12 focus groups, organised according to a set of vignettes. All focus groups were analysed using inductive thematic analysis. The findings illustrate the complexity of the interpretation of sexual consent. There was a clear perception among the participants that sex between two individuals is a mutual process, and that sex should be consensual, expressed either through words, body language, or both. They all stated clearly that a ‘No’ has to be respected, independently of context. However, at the same time participants expressed contradictory norms and expectations in relation to the described situations, that showed an ambivalence concerning sexual scripts and consequences of challenging these in specific situations. Reasoning concerning discrepancy between ideals and actual possibilities to act in sexual encounters indicates differences in relation to gender, age and educational background and pathways.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 28 January 2020
Accepted 16 April 2020

KEYWORDS

Focus group; gender norms; sexual negotiations; sexual consent; sexuality norms; young people

Introduction

During the last few years, the question of consensual sex has been brought to the fore in Sweden via some much-debated legal cases in which young men have been acquitted of rape. These verdicts have caused strong public reactions and generated massive demonstrations outside the courts, leading to a considerable amount of debate articles in public media calling for a discussion of legal reforms in relation to societal norms concerning sexuality and gender. In addition, the Swedish public debate regarding sexual offences gained momentum through the #metoo anti-sexual harassment/assault campaign in 2017. In 2018, the Swedish Government introduced new sexual offence legislation based on the requirement of consent (Government Offic's of Sweden, 2018). At a press conference, Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Löfven declared: ‘It should be obvious. Sex should be voluntary. If it is not voluntary, then it is illegal’ (Svenska Dagbladet, 2017). From July 1st, 2018, a rape conviction in Sweden does not require the use of violence or threats by perpetrators nor that a person’s vulnerable situation has been exploited. The new Swedish law criminalises sex without consent, saying that a person must give a clear verbal or physical consent. Lack of consent is in other words enough to be considered a crime; either negligent rape or negligent sexual abuse, sentences

CONTACT Charlotta Holmström charlotta.holmstrom@mau.se Centre for Sexology and Sexuality Studies, Department of Social Work, Faculty of Health and Society, Malmö University, Malmö SE-205 06, Sweden

© 2020 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.
with a maximum prison term of four years (Ministry of Justice, Sweden, 2018). A central question is thus how young people interpret and express the notions of consensual sex; what is voluntary sex and how does one know when it is not?

Conflicting and blurred sexual situations bring to the fore, and challenge, ideas about morally ‘good’ and ‘bad’ sex – but also about gendered sexual norms and expectations. Sexual boundaries can be seen as constantly negotiated and constructed in relation to how young people perceive, interpret, and define different sexual encounters. According to Muehlenhard and Peterson (2005), the conceptualisation of sex as either wanted or unwanted is problematic and reflects a dichotomous model that conflates wanting and consenting. Wanted sex is within this context understood as consensual, and unwanted sex as non-consensual. However, even if wanting sex may influence individuals’ decisions about whether to consent, wanting sex and consenting to sex do not need to correspond (Muehlenhard & Peterson, 2005). Instead, Peterson and Muehlenhard (2007, p. 81) showed that wantedness can be regarded as a continuous and multidimensional construct. Participants in their study described reasons for both wanting and not wanting sex, and also distinguished between wanting a sexual act and wanting its consequences (Peterson & Muehlenhard, 2007).

The relation between wanting or not wanting sex on the one hand, and consent or non-consent on the other, may also be conditioned by a range of different factors: individual, relational, contextual, but also structural, such as gender, social class, age, or ethnicity. Skeggs (2005) argued, for example, that women and men with different socio-economic backgrounds relate to class- and gender-specific sexual norms and thus develop different behaviours and attitudes in relation to gender and sexuality. In other words, to interpret and understand how sexual wanting is expressed and constructed, and how sexual wanting is related to sexual consent, is of central concern in order to understand young people’s reasoning of sexual consent.

**Gendered sexual wanting and sexual consent**

Studies have shown that young women and men respond in different ways to sexual coercion (Byers & Glenn, 2012), and studies focusing on young people’s experiences of unwanted sex show significant gender differences. More women than men, both in Sweden and internationally, have experienced unwanted sex (Flack et al., 2007; The Swedish Public Health Agency, 2019). These gender differences can be understood as the result of unequal power relations between women and men (Allen, 2005; Chambers et al., 2004; Clarke, 2006; Holland et al., 2004; Mellor, 2012; Morgan & Zurbriggan, 2007). Feminine and masculine ideals are constantly being negotiated among young people (Chambers et al., 2004; Clarke, 2006; Elmerstig, 2009; Elmerstig et al., 2017; Mellor, 2012; Morgan & Zurbriggan, 2007; Paechter, 2007), and these negotiations affect what is enacted in sexual situations (Elmerstig et al., 2012, 2014; Sanchez et al., 2005; Sanchez et al., 2012). In their classic study on women, sexual consent, and token resistance, Muehlenhard and Hollabaugh (1988) found that 40% of the women reported that they had experiences of saying no to sex, but meaning yes. Even if the majority of the women in the referred study still did not have that experience, Muehlenhard and McCoy (1991) argued that ‘saying no meaning yes’ can be described as scripted refusal. This type of behaviour can be understood as being based on traditional sexual scripts implying a double sexual standard for women (Gavey, 2005).

Thus, gender inequality seems to be sustained and possibly reinforced by sexual situations (Sanchez et al., 2012), and scholars within the field argue that the double standard – that sexual initiative is considered dubious in women but positive in men – remains and continues to impact young people’s sexual lives. According to these scholars, conforming to lingering gender-specific expectations may affect opportunities to exert sexual autonomy and to experience sexual pleasure (Elmerstig, 2009; Jackson & Cram, 2003; Sanchez et al., 2012). A growing number of studies show that saying ‘Yes’ to a partner’s sexual initiatives does not necessarily reflect unequivocal interest or desire (Bay-Cheng & Eliseo-Arras, 2008). A study on U.S. American college students’ communication of
sexual consent showed how women often are conceptualised as gatekeepers and therefore experience contradictory situations difficult to cope with:

(a) they may not resist strongly enough and thus be perceived as at fault for experiencing forced sex; (b) they may engage in some sexual activity but halt the activity prior to sexual intercourse and thus be labeled a “tease” and again be conceptualized as being responsible for men forcing sex on them; or (c) they may agree to sex too quickly or with too many partners, thus being perceived as a “slut” (Jozkowski & Peterson, 2013, p. 521).

The results from this study suggested that communication of sexual consent is strongly influenced by strict and stereotypical gender roles, and Gavey (2005) argued that there is a need to de-naturalise such rigid gendered binary representing women as passive and vulnerable and men as sexually aggressive.

Multiple social dimensions of sexual consent

In addition to the traditional gendered scripts and sexual double standard as central themes in previous research on sexual consent, other analytical perspectives have been suggested as well. For example, studies show how young people’s perceptions of sexuality are influenced by social class. According to Skeggs (1997), women who initiate sex have not always been compatible with respectability and virtue. Rather the opposite, women showing sexual interest have historically been seen as an expression of the immoral sexuality of the lower classes (Skeggs, 1997). Ideas concerning respectability and different expectations concerning sex in relation to gender and class are still highly prevalent. This is clearly shown in Forsberg’s (2005) study of young women in the Swedish suburbs, where ideas about respectability had a great impact on these women’s self-perceptions in relation to sexuality. Ideas about respectability were both internalised and supported by their families and peer groups. In a similar study of young college students in Sweden, Ambjörnsson (2004) found that normative femininity and young college women’s perceptions, experiences of relationships, and love and intimacy were strongly affected by social class and respectability. For the young women in her study, being respectable was clearly related to sexuality and the fear of being regarded as promiscuous and as a slut.

However, there is also research indicating a tendency towards increased sexual equality, sexual agency, and freedom. Within this discussion, the notion that a gender-specific double standard is still the norm is called into question (Johansson, 2007; Marks & Fraley, 2005). In a study on Swedish youth, Johansson (2007) found that few participants were negative towards young women taking the sexual initiative and concluded that ‘the oppressed young woman found in the work of Beauvoir and others seems to have been replaced by a more active and competent female subject’ (Johansson, 2007, p. 42). Examining social factors shaping sexual consent among college students, Hirsch et al. (2018) pointed to multiple social dimensions of consensual sex (e.g. gendered scripts, sexual citizenship, and intersectionality). Sexual citizenship has often been understood as a dimension of gendered scripts. However, Hirsch et al. (2018, p. 30) study showed a great variability concerning women’s sense of sexual citizenship: ‘some clear about their sexual boundaries and desires, others much less so’. These researchers also argued that intersectional social inequalities may have an impact on how young people experience intimacy and practice consent, pointing at differences in the sense of sexual citizenship, due to social background.

Contrasting perspectives on young people’s norms concerning sexuality

Sociologists Simon and Gagnon (1986) described the origins of sexual meanings and desire as located in the social context. According to their sexual scripting theory, individuals need to call on shared meanings and expectations to produce sexual scripts. Analytically, these scripts are defined at three distinct and interacting levels: cultural scenarios, interpersonal scripts, and intra-psychic scripts. More specifically this means that young people’s sexual encounters and sexual interactions are
influenced by social norms on different levels: on societal level through culturally and socially constructed norms, on interpersonal level through social norms in different peer groups, and on intrapsychic level through norms constructed through personal experiences and the internalisation of norms constructed and expressed on societal and interpersonal level. Young people of today act and exist in a range of different contexts and have access to several different influential socialisation agents. This situation implies that young people are influenced by a range of sexual scripts, which do not always correspond. The present study explored how sexual consent and sexual negotiations are interpreted by young people – paying particular attention to norms concerning gender in relation to sexuality.

Simon and Gagnon (1986) defined modern society as a ‘postparadigmatic society’ (as opposed to a paradigmatic society) in which sexual norms mediated at the cultural or societal level do not always correspond with values and norms constructed at the interpersonal or intra-psychic level. Such a lack of correspondence between these different levels may on the one hand give young people individual freedom, independence, and room for sexual agency and, on the other hand, cause frictions and pressure on young people at the interpersonal and intra-psychic levels to manage social interactions in sexual encounters with no unambiguous cultural and societal guidance. It is thus of great importance to explore how young people, on the one hand, reproduce and, on the other hand, challenge established sexual scripts, constructed and expressed on different levels.

Method

In order to assess young people’s norms concerning sexual consent, 12 focus groups with 44 young people were conducted during 2016 and 2017.

Participants

The participants were recruited through a sample of young people in the age ranges of 18–19 years old (n = 32) and 20–21 years old (n = 12) from three upper secondary schools (one school that offers vocational training, one school that runs university preparatory programmes, and one that offers both), from one youth clinic, and one student organisation. In addition, participants were recruited through snow-ball sampling. Of these individuals 32 participants attended upper secondary school (theoretical programme n = 6, and practical programme n = 26), nine attended university and three were working. The sample included women (n = 27), men (n = 16), and transgender (n = 1), with different social and ethnic backgrounds. Information about characteristics were obtained through self-report in the beginning of the interview. We had a gender comparative approach, and therefore mostly conducted gender-separated focus groups and strived for a variation in terms of sexual orientation, class, and ethnicity as these might influence people’s perceptions and experiences of sexual norms and practices (Ambjörnsson, 2004; Forsberg, 2005; Hammarén, 2008; Tikkanen et al., 2011). Three groups were gender mixed while nine groups were gender-separated. When it comes to sexual orientation, we didn’t have a strategic selection process reaching those who identified themselves as heterosexual, bisexual, or homosexual; we asked only for young people who were interested in participating. In the final sample, the majority identified themselves as heterosexual. The sizes of the 12 focus groups varied; two groups had two participants, three groups had three participants, six groups had four participants, one group had five participants, and, finally, one group had six participants.

Data collection

Prior to each focus group, all participants gave their informed consent to participate. The focus groups were organised by a set of constructed vignettes. These vignettes illustrated situations involving casual sexual encounters that have retrospectively led to feelings of regret and
sometimes experiences of persuasion or coercion. They described different social interactions both in party contexts with alcohol involved and in more everyday life situations – followed by sexual encounters and negotiations of sexual consent. Some vignettes described party situations and experiences of casual sex; others describe situations within a relationship. Here are three examples of the vignettes:

Vignette Example 1: Klara is in love with Aron and they meet at a party. They have been drinking alcohol. They start kissing and go upstairs. They have sex and he wants to have sex once more, but she says no. The next day, Klara is very sorry and regrets having sex with Aron, it feels wrong. Afterwards, Aron pretends that nothing happened between them.

Vignette Example 2: Matilda is out clubbing with a friend. She meets two guys, Anton and Filip, whom she is acquainted with. Matilda likes Anton. She goes with them to another bar and is offered wine. She has some wine and starts feeling drunk. Matilda doesn’t really remember what happens after that. She remembers going with Anton to an apartment, and suddenly she is almost naked. She also remembers that Anton had sex with her, but she doesn’t remember how long it lasted, or how it ended. When she wakes up in the morning she doesn’t feel well and is nauseous. She dresses and leaves.”

Vignette Example 3: Albin 16 years old, is in a relationship with Alice. Albin is unsure if he wants to have sex with Alice or not. His friends are cheering on him for having sex with her. Alice has said that she wants to have sex with him, but only if he feels ready. Albin is afraid that Alice will lose interest, if he says no to sex. Alice also says that sex is something you have with those you love and Albin loves her more than anything.

The focus group discussions gave room for reasoning on how to make sense of the situations, on communication concerning sexual boundaries, and on potential strategies to cope with the described situations. The vignettes were discussed on the basis of different gender and sexual orientations by initiating the discussion about their thoughts if the gender were shifted in the vignettes, and if gender were changed to two female names or two male names to lead the discussion further into same-sex relationships. The core of the focus groups was the participant’s understandings and assessments of the described situations.

Using focus groups as a research method has been described as a useful way to explore sensitive topics in a non-threatening way (Wibeck et al., 2007; Wilkinson, 2004), and the interactions often lead to the production of more elaborate accounts than are generated in individual interviews. Therefore, focus groups are a particularly useful method within this context since the aim of the study was to grasp young people’s sexual norms by exploring their reasoning concerning complex sexual situations, as illustrated by the vignettes. As with focus groups, the use of vignettes can serve as an aid in the elucidation of sensitive issues (Barter & Renold, 1999, 2000). Typically, participants are requested to respond in the third person to the vignette, rather than drawing on their own experiences, thereby desensitising the subject matter. Participants who do not want to discuss their personal experiences can respond to those of ‘others.’ This facilitates the investigation of potentially morally charged, or sensitive, issues. Using vignettes is ideal to assess attitudes and beliefs (Barnatt et al., 2007) and can be constructed in many ways.

In this study, vignettes took the form of a descriptive story, with participants being asked to respond to a narrative that was based on a mixture of several cases. The vignettes were written by the first author, influenced by real and fictive cases presented in campaigns focusing on sexual consent in a Swedish context. The vignettes were presented, discussed, and evaluated at a seminar including researchers within sexology and sexuality studies. Some of the researchers at the seminar had previous professional experiences of social work with young people. The vignettes were also piloted with two young people. The response to the vignettes was positive; thus, the pilot interview was included in the sample.

Each vignette was fairly short (i.e. 200–300 words) since this has been shown to be ideal for adolescents (Barter & Renold, 1999). All focus group sessions were conducted in Swedish, by the first author, and the interviews were audio-recorded and lasted approximately 60–100 minutes. Reflective field notes were made during and after each focus group session to assist with analysis.
The interviews were checked and anonymised. The study was approved by the regional ethical review board, Lund University, Sweden.

**Data analysis**

Data analysis broadly followed an inductive thematic approach inspired by Braun and Clarke (2006) including familiarising with data, coding, searching and defining emergent themes. The interviews and reflective notes were first systematically read several times by the first author to ensure familiarity with the data. After close reading of the interviews, a coding process was carried out to identify repeating phenomena within the data. These codes were developed further through movement back and forth, in the process of rereading of the interviews and codes. During this process, several subthemes and themes were developed, and, finally, the themes were refined during the process of writing (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The interpretations of findings were discussed among the authors throughout the analysis process.

**Results**

The thematic analysis produced four overarching themes addressing young people’s reasoning about conflicting sexual situations in relation to gender and sexuality norms: (1) ‘Sexual consent is when both are into it,’ (2) ‘Sexual scripts in casual sex encounters,’ (3) ‘The complexity of challenging a sexual script,’ and (4) ‘Sexual agency and intersectionality.’

**Sexual consent is when both are into it**

The participants described sexual consent as ‘when both are into it.’ Communication concerning wanting to have sex was understood as either verbal or through body language. Paying attention to other people’s reactions was seen as crucial when it comes to sexual encounters. Irrespective of discussing same-sex or heterosexual sexual interactions, being female, male, or transgender, there was, in each focus group, a clear awareness of the public discourse about sexual abuse and harassment. The participants often referred to various publicly known cases of rape and sexual abuse and, in the focus groups conducted during fall 2017, also to the #metoo campaign. They all clearly condemned sexual abuse and harassment. People who commit this type of serious sexual crime were referred to as ‘pigs,’ ‘abnormal,’ or described as ‘someone who is totally insane’. Forcing somebody to have sex was described as something else than sex: an expression of aggression or power.

There was in other words a clear consensus that a ‘No’ always has to be respected, irrespective of the context and situation. One example of that position was expressed between two male participants in a focus group with three male participants, 18 years old:

If a person says no, then it is no. It is as easy as that. (M, age 18, vocational)

You have to listen to that, you know! (M, age 18, vocational)

I think that anyone who is normal, who has empathy, stops immediately if you realize that the other one really do not want to … You can't enjoy it, while seeing that the other part is in … in pain … (M, age 18, vocational)

Another example was expressed in a focus group with female participants:

If someone wants to have sex, but the other does not, you just have to accept that … there's nothing more to do. (F, age 18, vocational)

It should be OK. You are allowed to say “No” whenever, even if you first said “Yes”. You should be able to say “No” whenever! (F, age 18, vocational)

In this respect, all participants expressed an understanding of sexual consent as something that should be viewed as a continuous process following an affirmative standard where a ‘No’ always
should be respected and non-consent must be assumed until anything else is actively communicated. In one focus group with male participants, they argued that as a young man, you have to be aware of “such things nowadays”. Saying ‘No’ once should be enough:

In today’s society you should not misunderstand such a situation! You just shouldn’t! It is like driving through a red light, you just don’t! (M, age 18, vocational)

People crossing boundaries or ignoring the other part’s signals were described as ‘idiots’ or ‘lacking empathy.’ Being attentive to other people’s reactions was seen as a matter of code and conduct and something you learn during your upbringing.

**Sexual scripts in casual sex encounters**

Even if everyone agreed with the principle that sexual consent is a prerequisite to engaging in sexual activity and that a ‘No’ should be respected whenever uttered, the participants’ discussions on the specific cases showed great complexity in assessing what it means to say ‘No’ in an intimate situation, especially in casual sex encounters. Discussing the vignette illustrating a situation when two young people who are acquaintances, meet at a night out, flirt, drink alcohol, and end up in one party’s apartment, showed how such an interactional process employs a certain sexual script. Here illustrated by three male participants, 18 years, vocational:

*Interviewer: Can you tell from this case if somebody, and if so, who wants to have sex?*

Both of them want to have sex! Isn’t that so? She goes with him to an apartment, right?

*Interviewer: Yeah … and does that mean that she wants to have sex, that she goes with him?*

No, it doesn’t mean that really … but I would have thought so too, if she had gone home with me. But it is not really …

But she accepts going home with him.

Yes, it does not say that she has said ‘No’, or that she did not want to …

She has not refused …

…it just says that she has regrets in the morning …

**Further on, participants in another focus group expressed similar ideas:**

It’s a bit weird if you meet someone at a club and you’ve both been making out there, then you go home … and then later when you’re both in bed they say they don’t want to have sex. I mean … if you go home with someone … and then go all the way … haven’t you already said ‘Yes’ to it …? (M, age 18, vocational)

*Interviewer: Is that so? If you go home with someone like that does it automatically mean that they want to have sex?*

Totally, I mean you know it, she knows it … both know it. (M, age 18, vocational)

**Similar views are expressed by five, somewhat older (20–21 years old), female university students:**

Then I think that it matters that she has already gone with him to his place.

Yes, it is like … is that a … ?

Does that mean that I have to … I have already agreed to go with him, but does that mean that I have said yes to sex?

That, I think, has nothing to do with it!

It is like that … Is that a silent guarantee? One could ask …

Yes, exactly.
Yes, have you then promised something … indirectly?

No!

Yes, does he expect … does he expect sex from me now?

What he expects is a different thing, but I don’t think that you have promised anything! She is not obliged to do anything!

No, she does not owe him anything

… and she has not promised …

These comments illustrated how sexual consent is understood as an interactional process, starting much earlier than the time of getting home with somebody after a night out. To agree to go home with somebody from the club, particularly if you have been making out or if you already fancy each other, was perceived as initiating a consensual process. The participants found that such sexual consent negotiations are usually guided by nonverbal communication, relying on body language with gestures, movements, and eye contact as signals. On the other hand, the idea of verbally negotiating the possibility of sex with someone you do not know that well appeared to be awkward and incongruous, described as a ‘turn-off’ and a ‘mood-killer.’ Consent was described here as something intimate and emotional, a situation when it ‘feels right’ and when ‘everything takes care of itself’ rather than being a rational verbal negotiation. In this respect, the participants stressed the importance of being clear in communication to avoid any misunderstandings:

You gotta be clear, you gotta be way fucking clear … (F, age 18, vocational)

Interviewer: But how do you know then that it’s OK, how do you know the other wants to?

You just know when it’s all good and happening’, you just know! (F, age 18, vocational)

Consent in casual sex encounters are thus described as an interactional process ‘where one thing leads to another,’ most often without explicit communication on what to expect. In order to prevent misunderstandings, communicating non-consent clearly was stated as crucial.

The complexity of challenging a sexual script

The majority of the participants argued that going home with somebody after a night out could indicate sex, and that most of their peers probably would agree. Even if the majority of the participants argued that such an understanding of sexual consent is wrong, the participants’ reasoning showed how they experience the possibility of negotiating sexual consent as gradually diminishing in such a situation. Considering a ‘No’ is associated with negative feelings, since saying ‘No’ at that point is seen as going against a mutually assumed script. The participants stressed the risk of experiencing ‘social awkwardness’ in the situation. The other person might be disappointed, feel rejected, become angry or even aggressive. In one focus group, consisting of three participants (two men and one woman 20–21 years old, university students), the female participant discusses feelings of vulnerability in relation to expectations in casual sexual encounters.

Yes, I would say so that you are really vulnerable in such a situation. You get to that point that … that … already undressed … and then starting to feel like … ‘No, now I really don’t want to!’ Then I would feel really vulnerable! Because then you might be in a situation when … ‘But what would you do to me, if I say no now, just now that I realize that you really want to?” Then you are really … Then you may experience that you need to have sex, in a different way, than if you say no (to sex) while still being out or just getting home, because then you have a different … yes … .” (F, age around 20, university student)

Yes, because then you are not that involved in the story … (M, age around 20, university student)
No, exactly … So that I understand is difficult … And I think that is why such things happen. It happens often, these things, because you get involved to a point when you feel that you cannot say no anymore. (F, age around 20, university student)

No, exactly … (M, age around 20, university student)

… that you realize that you do not want to have sex, too late. Even if it should not be like that. (F, age around 20, university student)

The participants also acknowledged potentially negative social consequences such as being described as a ‘tease’, being boring and uninteresting, or being subject to other negative rumours. For example:

Ah, I think that she will get a reputation either way … She might get a reputation for being a slut, due to the fact that she is willing to have sex. (…) And if she does not, she appears to be boring. Whatever she chooses, she will get a reputation. (F, age 18, vocational)

At the beginning of a relationship, regardless of whether it was casual or relation-oriented, it was also perceived to be risky to say ‘No,’ since such a ‘No’ might imply that there would be no more dates, or that it might lead to a break up:

You might fear that the person would not want to see you again … (F, age 18, university preparatory)

Another concern that was expressed among female participants was to be perceived as a ‘tease’ (i.e. to have acted upon non-verbal communication and in that sense ‘promised’ something):

It is weird, but it is almost like you have said “Yes” … It is almost like you have taken advantage of that expectation and … then you cannot just withdraw, because you are afraid that the other person will think that you have promised something that you have not promised, but you do not want to disappoint somebody. (F, age 18, university preparatory)

And you can always ignore such things, because that is unimportant. It should not be important. You can of course sit here and say a lot of good things, but when you are in the situation, it is really difficult. (F, age 18, university preparatory)

Other participants expressed this: it is like saying ‘OK, then I don’t like you’ or ‘It is like you are being rude’ or ‘being indecisive.’ In reality this means that several participants perceived the possibility to say ‘No’ as highly limited, even those who maintained that saying ‘No’ to sex should always be okay and be respected. In many of the focus groups the woman in the vignette was made responsible for the outcome of the situation; saying ‘No’ might lead to an uncomfortable situation, saying ‘Yes’ might lead to rumours.

This reasoning shows how ‘wantedness’ can be influenced by a number of factors that include not only the individuals and the couple but also, to a very high degree, the couple’s social environment. This way of reasoning challenges the idea that there really is consent in going home with someone, seeing it as ‘a signal that something’s gonna happen.’ Here the participants stressed that going home with somebody does not mean that you have to have sex or that you cannot change your mind about it. Yet, they all acknowledged a specific sexual script concerning causal sex and pointed to difficulties in challenging such a script, due to fears of situational and social consequences. In this sense, the participants initially expressed opinion that sexual consent is a continuous process and something that should be based on affirmative consent was altered here. Instead, the participants clearly stressed that there are situations where consent is assumed until non-consent is expressed and that expressing a non-consent ‘too late’ can be very difficult.

**Sexual agency and intersectionality**

All participants stressed the importance of acknowledging people’s sexual rights and recognising a lack of correspondence between sexual scripts on a societal level on the one hand and on an
interpersonal and intrapsychic level on the other. An ambivalence on how to cope with the lack of correspondence between sexual scripts on different levels was acknowledged by all participants. How this lack of correspondence is handled seemed to differ due to intersectional aspects, mainly concerning education, gender, and age.

The participants who were preparing for university or already studied at the university emphasised everyone’s right to challenge the assumed sexual script concerning casual sex to a higher degree than the participants in vocational programmes. Sexual agency and the right to negotiate sex independently of context was a central theme for female participants preparing for a university degree. The participants on the vocational training programmes, on the other hand, stressed the importance of being clear initially, preventing a socially uncomfortable situation.

Acting responsibly was crucial among all participants; however, how this could be done was described in different ways. One way of acting in a responsible way was to be aware of the presumed script, and to make sure that your intentions could not be misunderstood, in accordance with the script. Another way to act responsibly was to express your own intentions clearly and strongly, independently of situational and social expectations. In this regard, the participants from the university preparatory programmes advocated for a stronger reflexive individual approach, than their peers in work training programmes. The participants aiming at a university degree seemed to have the ambition to challenge norms concerning sexual encounters on the cultural or societal level to a higher degree than participants on the vocational programmes – while the participants at the vocational programme to a higher degree seem to relate to and follow the assumed sexual script. However, the ambition to challenge sexual scripts on a societal level was not only influenced by educational background or pathway.

The data showed how gender had a significant impact on negotiating consent as well. Even if the participants’ discussions on sexual consent and sexual scripts indicated a general awareness of gender equality and of new gender ideals, the participants’ reasonings on sexual consent also showed how they are strongly influenced by gender patterns and heterosexual norms. The negotiations surrounding sexual consent were characterised by discussions of gender equity – that both have the right to say ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ and that both women and men are free to choose their own partners and to acknowledge and affirm their sexuality. On the other hand, the discussions were permeated by a traditional view of gender in which women can be seen as emotional, reflexive, oriented towards relationships, and indecisive, while men can be described as decisive, action-oriented and potentially aggressive. And in several of the discussions, the woman was seen as the ‘gatekeeper’ in the sexual consent negotiations, being somewhat responsible for the outcome. In these discussions it was the woman who was expected to accept or refuse, and who needed to be clear about what she wants, while he should be responsive and not be ‘in too much of a rush.’ This not only referred to a woman’s first reaction to a man’s initial invitation (e.g. ‘it’s always the guy that takes the first step’) but also to a situation when it becomes more complicated, when she has agreed to a more intimate contact, but has not consented to sex:

Maybe they already started to seriously make out on the sofa; she would really need to be tough if she wanted to say “No”. (F, age 18, vocational)

If she does not say “No” then, well, then she can’t really lay blame on the guy, you gotta have some self-respect … what else can he do? (F, age 18, vocational)

But it doesn’t mean he should cross the line … (F, age 18, vocational)

No, of course not. (F, age 18, vocational)

Independently of educational background or pathway, the participants seemed to put somewhat greater responsibility on women than on men when it came to sexual consent. For some of the women, particularly those who were at university or on university preparatory programmes, this responsibility was considerable. They continuously argued that there are options for individual
action and emphasised that there are, or should be, alternatives to act and to challenge a presumed sexual script. They said that they expected it should indeed be so, but on the other hand acknowledged the complexity of actual situations:

I would feel really bad if I were in her situation . . . I mean she could have said “No” or suggested that they should just sleep together or so . . . instead of just letting it happen. But on the other hand it is hard . . . (F, age 18, university preparatory)

Even if many of the participants in the study described experiences of ambivalence in relation to sexual consent, the ambivalence was expressed more strongly and more explicitly by those women who also stressed that you always have an individual choice. The ability to act responsibly and in accordance with your own will was stressed to a somewhat higher degree among the participants who were some years older than the 18 year old participants. Several of the participants also referred to age in relation to the ability to know what you want, independently of social and situational factors. Youth and lack of experience was in other words described as factors that may have an impact on people’s ability to know and express their own will and intentions. Being a young inexperienced woman was understood as a specifically vulnerable position among all participants.

Discussion

The present study showed how young people assess, negotiate, and navigate understandings of sexual consent. The participants agreed upon the importance of sex being consensual and emphasised that paying attention to verbal and bodily signals expressing sexual consent is crucial. A verbal ‘No’ or passivity in a sexual encounter was understood as non-consent, independently of context. In this regard, the participants’ reasoning can be understood as being in accordance with the new Swedish legislation on sexual consent and with previous research (Willis et al., 2019). The new Swedish law on sexual consent focuses on how consent rather than non-consent is expressed and understood and aims to achieve normative change regarding the interpretation of sexual consent. Thus, the participants in the study supported this aim and expressed an understanding of consent as an interactional process, when both parties agree on what will happen next.

However, the focus group discussions also showed that there are specific sexual scripts related to specific situations, giving instructions on ‘what will happen next.’ In casual sex encounters, going home with somebody after a night out is to a large degree interpreted as a ‘Yes’ to sex. Both parts are understood as responsible for the situation and for what ‘will happen next,’ even if the focus group discussions to a large degree focused on how the woman acts. Men were seen as seldom saying ‘No’ to sex, and women were described as being responsible for what has been communicated in the interaction that preceded the sexual encounter. Both female and male respondents’ understandings of the situations can be related to the gender specific double standard that has been described in previous research (see for example, Jackson & Cram, 2003), where men are seen as being active and initiating sex, while women are described as passive, responding to men’s initiative through their gatekeeping position.

The respondents acknowledged that communicating wanting or not wanting sex in a casual sex encounter can be rather difficult and not at all clear cut, and that these difficulties are gendered. Misunderstandings and miscommunication were seen as understandable when young people negotiate sexual encounters. The participants’ difficulties in challenging sexual scripts connected to casual sex have been demonstrated in other Swedish studies among young people (Elmerstig et al., 2012, 2014). Both young women and men have shown conflicting feelings where they want to resist the impact of stereotyped scripts, while at the same time wanting to perform according to gendered standards. The young people in Elmerstig and colleagues’ studies described an indirect pressure from peer groups to match the existing scripts during casual sex. The young men in their study felt less confident during casual sex and, in order to avoid showing vulnerability, their focus turned into their own performance fulfilling the conventional male stereotypes of being dominant
and decisive. When totally focusing on their own performance, the sexual situation became a solitary action. In addition, they felt pressure to share their experiences of casual sex with peers afterwards. In this way the peer group became a central actor in the male-male narratives; the casual sex was shared with friends and not with partner (Elmerstig et al., 2014). In light of findings from the current study, such gendered expectations, could easily lead to misunderstanding and miscommunication during casual sex. The fear of situational and social consequences was described among the focus groups participants in the current study; women may fear rumours and aggressive reactions, while men may fear doing something wrong – and perhaps being accused for a crime they did not commit.

Facing contradictory norms and expectations, may cause ambivalence concerning how to understand communication regarding sexual consent. Adopting the idea that negotiating sexual consent should be regarded as an open continuous process – following an affirmative standard where non-consent must be assumed until anything else is actively communicated – can be understood in relation to concepts such as individualisation and self-reflexivity. Processes of modernity have increased individuals’ sexual agency and freedom, generally described as the state of a ‘democratisation of modern intimacy’ (Giddens, 1992). Individuals living in a post-paradigmatic society are ideally free to choose what sexual script to follow since there are several cultural scripts to choose from. The participants chose a sexual script saying that sex has to be consensual, and that sexual consent is a continuous process where the involved parts have to act responsibly and attentively. On the other hand, the participants related to culturally prescribed gendered scripts based on an understanding of a specific situation and interaction where consent is assumed until non-consent is expressed. Within these discussions, for example, some male participants gave voice to ideas on scripted refusal (see for example, Muehlenhard & McCoy, 1991; Marcantonio & Jozkowski, 2019), referring to situations where women are assumed to say ‘No’ to sex, due to gender ideals concerning women’s sexuality.

The difficulties in challenging sexual scripts in specific situations such as casual sex encounters were described as closely related to the women’s fear of the social consequences as being regarded as a tease, being boring, losing face, seriously damaging the relationship, getting a bad reputation, or even being subject to potentially aggressive reactions. An important dimension of the negotiation of sexual consent, and a restricting factor for the affirmative standard, could thus be seen as young women’s way of navigating respectability. However, another important aspect related to this is that consenting to sex and wanting to have sex does not seem to always correspond, as one can consent to unwanted sex, or in reverse, one may want to have sex but not consent to it because of the fear of losing respectability or experience other negative social consequences (Peterson & Muehlenhard, 2007). Also, Muehlenhard et al. (2016, p. 463) discussed the usefulness of understanding wanting and consenting as two distinct concepts ‘that sometimes correspond to each other but sometimes do not’. They claimed that this discrepancy between wanting and consenting often gives rise to feelings of ambivalence, especially in women who often worry about their reputation and about being labelled negatively.

However, in this study, expression of sexual consent not only related to gender but also seemed to relate to educational background or pathway and age. Even if all the female participants were caught in the contradiction of the affirmative consent and sexual scripts, some differences in relation to education could be found in the participants’ reasoning. The university students and pupils at university preparatory programmes strongly expressed the idea of sexual consent as a continuous process. They stressed people’s individual rights to say ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ and suggested alternatives to sex when going home with someone after a night out. Such a strong expression of individualism and emphasis on individual freedom to choose also made these female participants put more pressure on women to be strong-willed and to know when it is okay to say ‘Yes’ to sex, and when it is not, when and how to challenge the presumed sexual script.

There are several limitations to this study. The background information was obtained at the beginning of the interview through self-report. This part could have been more structured to obtain a greater amount of information about the participants, which could have deepened the analysis, for example, concerning ethnicity. Another limitation is that two focus groups had only two participants.
More participants were scheduled in these two groups, but they did not show up at the time for the interview. After consideration of cancelling the session, the decision was made to still conduct the interview. With the method of vignettes as being used in the study, participants were led and there is a risk that dominant discourses concerning sexual consent and gender were reproduced by the vignettes. However, the cases were based on how sexual consent has been discussed in the social dialogue and in the media, with the aim to capture the participant’s understandings of the described situations. The findings might have been different if we had used probes in the focus groups, with more open discussions concerning various scenarios.

While young people of various genders and sexual orientations were interviewed, the majority of participants identified themselves as women with experience of heterosexual sexual interactions. Therefore, the results must be interpreted on the basis of the conditions of the study. Nevertheless, with the help of vignettes with varying content and sexual interactions, the discussions broadened the focus from the personal to more abstract experiences (Bradbury-Jones et al., 2014).

Overall, the data from the focus groups reported in this paper illustrated the complexity of consensual sex and how young people interpret and negotiate the perception of when sex is voluntary and when it is not. It is clear that traditional gender norms still regulate sexual interaction patterns and create barriers when it comes to negotiation space and sexual agency. At the same time, we saw that the public discourse regarding consent, for example, through the recent #metoo campaign and the new Swedish legislation on sexual consent, has become visible among young people. Still, the question of how this awareness is practised in the actual sexual situation remains. The findings have implications for the Swedish public debate on sexual consent and campaigns striving for implementing a culture of consent in Sweden. The study points to the complex relation between wanting versus not wanting sex and consensual versus nonconsensual sex – as well as how these are related to and influenced by situational as well as structural aspects. Recognising how this complexity is closely related to gender is of utmost importance for developing efficient and adequate preventive methods targeting sexual communication, sexual and reproductive health and rights, or sexual violence and sexual abuse. Future research should investigate the importance of sexuality in young people’s lives in relation to intimacy, body, relationships, gender, and norms.

Note

1. Yet, the #metoo campaign started several years earlier, in 2007, through Tarana Burke, a civil rights activist from New York, focusing on the sexual abuse of black girls and women.

Acknowledgments

We are most grateful to the young people who participated in the study and to the principals at the schools and other facilitators.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Funding

This study was supported by FORTE: Swedish Research Council for Health, Working Life and Welfare [2015-00278].
Notes on contributors

Charlotte Holmström is associate professor at the Department of Social Work, Malmö University, and the director for the Centre for Sexology and Sexuality Studies, Malmö University, Sweden. Her research area is prostitution policies, sexual and reproductive health and rights, sexuality norms among youth.

Lars Plantin is professor of social work at the Department of Social Work, Malmö University, Sweden. His main area of expertise is sexuality, youth and family research. He has published books and articles on HIV, sexual and reproductive health, parenting and everyday family life.

Eva Elmerstig is associate professor and senior lecturer in health and society, field of sexology at Malmö University, Sweden. Her research is focused on sexual functions, sexual dysfunctions, gender norms/ideals connected to sexual situations, and sexual health and diseases.

References

Allen, L. (2005). Sexual subjects: Young people, sexuality and education. Palgrave.

Ambjörnsson, F. 2004. I en klass för sig. Genus, klass och sexualitet bland gymnasietjejer [In a class of its own. On gender, class and sexuality among girls in secondary school]. [In Swedish]. Ordfront Förlag.

Barnatt, J., Shakman, K., Enterline, S., Cochran-Smith, M., & Ludlow, L. (2007). Teaching for social justice: Using vignettes to assess attitudes and beliefs [Paper presentation]. The American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, Boston College.

Barter, C., & Renold, E. (2000). I want to tell you a story: Exploring the application of vignettes in qualitative research with children and young people. International Journal of Social Research Methodology, 3(4), 307–323. https://doi.org/10.1080/13645570050178594

Barter, C., & Renold, E. (1999). The use of vignettes in qualitative research. Social Research Update, 25(9), 1–6. http://srut.soc.surrey.ac.uk/SRU25.html

Bay-Cheng, L. Y., & Eliseo-Arras, R. K. (2008). The making of unwanted sex: Gendered and neoliberal norms in college women’s unwanted sexual experiences. Journal of Sex Research, 45(4), 386–397. https://doi.org/10.1080/00224490802398381

Bradbury-Jones, C., Taylor, J., & Herber, O. R. (2014). Vignette development and administration: A framework for protecting research participants. International Journal of Social Research Methodology, 17(4), 427–440. https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2012.750833

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Byers, E. S., & Glenn, S. A. (2012). Gender differences in cognitive and affective responses to sexual coercion. Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 27(5), 827–845. https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260511423250

Chambers, D., Tincknell, E., & Van Loon, J. (2004). Peer regulation of teenage sexual identities. Gender and Education, 16(3), 397–415. https://doi.org/10.1080/09540250042000251515

Clarke, D. (2006). Review. Sexual subjects: Young people, sexuality and education by Louisa Allen. Culture, Health & Sexuality, 8(2), 191–193.

Elmerstig, E. (2009). Painful ideals – young Swedish women’s ideal sexual situations and experiences of pain during vaginal intercourse [Doctoral dissertation]. Linköping University.

Elmerstig, E., Wijma, B., Årestedt, K., & Swahnberg, K. (2017). Being “good in bed” – Body concerns and gender expectations among Swedish female and male senior high school students. Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy, 43(4), 326–342. https://doi.org/10.1080/0092623X.2016.1158759

Elmerstig, E., Wijma, B., Sandell, K., & Berterö, C. (2012). “Sexual pleasure on equal terms”: Young women’s ideal sexual situations. Journal of Psychosomatic Obstetrics & Gynecology, 33(3), 129–134. https://doi.org/10.3109/0167482X.2012.706342

Elmerstig, E., Wijma, B., Sandell, K., & Berterö, C. (2014). Sexual interaction or a solitary action: Young Swedish men’s ideal images of sexual situations in relationships and in one night stands. Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare, 5(3), 149–155. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.srh.2014.06.001

Flack, W. F., Jr., Daubman, K. A., Caron, M. L., Asadorian, J. A., D’Aureli, N. R., Gigliotti, S. N., Hall, A. T., Kiser, S., & Stine, E. S. (2007). Risk factors and consequences of unwanted sex among university students hooking up, alcohol, and stress response. Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 22(2), 139–157. https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260506293534

Forsberg, M. (2005). Brunettes and blondes. Youth and sexuality in multicultural Sweden. [In Swedish] [Thesis, Department of Social Work], University of Gothenburg.

Gavey, N. (2005). Just sex? The cultural scaffolding of rape. Routledge.

Giddens, A. (1992). The transformation of intimacy: Sexuality, love, and eroticism in modern societies. Stanford University Press.
Government Offices of Sweden. (2018). Consent – The basic requirement of new sexual offences legislation, fact sheet. Ministry of Justice. http://www.government.se/information-material/2018/01/consent-the-basic-requirement-of-new-sexual-offences-legislation

Hammarén, N. (2008). Förroten i huvudet. Unga män om kön och sexualitet i det nya Sverige [The Suburb in the Head. Young Men’s Thoughts on Gender and Sexuality in the New Sweden]. [In Swedish] [Thesis, Department of Social Work]. University of Gothenburg.

Hirsch, J. S., Khan, S. R., Wamboldt, A., & Mellins, C. A. (2018). Social dimensions of sexual consent among cisgender heterosexual college students: Insights from ethnographic research. Journal of Adolescent Health, 64(1), 26–35. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2018.06.011

Holland, J., Ramazanoglu, C., Sharpe, S., & Thomson, R. (2004). The male in the head – Young people, heterosexuality and power. The Tufnell Press.

Jackson, S. M., & Cram, F. (2003). Disrupting the sexual double standard: Young women’s talk about heterosexuality. The British Journal of Social Psychology, 42(1), 113–127. https://doi.org/10.1348/014466603763276153

Johansson, T. (2007). The transformation of sexuality, gender and identity in contemporary youth culture. Ashgate Publishing Limited.

Jozkowski, K. N., & Peterson, Z. D. (2013). College students and sexual consent: Unique insights. Journal of Sex Research, 50(6), 517–523. https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2012.700739

Marcantonio, T. L., & Jozkowski, K. N. (2019). Assessing how gender, relationship status, and item wording influence cues used by college students to decline different sexual behaviors. Journal of Sex Research, 57(2), 1–13. https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2019.1659218

Marks, M. J., & Fraley, R. C. (2005). The sexual double standard: Fact or fiction? Sex Roles, 52(3), 175–186. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-005-1293-5

Mellor, D. J. (2012). The doing it debate: Sexual pedagogy and the disciplining of the child/adult boundary. Sexuality, 15(3–4), 437–454. https://doi.org/10.1077/1363460712439653

The Ministry of Justice. (2018). Consent – The basic requirement of new sexual offence legislation, Press release. Government Offices of Sweden. https://www.government.se/press-releases/2018/04/consent-the-basic-requirement-of-new-sexual-offence-legislation

Morgan, E. M., & Zurbriggen, E. L. (2007). Wanting sex and wanting to wait: Young adults’ accounts of sexual messages from first significant dating partners. Feminism & Psychology, 17(4), 515–541. https://doi.org/10.1177/0959353507083102

Muehlenhard, C. L., & Hollabaugh, L. C. (1988). Do women sometimes say no when they mean yes? The prevalence and correlates of women’s token resistance to sex. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 54(5), 872–879. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.54.5.872

Muehlenhard, C. L., Humphreys, T. P., Jozkowski, K. N., & Peterson, Z. D. (2016). The complexities of sexual consent among college students: A conceptual and empirical review. Journal of Sex Research, 53(4–5), 457–487. https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2016.1146651

Muehlenhard, C. L., & McCoy, M. L. (1991). Double standard/double bind: The sexual double standard and women’s communication about sex. Psychology of Women Quarterly, 15(3), 447–461. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6402.1991.tb00420.x

Muehlenhard, C. L., & Peterson, Z. D. (2005). Wanting and not wanting sex: The missing discourse of ambivalence. Feminism & Psychology, 15(1), 15–20. https://doi.org/10.1177/0959353504094968

Paechter, C. (2007). Being boys, being girls: learning masculinities and femininities. Open University Press.

Peterson, Z. D., & Muehlenhard, C. L. (2007). Conceptualizing the “wantedness” of women’s consensual and nonconsensual sexual experiences: Implications for how women label their experiences with rape. Journal of Sex Research, 44 (4), 72–88. https://doi.org/10.1080/00224490709336794

Sanchez, D. T., Crocker, J., & Boike, K. R. (2005). Doing gender in the bedroom: Investing in gender norms and the sexual experience. Personality & Social Psychology Bulletin, 31(10), 1445–1455. https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167205277333

Sanchez, D. T., Fetterolf, J. C., & Rudman, L. A. (2012). Erotizing inequality in the United States: The consequences and determinants of traditional gender role adherence in intimate relationships. Journal of Sex Research, 49(2–3), 168–183. https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2011.653699

Simon, W., & Gagnon, J. H. (1986). Sexual scripts: Permanence and change. Archives of Sexual Behavior, 15(2), 97–120. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01542219

Skeggs, B. (1997). Formations of class and gender: Becoming respectable. Sage.

Skeggs, B. (2005). The making of class and gender through visualizing moral subject formation. Sociology, 39(5), 965–982. https://doi.org/10.1177/003803850508381

Svenska Dagbladet. (2017). Uppenbarligen vet inte män att sex ska vara frivilligt [Apparently, men do not know that sex should be voluntary]. Svenska Dagbladet. [In Swedish]. https://www.svd.se/regeringen-infor-samtynckeslag-storsatsning-pa-polisen

The Swedish Public Health Agency. (2019). Sexual and reproductive health and rights in Sweden 2017. The Swedish Public Health Agency. https://www.folkhalsomyndigheten.se/publicerat-material/publikationsarkiv/s/sexuell-och-reproduktiv-halsa-och-rattigheter-i-sverige-2017/?pub=60999
Tikkanen, R. H., Abelsson, J., & Forsberg, M. (2011). UngKAB09. Kunskap, attityder och sexuella handlingar bland unga [UngKAB09. Knowledge, attitudes and sexual behaviour in young people in Sweden]. [In Swedish]. University of Gothenburg, Department of social work.

Wibeck, V., Abrant Dahlgren, M., & Öberg, G. (2007). Learning in focus group: An analytical dimension for enhancing focus group research. Qualitative Research, 7(2), 249. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794107076023

Wilkinson, S. (2004). Focus group research. In D. Silverman (Ed.), Qualitative research: Theory, method and practice (pp. 177-199). Sage Publications.

Willis, M., Blunt-Vinti, H. D., & Jozkowski, K. N. (2019). Associations between internal and external sexual consent in a diverse national sample of women. Personality and Individual Differences, 149, 37–45. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2019.05.029