EXAMINING THE SEXUAL DOUBLE STANDARD THROUGH FEMINIST EYES

BY

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A Final Project submitted to the
Graduate Centre for Applied Psychology, Athabasca University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
MASTER OF COUNSELLING

Alberta
August 2009
DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my friends and family, who have supported me in my academic journey.
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</table>
ABSTRACT

There is often a sexual double standard within a culture when girls and women are portrayed in a sexualized manner. This double standard occurs when women are discouraged from being sexually active, while men are encouraged to be sexually active. The result is that girls and women are limited and affected in ways that men are not. Sexual double standards for females are problematic because the pressure they face from these standards may negatively impact their mental health, sexuality, relationships, and overall well-being. This final project does include literature reviews on feminist therapy and sexual double standards, focused on how the principles and techniques of feminist therapy could be used to address client issues when they have been negatively impacted by sexual double standards. The double standards, viewed through the feminist lens would be addressed within a therapeutic counselling setting. This final project also incorporates a separate document, a Feminist Approach to Sexual Double Standards manual to use when applying techniques of feminist therapy in a counselling milieu.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to extend my gratitude to Noella Piquette-Tomei, who challenged me, guided me, and encouraged me throughout this project; without her support this project would not have been possible.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter I: Outline of the Project</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First-Person Writing</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationale</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter II: Review of the Literature</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminist Therapy</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of Feminism</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principles of Feminist Therapy</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Techniques of Feminist Therapy</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sexual Double Standards</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sexualization of Girls and Women</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of Sexual Double Standards</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Studies</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Impact on Girls and Women</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Summary                              | 23   |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter III: Procedures</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Summary                              | 25   |

|--------------------------------------------------|------|

<p>|                                                   | 27   |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demystification</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender-Role Analysis</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power Analysis</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assertiveness Training</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consciousness-Raising Groups</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliotherapy</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter V: Synthesis and Implications</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of Project</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Self-Analysis
Summary
References
CHAPTER I

Outline of the Project

Overview

There is often a double standard within a culture when girls and women are portrayed in a sexualized manner. This sexual double standard occurs when women are discouraged from being sexually active, while men are encouraged to be sexually active. The result is that girls and women are limited and affected in ways that men are not. This project includes literature reviews on feminist therapy and sexual double standards, focused on how the principles and techniques of feminist therapy can be used to address client issues impacted by sexual double standards within a counselling setting. The project culminated in the development of a manual for practitioners to use in applying the techniques of feminist therapy in the counselling setting.

In an attempt to honour feminist theory and feminist writing, and to contribute to feminist literature, I have chosen to write in the first person. Therefore, this chapter begins by explaining the use of first-person writing in an academic piece. The focus of this project is then described and a rationale provided. This chapter outlines the necessity for counsellors to recognize and respond to female clients who are negatively impacted by sexual double standards and suggests that counsellors use a set of feminist therapy techniques to assist with these clients in a therapeutic setting.

Chapter II provides a review of the literature on feminist therapy and sexual double standards. Following the literature review, Chapter III describes the procedures undertaken in conducting the final project and the creation of a practitioner manual. The applied product or
practitioner manual is contained in Chapter IV. Finally, Chapter V provides a synthesis and discusses implications of the project.

_First-Person Writing_

In academics, students have been taught to write using the third person (Webb, 1992). Webb explains that this is an attempt to encourage the use of theoretical, literature-based arguments and evidence instead of anecdotes. Webb argued that the use of third-person language conveys that the ideas being discussed in the piece are neutral and value-free. Feminism arose as a radical stand against society to end sexism and oppression and encouraged the empowerment of women (Enns, 2004). The feminist agenda is not neutral and value-free.

Using first-person writing allows the writer to keep the epistemology of feminist theory and avoids the “anonymous, invisible voice of authority” (Webb, 1992, p. 751). Enns (2004) explained that some third-wave feminists have argued that academic writing has not been helpful and that implications of feminism are more clearly revealed in personal writing. In honouring feminist theory and contributing to feminist literature, I chose to write this piece in the first person, thereby incorporating personal writing.

_Rationale_

One issue that feminists are concerned with is the sexual double standard. Eighty-five percent of people in North American society believe that there is a sexual double standard between the genders (Marks & Fraley, 2005). I am in this percentile, as I have experienced the sexual double standard placed on girls and young women and that impacts us negatively. My experience with the sexual double standard has taken place in a North American context;
therefore the literature reviewed was North American, and this final project is limited to a North American context.

A sexual double standard is described as occurring when men are socially rewarded for sexual activity, but women are socially reprimanded for sexual activity (Marks & Fraley, 2005). Many women feel as though they are torn between wanting to be sexually desirable and active and needing to be moral and sexually inactive (Katz & Farrow, 2000). Often when women do act on their sexual desires they must endure negative societal labelling, such as when a women is labelled a slut and from this label gains a bad reputation (Tolman, 2002).

As a woman, I have been personally impacted by sexual double standards. However, I was unaware that there was research and writing on the topic that would validate my experiences. As a youth I felt pressure to dress provocatively, engage in flirtatious behaviours, and act on my sexual desires with the opposite sex. When I did this, I was labelled a slut, experienced low self-esteem, guilt, and shame. In order to make myself feel good by gaining attraction from the opposite sex, I continued to engage in those behaviours, thus continuing to experience the negative repercussions within a vicious cycle. With a broader knowledge on the subject of sexual double standards, I have been able to process and understand why I had some of the negative experiences, feelings, and difficulties. This increased knowledge also made me aware that I am not alone in my experiences.

“Throughout U.S. culture, and particularly in mainstream media, women and girls are depicted in a sexualized manner” (Zurbriggen et al., 2007, p. 5). In this culture, where television, music, advertisement, and other media portray girls and women in this way, sexual double standards have arisen. Women are discouraged from being sexually active, while men are encouraged to be sexually active: “so she gets called a slag and a slut – what
happens if it’s the guy that’s [being sexually promiscuous]? He’s a stud” (Jackson & Cram, 2003, p. 117).

I know many women who have felt marginalized for wanting to be sexually active without a relationship. The Madonna-whore dichotomy, described by Jackson and Cram (2003) as legitimatizing sexual activity within committed relationships, negatively labels the same sexual activity when it occurs outside relationships. This has been explained as the bad girl versus good girl dilemma that occurs because women are exposed to contradictory messages (Connell, 2005; Katz & Farrow, 2000). It is reinforced by society, which expects women to uphold a good girl image by looking desirable yet innocent (Tolman, 2002).

Media images teach girls and young women that “all they have to offer is their body and face and that they should expend all their effort on physical appearance” (Zurbriggen et al., 2007, p. 28). In fact, teen girls are encouraged to look sexy; however, due to their youth, they do not understand what sexual desire is (Zurbriggen et al.). I recall experiencing this in junior high school when societal pressures led me to wear make-up and provocative clothing without understanding the implications of this image. I continue to be shocked at seeing the young age at which girls are starting this similar process of appearing provocative.

Through this project, my wish is to shed light on and spread knowledge about sexual double standards while empowering girls and women to reconstruct the status quo regarding sexuality. I feel that this knowledge and empowering process can begin when girls and women enter a counselling setting.

In counselling, female clients could present with varying issues and problems, some of which may have resulted from the sexual double standard. Possible negative effects may impact cognitive functioning, physical health, mental health, sexuality, attitudes, and beliefs
(Zurbriggen et al., 2007). Welles (2005) insisted that professionals who work with girls need to have a greater awareness of how issues of sexuality affect their client’s well-being.

I fully agree with the idea for professionals to have a greater understanding of sexuality issues. In my personal experience, because he believed that I was too young to discuss sexuality, a counsellor I was working with did not want to discuss the impact of my sexual desire and the negative implications of sexual double standards I was experiencing. This created barriers in our therapeutic relationship and a lack of understanding of my experiences, which ultimately led to me discontinuing counselling and not working through the underlying causes of my difficulties. Based on my experience with the sexual double standard and my knowledge of feminist therapy, I hypothesize that if the principles of feminist therapy were used with women who presented with issues related to sexual double standards, these women would be able to place their issues within a sociocultural context that heavily influences these issues. They would become empowered, not only personally, but also on a broader scale to promote social change.

It is imperative that counsellors recognize when women are impacted by the sexual double standard. Furthermore, it is essential for counsellors to have a set of techniques to use to work through this issue with their clients; feminist therapy techniques seem to provide this. As result of the hypothesis that feminist therapy techniques could be applied to girls and women experiencing difficulties related to the sexual double standards, I created a final project, including a manual for practitioners guiding them in applying these techniques in the counselling setting.
CHAPTER II
Review of the Literature

Overview

This chapter summarizes the literature on feminist therapy and sexual double standards. The first section is dedicated to feminist therapy, including the history of feminism, principles of feminist therapy, and techniques of feminist therapy. The second section is dedicated to sexual double standards, including the sexualization of girls and women, studies completed, and the impact of sexual double standards on girls and women.

Feminist Therapy

History of Feminism

In order to understand feminist therapy, one must first look at feminism. Brown (2006) described feminism as the ability to think critically about how power in one’s life is filtered through facets of society and gender. I understand feminism as having gone through three waves and will use Enns’ (2004) succinct explanation of these waves.

The first wave arose in the mid-19th century when women made efforts to be granted the same rights as men. The driving force of feminism during this time was inequalities between men and women in areas of politics, education, the workplace, and healthcare. The main focus of first wave feminism was on legal inequalities, such as voting and property rights. The efforts of women through rallies, protests, and conventions, eventually secured women the right to vote in 1920. The oppression of women and stereotyped roles in the 1960s gave rise to the second wave of feminism. The focus here was on social activism and reforming existing legal and political systems that limited individual freedom. Organizations such as the National Organization for Women, literature written by feminists including Betty
Frieden and Gloria Steinem led to victories for feminists. These victories included the equal pay act, educational equality, freedom for women in family planning, and the illegalization of marital rape. During the second wave of feminism there were many minority women groups who were not incorporated into feminism. In the 1990s, a group of these young women who had not been previously included identified themselves as third-wave feminists. Feminism now encompasses all women, including women of color, non-heterosexual women, women of low-income, and women in developing worlds. Third-wave feminists still engage in social activism, but focus on consciousness changing rather than awareness. The focus of third wave feminism is on issues that currently impact women, such as sexual harassment, violence against women, sexuality and reproductive rights, and eating disorders. With an overview of the history of feminism, one can now look at feminist therapy.

Feminist therapies materialized from political and social consciousness, specifically from three aspects of the women's liberation movement: consciousness-raising groups, battered women's shelters, and the anti-rape movement (Evans, Kincade, Marbley, & Seem, 2005). These activities allowed women to criticize sexist views and discuss the impact of patriarchal forces on women’s development and experiences (Israeli & Santor, 2000). Feminist therapy is thus an extension of feminism that emerged after the civil rights and social change movements of the 1960s to meet the needs of women experiencing psychological distress by incorporating biological, social, and cultural causes of distress (Evans et al.; Israeli & Santor). At that time, traditional psychotherapies were viewed as non-supportive of women and even damaging to them, as the focus was on females adapting to a patriarchal society (Israeli & Santor). To date, no single person has been identified as the founder of feminist therapy, but there are several individuals whose work has contributed to
feminist therapy (Evans et al., 2005). Some of these key individuals identified by Evans et al. are Laura Brown, Carol Zerbe Enns, Judith Worell, Olivia Espin, Beverly Greene, Jean Baker Miller, Carol Gilligan, Paula Caplan, Lenore Walker, and Lynn Bravo Rosewater.

Feminist therapy is described as a theoretical framework rather than a defined set of therapeutic techniques (Rader & Gilbert, 2005). In fact, feminist therapy consists of a variety of techniques and is often integrated with other therapy orientations (Israeli & Santor, 2000).

The significant difference between feminist therapy and traditional therapies is the way in which the counsellor frames client issues. In feminist therapy, client issues are seen as enmeshed in their cultural and socio-political contexts, whereas in traditional therapies client issues are seen as personal (Evans et al., 2005). In essence, feminist therapy “owns and names the politics of realities affecting us all” (Brown, 2006, p. 17) and acknowledges that sex roles, female socialization, and living in a patriarchal society are often sources of psychological difficulty for women (Israeli & Santor, 2000).

**Principles of Feminist Therapy**

There are three principles that form the basis for feminist therapy and the nature of counselling; the personal is political, an emphasis on egalitarian relationships, and valuing of the feminist perspective (Sands, 1998). The techniques used in feminist therapy all support the personal is political worldview, emphasis on egalitarian relationships, and value the feminist perspective.

The personal is political principle assumes that placing client issues within their sociocultural context connects them to the broader political context that heavily influences individual issues (Cummings, 2000). A feminist therapist looks at all external contexts that could be influencing the client’s issues (e.g., socio-political, sexual orientation, socio-
economic status, and historical/cultural background) (Reynolds & Constantine, 2004). Feminists believe that many of the symptoms that women present with are an “ineffectual reaction against their oppressive existence” (Taylor, 1991, p. 101). When clients understand that “there is nothing inherently wrong” (Sands, 1998, p. 46), they are better able to make personal changes and changes in their environmental contexts.

The principle of egalitarian relationships implies that power differentials need to be minimized because counselling relationships should not reproduce the power imbalances that are found in society (Worell & Remer, 1992, 2003). In order to form a collaborative and egalitarian relationship, counsellors use humanistic approaches of empathic listening, unconditional support, respect, and self-disclosure (Sands, 1998). Counsellors use a power with model in which counsellors and clients work cooperatively together; this process of forming an egalitarian relationship is also known as decreasing the power differential (Cummings, 2000). With this collaborative stance, the client has an equal say, and everything is decided upon jointly by the client and counsellor (Hill & Ballou, 1998). The hope in forming a power with relationship is that the client can use this as a model for relationships outside the therapeutic setting (Cummings, 2000; Worell & Remer, 1992). Rader and Gilbert (2005) stated that an egalitarian relationship is viewed as a “corrective experience for clients who had been oppressed” (p. 432).

In valuing the feminist perspective, weaknesses are reconceptualized into strengths and negative deficits turned into positive advantages (Worell & Remer, 1992). Valuing the feminist perspective occurs through validating client feelings and responses and helps clients become empowered (Sands, 1998). Worell and Remer described how clients define themselves by trusting their unique life experiences. Hill and Ballou (1998) discussed how
feminist counsellors prioritize, honour, and validate the reality of clients. It is thought that when clients feel heard and experience empathy from their counsellor, they feel more satisfied and, with satisfaction, are likely to engage in the work of therapy (Brown, 2006).

Techniques of Feminist Therapy

Worrell and Remer (1992) explained that there are a wide variety of techniques used by feminist therapists to accomplish the goals of feminist therapy. I found that feminist literature focused on six of these techniques (Cummings, 2000; Israeli & Santor, 2000; Sands, 1998; Worell & Remer 1998, 2003). The six therapeutic techniques support the underlying principles of feminist therapy and empower women. They are demystification, gender-role analysis, power analysis, assertiveness training, consciousness-raising groups, and bibliotherapy. Gender-role analysis, power analysis, and consciousness-raising groups are unique to feminist therapy (Worell & Remer, 1998).

Feminist therapists believe that counselling should not be a mysterious process (Sands, 1998). When demystification is used, clients are given information about the therapeutic process and about the counsellor’s personal approach and orientation (Sands; Worell & Remer, 2003). Clients are also given tools for evaluating and monitoring the progress of therapy and are encouraged to ask questions about the therapy process (Sands; Worell & Remer). Providing information about counselling to the client helps form an egalitarian relationship and minimizes the power imbalance between counsellor and client (Sands; Worell & Remer, 1998).

Gender-role analysis may assist clients in identifying how societal expectations and structure, in terms of traditional gender arrangements, have influenced client issues (Worell & Remer, 2003). Cummings (2000) explained that examining gender roles gives clients
knowledge about how roles can conflict with expanding consciousness. For example a young woman who has grown up in a traditional gender role home where the mother stayed at home and the father worked, may have confusion when learning about how gender roles in the home can be exchanged. Gender-role analysis helps clients identify societal messages and self-statements that have been incorporated based on these messages (Sands, 1998). With this analysis, clients learn to identify the difference between male and female socialization and how this affects various issues (Worell & Remer, 1998). Clients examine their personal values, how these are reflected in self-expectations, and identify any explicit and implicit gender-role messages they have experienced and internalized (Israeli & Santor, 2000). A gender-role analysis helps clients identify areas for change and aids in self-knowledge (Israeli & Santor).

A tenet of feminist therapy is that women are socialized to be passive, which suggests a need for the technique of assertiveness training (Worell & Remer, 1998). Worell and Remer explained that women can develop assertiveness skills through behaviour training in which they can become “empowered to counteract patterns of helplessness and submissiveness” (Sands, 1998, p. 49). Clients learn how to be assertive, practice their newly acquired skills in the counselling setting, and transfer these skills to situations outside of the counselling setting.

Feminist therapy principles provide a model of empowerment; power analysis helps empower women to have an influence on the external sources that affect them (Worell & Remer, 1998). When clients learn to express the power differential between men and women, and recognize how others use personal and institutional power, it is labelled power analysis (Worell & Remer, 2003). The power analysis is performed in steps in which the counsellor
teaches the client about different kinds of power in society, how sex role messages affect women's use of power, and the differential access that women and men have to power (Sands, 1998). The power analysis is completed once the client can identify ways in which she can have influence on external sources (Sands).

For example, assume that a depressed female client and her counsellor are conducting a power analysis of the client’s work environment. The counsellor and client can examine the dynamics of her work setting, including the low representation of women in her field. The client may be encouraged to explore the thoughts, feelings, and behaviours that she has in response to her work environment. The counsellor then challenges the client to identify and modify her negative self-talk and self-blame regarding her failure to negotiate a promotion at work. The client is then encouraged to use her new perceptions to re-evaluate the situation and view herself in a more positive manner, which empowers her to change the representation of women at her work environment.

Consciousness-raising groups occur when women meet to discuss their lives (Worell & Remer, 1998). These groups began during the feminist revolution of the 1960s and became a mechanism for social change (Israeli & Santor, 2000). Although these groups are not led by counsellors (Israeli & Santor), counsellors may assist clients in finding a group to attend and may have knowledge of the power of consciousness-raising groups. Israeli and Santor discussed how consciousness-raising groups are similar to traditional group psychotherapies in using role models, sharing personal experiences, providing peer support, and instilling hope; the unique component of the consciousness-raising group is its focus on oppression and solutions for individual and social change. The counsellor may describe these components to a client who is exploring becoming part of a consciousness-raising group and
assist the client in identifying how she could benefit from the group. In addition, the counsellor can describe the importance of consciousness-raising groups in helping the client identify commonalities and how the personal is political through hearing the experiences of others (Worell & Remer). The counsellor may also explore how consciousness-raising groups, with the support of group members, help empower women to take action against oppression (Israeli & Santor).

_Bibliotherapy_ refers to when clients read books or articles that are relevant to their therapeutic issues (Worell & Remer, 1998). Worell and Remer explained that feminist bibliotherapy facilitates resocialization and learning life coping skills and, as clients gain more knowledge, helps reduce the power differential. Counsellors might give clients specific textual materials to read in addition to encouraging them to choose their own material. This may include material on assertiveness skills, gender roles, sexualization, women’s sexuality, depression, eating disorders, body image, and other books written by feminists. As clients read about other women’s experiences, struggles, and progress, they may gain hope in themselves and develop a sense that they are not alone in their struggles.

The feminist therapy techniques of demystification, gender-role analysis, assertiveness training, consciousness-raising groups, and bibliotherapy all aim to educate and empower female clients, and I feel they are important pieces both in counselling and in addressing sexual double standards. When clients gain education about sexual double standards and have a sense of empowerment, social change may begin.

_Sexual Double Standards_

_Sexualization of Girls and Women_
Grant, Finkelstein, and Lyons (2003) described how media portrayals of women are both sexualized and unrealistic. I see this every day on billboards, television, movies, music videos, and magazine advertisements. Women are dressed provocatively (sexualized) and have perfect bodies (unrealistic). Others also view this objectification of women on a daily basis. Welles (2005) explained that the sexual development of girls and women is challenged by the confusion surrounding being an object of sexual desire versus being a subject of sexual desire. She further explained that these fears of sexual objectification are “well-founded given the images of young women that dominate the media, increasing pressure for adolescent girls to meet the cultural standards of beauty” (Welles, p. 32). According to Welles, due to these pressures, young women are disconnected from their bodily sensations and desires, and instead of being subjects of sexual desire, are objects of sexual desire. Young women are often exposed to contradictory messages about sexuality, and these messages may promote negative and conflicting self-views (Katz & Farrow, 2000).

Jordan, as cited in Welles (2005), separated the understanding of sexual development of girls and boys during adolescence. During their teen years, boys gain sexual entitlement and power, but girls learn to use sexual accommodation and protection. An example of this is a young woman flirting with men enough to gain their interest and attention, yet ignoring advances of the men to avoid negative labelling, such as “easy” or “slut”. It is widely accepted and recognized that schools are pivotal organizations in providing sexuality education, but within sex education programs girls and boys receive different messages (Connell, 2005; Katz & Farrow, 2000). Connell explored the Ontario curriculum and companion course profiles for school-based sexuality education and found that the case studies within the curriculum illustrated gender-specific roles and expectations in intimate
relationships. Connell’s findings were that boys gain popularity with sexual experiences and girls only reluctantly agree to sex. This reinforces a conflicting message for girls and may contribute to the power of the sexual double standard.

*Description of Sexual Double Standards*

Baumeister and Twenge (2002) described the sexual double standard as a phenomenon that condemns sexual activities for women while permitting the same activities for men, thereby giving differential permissiveness to men and women. In current times, sexual activity is tolerated for both genders, but there are more restrictive circumstances for women (Hyde & Oliver, 2000). While men are allowed to be sexually active outside of monogamous relationships, women are only allowed to be sexually active within monogamous relationships.

For men, an active and desiring sexuality is positively regarded, but this quality of sexuality is denigrated and regulated by negative labelling in women, specifically by the use of the word *slut* and similar derogatory terms (Jackson & Cram, 2003). For women, there are negative implications of sexual activity by being labelled a slut; women who act on their sexual desire leave themselves open to getting a bad reputation (Tolman, 2002). Women themselves both paradoxically resist and accommodate the double standard by accepting the label of slut and then labelling themselves as well as others in this way (Allen, 2005). Based on my experience, I feel that this contributes heavily to the continuity of the sexual double standard.

Women are socialized to resist advances from men and not act on their sexual desire, as well as to be the arbitrators of sexual behaviour (Welsh, Rostesky, & Christin Kawaguchi, 2000). This is commonly seen in committed relationships, where women try to use sex as a
bargaining chip to obtain personal benefits. Women often internalize societal-based standards of morality and desirability; they then view themselves as having to be both sexually constrained, or moral, and sexually pleasing, or desirable (Katz & Farrow, 2000). Baumeister and Twenge (2002) acknowledged women’s internalization by stating that women are taught to avoid feeling sexual desire and to refrain from sexual behaviour. Women are often confused at the messages they are being sent, and this arises from living in a “culture that denigrates, suppresses, and heightens the dangers of girl’s sexuality” (Tolman, 2002, p. 327). Katz and Farrow stated that women internalize society’s standards of morality and desirability; they strive to be sexually attractive in terms of appearance and behaviour, but also to be submissive and resist sexual urges. The cultural message is that “boys are active agents and studs with an insatiable appetite for sex, while girls are passive, uninterested in sex and only submit to it under pressure” (Connell, 2005, p. 260).

Studies

Currently, there is no consistent evidence for the double standard (Marks & Fraley, 2005). Some research supports the double standard (Katz & Farrow, 2000; Tolman, 2002); other research does not (Edward, 1999; Marks & Fraley). Gentry (1998) explained that most studies have not provided strong evidence for sexual double standards, but there is strong anecdotal evidence for the presence of double standards. This section describes studies that have been done regarding sexual double standards.

Katz and Farrow (2000) used quantitative methods to determine the relationship between women’s self-views and their sexual and emotional adjustment. They found that discrepant self-views were associated with lower adjustment. This suggests that women are presented with conflicting views about their sexuality, which supports the double standard.
In opposition, Marks and Fraley (2005) suggested that there is no strong evidence of a double standard. In their two studies they found that participants reading vignettes about a target man or woman with equally negative and positive comments about the target’s sexuality did recall more information consistent with the sexual double standard than inconsistent with it. However, this was attributed to a confirmation bias, where people notice information that confirms the double standard and ignores or fail to notice information that refutes it, and was not evidence of a sexual double standard. Marks and Fraley studied the methodological limitations of past research and then conducted research that rectified these problems. They noted three limitations: the existence of demand characteristics, the presentation of sexual activity in a biased fashion, and not differentiating between attitudes and evaluations. Demand characteristics were described as participants coming in with preconceived notions and trying to answer questions consistently with what they think is the norm (Marks & Fraley). Many of the questions included in questionnaires or checklists included value-laden language, which implied that certain behaviour was abnormal or inappropriate. Finally, past research has not been successful in differentiating between attitudes and evaluations. Attitudes are the beliefs that a person holds, whereas evaluations are actual the judgments a person gives to someone or something (Marks & Fraley). It is important to recognize that attitudes can be independent of evaluations, thus making it imperative to look at each separately. Marks and Fraley’s study eliminated these methodological limitations by focusing on evaluations of specific targets, making sure their questions did not include biased language, and using a between-subjects design to reduce the effects of demand characteristics. The data from this research indicated that there was not a strong sexual double standard.
Gentry (1998) studied 254 undergraduates who were required to read different transcripts depicting either a monogamous sexual relationship or sexual relationships with multiple partners. After reading one of the transcripts, the participants rated the target character on seven-point semantic differential scales. The result of Gentry’s study did not provide evidence for the sexual double standard. In contrast to Gentry’s findings, Muehlenhard and Quackenbush, as cited in Haavio-Mannila and Kontula (2003), found that both female and male college students held the sexual double standard. Haavio-Mannila and Kontula studied six populations in Finnish samples, analyzing gender equality in sexual attitudes and sexual behaviour, and found that a sexual double standard prevailed. Sheeran, Spears, Abraham, and Abrams (1996) also found evidence of the sexual double standard through the use of questionnaires with 690 male and female respondents.

Katz and Farrow (2000) did not discuss the limitations of their study, whereas Marks and Fraley (2005) extensively discussed the limitations of their study. One limitation of the Marks and Fraley study is that the sample size was small, thus making the results not generalizable to the greater population. Another weakness was that this study relied only on quantitative methods to obtain results. In any research, results may be influenced by methodological choices, so relying only on one methodology would not produce the best information (Crawford & Popp, 2003). Gentry (1998) noted that almost all published studies of the sexual double standard have used quantitative methods that take away from the context of the judgments being made. The limitation here is that stimuli are evaluated as hypothetical or unknown targets and depicted in situations with minimal descriptions (Gentry).

It is commonly perceived that women are most affected by the double standard, but Edward (1999) claimed that both genders are equally influenced by this. Jackson and Cram
(2003) found that the women in their focus group did not see themselves as victims of the sexual double standard, but as women who were aware of the double standard and who had knowledge of how to negotiate this. Sheeran et al. (1996) also stated that there was no evidence of gender differences with the double standard. Since the issue of sexual double standards has traditionally been seen as affecting women more than men, most research has been done with women. The male sexual double standard is that men are permitted to have as many sexual partners as they desire and instead of negative repercussions, they gain positive reputations among their friends (Edward). It is imperative that both genders be studied (Edward). A great weakness of the majority of literature on the sexual double standard is that research has only been done using female participants (Andersen & Cyranowski, 1994; Jackson & Cram, 2003; Katz & Farrow, 2000; Tolman, 2002).

There are also discrepancies between research that states that women internalize the double standard (Katz & Farrow, 2000) and research that states that women perceive a double standard, but do not necessarily internalize or support it (Edward, 1999; Marks & Fraley, 2005). For example, Marks and Fraley stated that “women tend to hold sexual standards that are stricter than those of men, but do not necessarily apply those standards differently as a function of gender of the person being evaluated” (p. 1). From the opposite view, Katz and Farrow stated that women internalize society’s standards of morality and desirability in that they strive to be sexually attractive in terms of appearance and behaviour, but also strive to be submissive and resist sexual urges.

Using different experimental methodology has resulted in a discrepancy of results regarding the double standard. Crawford and Popp (2003) critiqued both experimental and qualitative studies to determine evidence for the double standard. They determined that less
than half (5 out of 11) of the experimental studies found evidence for the double standard, whereas the majority of the qualitative studies critiqued found evidence for the double standard. Thus, there is some conflict between which methodologies will reveal the most valid information about double standards. Edward (1999) pointed out that using different types of methodology enhances understanding of any topic; therefore, a strength of the studies done by Crawford and Popp was that they used different methodologies to enhance their knowledge of the double standard.

There is disagreement on the reasons why a sexual double standard would exist. Hyde and Oliver (2000) described two reasons for the existence of the double standard. The first is that people hold a permissive attitude for male promiscuity; the second is that people have are intolerant towards female promiscuity. They claimed that these two attitudes promote the sexual double standard. Baumeister and Twenge (2002) discussed two different theories. The first is a male control theory in which the political goals of men prevent women from having sexual power. The second is a female control theory in which women restrict the supply of sex to bring about better conditions and outcomes for themselves. According to Baumeister and Twenge, research supports the female control theory as the reason for the sexual double standard whereas Hyde and Oliver (2000) say that both genders are responsible. Baumeister and Twenge did not do specific research on the female control theory, but they were able to back up their reasoning with evidence from the literature. Hyde and Oliver used several studies to conduct a meta-analysis that supported their findings, but lacked a discussion on the limitations of their review.

Through my review of the literature I found that there are many areas of discrepancy with the sexual double standard. Research has not been able to provide consistent evidence
for or against a sexual double standard. Despite popular belief, research has suggested that men and women are equally impacted by the double standard. The methodologies used for research on this topic have given different outcomes, and there is conflict between which methodology will reveal the most information. If a sexual double standard does exist, there are different perspectives on why this is. I strongly feel, from my own personal experiences, that regardless of inconsistent evidence for the sexual double standard, this standard does exist and has a negative impact on girls and women. While I feel that empirical research on the sexual double standard is important and valuable, the results of research can not negate my personal experiences with the sexual double standard or those experiences of other women.

Impact on Girls and Women

The rigid and stereotyped gender roles that girls and women experience are thought to be detrimental to their development of sexuality (Welles, 2005). Sexualization influences the mental health of girls and women, resulting in heightened rates of depression, anxiety, and eating disorders (Grant et al., 2003). There is a struggle to create a healthy sexual identity within a society that sends mixed messages and creates fear and exploitation (Welles, 2005).

Sands (1998) explained that confusion and depression may result when societal pressure becomes overwhelming. In fact, starting at the age of 14, the ratio of women reporting symptoms of depression compared to men is two to one or higher, and the prevalence of depression among adolescent females increases with age (Sands). Other common dysfunctional behaviours that women and girls may experience as a result of the stress of the sexual double standard include eating disorders, anxiety, suicidal behaviour,
substance use and abuse, lowered self-expectations, and negative self-attitudes (Zurbriggen et al., 2007).

McCarthy and Bodnar (2005) discussed the impact of sexual double standards, not only for young girls and adolescents, but also for married women. They stated that the long-term effects are harmful for marriage and that the sexual double standard can promote a range of problems, including psychological, relational, sexual, and familial.

Grant et al. (2003) indicated that many women accept the status quo because of the gains that have been made and that women value the cultural ideas set for themselves; so, in a sense, women become their own oppressors. This can become a vicious cycle in which exposure to stressors contributes to psychological problems and these problems contribute to additional stressors. Looking at the sexual double standard, women may value the ideal to look sexy and may put pressure on themselves to reach this ideal, which may contribute to issues with self-esteem and lead to even greater pressure.

Katz and Farrow (2000) described sexual self-schema as cognitive representations of one’s sexual self. These schemas are associated with sexual attitudes and behaviours. Through the use of questionnaires and two studies, Katz and Farrow analyzed women’s sexual self-schema. They found discrepancies in sexual self-schema, such as having both strong negative and strong positive sexual self-views and differing ideal and real sexual self-views. These discrepancies were associated with poor sexual adjustment, emotional distress, sadness, dejection, and depression. This suggests that women are presented with conflicting views about their sexuality, which may lead to negative emotions.

Girls and women may experience many negative behaviours and issues as a result of the stress or pressure experienced by the sexual double standard. I feel that there is a need to
recognize this in a counselling setting and to treat the underlying reason as well as the presenting concerns.

**Summary**

This chapter reviewed literature on feminist therapy and sexual double standards. Feminism was described as looking at one’s life through the lenses of society and gender; this view paved the way for feminist therapy. Feminist therapy arose from the women’s liberation movement and is a theoretical framework that incorporates biological, social, and cultural aspects of psychological distress. Feminist principles, including the personal is political, egalitarian relationships, and validating the feminist perspective, provides an empowerment model for working with girls and women. Through the techniques of demystification, gender-role analysis, assertiveness training, consciousness-raising groups, and bibliotherapy, female clients become educated and empowered and these changes can be used to address the sexual double standard. A sexual double standard exists when sexual activities are condemned for women but permitted for men.

Research on the sexual double standard was described and, although findings are inconsistent for evidence of the sexual double standard, through my personal experiences I feel the sexual double standard exists and has a negative impact on girls and women. This may include mental health issues, sexual identity problems, and dysfunctional behaviours. The negative impact of the sexual double standard calls for procedures to address this in counselling, which provided the incentive for creating a practitioner manual.
CHAPTER III

Procedures

Overview

The creation of a practitioner manual was based on a comprehensive literature review of both quantitative and qualitative research articles, as well as some chosen books. This section describes the procedures used for both the literature review and the manual.

Process

Based on the recommendations of Leedy and Ormrod (2005), a thorough searching strategy and recording method was used. They suggested beginning by identifying keywords, or short phrases that summarize the search topic. Key terms used for the search included human females and sexuality, sexuality, sexualization, social change and sexuality, sexual morality, sexual attraction, social norms, self concept and sexuality, sexual standards, double standards, feminism, feminist therapy, and sexual desire. Online databases of PsycARTICLES, Psychology and Behavioral Sciences Collections, PsycINFO and Academic Search Premier were searched for reference material and sources. Leedy and Ormrod insisted that in conducting a search it is important to identify materials found by using some type of record keeping. The record-keeping system used consisted of an electronic database in Microsoft Excel that included the title and author of the item, database and keyword used for the search, and whether a copy of the item was obtained. Through the records, I found materials, reviewed them, and recorded the pertinent information (Leedy & Ormrod).

The World Wide Web was used, and web pages were evaluated for quality following the guidelines suggested in Barker (2005), who provided several questions to keep in mind when using the Internet. Looking at the URL address gave an indication as to whether the
web page was personal, corporate, educational, or another domain. Specific web pages were evaluated for credibility by looking at who wrote the content, the author’s credentials, the date, and possible implications of the material contained on the web page, while looking for documentation of information, links, and the publisher gave indications of quality. The main point was to “establish the validity, authorship, timeliness, and integrity of what [was found]” (Barker, ¶6). Both primary and secondary sources were examined, and the majority of the material used was current; research was considered to be current if written in 1990 or later.

I had a specific guideline for ending the research portion of the project; this guideline was taken from Leedy and Ormrod (2005), who stated that “when you are no longer encountering new viewpoints, then you may be reasonably sure that you are familiar with the critical parts of the literature” (p. 78). Once I reached this point, I analyzed the reference material and sources, including research papers, texts, and web pages, for both content and quality and wrote a literature review focusing on the sexual double standard and feminist therapy techniques.

Using the findings from the literature review, I integrated how feminist therapy principles could be used with women who are feeling impacted by the sexual double standard. This information was used to create the manual. The manual focused on the six techniques of feminist therapy and described how these could be used in counselling women impacted by sexual double standards.

Summary

This chapter provided details on the process used to conduct a literature review on feminist therapy and sexual double standards. The information gathered through the literature
review was used to create a practitioner manual integrating feminist therapy into counselling women presenting with issues relating to sexual double standards.
CHAPTER IV


Overview

In a counselling situation, female clients may present with varying issues and problems. It is possible that some of these issues, including impacts on cognitive functioning, physical health, mental health, sexuality, attitudes, and beliefs, may result from the sexual double standard (Zurbriggen et al., 2007). When men are socially rewarded for sexual activity, but women encounter negative social implications from sexual activity a sexual double standard is occurring (Marks & Fraley, 2005). This includes women feeling as though they are torn between wanting to be sexually desirable and active and needing to be moral and sexually inactive (Katz & Farrow, 2000). When a woman is labelled as a slut because of acting on her sexual desire, this is a result of the sexual double standard (Tolman, 2002). It is imperative that that professionals who work with girls have a greater awareness of how issues of sexuality affect their client’s well-being Welles (2005). Feminist therapy provides a model of empowerment for women (Israeli & Santor, 2000), as client issues are seen as enmeshed in their cultural and socio-political contexts rather than seen as personal (Evans et al., 2005). The three underlying principles that comprise feminist therapy include: the personal is political, an emphasis on egalitarian relationships, and valuing of the feminist perspective (Sands, 1998). The techniques used in feminist therapy all support the personal is political worldview, place an emphasis on egalitarian relationships, and value the feminist perspective. If these principles and techniques of feminist therapy were used with girls and women who presented with these issues and identified a connection with the sexual double standard, these women would be able to place their issues within the sociocultural context.
that heavily influences it. The women would become empowered, not only personally, but also on a broader scale to promote social change. It is imperative that counsellors recognize when women are impacted by the sexual double standard and it would be helpful for counsellors to have a set of techniques to use to work through this issue with their clients. The manual is intended to be a guideline showing practitioners how to use feminist therapy techniques to help clients overcome the negative effects of sexualization, including any double standards. The techniques of demystification, gender-role analysis, power analysis, assertiveness training, consciousness-raising groups, and bibliotherapy are described and examples and resources are provided.

**Demystification**

Demystification is important because it aids in forming an egalitarian relationship and minimizes the power imbalance between practitioner and client (Sands, 1998; Worell & Remer, 2003). This is a key factor when working with clients who are experiencing sexual double standards. When faced with the double standards, women are experiencing differences in what is socially acceptable for them and what is socially acceptable for men. If the client feels this inequality in therapy, it is likely that therapy will not be successful. It also reinforces the sexual double standard by allowing power imbalances.

Practitioners should begin a counselling session with the process of demystification. Here the practitioner would provide the client with information about the therapeutic process and about the counsellor’s personal approach and orientation, give the client tools for evaluating and monitoring the progress of therapy, and invite and encourage the client to ask questions about the therapy process (Sands, 1998; Worell & Remer, 2003). The more information clients have, the more they will feel like an equal.
**Example**

A brief example script of an initial counselling session illustrates the demystification process.

**Counsellor:** Hello, Jenny, and thank you for coming today.

**Client:** Hi.

**Counsellor:** Jenny, I thought we would start off today by me giving you some information about counselling and about myself, and throughout this time please let me know if you have any questions. Does this sound all right to you?

**Client:** Yes.

**Counsellor:** I identify closely with principles of feminist therapy. I believe that client issues are heavily impacted by societal messages and pressures, and therefore counselling and treatment need to address the messages that are being internalized, and goals need to be developed with this in mind. Do you have any questions about this?

**Client:** No.

**Counsellor:** We are going to work together on identifying how gender and power impact you and decide upon some goals that you would like to work towards. Throughout our time together I want you to think about where you are in terms of reaching your goals, whether you feel that I am treating you as an equal partner, and whether you are learning anything from our sessions. This will help you monitor the progress of your journey.
Client: So you aren’t going to tell me what to do?
Counsellor: No, Jenny, we are going to work together.
Client: That sounds good.

Resources

Worrell and Remer (1992) provided an excellent description and case examples of how to use demystification with clients. They also referred to a booklet entitled A Consumer’s Guide to Nonsexist Therapy (New York Chapter of the National Organization for Women, 1978), which educates clients about their rights and provides help in searching for a therapist. Sands (1998) and Worrell and Remer (2003) also provided descriptions of the process of demystification.

Gender-Role Analysis

Gender-role analysis looks at how client issues are influenced by societal expectations of traditional gender arrangements (Worell & Remer, 2003). That is, a gender-role analysis will help female clients see how traditional gender roles impact and influence sexual double standards. Clients will be able to identify societal messages that have been personally incorporated and how their personal values are reflected in self-expectations (Israeli & Santor, 2000; Sands, 1998). Once these are identified, clients will be more aware of how they internalize societal messages and how these internalized messages are influencing their presenting issues.

Practitioners should guide clients in identifying traditional gender roles to examine. Once these are identified, the practitioner can help the client identify societal messages and guide the client in examining how these and traditional gender roles influence sexual double standards and the individual issues associated with these standards.
Example

A brief example script of a counselling session looking at a traditional gender role that women are to be attractive and well groomed at all times illustrates the gender role analysis.

Counsellor: Hello, Jenny, in our last session we talked about gender role analysis. I thought that today we could work on a gender role analysis using the role that women are to be attractive and well groomed at all times. Is this something you are interested in doing?

Client: Yes.

Counsellor: Alright, Jenny I want you to think about your experience with this role. How did you learn about this rule?

Client: From the time I was a young girl my grandmother, mother and older sisters always told me that I needed to look like a lady when I was out in public. I had to have my hair curled and wear nice clothes.

Counsellor: It sounds like that rule was taught to you by the females in your family. How does this rule function for you currently?

Client: Well, I don’t really like to wear make-up and wearing a skirt makes me nervous, but I feel like I have to wear make-up and a skirt in order to fit in and be considered sexy by guys. On television shows, movies, and commercials all the women wear make-up and skirts.

Counsellor: Even though you do not like to wear make-up and skirts and you feel anxious when you do, you do it because you think this makes you sexy
and you feel like you need to be sexy because of the commercials you see on television.

Additional questions to ask may include: How did this rule impact you in the past?, and What is the message that is communicated by this rule? The practitioner can assist the client in separating herself from the role and societal messages and identify how these impact her current concerns.

**Resources**

Practitioners should have knowledge of traditional gender roles as well as socialization theories. Worrell and Remer (1992) described these well and suggested reading *Gender and Communication* by Pearson (1985). Laura Brown (1986, 1990) has written on gender-role analysis and her works described and explored components of this technique. Israeli and Santor (2000) and Sands (1998) also described gender-role analysis.

**Power Analysis**

A power analysis is important in working with clients who are experiencing distress related to sexual double standards because it helps empower clients to have an influence on the external sources that affect them (Worell & Remer, 1998). Through this process, clients learn to express the power differential between men and women and to recognize how others use personal and institutional power (Worell & Remer, 2003).

Practitioners should teach clients about different kinds of power in society, how sex role messages affect women's use of power, and the differential access that women and men have to power (Sands, 1998). Together, the practitioner and client can explore power differentials coming from external sources in the client’s life. When the client can identify
ways in which she can have influence on the external sources that are causing power differentials, the practitioner will know the power analysis is complete (Sands).

**Example**

A brief example script of a counselling session looking at the client’s work environment illustrates the power analysis.

**Counsellor:** Jenny we have been doing a power analysis on your work environment, how about we continue this?

**Client:** Ok, I remember that we were talking about how I was too scared to talk to my boss about a promotion because they have never given a promotion to a female before.

**Counsellor:** Yes, so that was a perfect example of a power differential where only males are given promotions in your work place. How can you have an influence on power differentials?

**Client:** Well I have already started educating the other females in my office about power barriers and differentials and have encouraged them to educate their family and friends. I know that I have more experience and education than other candidates for the promotion and I am going to highlight these things to my boss when I talk to him about giving me the promotion.

The practitioner would have first provided a description of power (i.e., that it is the ability to access resources in order to create change) and describe how an individual’s use of power depends on the ways that others exert power. The client was then asked: What are the different kinds of power that you experience?, How does being a female affect your use of
power?, What barriers do you come across in your use of power? and How can you increase your use of power? These questions would assist in the culmination of the power analysis that was illustrated in the example.

**Resources**


**Assertiveness Training**

Feminist therapists believe that women are socialized to be passive; therefore, there is a need for the use of assertiveness training (Worell & Remer, 1998). Assertiveness training is important when working with clients who have been impacted by the sexual double standard; through gaining assertiveness skills, these clients will be able to stand up for themselves, thereby counteracting helplessness and submissiveness.

Clients can develop assertiveness skills through behaviour training (Worell & Remer, 1998). These newly acquired skills can be practiced in the counselling setting and then transferred to situations outside of the counselling setting.

**Example**

Jenny and her counsellor explored how her mother’s comments about her dating multiple men were impairing the relationship between Jenny and her mother and they decided to work on assertiveness skills that Jenny could use when she was speaking with her mother. The following is an example of Jenny practicing, with her counsellor pretending to be her mother.
Mother: Jenny I can’t believe that you went out with Mike on Friday and Tim on Saturday. That’s not very ladylike behaviour.

Jenny: When you talk to me about my dating habits, I feel like you are treating me like a child and I feel angry towards you.

Mother: But Jenny, why do you have to act that way? You are disgracing me.

Jenny: Mom, I am an adult and I can make my own choices. I will not continue to listen to you talk about my dating.

The counsellor would praise Jenny for using assertiveness skills in this scenario and they would practice different scenarios. Jenny would be encouraged to use her skills when communicating with others outside of the counselling setting.

**Resources**

Jakubowski (1977) developed an assertiveness skills training program that may assist practitioners. Enns (2004) described traditional assertiveness training and adaptations for the use of assertiveness training in feminist therapy.

**Consciousness-Raising Groups**

In consciousness-raising groups, women meet to discuss their lives, share personal experiences, provide peer support, and instill hope in each other, with a focus on oppression and solutions for individual and social change (Israeli & Santor, 2000; Worell & Remer, 1998). Clients who have been affected by sexual double standards can benefit from consciousness-raising groups by identifying commonalities, learning about how others are impacted by sexual double standards, and becoming empowered to take action against the status quo of these standards.
Example

Typically, consciousness-raising groups are not led by professionals. Practitioners might notify their client of any groups going on and encourage the client to attend. The practitioner can help educate the client as to what components are involved in a consciousness-raising group: opening up, sharing, analyzing, and abstracting.

A brief script example of a counselling session illustrates how a practitioner can talk to their client about consciousness-raising groups:

Counsellor: Jenny, I’ve told you about the consciousness-raising group that meets every Monday, now I’d like to share with you what you can expect if you attend this group.

Client: That would be really great, the more prepared I am, the less nervous I will be.

Counsellor: The CR group will be like other group sessions where members will take turns sharing their stories and experiences with the support of group members. The unique component of the CR group is that members will then take these experiences and analyze how oppression has impacted them and what solutions can be used to counteract this oppression. You will be a benefit to the group because of the work you have done with power analysis during our sessions.

Resources

Enns (2004) described the history of consciousness-raising groups, the process of these groups, and the benefits of attending a group. Israeli and Santor (2000) and Worell and Remer (1998) also provided descriptions of consciousness-raising groups.
**Bibliotherapy**

With bibliotherapy, clients who have been impacted by sexual double standards can become resocialized, learn life-coping skills, and reduce power differentials in their lives (Worell & Remer, 1998). An important aspect of bibliotherapy is that clients have instilled hope and a sense that their experiences are shared with other women.

Practitioners can give clients specific items to read in addition to encouraging them to choose their own material or they can let clients choose their own material. The material chosen should be relevant to the sexual double standard, feminist therapy techniques, and/or the client’s own therapeutic issues.

**Example**

For a client who presents with an eating disorder and identifies that engaging in the associated behaviours helps her deal with being labelled a slut, the practitioner could assign material about eating disorders and sexualization. The material would then be discussed and explored to see how it has impacted the client.

A brief script example illustrates how bibliotherapy can be discussed with a client:

Counsellor: Jenny, I would like to talk to you about something called bibliotherapy. Have you heard of this before?

Client: No, but it sounds interesting.

Counsellor: Indeed it is interesting. Bibliotherapy is used often in counselling when clients are given books or material to read regarding their issue.

Client: My previous counsellor gave me some pamphlets to read on eating disorders, I didn’t know there was a name for that.
Counsellor: Yes, bibliotherapy will help you become more educated, feel empowered, and give you a sense of hope. I could give you a list of books and material that I think would be helpful to you and then we can talk about these and see what your thoughts and feelings on them were. I would also encourage you to find your own resources and share these with me.

**Resources**

The materials that can be used for bibliotherapy are numerous and are available in different formats (e.g., books, audiotapes, Braille books, pamphlets, and websites). Material can be found using the Internet, library, or book stores. When women are impacted by the sexual double standard, topics that may lend themselves to bibliotherapy include gender roles, stereotypes, sexualization, feminism, feminist therapy, eating disorders, depression, anxiety, suicide, substance use/abuse, self-esteem, and stress. Therefore, practitioners should have bibliotherapy materials covering a wide range of topics.

**Summary**

The practitioner manual described the feminist therapy techniques of demystification, gender-role analysis, power analysis, assertiveness training, consciousness-raising groups, and bibliotherapy. Explanations and examples were provided to show how these techniques could be used in a counselling setting to address the negative implications of sexual double standards impacting female clients. Resources for practitioners to seek out were also included.
CHAPTER V

Synthesis and Implications

Overview

This chapter discusses the implications and contributions of this project. Within this I explore how this project impacted me, both personally and professionally. I also discuss the impact this project might have on clients, professionals, males, and society as a whole.

Impact of Project

The literature review and manual were intended to inform my future counselling practice, competence, and knowledge, as well as to contribute to the feminist body of literature. The research done for the literature review has indeed contributed to my knowledge of feminist therapy and sexual double standards, as well as given me interest in areas of further research regarding the topics. Topics that I feel need to be addressed through empirical research using a variety of methodologies include impacts of sexual double standards on both genders, how double standards are internalized and influence decision making, changes in how the sexual double standard is presented in current society, and if and why sexual double standards exist. I feel that I have a stronger knowledge of the feminist therapy techniques that were focused on in this project and of the impact of sexual double standards on girls and women. With this knowledge and by using feminist therapy techniques I feel I will be able to assist female clients who have been impacted by the sexual double standard.

Thus far in the feminist body of literature, there has been little on the topic of using feminist therapy techniques with women impacted by sexual double standards, and I feel that this project has contributed this perspective to the body of literature. It will be necessary and
useful for this hypothesis to be tested through empirical research and determine the influence of using feminist therapy techniques with women impacted by sexual double standards. An area that was missing from this project was taking the feminist therapy techniques chosen and illustrating how these could be used within other theoretical orientations; this is an area that should be explored. For example, how do feminist therapy techniques such as demystification, assertiveness training, and bibliotherapy lend themselves to cognitive behavioural therapy, person-centered therapy, gestalt therapy, Adlerian psychotherapy, and other orientations? Another question to look at is whether the underlying principles of feminist therapy, the personal is political, valuing the feminist perspective, and egalitarian relationships, fit into the underlying principles of these other theoretical orientations. In exploring the use of feminist therapy techniques it would also be beneficial to explore the use of techniques from other theoretical orientations applied to women affected by the sexual double standard. For example, would behavioural techniques such as guided imagery, self-monitoring, and role-playing be useful in working through issues related to the sexual double standard? Along the same vein, would cognitive techniques such as decatastrophizing, redefining, and decentering, fit well with feminist techniques to help women address the negative impacts of the sexual double standard? There are many theoretical orientations, each with their own principles and techniques that need to be analyzed to see their relation and application to sexual double standards in a counselling milieu.

Potential benefactors of this final project and manual include counsellors and other mental health practitioners, educators, researchers, parents of youth, women, and men. This group of individuals will gain knowledge of the sexual double standard, how the sexual double standard negatively impacts females, and how feminist therapy techniques may assist
females impacted by the sexual double standard. Practitioners who may benefit from this project include psychologists, mental health therapists, counsellors, school/guidance counsellors, family counsellors, mediators, and life coaches. Practitioners will benefit greatly from the manual that provides examples and resources of how to apply feminist therapy techniques to the issue of the sexual double standard in a therapeutic milieu. Educators who may benefit from this project include professors, teachers, trainers, and University faculty. They will benefit from the increased knowledge regarding feminist therapy, sexual double standards, and how to apply feminist therapy techniques to sexual double standards. Researchers may benefit from this project by gaining knowledge in the areas that require further research. Parents of youth will become more knowledgeable in the struggles that girls and young women face, and the negative implications of the sexual double standard. Females who may feel pressure from the sexual double standard will benefit greatly from this project in that they will gain an increased awareness and possible motivation for social change actions. With the inclusion of my personal experiences females will know that they are not alone in their experiences and will gain an understanding of the pressures they face from the sexual double standard. Some of these females may be motivated to learn more about feminism, feminist therapy, and social change, and may join groups that contribute to highlighting and changing the status quo. As such, males will also benefit from the increased attention and sensitivity to the double standards that their spouses, sisters, daughters, and female friends are subjected to. Additionally, males may also gain awareness of the sexual double standard that they themselves are pressured by and work on changing their actions and beliefs. Males may benefit from this project in gaining knowledge about the sexual double standard, and may begin to think of the standards that they face. Indeed, society as a
whole will benefit from increased knowledge and awareness of the subject matter, which will in turn help to change society’s views on women’s sexuality and sexual double standards.

**Self Analysis**

As some time has passed from when I first started working on this project, I have been able to engage in some reflection and self analysis. I am proud of the uniqueness of this project; I was able to identify a gap in the literature where feminist therapy had not been applied to sexual double standards, and bridge this gap by applying chosen feminist therapy techniques to the sexual double standard impacting females. I do feel that the manual created from this project is a very practical tool that practitioners can use to assist them in addressing sexual double standards that are impacting their female clients. It is a tool that I myself hope to be able to use in my future counselling practice. An identified gap in my work is that I only focused on the impact of sexual double standards on females. Literature has identified that both females and males are impacted by the sexual double standard, yet my project narrowly focused on females only. A more thorough project would have included the impact of the sexual double standard on males and techniques that could be applied in a counselling milieu. With reflection on feminist therapy, it is my belief that this theoretical orientation is not exclusively for females but can be used in working with any client who is impacted by a socially constructed concept, namely the sexual double standard. Therefore, I feel that feminist therapy techniques can also be applied to males who are impacted by the sexual double standard.

Another area of weakness in my project is generalizability to cultures outside of North America. As my experience with the sexual double standard has been in North America, the literature focused on was also North American, therefore my hypothesis and
manual can only be applied in a North American context. I am unsure if sexual double standards are present in all cultures and if there are differences in the sexual double standard in other cultures. To widen the generalizability of this project, literature from other cultures could have been included. This is definitely an area that requires further research. Even though there are definite limitations of this project to other cultures, I do think that this project may benefit immigrants and those of non-dominant ethnicities living in North America. These individuals include females that may be affected or may eventually be affected by the sexual double standard, parents of these females, and males in the roles of brother, partner, or friend to those females. These individuals will benefit from an increased knowledge of the sexual double standard that is in North American society, the implications of this standard, and a possible method for addressing these issues professionally.

Specifically second generation female immigrants may benefit greatly from this project in providing them information and knowledge on the sexual double standard, that may assist them in communicating this information to their parents who have differing views on young women.

Some of my hopes in doing this project were that social change be created and that there is an increased awareness of sexual double standards. I think it would have been beneficial if there would have been a component of this project focused on early education of sexual double standards for young men and young women. This could be included in school curriculums as part of health and sex education. In providing teenagers with information on the sexual double standard, it may prompt them to think about how this is presented in their lives, how they are internalizing this, and how they can change their perception and actions related to the sexual double standard.
Summary

I hypothesized that it was imperative for counsellors to recognize when women are impacted by the sexual double standard and that feminist therapy techniques would provide counsellors with a set of interventions they could use to work through this issue with their clients. As a result of this hypothesis and literature review of feminist therapy and sexual double standards, I created a manual for practitioners to help them apply these techniques in the counselling setting. In embarking on this project I hoped to shed light on and spread awareness of sexual double standards, as well as to inform my knowledge and contribute to the literature; I feel that this project has accomplished these things.
References


