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**Self, Selves and Highly Sexual Women:
A Phenomenological Study of the Sexual Subjectivities and Discursive Environment
of Women who are Identified or Identify Themselves as Highly Sexual**

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Within sexology, the term 'sexual identity' is almost synonymous with the object or direction of desire, particularly gay identity. Strength of desire is an overlooked dimension in consideration of sexuality and is a dimension that can impact strongly on subjectivity and sense of self. My PhD research investigates how women who are highly sexual form a sense of self in a discursive environment that ostensibly promotes female sexuality while rendering those with high sexual drive, invisible, pathological and/or the object of contempt. Historically, women who express a strong interest in sex have been treated badly, and there is some evidence to suggest that their situation is still difficult. Derogatory terms such as 'slut' and 'whore' are still widely used to denigrate women who display an interest in sex. (Blumberg, 2000; Califia, 1994; Milhausen & Herold, 2001; Sprecher, McKinney, & Orbuch, 1987). Historically they have been ostracized and separated from their families (Cleckley, 1945), seen as compromising national integrity, and as undeserving of legal protection (Dozema, 2000; Groneman, 2000; Weijers, 1998). My study uses a phenomenological approach to explore constituent elements of the discursive environment, and how these impact on the subjective experience of women who identify as highly sexual.

Margaret O'Neill is a West Australian Psychologist who is in the final stages of a PhD in sociology and psychology. Using phenomenological methodology, she is investigating the impact of the discursive environment on women who are highly sexual. Margaret also coordinates Family and Community Support at the South Lake Ottey Centre. As well as sexology, her academic interests include social capital, indigenous community development and disability.