Dialogues of sexualities: An action research project

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By

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Abstract

Risky and abusive sexual behaviours, stemming largely from inequitable gendered norms, are a pervasive feature of the South African socio-sexual landscape. Literature shows that sexuality education programmes can be effective in reducing risky sexual practices, but South African school sexuality education has been shown to be largely inadequate. The question arises as to how to engage with high school learners about sexualities in meaningful ways. In an attempt to answer this, I implemented a dialogical sexuality action research project at a lower middle class urban high school. Freirian principles of critical consciousness and dialogical pedagogy were utilized, and these were infused with feminist post-structural understandings of a discursively constituted subject.

The initial consultative process started in 2012 with two projects at the school. Data from these projects, and a further consultation with the school principal, provided baseline information on the gendered norms and the sexuality education in the school. I then instituted a dialogical sexuality intervention with a group of Grade 10 learners, aiming to bring gendered and sexual norms to visibility, to trouble them (thereby promoting participants' critical consciousness around gendered norms), and to provide recognition for participants in a variety of subject positions. Ten sessions were conducted, with the focus of each session being planned by the group. The action research project attempted to promote understandings of the processes required to facilitate such aims.

The dialogical format of the group generated curiosity and engagement, and there were suggestions that some participants were taking up safe-sex messages in a reflexive manner. A partial normalisation of some 'hidden' aspects of sex, particularly around issues pertaining to female sexuality, was enabled, and critical consciousness around the gendered inequities in 'cheating' was promoted. However, abstinence was relatively silenced, and male same-sex remained heavily stigmatised. No substantial action component beyond the group meetings was generated. Participant feedback indicated that they placed great value on the dialogical processes in the group, and that they enjoyed being able to talk about sexual and other personal aspects of their lives. I theorise that the value of the group was in the recognition that participants received as they were positioned in a variety of subject positions. Whilst dialogue was shown to be extremely valuable, there were suggestions that other, non-dialogical modes of recognition were also needed by participants.

The action research cycle will continue with feedback to the school and Department of Basic Education, with possibilities for future interventions. Recommendations for future sexuality interventions are provided.

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Chapter 1: Introduction and context

Introduction

Inequitable sexual relationships, gender based violence, and coercive sex are pervasive features of the current socio-sexual landscape in South Africa, particularly in contexts of impoverishment (Bhana, 2012; Wood & Jewkes, 1997). Bhana (2012) shows how gender based violence, and the threat thereof, is used by men to suppress perceived gender insubordination by women, and to maintain gendered power. Positive associations between HIV infection and gendered power inequities have also been highlighted in the literature (Dunkle et al, 2004; Jewkes, Dunkle, Nduna & Shai, 2010; Jewkes & Morrell, 2010). Jewkes and Morrell (2010) trace how certain ideals of masculinity and femininity (namely, males who are tough, in control of women, and hyper-sexual, and females who are compliant, tolerate male control, and are desirable to men) undergird sexually inequitable and abusive behaviour, and they argue that "sexual practices are rooted in and *flow from* (although not always in a consistent and linear way) gender identities" (Jewkes & Morrell, 2010, p. 7, original emphasis). With this understanding, gender transformative sexuality programmes targeting young people are increasingly being heralded as a critical public health intervention (Kirby, 2011; Jewkes, 2010). `

The most widely implemented intervention with young people regarding sexuality and gender in South Africa is through the gender and sexuality modules of the compulsory school subject, Life Orientation (LO). These modules aim to raise awareness around gender roles and to guide learners' "decision-making regarding sexuality." (Department of Basic Education, 2012, p. 11). However, emerging research into these modules highlights many shortcomings, particularly in disadvantaged settings. General shortcomings in the schooling system which mitigates against positive learning outcomes during LO include extremely large class sizes (Rooth, 2005), gender inequitable school cultures (Bhana, 2012), high levels of learner and educator absenteeism, and school violence (Harrison, Newell, Imrie, & Hoddinott, 2010). Specific concerns around the LO sexuality modules include inadequate curricula (UNESCO & UNFPA, 2012), poorly trained LO teachers (Ahmed, Flisher, Mathews, Mukoma, & Jansen, 2009; Francis, 2011), and didactic, non-interactive teaching styles which are not conducive to enhancing a positive sexual subjectivity (Jearey-Graham & Macleod, 2015; Rooth, 2005).

With regard to teaching styles during LO, authors are increasingly recognising that interventions that aim to promote respectful, ethical and safe sexual behaviours amongst young people need to be conducted in a participatory, dialogical manner, with an emphasis on enhancing communicative and

critical thinking skills (Harrison et al, 2010; Jewkes, 2010; Kirby, 2011). Harrison et al (2010), therefore, suggest that school-based sexuality education in South Africa may be enhanced if delivered in a group format (as opposed to a class format) and by personnel other than teachers. These authors also claim that "(t)he development of interventions specific to the South African context is an urgent research priority" (p. 2).

In response to these calls, an action research project involving a pilot sexuality intervention programme was conducted with a group of learners in a lower middle class high school. The aims of the intervention were: to bring taken-for-granted sexual/gendered norms to visibility; to foster critical discussion around such norms; and to provide recognition for participants in a variety of subject positions. The research project attempted to promote understandings of the processes required to facilitate such aims, in order to inform the development of sexuality education programmes.

This chapter provides an overview of the sexual and gendered context of South Africa, followed by an introduction to sexuality education. It moves on to discuss action research and associated principles of dialogical pedagogy, as well as feminist post-structuralism, which are the orientations upon which this enquiry is based. The chapter ends with a description of the chapters to follow.

1. Gendered/sexual context of South Africa

The new South African constitution, instituted after the first democratic elections in 1994, is one of the most progressive constitutions in the world in terms of legislating for gender equality, women's rights, and non-discrimination against sexual minorities. However, whilst some gains have been made over the last 20 years in the structural provision for such rights, such as the rolling out of termination-of-pregnancy clinics and the provision of comprehensive sexuality and gender education in schools, the quality of such provisions is often poor. Furthermore, transgressors of legislation, such as sexual offenders, perpetrators of hate crimes against sexual minorities, and defaulters on child maintenance payments, are often not prosecuted.

Two overarching and related issues dominate the South African gendered and sexual landscape. The first is the HIV pandemic and the sexual behaviours that increase risk for HIV sero-conversion, and the second is the extremely high burden of gender based violence and coercive sex that South Africa carries, shown to arise out of inequitable gendered norms.

1.1. The HIV pandemic and associated behavioural risk factors

Prevalence rates of HIV in the South African population are estimated to be between 12.2% (Shisana et al, 2014) and 16.9% (UNAIDS, 2009), which gives South Africa the highest HIV burden in the world. There has been an encouraging decline in new infections in women aged 15 to 24 between 2000 and 2012, but this population still has the highest incidence of new HIV infections per year in South Africa (Johnson, Hallett, Rehle, & Dorrington, 2012; Shisana et al, 2014; Rehle et al, 2010). The South African National HIV Prevalence, Incidence and Behaviour Survey, 2012 (Shisana et al, 2014) reports that almost a quarter of all new HIV infections occurred in young women aged 15 to 24 years during 2012. The recent widespread roll-out of antiretroviral treatment (ART) for people infected with HIV was expected to significantly reduce the rate of new infections, given that effective ART can reduce transmission rates by over 90% (Granich et al, 2012), but Shisana et al (2014) have identified a recent disturbing trend of increased HIV-risk behaviour, which may offset the beneficial impact of ART coverage on HIV incidence.

The HIV pandemic has stimulated a great deal of research into sexual behaviours that increase risk for HIV sero-conversion. Shisana et al (2014) identify the behavioural risk factors for contracting HIV to be, *inter alia*: sexual debut before the age of 15, age-disparate relationships amongst adolescents, multiple sexual partners, and inadequate condom usage.

The South African Demographic and Health Survey (SADHS) of 2003 (Department of Health, 2007) indicated that the number of young people (aged 15 – 24) reporting that they had their first sexual intercourse by the age of 15 was 12% of males and 6% of females nationally. Results from later surveys have been discouraging: Shisana et al (2014), reporting on 2012 survey results for sexual debut *before* the age 15, give figures of 16.7% for males and 5% for females nationally. A study by Chiranda, Peltzer, Ramlagan and Louw (2012), conducted across the Eastern Cape, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga, indicated that the percentages of sexually experienced young people aged 18 – 24 reporting sexual debut before the age of 15 were 17.8% for males and 6.9% for females. These figures are similar to national figures of 18% of men and 8% of women reporting first sex before the age of 15, given by Pettifor, O'Brian, MacPhail, Miller, and Rees (2009). Shisana et al (2014) report that, whilst figures from their four surveys (conducted between 2002 and 2012) for early sexual debut amongst females has remained stable at around 5%, rates for males dropped slightly between 2002 and 2008, but then increased significantly in 2012. In both the Department of Health survey and Shisana et al's survey, the figures for early sexual debut for the Eastern Cape were almost double the national levels. Levels of education for women played a role, with the highest levels of early sexual debut being amongst the least educated women (Department of Health, 2007).

Another HIV risk factor that has been identified is age-disparate relationships, in which the age gap between sexual partners is five or more years (Shisana et al, 2014). In the 15 to 19 year age group, 33.6% of women and 4.1% of men reported age-disparate relationships, and these figures have been increasing steadily since 2005 (Shisana et al, 2014).

The Department of Health (2007) record the following figures for people reporting two or more sexual partners within the last year: 3% of women and 8% of men aged 15 – 19 years, and 4% of women and 24% of men aged 20 – 24 years. Shisana et al (2014) report aggregated figures for people in the age group 15 – 24 years, and their figures stand at 8.2% of women and 37.5% of men in the 2012 survey. A worrying trend reported by Shisana et al is a steady increase in multiple sexual partners amongst men in the 15 – 24 year age group, with figures rising from 23% in 2002 to 37.5% in 2012. Figures were stable amongst their female counterparts. The Eastern Cape was again one of the provinces with the highest number of women and men reporting more than one sexual partner in the last year (Department of Health, 2007; Shisana et al, 2014). Unlike with the other indicators, higher education levels this time corresponded with increased numbers of partners for both women and men (Department of Health, 2007).

Regarding condom use, national figures recorded by the last SADHS for condom use at last sex amongst young unmarried people stood at 53% for women and 75% for men, although figures for the Eastern Cape indicated that only 38% of unmarried sexually active women used condoms (Department of Health, 2007). Education again had an effect, with rising percentages of condom usage with increasing levels of education for both women and men. Shisana et al's (2014) figures indicated that, amongst people aged 15 – 24, 49.8% of women and 67.5% of men used a condom at last sex, and these figures show a significant decline compared to figures from their 2008 survey.

In looking at overall trends, the SADHS surveys indicated improvements in women's condom use between the 1998 and 2003 surveys but barely any change in the figures for early sexual debut and multiple sexual partners (Department of Health, 2007). The HSRC report (Shisana et al, 2014) which looked at trends across their four national surveys between 2002 and 2012, indicated declines in condom use for both men and women, increases in multiple sexual partners and early sexual debut for men, and increases in age-disparate relationships for both men and women (Shisana et al, 2014). These results are concerning, and the authors point out that "the focus of the country's HIV response has shifted more towards antiretroviral treatment and implementation of biomedical prevention strategies … (while) social and behavioural interventions have fallen largely by the wayside." (Shisana et al, 2014, p. 107). This shift may have contributed to the worrying increases in risky sexual behaviour. The authors also theorise that the knowledge that HIV is no longer the

terminal disease that it once was may be leading to 'risk compensation', where there is "an increase in risky behaviour in response to the wider availability of antiretroviral treatment." (Shisana et al, 2014, p. xlii).

1.2. Gender based violence and coercive sex

Related to the high HIV prevalence, South Africa carries an extremely high burden of gender based violence and coercive sex (Bhana, 2012; Dunkle et al, 2004; Wood & Jewkes, 1997). Bhana (2012) reports that one in four South African women will be beaten by her domestic partner, and one in three will be raped in her lifetime. Abrahams, Jewkes, Hoffman and Laubsher (2004) surveyed 1368 men working in Cape Town municipalities and found that 15.3% of them reported perpetuating sexual violence against intimate partners in the last 10 years. The authors found that intimate partner violence was associated with relational conflicts over male sexual entitlement and domination, which highlights the treacherous nature of abusive gender norms. Jewkes and Morrell (2010) report even more alarming statistics: they claim that "(i)n interviews, 42% of men disclose perpetration of intimate partner violence and 28% disclose rape of a woman or girl." (p. 2). In addition to the high psycho-social costs of such abuse (such as PTSD, increased substance abuse, promiscuity, and repeated victimization (Jewkes & Christofides, 2008)), intimate partner violence and sexual coercion within relationships has been shown to be a high risk indicator for HIV sero-conversion (Dunkle et al, 2004; Jewkes & Morrell, 2010).

There is a growing recognition of the role of patriarchal and unequal gendered norms in fostering non-consensual and coercive sex, intimate partner violence, and risky sexual practices, particularly in contexts of impoverishment (Bhana, 2012; Campbell & MacPhail, 2002; Dunkle et al, 2004, Jewkes & Morrell, 2010; Wood, Lambert & Jewkes, 2007). Thus, interventions aimed at addressing inequitable and risky sexual practices need to make the targeting of inequitable gendered norms a priority (Kirby, 2011; Jewkes, 2010). In response to this perceived sexual crisis in South Africa, both state and private bodies have attempted to intervene in the form of sexuality education programmes targeting young people.

2. Sexuality education

The concept of 'sexuality education' arose in the United States in the early part of the last century in response to two linked phenomena. Firstly, health professionals began to recognise the pervasive negative health effects of venereal diseases, and secondly, there was growing discontent in some quarters at the 'double standards' that were applied to male and female sexuality, whereby it was deemed healthy and normal for a man to have many sexual partners, whereas similar behaviour by a woman was considered shocking and immoral (Luker, 2006). Luker (2006) identifies this latter

phenomenon as the first sexual revolution. Reformers and health professionals tried to intervene in the form of various kinds of sexuality education (Luker, 2006), with other developed nations gradually following suit. Sexuality education in schools has now become almost universal across the Western world (Luker, 2006), although the extent and quality of such education is highly variable according to localised contexts and socio-demographic factors (Lindberg & Maddow-Zimmet, 2012).

In the United States, school sexuality education has become a central battle ground over the last 30 years within the culture wars between liberal and conservative interests, with conservative groups wanting programmes that only promote sexual abstinence, while liberal approaches favour comprehensive programmes which discuss a range of sexual options and contraceptive methods (Connell & Elliott, 2009; Luker, 2006). Most studies now show that well designed comprehensive programmes deliver better outcomes than abstinence-only programmes in terms of reducing unwanted pregnancies and STI's, and that comprehensive programmes do not lower the age of sexual initiation, as feared by conservatives (Kirby, 2011; Kohler, Manhart & Lafferty, 2008).

In South Africa, formal sex education in schools was frowned upon by the Apartheid government, although a non-examinable subject called Guidance, in which students may have been informally introduced to sexuality education, was introduced in 1967 in White schools and 1981 in Black schools (Macleod, 2011). The change of government in 1994 led to sweeping educational reforms, including the introduction of a compulsory subject, Life Orientation (LO), which includes comprehensive sexuality education modules (Francis, 2011; Macleod, 2011; Mukoma & Flisher, 2008). Topics in these modules address STI's, unwanted pregnancies, gender inequality, power relations, and decision-making regarding sexuality (Department of Basic Education, 2012).

As well as school based sexuality education, other forms of sexuality interventions, initiated by both governmental and non-governmental agencies, also began to be introduced throughout the 1990's in response to the HIV pandemic. Initially, few interventions (school based or otherwise) were based on theory and evidence, and even fewer were rigorously evaluated (Aarø et al, 2006). Interventions tended to focus on the dissemination of sexual health information, based on the view that sexual behaviour arose from individual decisions (Campbell & MacPhail, 2002). The evaluations that were conducted on these early sexuality interventions suggested that whilst some were able to increase knowledge of sexuality and HIV infection, and improve attitudes towards condom use, very few effected a reduction of sexually risky behaviours (Aarø et al, 2006; Mukoma & Flisher, 2008; Paul-Ebhohimhem, Poobalan & van Teijlingen, 2008). However, there has been growing recognition that sexuality is "a socially negotiated phenomenon" (Campbell & MacPhail, 2002, p. 332), and this conceptual shift has resulted in an increased emphasis on participatory approaches to sexuality

interventions (Campbell & MacPhail, 2002). The last ten years have seen an increase in the number and quality of evaluations of sexuality interventions, with some modest evidence of success. These evaluations will be discussed in the next chapter.

3. Action research, feminist post-structuralism, and dialogical pedagogy: The orientation of this study

This research is underpinned by principles of action research, and it draws off associated ideas of dialogical pedagogy, infused with a feminist post-structuralist orientation. Action research is the research style of choice when the goal of the research is to influence practice development (Meyer, 2000), and it is characterised by its "participatory character…; its democratic impulse; and its simultaneous contribution to social science and social change" (Meyer, 2000, p. 178). It focuses on both the process and the outcome of action (Meyer, 2000), and it involves iterative cycles of consultation with stakeholders, implementation of some form of social action or change, and investigation of the implementation at the same time. It is deeply consultative and collaborative in nature, being founded on principles of egalitarianism, and, as a research orientation, it arose out of social change movements and attempts to marry academic investigation with practical, solution orientated interventions (Kagan, Burton and Siddiquee, 2008; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). It is not a specific research method but rather an orientation or style of research, drawing on any number of appropriate data gathering and analytical procedures (Kagan et al, 2008; Meyer, 2000).

Theoretically, I drew off two complementary lenses: feminist post-structuralism and Paulo Friere's theories of critical consciousness and dialogical pedagogy. Feminist post-structuralism takes a broadly social constructionist approach to understanding social realities, and views knowledge, subjectivities, and gendered identities to be constructed through discursive activity (Cromby & Nightingale, 1999; Davies & Gannon, 2005). Discursive activity is the process of creating and assigning meaning through the uptake of pre-established systems of meaning, or discourses. With repeated uptake, certain meaning systems become normative. These normative meaning systems, or norms, generally operate implicitly (Butler, 2004), creating the impression that the knowledge they construct is 'the way things really are'. Feminist post-structuralism is an orientation that attempts to deconstruct the gendered norms that govern gendered behaviours and identities, and to bring them to visibility, thereby enabling critique and change.

Regarding subjectivities, this project draws off synthetic discursive understandings which view subjectivities as an ensemble of subject positions, which are both 'conferred' by available discursive resources, and also agentively taken up or resisted by individual subjects through interactions with others. In order for a subject to be reflexive about the different positions she occupies, and critique some of her constituting discourses, she needs to be recognised by another as occupying that

position. This concept of recognition is important, as it was the aspect of the intervention that participants appeared to find most beneficial.

Whilst feminist post-structuralism provided rich theories on which to base my research, it did not speak to practical ways of promoting critique of gendered norms, and for this reason, Freire's (1993/1970; 2003/1973) seminal writings on critical consciousness and dialogical pedagogy were consulted. Freire's notion of critical consciousness refers to the intellectual capacity to understand and critique the social conditions and implicit structures of inequality which promote one's own and others' disadvantage. Freire believed that such a consciousness cannot develop outside of dialogical processes of engagement, and he developed a highly influential theory of dialogical pedagogy. Dialogical pedagogy postulates that true learning only occurs through dialogue, and dialogue can only occur on a basis of egalitarian and trusting relationships, where all participants are both learners and teachers who engage in mutual investigation of a problem or difficulty. Implicit in dialogue is the concept of recognition. True dialogue is predicated on recognition, as each member's knowledge base and subject positions are recognised as legitimate.

Critical consciousness and dialogical pedagogy are closely aligned with the impetus towards social change inherent in action research, and therefore this project embraced these notions as much as possible.

4. The chapters to follow

Following on from this introductory chapter, the second chapter takes an in-depth look at sexuality interventions with young people, both in South Africa and in other developing and developed countries. The chapter proceeds by reviewing two different types of evaluations of such interventions. The first type of evaluation takes a public health perspective by evaluating programmes according to specified behavioural indicators such as delayed sexual initiation, condom use and reduced number of sexual partners. Designs of such studies are generally experimental or quasi-experimental. Results indicate that sexuality education programmes can have significant positive effects, but the proviso is that they be well designed and well implemented. The second type of evaluation takes a critical discursive stance and examines four related critiques of many sexuality education programmes, namely: a primary emphasis on risk and avoidance of discourses of pleasure and desire; the pathologisation of teen pregnancy and parenting; a re-inscription of gendered and raced inequalities; and didactic and non-interactive teaching styles. These critiques and counter-balancing emphases infused my approach when engaging with the participants in my intervention.

The chapter then briefly discusses positive youth development programmes, which spend the bulk of their time attempting to enhance young peoples' general and emotional competencies and provide adult support, as opposed to focusing specifically on sexual and reproductive health. Programmes that led to a reduction in risky sexual behaviour were theorized to have been successful by giving youth the motivation to use safe-sex skills that they learnt in conventional sex education programmes. This is of relevance to this study, as feedback from participants indicated that they felt that they had grown particularly in the areas of emotional competence and self-knowledge.

The chapter ends by drawing out some suggestions from the above reviews for sexuality interventions, and indicates that the specific aspects that I focused on in the intervention arm of my research were: an initial consultative process; a dialogical group format that attempted to foster the development of critical thinking skills around gendered and sexual norms and practices; and activities designed to enhance emotional and relational competence.

The third chapter of this report discusses the theoretical and methodological approaches of the research. Two complementary theoretical lenses informed this action research, namely feminist post-structuralism and Freire's theories of critical consciousness and dialogical pedagogy. Whilst feminist post-structuralism provides rich theoretical resources for understanding gendered subjectivities within a socially constructed paradigm, Freire's writings give grounded practical wisdom on how to facilitate the development of critical consciousness, which is necessary to apprehend and resist gendered inequities and socially constructed means of oppression. Both theoretical approaches have, as their impetuses, the deconstruction of power.

From this literature and theoretical review, the following research questions were formulated, and these provide the fulcrum upon which this study rests. The overarching research question is:

In what ways did a dialogical sexuality intervention highlight gendered norms, foster critical consciousness around such norms through troubling them, and provide recognition to participants?

Specific questions were:

1. **What sexual and gendered discursive themes arose in the dialogical intervention?**
2. **How were the sexual/gendered norms embedded in these themes troubled or reinforced?**
3. **What did participation in the intervention mean for participants?**

The methodological approach to this study is action research, which dovetails in its orientation with Freirian principles of dialogical pedagogy, as well as the social constructionist paradigm of feminist

post-structuralism. Action research embraces both the implementation of social action, as well as research on the processes and outcomes of the implementation, thereby contributing to social change as well as social science. It must be noted that this project was constrained in its size and scope, and, whilst I attempted to follow action research principles as far as possible, there were limits in the extent to which these could be followed.

This action research commenced with a consultative process in 2012, when two projects were conducted at a local high school, which is the site of this project. Data from these projects gave insight into the gendered norms which were prevalent in the school, and the nature of the school's sexuality education. The principal of the school was consulted in 2014, and then an intervention was instituted at the start of 2015, consisting of a dialogical sexuality discussion group with a group of Grade 10 learners. Sessions were held weekly through the first school term of the year. Analysis of data from both 2012 and 2015 consisted of descriptive, process, and discursive thematic analyses. The action research cycle will continue next year with feedback and follow up interviews with the participants, feedback to the Eastern Cape Department of Basic Education, and a proposed workshop with the school educators.

Chapter four commences with a brief descriptive thematic analysis of pertinent data gathered in 2012. This provided a baseline upon which to base the intervention. The chapter moves on to present a discursive thematic analysis of the gendered themes which were prevalent in the group talk. Three dominant themes emerged, around the physicality of sex, the relationality of sex, and same-sex desire and sex. Participants were heavily invested in talking about the physical aspects of sexuality, such as its dangers and pleasures, and were curious about issues that they knew less about, particularly factors pertaining to female sexuality such as arousal, masturbation and female condoms. 'Cheating' likewise emerged as a topic of high discursive investment, and, due to one member talking about her same-sex desires, female same-sex was also thoroughly discussed. There were suggestions that critical consciousness was promoted around the validity of female sexuality, female desire, and female same-sex, and also around safe sex, and some inequitable gendered norms. However, there was evidence that abstinence was a relatively silenced discourse in the peer context of the group, and male same-sex was vehemently positioned as abnormal and deviant.

Chapter five presents a dialogical processes thematic analysis, and also a descriptive thematic analysis as I examine the dialogical processes that occurred in the group, participant feedback, and my own reflections on running the group. I show how participants greatly valued the opportunity to talk, both about sex and about other personal aspects of their lives, in a trustworthy environment. I argue that, through this dialogical process and also structural aspects of the group, they gained

recognition in their varying subject positions, and that this recognition enhances their reflexive ability and positions them positively. These aspects have been shown to be protective of sexual and reproductive health. However, there were limits to the fruitfulness of dialogue, and I suggest that dialogical activities need to be complemented with non-dialogical activities to provide further avenues of recognition to participants.

Freire's concept of critical consciousness involves both reflection and action on the underlying power dynamics of social inequities, and I had hoped that the intervention would generate some form of wider action within the school to challenge gendered norms. However, this was not achieved, and I reflect on possible reasons for this in Chapter 5.

The final chapter reviews the rationale for the study and the theoretical and methodological approaches before providing an integrative evaluation of the intervention and suggestions for future sexuality interventions. As well as discussing the great value of the dialogical approach through the recognition that it provided to participants, the integrative evaluation highlights how curiosity about sexual matters was generated through the dialogical approach, which appears to have led to enhanced learning and reflexive uptake of safe-sex messages by some participants. The dialogical intervention was able to challenge some gendered norms and promote critical awareness around some gendered inequities, but it was unable to successfully trouble the denigration of male same-sex. This suggests that, at times, outside resources may need to be introduced into dialogical groups to assist with troubling entrenched gendered norms. Furthermore, abstinence was a relatively 'silenced' discourse, although there was evidence from written feedback that it is important for some participants. This shows how facilitators of dialogical sexuality interventions need to be alert to silenced discourses, and introduce such discourses in a deliberate manner. There was also a limit to how much recognition the dialogical approach could provide, and I suggest that the best outcomes may be achieved if a dialogical intervention is combined with a non-dialogical one. I conclude the chapter with reflections on the strengths and limitations of this research, and with suggestions for how to continue this action research cycle.

Chapter 2: Sexuality Interventions

Introduction

Sexuality interventions have been evaluated from two different vantage points in the literature. Firstly, a public health perspective evaluates the efficacy of interventions according to whether changes have occurred in behavioural indices of safe sex, and study designs are often experimental or quasi-experimental, involving control groups and/or pre- and post-test measures, generally via self-report questionnaires. Results of these studies indicate that well designed and well implemented sexuality education programmes can deliver significant, though modest, positive effects, and I will highlight the elements of the more successful programmes. The second perspective from which sexuality interventions have been evaluated is through a critical discursive lens, which foregrounds the unexamined assumptions that interventions tend to perpetuate.

Shifting from interventions that focus directly on sexual skills and knowledge, positive youth development (PYD) programmes focus on improving a general competency or skill of a young person, whilst simultaneously providing adult support, and attempting to strengthen community support for the youth. Some of these programmes are showing promising reductions in one or more sexual risk behaviours of participants.

The results and findings of these reviews are then drawn together to provide suggestions for effective sexuality interventions, and these suggestions informed the action/intervention that I conducted with my participants.

1. Efficacy of sex and sexuality interventions – a public health perspective

Review studies of sex and sexuality interventions[1] are showing significant, though modest, positive effects on targeted risk behaviours in programmes that are rigorously designed and implemented. Lindberg and Maddow-Zimmet (2012) analysed data from the American 2008 National Survey of Family Growth, and found that young people who reported receipt of sex education (both comprehensive[2] and abstinence-only) also reported healthier sexual behaviours and outcomes than those who had not received sex education.

[1] Sex interventions refer to those programmes that focus only on sexual behaviours and risk factors, such as timing of sexual initiation and safe sex practices. Sexuality interventions encompass broader issues as well, including factors pertaining to gender, power, communication and negotiation skills.

[2] Comprehensive sex education teaches a range of safe sex practices, including but not limited to abstinence.

Kirby, Laris and Rolleri (2005) reviewed 83 curriculum based sex education programmes which were instituted in both developed and developing countries. Their review specifically focused on programmes which targeted pregnancy or HIV/STI prevention behaviours (such as delayed initiation of sex, reduced number of sexual partners, and condom use), not on broader issues of sexuality such as gender roles, romantic relationships, or developmental stages. These authors found that two thirds of the studies had a significant positive impact on one or more of the targeted sexual behaviours. They conducted a content analysis of the curricula of 19 programmes that were clearly effective in positively impacting sexual behaviour, and they identified common characteristics of these programmes, clustered around the development, content and implementation of the curricula. Kirby (2011) updated this review to include 87 studies, with an increased proportion of studies from developing countries. Recommendations regarding curricula, given by Kirby et al (2005) and Kirby (2011) are discussed below:

Regarding curricula development, successful programmes were developed by multi-disciplinary teams (Kirby et al, 2005) with expertise in sexuality, behaviour change and educational/pedagogical theory (Kirby, 2011). These teams identified the relevant needs and strengths of the target groups, developed curricula targeting specific health goals, designed activities that were in line with community values and resources, and pilot-tested the programme (Kirby et al, 2005; Kirby, 2011). The curricula content attempted to create a safe environment with a focus on clear goals and specific behaviours that lead to these goals (Kirby et al, 2005; Kirby, 2011). Furthermore, the content "addressed psycho-social risk and protective factors, employed instructionally sound teaching methods that actively involved the participants and helped them personalise the information, employed appropriate activities and messages (for participants' culture, age, sexual experience), and covered topics in a logical sequence." (Kirby et al, 2005, p. 3). In terms of the implementation of the curricula, effective programmes commonly secured support from local authorities, utilised educators who were selected and trained in using appropriate pedagogical methods, and implemented the curricula with a high degree of fidelity (Kirby et al, 2005; Kirby, 2011).

Fonner, Armstrong, Kennedy, O'Reilly and Sweat (2014) reviewed 64 studies of sexuality interventions delivered in schools and colleges in low and middle income countries. Studies were published between 1990 and 2010. The review found that the interventions were effective for "generating HIV-related knowledge…, delaying sexual debut, increasing condom use, and decreasing numbers of sexual partners." (Fonner et al, 2014, p. 16). Several of the most effective interventions extended beyond the school environment by including community based components such as involving parents, teachers and others in the intervention development, training healthcare staff,

and distributing condoms. Effective interventions were also often based on curricula that were shown to be efficacious in other contexts.

These review studies indicate the potential for sexuality interventions to have risk-reducing effects on the sexual behaviours of young people, but the proviso is that the intervention be well designed and well implemented. Involvement of the wider community in the intervention tends to lead to better results.

In South Africa, there are two primary sources of sexuality education: programmes run by non-governmental organisations, either within schools or outside them; and the sexuality education modules of the school subject, Life Orientation (LO), which is compulsory in all schools. The following section will review studies in each of these areas.

1.1. Non-governmental youth sexuality interventions in South Africa

In systematically reviewing evaluations of non-governmental youth HIV prevention interventions, Harrison et al. (2010) found eight studies which met their inclusion criteria. Their criteria included: an experimental design (i.e. including a control or comparison group); a focus on behavioural change, not just attempts to improve sexual knowledge and attitudes; assessment of biological or behavioural outcomes; and available information on the curriculum, structure, and manner of implementing the intervention. They found that “effects on reported sexual risk behaviour or biological outcomes were limited.” (p.9). Nevertheless, they identified important features of the more successful programmes. They found that, as well as focusing directly on sexual risk and protective factors, these programmes included a structural approach that addressed at least one of the social/structural factors that underlies HIV risk. The programmes therefore addressed gender inequality, sexual coercion, alcohol use, or poverty, or they included the provision of alternative leisure time pursuits or the teaching of life skills such as numeracy to enhance success in other areas of life. Another important aspect of successful programmes was the adjustment of participants’ perceived social norms regarding sexual behaviour, achieved partly through collective group discussion and critical thinking. This review indicates the necessity of acknowledging and addressing wider structural and social issues that impact on sexual behaviour.

One of the studies included in Harrison et al’s (2010) review was Visser’s (2007) action research involving a peer education and support programme, implemented in the Tshwane area in 13 secondary schools. The programme identified, trained and supported peer educators to “provide accurate information about HIV/AIDS, discuss and reconsider peer group norms, and establish support for learners” (Visser, 2007, p. 678). The programme was evaluated qualitatively through

weekly reports and focus groups with peer educators and teachers, and quantitatively through the use of a quasi-experimental design. Results suggested that the intervention may have contributed to a delay in onset of sexual activity, but did not improve condom usage significantly. Perceived peer norms regarding sexual activity and alcohol use were not statistically different in the experimental group pre- and post-intervention, whereas they increased in the control group across time. This suggests that the programme had a positive impact on these perceived peer norms, which have been shown to have an impact on HIV risk behavior (Visser, 2007).

Regarding the programme implementation in Visser's (2007) study, there were differences between how actively the programme was implemented in participating schools, and some peer educators did not receive sufficient support from school authorities for their activities. Analysis suggests that better results were generally achieved in schools where the programme was implemented more actively (Visser, 2007). An analysis of the psychological well-being and personal control of learners in targeted schools showed no changes in either the experimental or control groups. However, evaluation of the school climate by learners in the control group dropped between the pre- and post-tests, whereas that of the experimental group learners remained unchanged. Visser (2007) therefore suggests that "the changes that occurred were not in personal variables, but on a social level." (p. 691).

Visser's (2007) study provides support for the notion that attempts to reduce sexual risk behaviour in adolescents need to target social factors such as school climate and peer norms around sexual behaviour. This is pertinent to this research, with its focus on the sexual norms within the participants' context.

Jemmot et al (2010) report on their study of an HIV/STD risk-reduction intervention with Grade six learners in a large township and neighbouring rural settlement in the Eastern Cape. It was a large, rigorously designed, cluster-randomized, and controlled study using self-report assessments collected before intervention and at three intervals up to a year after the intervention. The age range of the 1057 participants was 9 to 18 years, with a mean age of 12.4 years. Both the control and the HIV/STD risk-reduction interventions consisted of 12 one-hour modules, delivered to small, mixed sex groups by paired female and male, Xhosa speaking facilitators who had been rigorously trained. Comic workbooks were utilised as resources, and "were developed based on social cognitive theory, the theory of planned behaviour, and extensive formative research" (Jemmot et al, 2010, p. 924). Activities in both interventions were interactive, and included games, role-playing, brainstorming and discussions. The control intervention focused on general health promotion, while the HIV/STD risk-reduction intervention was designed to "(1) increase HIV/STD risk-reduction

knowledge, (2) enhance behavioural beliefs that support abstinence and condom use, and (3) increase skills and self-efficacy to negotiate abstinence and condom use and to use condoms." (Jemmot et al, 2010, p. 924). Additionally, homework tasks to complete with parents/caregivers were assigned in order to promote parent-child discussions of sexual matters.

Results of Jemmot et al's (2010) study showed that approximately 50% less participants in the HV/STD risk-reduction intervention than in the control intervention had unprotected vaginal intercourse and multiple sexual partners. However, sexual debut was not delayed in the experimental sample. Strengths of this intervention appeared to be the rigorous design, the well-educated and trained facilitators, the interactive activities and the delivery through small groups.

Overall, these studies indicate that in order to ensure positive results, sexuality interventions need to go beyond improving knowledge and attitudes, and to focus on sexual behaviour change. Ways of doing this include adjusting social norms around sex through promoting critical thinking skills and facilitating discussions, as well as involving the wider community such as parents and teachers in the intervention. A focus on at least one social or structural HIV risk/protective factor such as gender inequality, sexual coercion, alcohol use, poverty, school climate, leisure pursuits, or life skills such as numeracy or communicative skills has also been shown to enhance intervention outcomes. Finally, the studies highlighted the importance of interventions being rigorously designed and well implemented by trained facilitators who use interactive techniques.

These studies refer to the importance of targeting social norms around sex through enhancing critical thinking and facilitating discussions with facilitators who use interactive methods of engagement. In Freirian terms, this translates into promoting critical consciousness about sexual and gendered norms and inequities through dialogical pedagogy, which was the approach of this intervention. This intervention also enhanced communicative skills through its dialogical approach.

1.2. School sexuality education in South Africa

The most widely implemented sexuality intervention in South Africa is the sexuality education modules of the compulsory school subjects, Life Skills (LS) (taught from Grades R-6) and Life Orientation (LO) (taught from Grades 7-12) (Francis, 2010). Despite this, studies evaluating the effects of these modules are scant. Magnani, MacIntyre, Karim, Brown and Hutchinson (2005) collected data from KwaZulu-Natal schools in 1999 and 2001, looking at the effects of exposure to the LO education modules on youth aged 14 to 24. They found positive effects for condom use, but not for age of sexual initiation, secondary abstinence, or partnering behaviour. Rooth (2005) investigated the status and practice of the LO subject as a whole (i.e. not just sexuality education

modules) in Limpopo and Western Cape provinces. She found that the implementation of this learning area was far from optimal, with large class sizes, under-trained teachers, erosion of LO time slots for other learning areas, and an over-reliance on didactic teaching methods with a concomitant lack of group and experiential teaching practices. Nevertheless, there was evidence that teachers and learners recognized the value of LO.

Harrison et al. (2010) report that “most school-based interventions do not use a group approach, but are delivered didactically by teachers in classrooms, relying on the ability of students to act individually on information received” (p. 9). Rooth (2005) finds similar results. My earlier research on how young adults at a Further Education and Training College talk about their school sexuality education also suggests that methods of teaching were primarily non-interactive, with content that was disconnected from the realities of young people’s sexualities (Jearey Graham, 2014; Jearey-Graham & Macleod, 2015). This is not conducive to enhancing a positive sexual subjectivity amongst learners (Fields, 2008).

Ahmed et al (2009) found that “many educators are conflicted about HIV and sex education, as they perceive it as contradicting their values and beliefs.” (p. 48). Francis (2011), in his desktop review of sexuality teaching practices in South African schools, asserts that LO teachers often “see their role as being one of teaching values and morals” (p. 318). Francis and DePalma (2014) interviewed 25 LO teachers in the Free State Province, and found “an erroneous understanding that sex and HIV education leads to increased sexual behaviour.” (p. 86). These outlooks, combined with a lack of training in the teaching of sexuality education, means that classes often prioritise the teaching of abstinence and do not provide sufficient information on safe sex or engage with current sexual concerns of youth (Francis, 2011; Francis & DePalma, 2014).

Regarding the formal school curricula, the United Nations sponsored a ten-country review of school sexuality education curricula in East and Southern Africa (UNESCO & UNFPA, 2012). In evaluating the South African curricula, as contained in the Department of Basic Education Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS), the review finds the curricula to be insufficient in providing a comprehensive sexuality education. The report states that the sexuality modules

> exclude much of the requisite information for effective sexuality education, particularly topics relating to sexual and reproductive health – including condoms and contraception. Information on gender and intimate partner violence is also lacking. When topics are included, they often lack detail and do not build on each other or cohere (p. 62).

Furthermore, the report states that there is a lack of teacher guidance on how to help learners engage with content at an emotional level (UNESCO & UNFPA, 2012). Francis and DePalma (2014) likewise report that "(c)urriculum documents do not set out details for practice or outcomes" (p. 83).

The general school culture in many disadvantaged schools also mitigates against positive learning outcomes during LO. Gender inequity, sexual exploitation and sexual violence are widespread in some schools (Bhana, 2012). Harrison et al (2010) report high levels of learner and educator absenteeism, teacher shortages, and school violence, and Rooth (2005) notes extremely large class sizes.

Given these constraints in South African school sexuality education classes, effectiveness in reducing HIV risk and gender inequity is likely to be limited. Harrison et al (2010) therefore recommend that school interventions "include more group-based, rather than didactic learning" (p. 9), and that personnel other than teachers be used as facilitators. This recommendation adds support to this current intervention.

2. Critiques of sexuality education – a critical discursive perspective

Critiques of sexuality education have been wide ranging in developed nations (Abel & Fitzgerald, 2006; Allen, 2007a, 2007b; Bay-Cheng, 2003; Fields, 2008; Luker, 2006), with South African scholars more recently adding their voices to the body of critical scholarship (Francis, 2011; Francis & DePalma, 2014; Kruger, Shefer & Oakes, 2015; Macleod, 2009; Mthatyana & Vincent, 2015; Shefer & Ngabaza, 2015). Four related critiques will be examined here, namely: a primary emphasis on risk and avoidance of discourses of pleasure and desire in most sexuality education programmes; the pathologisation of teen pregnancy and parenting; a re-inscription of gendered and raced inequalities; and didactic and non-interactive teaching styles.

Firstly, a primary emphasis on the risks of sex, and a concomitant avoidance of discourses of pleasure and desire is a critique of many sexuality education programmes. Macleod (2009) analysed 29 sexuality education textbooks and teacher guides used in South African school Life Orientation and sex education lessons. Whilst these texts attempted to promote some critical and reflexive thinking in students through encouraging discussion and debate, "all but two of the manuals analysed featured danger and disease as guiding metaphors" (Macleod, 2009, p. 377), thereby orienting class discussions to the 'risky' aspects of sex. In their interviews with South African LO teachers, Francis and DePalma (2014) found an extremely strong emphasis on the risks and negative aspects of sex, and "a marked absence of notions of pleasure, desire, fulfillment and warmth." (p. 87). South African learners, likewise, report that sexualities are taught "through a lens of 'dangerous'

outcomes." (Shefer & Ngabaza, 2015). Whilst knowledge of risks is important, an elision of notions of pleasure and desire not only constructs young people as childlike and vulnerable, with an associated lack of sexuality and agency (Allen, 2007b) but it is also unlikely to engage young people, being disconnected as it is from the multiple other societal discourses which construct sex as pleasurable and necessary for proof of one's masculinity/femininity (Jearey-Graham & Macleod, 2015). Attempts to increase responsible sexual behaviours are thereby undermined (Allen, 2007b).

A second critique, related to the primary emphasis on the risks of sex, is that teen pregnancy and parenting continues to be pathologised and shamed, despite liberal state policies regarding the rights of pregnant and parenting teens (Shefer, Bhana & Morrell, 2013). This leads to young pregnant and parenting women feeling marginalized in the school setting (unpublished interview data, Jearey Graham, 2014; Shefer et al, 2013). Some international and local authors, however, point out that early conception may be a positive choice and viable option for some young people, particularly in contexts of deprivation where there is a sense of a foreshortened future, and educational and employment options are restricted (Allen, 2007a, Geronimus, 1991; Macleod, 2011). This fact remains unacknowledged in sexuality education.

A pernicious issue, and the third critique of sexuality education, is the manner in which sexuality education frequently reinscribes gendered and raced inequalities. Regarding gendered inequities, authors from developed countries point out that the biological emphasis in much sexuality education links female sexuality with reproduction, whilst for males, "discussions on erections and ejaculation supports men's and boys' claims to pleasure" (Fields, 2008, p. 103). Notions of initiation, pursuit and power are used to construct masculinities, whilst passivity, receptivity, vulnerability and reactivity are the descriptive signifiers for femininities (Bay-Cheng, 2003). In this state of passive receptivity, girls are contradictorily exhorted to exercise responsibility by not inciting male hyper-sexuality, delaying sex, and negotiating contraception (Allen, 2007b; Bay-Cheng, 2003; Fields, 2008). South African authors, likewise, find that gendered inequities are embedded in sexuality education lessons, and young women "appear to be receiving messages that arguably reinstate a form of femininity as vulnerable, submissive and inherently victimized." (Shefer & Ngabaza, 2015, p. 73). Gendered dynamics frequently proliferate in sexuality education classes: classroom observations and interviews in both South Africa and North America show that males tend to be more disruptive of classes than females, and some males use the classes to express sexist sentiments and to proposition females (Fields, 2008; Unpublished observations and interviews at the target school, Moodley, 2015).

Sexuality education emphasises reproduction and penile-vaginal penetration, meaning that heterosexual intercourse is privileged. Both South African and American authors find that there is an almost complete silence in sexuality programmes around homosexual desire and sex (Bay-Cheng, 2003; Fields, 2008; Francis, 2012), which places homosexuality outside the realm of normality, and leaves it to the derisive forces of school gossip and slander. Connell and Elliot (2009) claim that "(t)he absence of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer narratives from sexuality lessons contributes to the maintenance of 'compulsory heterosexuality', hampering alternative sexual self-definitions" (p.87-8).

Regarding the racial scripting of sexuality, demographic statistics of teenage pregnancies, sexual coercion, rape, and STI's already construct the sexuality of 'Black' people as more 'problematic' than that of 'Whites', with the unbounded and fluid nature of racial categories, and the often historically colonial roots of such 'problematic' sexuality, remaining unacknowledged (Macleod, 2011). With Western society being culturally dominant, sexuality education manuals and practices tend to reproduce Western social values (Jearey Graham, 2014; Wilbraham, 2008). Macleod (2011) states that "'Westerners' constitute society, the common sense against which the cultural peculiarities of 'Africans' are etched" (p. 103). A lack of acknowledgement or critique of these constructive forces in sexuality education leads to the reinscription of racial and gendered inequities during sexuality education classes.

Finally, school sexuality education has been critiqued for the manner in which it is taught. Didactic and non-relational teaching methods appear to be the dominant pedagogical style in many South African classrooms, with a focus on imparting information, and minimal interactive and participatory methodologies (Francis, 2010; Jearey-Graham & Macleod, 2015; Rooth, 2005). Learners are positioned as passive and lacking in knowledge, which leads to low learner engagement and boredom, and which undermines their agency (Fields, 2008; Rooth, 2005). Ironically, it is this very agency that they need in order to make the 'responsible' choices that they are exhorted to engage in by sexuality education classes. With classes being conducted in a primarily non-relational manner, there is "a disconnection between young people and the responsible sexual subject position that such classes attempt to create." (Jearey-Graham & Macleod, 2015, p. 26)

3. Positive Youth Development programmes – a complementary approach

The programmes reviewed and critiqued above directly target sex-related behaviours. Another approach to intervention lies in what is being referred to as positive youth development (PYD). Gavin, Catalano, David-Ferdon, Gloppen and Markham (2010, p. S76) state that

> PYD programmes help youth strengthen relationships and skills, embed them in positive networks of supportive adults, and help them develop a more positive view of their future by providing academic, economic, and volunteer opportunities. In other words, PYD programmes target a different, but complementary, set of mediating variables than those targeted by many sexuality education programmes.

Indeed, Bearinger, Sieving, Ferguson and Sharma (2007), in their article on global perspectives on the sexual and reproductive health of adolescents, cite positive youth development programmes as one of three essential strategies for improving young people's sexual and reproductive health. (The other two that they identify are high quality clinical services which provide accessible reproductive health care, and sex education programmes.) One aspect of PYD programmes that Bearinger et al highlight, and which is pertinent to the dialogical approach of my intervention, is that it is important to couple skills development and service learning with "regular opportunities for reflection and dialogue about those experiences" (Bearinger et al, 2007, p. 1227).

Gavin et al (2010) reviewed thirty programmes which evaluated a sexual/reproductive health outcome during adolescence, and which allocated at least half of their content or time to promoting general PYD outcomes, in contrast to activities focused on sexual/reproductive health. These outcomes included "prosocial bonding, cognitive competence, social competence, emotional competence, belief in the future, and self-determination." (Gavin et al, 2010, p. S75). The programmes were delivered to a range of age groups, including three programmes targeting preschool and junior school children. The authors found that fifteen programmes had evidence of effectiveness. Characteristics of all, or the majority of, the effective programmes were as follows: an attempt to enhance the supportiveness of the family, school or community context by, for example, providing parent or teacher training; building skills and empowering youth in a range of areas; and providing opportunities for recognition, for example "by publicly acknowledging youth's contribution through award ceremonies and articles in local newspapers" (p. S86). Some of the effective programmes did not focus at all on direct sexual or reproductive outcomes, and the three programmes targeting young children "had some of the strongest and most sustained impacts on adolescent sexual and reproductive health" (p. S88).

Thus, effective PYD programmes appear to work on mediators that differ from the ones targeted by direct sexuality education. Gavin et al (2010, p. S89) state that "(w)hile sexuality education programmes provide youth with the specific skills and knowledge needed to refuse sex and practice safe sexual behaviour, PYD programmes may provide them the motivation they need to use those skills; exposing youth to both types of programmes is likely to be more effective than a strategy relying only on one type." There were suggestions from my intervention that much of the benefit

that participants derived could be termed general PYD outcomes, as opposed to direct sexual/gendered health outcomes.

4. *Suggested ways forward for sexuality interventions*

As outlined above, Kirby and colleagues (Kirby, 2011; Kirby et al, 2005) and Harrison et al (2010) provide the following structural recommendations for sexuality interventions: they need to be rigorously designed by personnel with expertise in sexuality, behaviour change and pedagogical theory; it is important that the relevant needs and strengths of the target groups are identified prior to initiation of programmes, and activities need to be designed that are in line with community values and resources; pilot testing a proposed intervention is important, and goals should encompass psycho-social risk and protective factors such as gender inequities, peer norms around sexual behaviour, alcohol use, emotional intelligence, and pro-social bonding; and instructionally sound teaching methods should be employed, such as varied and interactive activities which promote critical thinking skills and ideally are conducted in small groups. These were all aspects that informed my intervention. Emotional intelligence and pro-social bonding may be understood, from the post-structural perspective of this thesis, as reflexive ability and recognition from others.

Facilitating the development of complementary skills in youth such as academic, vocational, social or community service skills through PYD focused activities has also been found to have a significant impact on sexual and reproductive health (Bearinger et al, 2007; Gavin et al, 2010). The facilitation of social skills was an aspect that the dialogical nature of this intervention was able to promote. A community based component, such as strengthening the family or school through training parenting or teaching skills, has also been shown to enhance outcomes (Fonner et al, 2014; Gavin et al, 2010), and this is something that I hope I can engage with next year by providing a workshop to the school educators.

Critical discursive scholars have examined the underlying messages contained in many sexuality education programmes. Authors have called for “a critical pedagogy of sexuality education” (Shefer & Macleod, 2015, p. 7) where the socially constructed nature of sexuality is acknowledged, and where learners are encouraged to critique taken-for-granted sexual and gendered norms. This was a strong emphasis in this current project, which attempted to promote critical consciousness about these norms. Some international writers recommend that sexuality education to be located within the notion of ethical pleasure, which honours the sexually desiring subject within the rubric of care of self and others (Allen, 2007a, 2007b; Bay-Cheng, 2003; Fields, 2008; Fine, 1988; Fine & McClelland, 2006). Ethics incorporates not only care of others but also care of the self, which includes exercising power and self-control over the self (Allen, 2007a). However, there are

difficulties, too, with an overemphasis on pleasure or desire, as ethical desire cannot occur when subjects lack agency (Rasmussen, 2006). Unjust power relations, including gendered, raced, and classed inequities, therefore have to be addressed. Whilst it is clearly important to take young peoples' voices regarding sexuality seriously, some of their dominant discourses perpetuate social inequities (Allen, 2007b), and it is therefore important at all times to locate sexuality education within a social justice framework that allows "for a diversity of voices, that encourage(s) minority views, and that highlight(s) contradictions and complexities." (Shefer & Macleod, 2015, p. 8).

Shefer and Macleod (2015) call for more work with educators and schools, and also with the sexuality education curricula and materials. As well as introducing a critical feminist orientation to the sexuality education textbooks, they argue for "the importance of facilitating self-reflexivity among educators" (p. 7) in order to assist them to critique their own investments in "particular moralities, normative expectations of gender, culture, family and sexuality." (p. 7).

Finally, social justice goals are difficult to pursue within schools that are victims of gross macro-economic inequality. When class sizes are double or triple the recommended standard, when teachers are overworked and under-trained, when textbooks and learning equipment is minimal, and when learners come from contexts of extreme poverty, power inequities, including gendered ones, flourish at the micro-level. Thus, redress of economic inequalities is an important priority for the country as a whole as attempts are made to assist young people to negotiate the field of sexualities. Whilst this is well beyond the scope of this research, it is necessary to highlight this crucial aspect.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined sexuality interventions, as they can be effective in assisting young people to reduce risky sexual behaviours. After reviewing efficacy studies of sexuality education, and critiques of sexuality education from a critical discursive perspective, the chapter outlined some research on Positive Youth Development (PYD) programmes, some of which have shown positive results in reducing sexually risky behaviours. The chapter then drew together the results of the review studies and critiques to provide some suggestions for sexuality interventions.

Taken together, review studies and critiques show that, in order to have significant positive effects, sexuality interventions need to be well designed by personnel with the necessary expertise, be based on a thorough consultation with relevant stakeholders prior to implementation, be pilot tested, draw off sound pedagogical principles and proven curricula, and be well implemented with support from wider community bodies such as schools. It seems important that interventions are

mindful of the socially constructed nature of sexuality, which allows participants to apprehend the mutable aspects of sexual and gendered norms, and that ethical pleasure and social justice values are emphasized as well as a necessary discussion of the risks associated with sex. Studies have repeatedly shown the importance of facilitators who are rigorously trained and who facilitate varied and interactive activities designed to promote reflexive and critical thinking skills amongst learners. It is therefore important that facilitators are capable of being reflexive about their own moral and gendered investments, and that a group format be used, as opposed to delivering the intervention to a large class. Beneficial effects are enhanced if the wider community, such as parents and teachers, are involved in the programme. As well as focusing directly on sexual risk and protective factors, programmes that address a structural or social factor, such as gendered/sexual norms, alcohol use and poverty tend to be more effective. Finally, research on PYD programmes indicates that interventions that focus on enhancing general relational, social, vocational or academic skills amongst young people, and that link young people with networks of supportive adults can enhance sexual and reproductive health.

Based on some of these suggestions, I implemented a pilot sexuality intervention in a local school with a group of Grade 10 learners. Given the combined expertise that my supervisor and I have in psychology, sexualities and education, we had the requisite characteristics that have been identified as necessary for personnel designing effective interventions. Other aspects of effective interventions that I focused on were: an initial consultation with the headmistress and former LO teacher in the school, and a review of data collected at the school in 2012 to inform the design of the intervention; a group format; an intervention based on principles of dialogical pedagogy and feminist post-structuralism (to be discussed in the next chapter); a strong focus on developing critical thinking skills, particularly around sexual and gendered norms; and activities designed to enhance relational and emotional skills. The next chapter will discuss the theoretical bases for the intervention, outline the action research approach that was followed, give details about the implementation of the intervention, and discuss the analytical steps that were used to conduct a formative evaluation of the intervention.

Chapter 3: Gendered norms, dialogical pedagogy, and action research – the theory and methodology of the intervention

Introduction

This chapter will outline the two complementary theoretical lenses that undergirded my conceptualisation of the action research, namely feminist post-structuralism and Freire's theories of critical consciousness and dialogical pedagogy. Thereafter it will discuss how I incorporated Freirian pedagogical principles into a post-structural paradigm. The chapter moves on to present the research questions upon which this study is based, followed by the methodological approach. This involves a description of action research principles and the application of these principles in designing and conducting the intervention. Finally, ethical procedures are outlined, as well as details about conducting the intervention, data collection and analytical procedures.

1. Theoretical underpinnings of the action research

The first theoretical lens that informed this intervention was feminist post-structuralism. This enabled me to apply "a critical feminist gaze" (Shefer & Macleod, 2015, p. 6) to the action research and to attempt to address the critiques which were highlighted in the previous chapter. Feminist post-structuralism understands subjectivities and knowledge, including gendered identities, to be constituted through discursive activity. As such, this theorising posits an unstable subject, constituted through discursive activity and the instantiation of norms (Butler, 2004; Davies & Gannon, 2005). Key concepts within feminist post-structuralism that I draw on include discourse, discursive resources, gendered norms, and the subject positions that arise through discursive activity.

The second lens was Freire's conceptualisation of critical consciousness and the pedagogical approaches that are necessary to develop such a consciousness. Freire's (1993/1970; 2003/1973) thesis was that oppressed people cannot rise above their oppression without developing an understanding of the social conditions and processes that have fostered their disadvantage, and then engaging in collective action to counteract such disadvantaging processes (Campbell & MacPhail, 2002). Freire termed this development 'critical consciousness'. He went on to develop his theories of dialogical pedagogy as a necessary means of promoting critical consciousness, as he believed that such consciousness only arises through dialogical processes of engagement. My intervention attempted to promote participants' critical consciousness around gendered inequities through facilitating dialogue about such issues.

1.1. Feminist post-structuralism

Post-structuralism is intertwined with discourse theory, which understands social and psychological realities to be constituted by discursive activity (Cromby & Nightingale, 1999). This is in contrast to liberal humanist understandings which view the person as having an interior, stable essence which is ontologically prior to discursive activity (Davies & Gannon, 2005; Butler, 1990; Gavey, 1989). Feminist post-structuralism is a theoretical lens which views gendered identities as discursively constructed, and it seeks to uncover the discursive activity constituting gendered subjectivities and identities (Davies & Gannon, 2005).

1.1.1. Discourse

Discourses, in the Foucauldian sense, may be understood as broad, commonly used systems of meaning which establish a particular social reality, and "govern what it is possible to think" (Singer & Hunter, 1999, p. 66). Through the articulation of these coherent systems of meaning, objects are constructed (Parker, 1992) and subjects are positioned (Davies & Harré, 1990). Broad societal discourses can be viewed as being made up of more localised and specific discursive resources, with discursive activity referring to the process of creating and assigning meaning through the uptake of such resources. Discursive resources pre-exist an individual's talk or actions (Taylor & Littleton, 2006), yet each time an individual takes up or reproduces a discursive resource, slight adjustments occur (Butler, 1993; Van Lenning, 2004), resulting in gradual mutations in the resources over time and across contexts (Macleod, 2011). The constitutive effects of discursive activity are generally covert. Butler (1990; 1993) refers to such effects as performatives, stating that "a performative is that discursive practice that enacts or produces that which it names" (Butler, 1993, p. 13). This performative production, arising from both speech and bodily actions, may or may not be intended or understood by the subject who is the site of the performance (Butler, 2004).

1.1.2. Power, norms and trouble

As discourses govern and establish meaning, they can be understood to produce knowledge, which creates and maintains societal power relationships (Macleod, 2011; Singer & Hunter, 1999). Discourse, knowledge and power are thus crucially interlinked. Knowledge and power reinforce one another, as knowledge is not recognised as 'true' unless it conforms to certain rules, and is brought forth from a power web that is accepted as representing 'the way things really are' (Butler, 2004). The generation of knowledge by such a power web reinforces its own power, and this power is manifested and enacted through discursive activity, or signifying practices. With repeated discursive activity, certain knowledge-power systems become normative. However, power is never unitary or total, as it is inherent in all discourses. Whilst power cannot be refused or withdrawn, it can be

redeployed (Butler, 1990) by the uptake of alternative discourses. This alternative uptake can cause 'trouble' for a dominant or normative power system, and can ultimately disrupt the normative field by instantiating new norms.

Regarding norms, Butler has been a key theorist in this area (Lloyd, 2007). Butler (2004) views norms as societal standards which "mark the movement by which ... (juridico-discursive) power becomes productive." (p. 49). Norms "govern the social intelligibility of action" (p. 41) and are usually implicit in their functioning. Butler's emphasis is on the norm of gender, which she claims is the apparatus which institutes compulsory gendered binaries, whereby (socially acceptable) forms of masculinity express maleness, and (socially acceptable) forms of femininity express femaleness (Butler, 1990). The liberal humanist understanding is that a pre-discursive, unitary subject has a gendered essence which is then expressed outwardly through gendered behaviours. However, Butler's (1990; 1993) thesis is that gendered norms and expectations produce, through ongoing performances by subjects, an illusion of a pre-discursive, gendered being, and that gendered norms fundamentally shape the subject (Morison & Macleod, 2013a). This norm of gender judges a gendered appearance which falls outside of societal norms as unethical or unacceptable. For example, homosexual expressions fall outside of the compulsory heterosexual norm which is operative in many societies, and they are therefore judged as being unethical. Butler (2004) points out that "the viability of our individual personhood" (p. 2) is dependent upon our being recognised and accepted by others, and therefore norms are crucially constitutive of who we are. Norms become visible through their discursive enactment, so an analysis of discursive activity will reveal the norms operating within specific contexts.

Morison and Macleod (2013) show how, through questioning gendered norms which are generally taken for granted and implicit, such norms can be made explicit. Through bringing gendered norms to visibility in this manner and introducing alternative discursive resources, such norms are 'troubled' – their apparent 'essence' and 'truth' is questioned. With repeated troubling, norms slowly mutate over time. Such troubling was an impetus in my dialogical group, as I sought to trouble patriarchal and unequal gendered norms and allow more egalitarian discursive resources to be foregrounded.

1.1.3. Subject positions and recognition

A post-structuralist lens views subjects, like other social realities, as discursively constituted. Davies and Harré (1990, p. 47) argue that discursive practices constitute subjectivities through "the provision of subject positions", which locate a person within the structure of concepts, rights and story lines made relevant by the particular constituting discursive practices. Davies and Harré (1990)

go on to say that "(a)n individual emerges through the processes of social interaction, not as a relatively fixed end product but as one who is constituted and reconstituted through the various discursive practices in which they participate." (p. 66). Working from this premise, this intervention attempted, through generating rich dialogical engagements, to 'constitute and reconstitute' the identities of participants in gender equitable manners.

Regarding subjectivities, these may be understood as ensembles of subject positions within which a person is habitually located (Wetherell, 1998). Butler (1993) views the subject as arising at the juncture, or crossroads, of multiple discursive formulations, and she believes in the importance of expanding connections and communication between diverse subject positions, and bringing to visibility the complex webs of power within which such positions are constituted. This increases the subject's ability to be reflexive (Lloyd, 2007), and can only be achieved socially, as the self can only recognise itself from a distance, reflected by others (Butler, 2004). The self is thus crucially social, and dependent on the recognition of others for existence (Lloyd, 2007). This recognition is predicated upon the subject enacting recognisable forms of humanness, which are defined normatively (Butler, 2004). One of my aims in the dialogical group was to expand the recognition that participants received in their varying subject positions. I especially tried to recognise participants when they were positioned in less normative or more marginalised discourses, for example in same-sex discourses, or in emotionally painful discourses.

This study analyses subjectivities using a synthetic discursive lens, which understands subject positions to be both 'conferred from above' in a top-down fashion by available discursive resources, and also agentively taken up or resisted in a bottom-up fashion by individual subjects (Davies & Harré, 1990; Wetherell, 1998; Bamberg, 2004; Taylor & Littleton, 2006). As such, subjects are seen as "complex composites of, on the one hand, who they create themselves as and present to the world, as a way of 'acting upon' it, and on the other, who that world makes them and constrains them to be" (Taylor & Littleton, 2006, p. 23). Top-down positioning of subjects occurs through the broad discursive and social practices which operate within particular contexts, and which already position speakers in pre-determined ways. Bottom-up positioning affords some agency to the subject, as there are a range of available positions for a particular subject to take up within a particular discursive context. For example, a subject may be positioned in a top-down manner within a certain gendered category according to certain biological markers, but within this gendered category (for example, 'woman') there is a wide range of subject positions that are potentially available for uptake in a bottom-up manner (for example, 'feminine', 'lesbian', 'compliant' etc.).

However, within this range of available subject positions, the subject's uptake of a position, or self-positioning, is heavily constrained by several further factors. Firstly, previous habitual self-positions already position the speaker in any instance of talk (Taylor, 2005), as she is obliged to present a subjectivity which is largely consistent across time (Taylor & Littleton, 2006) in order to remain recognisable to herself and others. Secondly, there are cultural or normative injunctions to present a selfhood which is positively valued (Reynolds, Wetherell & Taylor, 2007). Finally, it is important to note that positioning is an ongoing, interactive and dynamic process, so it is dependent on the immediate interactive context. Bamberg (2004) states that "self and identity are not givens, as sitting on a shelf to be picked and plugged into communicative situations, but rather, … they are constantly under revision and interactively renegotiated…" (p. 334). In positioning themselves, subjects also position others through the discursive resources that they utilise, and this self- and other-positioning is a fluid and dynamic interactive process. I attempted, in the group interactions, to provide opportunities for members to position themselves and others in positive and valued ways.

1.1.4. Application of feminist post-structural theories to the action research

My action research aimed to increase the visibility, for the participants, of the gendered discursive activity which was operative in their school, and which positioned participants in gendered manners. An uncovering of the gendered discourses allowed for critique of gendered and sexual practices, and promoted a troubling of some of these discourses. This troubling enabled critical and reflexive engagement with previously taken-for-granted subject positions and behaviours, and allowed alternative sexual subject positions to be foregrounded. However, the intervention went beyond focussing merely on gendered subject positions, and also encompassed dialogical activities which promoted self-positioning and recognition within other discursive fields, such as personal strengths, likes and dislikes, and areas of emotional pain. In this manner, some of the participants' diverse subject positions were brought to visibility and recognised, which hopefully promoted connections and communication between the positions, both intra-subjectively (within individual participants) and inter-subjectively (between participants). Working from the premise that this enhanced connection promotes the reflexivity and emotional competence of participants, and also social bonding between participants, (both of which have been shown to be factors which promote sexual/reproductive health amongst adolescents (Bearinger et al, 2007; Gavin et al, 2010)), it was hoped that the intervention contributed to this in participants' lives.

Whilst feminist post-structuralism provided rich theoretical resources on which to base my intervention, it does not speak to practical ways of implementing dialogical processes. For this

reason, Freire's writings on critical consciousness and dialogical pedagogy provided invaluable principles for guiding the intervention, as outlined below.

1.2. Freire's theories of critical consciousness and dialogical pedagogy

The second theoretical lens that guided this project was Paulo Freire's conceptualisation of critical consciousness and dialogical pedagogy. Freire developed his seminal ideas while working to improve literacy levels and reduce socio-political oppression amongst peasants in Brazil in the early 1960's, and he went on to refine his theories over the next twenty five years. Freire's notion of critical consciousness has two interlinked dimensions. The first dimension involves "the development of intellectual understandings of the way in which social conditions have fostered peoples' situations of disadvantage" (Campbell & MacPhail, 2002, p. 333), and this dimension has been termed 'conscientisation' (Blackburn, 2000). The second dimension involves the development of some kind of collective action to resist or transcend such disadvantaging situations (Campbell & MacPhail, 2002). Freire believes that such critical consciousness enables us to become more fully human (Roberts, 1996). He also believes that critical consciousness does not develop outside of dialogue. He states that "(d)ialogue is a moment when humans meet to reflect on their reality as they make and remake it" (Freire & Shor, 1987, p. 13). Such dialogical reflection enables us "to know that we know", which is a necessary precondition for changing our reality (Freire & Shor, 1987, p. 13). Recognition implicit in dialogue

Anti-dialogical modes of engaging are characteristic of oppressive systems (Freire, 1993/1970). Such modes involve vertical relationships, which close down empathy, trust and critical engagement (Freire, 2003/1973). Freire (1993/1970, p. 52) refers to anti-dialogical modes of teaching as being based on "the 'banking' concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits" made by the teacher. This 'banking' method appears to be the mainstay of much sexuality education in South African schools (Francis, 2010; Rooth, 2005), where non-relational and non-dialogical methods of instruction prevail (Jearey-Graham & Macleod, 2015). Banking methods rely on prescriptive impositions which "transform… the consciousness of the person prescribed into one that conforms with the prescriber's consciousness" (Freire, 1993/1970, p. 29). We see such prescriptive impositions in South African sexuality education, where prescribed methods of sexual safety (often summed up in the ABCD acronym – abstain, be faithful, condomise, delay sexual debut) are emphasised.

In contrast to this, dialogical modes of engaging arise from horizontal, or egalitarian relationships between people, which promote empathy and trust, thereby allowing a critical engagement with objects of study (Freire, 2003/1973). In the educational sphere, this requires a radical shift in the

"teacher-student contradiction, by reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that both are simultaneously teachers *and* students." (Freire, 1993/1970, p. 54, emphasis in original). Rather than prescribing solutions to problems, Freire (1993/1970) advocates a problem-posing approach, whereby the students become "critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher" (p. 61). Furthermore, the objective is to enable dialogue or mutual conscientization to occur not only between the educator and participants, but also between participants and "with the world" (Blackburn, 2000, p. 9).

It is imperative that dialogical pedagogy is contextually situated within the lives of the learners, addressing issues which they deem to be problematic. It is therefore important that any programme content is negotiated with the learners. Such social and participatory methods of learning are "situated in the culture, language, politics and themes of the students" (Freire & Shor, 1987, p. 18) which enables issues most problematic to the students to be foregrounded and reflected upon. Familiar issues are examined from a broader social and historical dimension, enabling critique and detachment. The "deepened consciousness" that this enables "leads people to apprehend [their] situation as an historical reality, susceptible to transformation." (Freire, 1993/1970, p. 66). Without this conscientization, people are apt to: (a) assume that disadvantageous circumstances within their lives are a permanent fact, rather than arising from unjust societal mechanisms which are ultimately mutable (Blackburn, 2000); (b) internalise oppressive values which renders them unable or unwilling to critically reflect on their situation of disadvantage (Blackburn, 2000); and (c) reproduce oppressive practices (Freire, 1993/1970).

A dialogical investigation cannot remain at an abstract level. True reflection leads to action to transform "the concrete situation which begets oppression" (Freire, 1993/1970, p. 32), which promotes further reflection. This iterative and dialectical process is termed praxis, which refers to "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it." (Freire, 1993/1970, p. 33). Reflection without action does not constitute a true understanding of a situation, and similarly, action without reflection on the consequences of the action leads to activism, which does not result in true transformation (Freire, 1993/1970).

1.2.1. *Critiques of Freire's pedagogy.*

Whilst Freire's theories have been profoundly influential on pedagogical practice, there have been necessary critiques of his ideas and methods. At a conceptual level, Blackburn (2000) suggests that Freire's theories assume that the oppressed have no initial power, and are reliant on an outside educator to initiate them into a particular 'critically conscious' form of power that is universally applicable and justifiable. Blackburn believes that Freirian activists tend to downplay traditional

grassroots forms of power, such as a "culture of resistance" (p. 11), and impose their own vision of power "largely derived from European Leftist traditions" (p. 11) involving ownership of means of production. This has been deemed to be a form of Western "cultural invasion" (Roberts, 1996, p. 182). Blackburn states that "the inappropriate imposition of a certain vision of power on people who may not perceive themselves as powerless and, moreover, may not want to be empowered in the way that is being prescribed, is a problem area that has not been sufficiently addressed by Freirians." (p. 11). However, I would argue that if a particular programme is 'prescribing' ways of empowerment, then it is not following one of the fundamental tenets of Freirian pedagogy, which involves problem-posing rather than prescriptive methods of engagement. A problem-posing method presents participant-identified problems back to the participants, and facilitates their generation of their own solutions, rather than imposing prescribed solutions. Furthermore, while Friere's use of the word "oppressed" may imply a lack of initial power within participants, his problem-posing and dialogical methods of engagement presuppose inherent power and capacity within participants.

Nevertheless, I concur that Freire's vision of power may be viewed as a singular one, premised upon intellectual conceptualisation and political activity, which elides other multiple forms and manifestations of power which exist within all social contexts. In this regard, supplementing Freire's theories with a post-structural view of power, which takes cognisance of multiple and competing forms of power, is helpful.

Freire has been criticised by some authors (cited by Roberts, 1996) for his 'stages' model of consciousness, which he described in some early writings. In this model, the development of critical consciousness may be understood as progressing from magical consciousness (in which individuals understand oppressive conditions as 'God's will' or due to bad luck), through naïve consciousness (where individuals rather than social systems are blamed for difficulties), into critical consciousness, where people attempt to transform oppressive systems through cooperative action (Roberts, 1996). Critiques have been levelled at this model for its suggestion that 'critically conscious' individuals are more advanced or more fully human than the 'oppressed' for whom Freire's pedagogical approaches were initially developed. However, Roberts (1996) asserts that Freire coined the terms 'magical consciousness' and 'naïve consciousness' to explain the specific situation and conditions that prevailed in Brazil during and before the early 1960's, and did not intend such categories to be understood as universal stages of consciousness. Roberts states that Freire never suggested that "some people are at a 'lower' level of consciousness than others… [He] saw adult illiterates as operating at a *different* level of consciousness to that which he regarded as necessary for their liberation from conditions of oppression" (p. 186, emphasis in original). Furthermore, Freire's later

writings indicate that, rather than understanding conscientisation as a finite and static 'stage' which individuals could 'achieve' once and for all, he instead conceived of it as an ever-evolving, fluid, and ongoing process in which knowledge is always known to be provisional (Roberts, 1996).

At a practical level, Blackburn (2000) highlights some pitfalls that need to be negotiated when attempting to implement Freire's methods. He points out the difficulties of shifting an educational system from an anti-dialogical to a dialogical mode of educating, especially when educators themselves have been schooled in the 'banking' system of education. He states that such a shift

> requires a fundamental revolution in thinking … Not only must the educator be prepared to respect the participants' knowledge as valuable as his own, he must also be prepared to enter into the reality of the participants' lives… The educator must then act as a catalyst, or animator, with the objective of facilitating an educational process in which oppressed people become creative subjects of the learning process rather than passive objects. (p. 8-9).

Thus, the facilitation of such a truly dialogical mode of educating is a delicate and intense process, requiring an educator who possesses strong interpersonal skills and a willingness to critically reflect on her own hidden oppressive impulses and tendencies to impose her own ideological framework on participants. It is also necessary that the broader context is supportive of such a dialogical intervention.

Another difficulty with implementing a truly Freirian liberatory programme that Blackburn (2000) highlights is that the aims and objectives of programmes are often pre-defined, which may constrain how far the participants can define their own goals. Blackburn points out that "any pre-determined vision of liberation introduced from the outside is ultimately paternalistic" (p. 12), and he goes on to warn that "(t)he greatest danger of Freire's pedagogy … is that it can be used as a very subtle Trojan Horse, one which appears to be a gift to the poor, but can all to easily contain a hidden agenda." (p. 13). However, given the subjectivities of facilitators, it is impossible to truly leave behind "pre-determined visions" and agendas. Nevertheless, Blackburn's warnings behove facilitators to be highly reflexive about their own positions, to work consistently to understand the current realities and concerns of participants, and to surface participants' own agendas as far as possible.

1.3. Incorporating Freirian pedagogy into a post-structural paradigm

Although Freire's early writings may be situated within a structural paradigm, and Roberts (1996) characterises him as a modernist, there are natural convergences of Freire's liberatory impetus with post-structural agendas which attempt to reveal and deconstruct power imbalances through analysing the manners in which signifying practices maintain power differentials. Freire displays a non-dualistic understanding of reality, as he states that in peoples' relationships with the world, "consciousness and world are simultaneous: consciousness neither precedes the world nor follows

it." (1993/1970, p. 61). He goes on to say that "Problem-posing education affirms men and women as beings in the process of *becoming* – as unfinished, uncompleted beings in and with a likewise unfinished reality." (p. 65). Furthermore, he has a keen awareness of the constructive power of discourse, and its existential necessity for humanity. He states that "(t)o exist, humanly, is to *name* the world, to change it. Once named, the world in its turn reappears to the namers as a problem and requires of them a new *naming.* Human beings are not built in silence, but in word, in work, in action-reflection." (1993/1970, p. 69, emphasis in original).

Freire's emphasis was on liberation and education, not on subjectivities, and he stops short of theorising a completely discursively constituted subject. Nevertheless, Freire states, in a later work, that "(d)ialogue is a moment when humans meet to reflect on their reality as they make and remake it" (Freire & Shor, 1987, p. 13), which suggests an understanding of multiple realities which are discursively constituted – a decidedly post-structural understanding. Roberts (1996) points out that Freire's notion of conscientisation (which Freire views as necessary to become more fully human) is that it only emerges within dialogue, and it is constituted and reconstituted socially. Such a notion is therefore compatible with post-structural theories of a socially constituted subject. Indeed, Roberts (1996) states that "(c)onscientisation is concerned with expanding the range of discourses within which people might actively (and reflectively) participate." (p. 193). Conscientisation can therefore be seen as aligned with the post-structural notion of troubling, where normative discourses[3] are brought to visibility, and alternative discourses are foregrounded, thereby expanding the range of discourses which are available for uptake.

As discussed above, Freire's conceptualisation of power and powerlessness is problematic in its singular emphasis. Therefore, an infusion of his pedagogical theories with post-structural understandings of multiple power vectors, instantiated through normative practices and areas of resistance to these, provides substantial depth to his concept of power, in my view.

In contrast to Freire's action orientated impetus, post-structuralism has been accused by authors such as Francis (1999) of invoking paralysis with regard to taking meaningful action against oppression. Whilst others, for example St. Pierre (2000) refute this accusation, asserting that post-structuralism "dismantle(s) in order to reconstitute" (p. 482), much post-structural work remains at a theoretical level. Benefit may be derived, therefore, from harnessing some of the considerable practical guidance contained in Freire's writings for use within post-structural projects that aim to both dismantle and reconstitute.

[3] It is important to note here that I view discourses as being enacted not only verbally, but also through actions and other visible manifestations. Troubling can therefore refer, at a concrete level, to both reflection on normative discourses, and action by enacting/foregrounding alternative discourses.

1.4. Current applications of critical consciousness and critical pedagogy

Since Freire's ground-breaking theorising about critical consciousness and pedagogy, these concepts have been taken up extremely widely, both in the educational sphere (Au, 2009), and also more broadly in socio-political arenas (for example, Diemer, Kauffman, Koenig, Trahan & Hsieh, 2006). Within educational fields, the broad field of critical pedagogy seeks to uncover and challenge power dynamics, with a consideration of both "the politics of redistribution (exploitative economic processes and dynamics) and the politics of recognition (cultural struggles against domination and struggles over identity)" (Apple, Au & Gandin, 2009, p. 3). Social justice is therefore an overarching guiding principle, with a commitment to acting against processes that reproduce oppression in educational settings (Apple et al, 2009).

In the arena of gender and education, feminist post-structuralism has been a theoretical orientation which has aligned with critical pedagogical impetuses to unmask and critique the constructions of gendered identities within schools, and the maintenance of normative gendered ideals (McLeod, 2009). Notable characteristics of feminist post-structuralism that have been brought to bear on gendered educational practices include "a suspicion of grand narratives, a focus on questions about subjectivity, on partial and multiple meanings, on discourse, on processes of becoming, and on construction and deconstruction" (McLeod, 2009, p. 138).

A study by Campbell and MacPhail (2002) is an example of an application of Freire's concept of critical consciousness to conceptualise the processes which innervate successful peer education in HIV prevention programmes. Regarding the development of critical consciousness, which, as discussed above, involves the twin dimensions of developing insight and engaging in transformative action, Campbell and MacPhail (2002, p. 334) suggest that a programme needs to have the following key goals:

> …stimulating the development of insight into the way in which gender relations, constructed within the conditions of poverty, undermine the likelihood of good sexual health. It should also stimulate the development of the belief that existing norms can be changed, as well as scenarios for alternative ways of being. Finally, it should promote a context within which young people can collectively develop the belief and confidence in their power to resist dominant gender norms, in the interests of being able to assert their sexual health. (p. 334)

Campbell and MacPhail's (2002) research was situated in a disadvantaged school in a township outside Johannesburg, and these authors identified the following impediments to the successful development of critical consciousness: the school culture of didactic teaching and rote learning methods (which was reproduced by the peer educators); rigidly authoritarian school rules and teacher control of the programme; a focus on biomedical information rather than the social aspects of sexuality or gender relations; the lack that peer educators themselves had in the areas of critical

thinking skills and awareness of social drivers of HIV transmission; and the reproduction of inequitable gendered dynamics by the peer educators. These limitations of the peer education programme evaluated by these authors suggest that the peer educators did not themselves have sufficient critical consciousness of gender, and nor did they have sufficient social support to enable them to act as critical change agents. Freire (1993/1970) points out that "during the initial stages of the struggle, the oppressed, instead of striving for liberation, tend themselves to become oppressors … This is their model of humanity." (p. 27). Applied to gender oppression, Campbell and MacPhail's study suggests that the peer educators, and the teaching staff that supervised them, continued to reinscribe uncritical and unequal gendered practices as they did not have a sufficiently robust alternative "model of humanity".

Campbell and MacPhail's (2002) study points to two crucial factors that are needed in any intervention which aims to stimulate the development of critical consciousness. Firstly, the facilitators/educators need to have a sufficiently well-developed critical consciousness of their own regarding the oppression that they are hoping to overcome, and secondly, there needs to be sufficient support for, and understanding of the intervention from authorities within the context of the intervention.

With these theories and applications of critical pedagogy and feminist post-structuralism as backdrop, this project used critical dialogical and feminist post-structural theoretical lenses to inform the design and implementation of the intervention (discussed in detail a little later). I turn now to the research questions which animated this study, followed by a discussion of action research principles.

2. Research Questions

The overarching research question upon which this study was based is as follows:

In what ways did a dialogical sexuality intervention highlight gendered norms, foster critical consciousness around such norms through troubling them, and provide recognition to participants?

Specific questions were:

1. What sexual and gendered discursive themes arose in the dialogical intervention?
2. How were the sexual/gendered norms embedded in these themes troubled or reinforced?
3. What did participation in the intervention mean for participants?

In order to answer these questions, the intervention was implemented as part of an action research project, as outlined below.

3. *Methodological approach*

3.1. Action research

Action research shares a history with emancipatory social movements, which have been "championed by people such as Paulo Freire" (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, p. 560), and it is the research style of choice when the goal of the research is to influence practice development (Meyer, 2000). It is also a style which aims to "build the skills and confidence of participants through the process." (Vaughan, 2015, p. 258). Action research is, therefore, an obvious choice of orientation for this project, with its aims of both contributing to the development of sexuality interventions, and of affecting the individual participants' gendered practices through facilitating the development of their critical consciousness around gendered norms.

Rather than being a specific research method, action research is better understood as a style of research (Meyer, 2000). Kagan et al (2008) state that "(a)ction research is an orientation to inquiry rather than a particular method… (it) is at one and the same time the investigation of action, the implementation of investigation through action and the transformation of research into action." (p. 32). As such, action research attempts to bring about change and generate solutions at the same time as promoting understandings of the change process (Kagan et al, 2008; Meyer, 2000), thereby simultaneously contributing to both social science and social change (Meyer, 2000). Kagan et al (2008) describe two major types of qualitative action research: practical and emancipatory action research. Practical action research aims to solve immediate problems, while emancipatory action research promotes a critical consciousness around "the roles played by social, economic and political structures" (Kagan et al, 2008, p. 38), thereby facilitating social transformation. This project aligns with emancipatory action research, as its goal was to facilitate dialogical engagement and critical consciousness about gendered and sexual norms. However, due to the project's limited scope, I do not claim that the end goal of gender emancipation or social transformation was in any way achieved.

In alignment with Freire's theorising of dialogical pedagogy, a foundational tenet of action research is its participatory, collaborative, and democratic nature (Meyer, 2000). This involves initial consultation, collaboration and visioning with participants and stakeholders around the nature and goals of the project, with a focus on mutual enquiry and change through a dialogic process (Kagan et al, 2008). This is followed by an iterative process of collaborative planning, acting, evaluating and reflecting (Kagan et al, 2008; Vaughan, 2015). This repeated cycling through the planning, acting, evaluating and reflecting stages in a collaborative manner is an identifying characteristic of action research. Regarding data collection and analysis, action research tends to utilise a combination of

methods (Kagan et al, 2008), and the choice of such methods is broad, depending on the nature of the research. In terms of dissemination of findings, action researchers do not restrict themselves to academic forums but also ensure that the findings are available to a wider audience, for example through giving feedback to participants and community members, and publishing reports on the World Wide Web (Kagan et al, 2008).

I now present a brief description of the gendered and sexual landscape within the Eastern Cape in order to locate the study in its geographical context, and of the school which is the site of this action research. I then move on to describe the process of this action research project and the application of the theoretical principles to the project.

3.2. Description of the site of the action research

This research took place in a town in the Eastern Cape. The Eastern Cape is one of the poorest provinces in South Africa, with overall employment rates and school performances being worse than in most other provinces. As indicated in chapter one, early sexual debut in the Eastern Cape is almost double the national figure, and the province has one of the highest numbers of women and men reporting more than one sexual partner in the last year, and one of the lowest rates of condom use (Department of Health, 2007; Shisana et al, 2014). Regarding gendered norms within this province, research in a large rural area of the Eastern Cape revealed dominant models of idealised masculinity to be based on "gaining the 'best' and most female partners" (Dunkle, Jewkes, Nduna, Jama, Levin, Sikweyiya & Koss, 2007), whilst an acquiescent femininity was emphasized for women (Jewkes & Morrell, 2012). My previous research at an FET college in an Eastern Cape town found similar results, with successful masculinity being perceived to be based on hyper-heterosex, whilst a model of compliant girlfriend-hood was foregrounded for women (Jearey Graham, 2014). Previous research at the High School which is the site of this study found similar gendered norms (Moodley, 2015).

The targeted High School which was formally designated as a school for 'Coloured' learners, under the previous Apartheid government. It is located in an area which is inhabited by predominantly 'Coloured' people. It is a dual medium school, offering parallel classes in English and Afrikaans. There are currently approximately 1200 learners in the school, and in the Grade 10 year, there are four English medium classes and two Afrikaans medium classes. Class sizes are approximately 50 learners per class in Grades 8 and 9, dropping to approximately 40-45 learners per class from Grades 10 to 12, as they have more classes in the higher grades. The Afrikaans medium classes are populated by 'Coloured' learners, while the English medium classes have predominantly 'Black' learners, with some 'Coloured' learners. There are no 'White' learners in the school. The school may be described

as falling into a lower-middle class bracket, and it struggles with a chronic shortage of teaching staff and learning materials. It achieves better matric results than schools located in the township areas, but not as good as formerly 'White' schools (Unpublished interview transcripts, Principal and LO teacher at the school, 2012).

3.3. Initial consultative process

The first step of the action research, namely consultation with stakeholders around sexual/gendered norms and power inequities, started in 2012 with two separate projects. The first one was a writing project in which I was involved. It was conducted by my university's Journalism and Media Studies Department in the first school term of 2012, in conjunction with the target school. One part of the project consisted of the Grade 9 learners in the English medium classes writing anonymous 'post-secrets' and depositing them in a locked post-box. Secrets were then put on display at Rhodes University, and I extracted all secrets containing a sexual or gendered theme for analysis. Grade 9 classes were used out of convenience, as their English teacher had requested the project. The second project was conducted by another researcher from my university's research focus area in Critical Studies in Sexualities and Reproduction (Moodley, 2015). In 2012, he conducted interviews at the target school, focussing on educators' and learners' perceptions of sexuality education, and normative gender narratives, practices and power relations. Three focus group interviews were conducted with Grade 10 learners (one female group, one male group, and one mixed gender group), and then one initial and one follow up interview were conducted with two female and two male Grade 10 learners who had been part of the focus group interviews. Two interviews were also conducted with one of the LO teachers at the school, and one interview was conducted with the school Principal. Additionally, four Grade 10 LO lessons were observed, in which the topics were varying aspects of gender. Grade 10 learners and classes were chosen, as this is the year in which LO classes discuss gender. Transcripts and field notes from these interviews and observations were made available to me. Pertinent aspects of this data will be discussed in the next chapter.

The next step of the consultative process occurred in June 2014 when I approached the Principal of the school regarding the possibility of conducting a dialogical sexuality intervention at her school. She was previously the LO teacher who was interviewed in 2012. As well as gaining her permission, I also briefly interviewed her regarding her current perceptions of sexuality education and gendered norms in the school. I had hoped to consult further with her and a current Grade 10 LO teacher at the start of 2015, just before commencing with the intervention, but this was not possible due to the immense time pressure she and the teachers were under at the start of the school year.

The data gleaned from the 'post-secrets', focus groups, lesson observations and interviews gave insight into some of the sexual/gendered norms and power relations that were prevalent in this school, and the strengths and weaknesses of the sexuality education provided at the school. This may be viewed as an initial consultative process. The actual learner participants in the intervention arm of the research were not consulted prior to their recruitment, and the intervention did not arise as a result of their own expressed needs, so in this regard the research cannot be termed 'participatory action research' in the true sense. Nevertheless, once recruited, the participants were consulted continually regarding the nature of the intervention.

The intervention followed on from these previous projects by presenting some of the identified difficulties to the participants at the start, and enquiring as to whether these are difficulties faced by current learners in their school. In this manner, familiar problems were presented back to the learners for discussion and critique. This was followed by collaborative planning, acting, evaluating and reflecting in an iterative process.

3.4. Ethics and recruitment procedures

Ethical approval for the project was received from the Rhodes Psychology Department Research Projects and Ethics Review Committee in May 2014 (Appendix A). The headmistress of the target school granted permission for the intervention in June 2014 (Appendix B), and she was eager for it as the school is currently short of LO teachers. The Eastern Cape Department of Education was then approached for permission to conduct research within a school falling under its jurisdiction, which it duly granted in September 2014, with various provisions (see Appendix C). One of the provisions was that the intervention should not take place during official school contact time so as not to disrupt educators' programmes. The intervention was therefore conducted directly after classes, in the afternoon.

Female and male participants were recruited through a process of convenience sampling. I introduced myself and the proposed intervention to two of the four Grade 10 English streamed classes, handed out fliers (see Appendix D) and asked for volunteers to commit themselves to meeting weekly for the first term of the year (11 weeks in total). I only targeted two of the four classes as it became clear that I would get sufficient volunteers from these two classes. Some sexuality intervention programmes (for example Stepping Stones (Jewkes, Nduna & Jama, 2010)) advocate single gender groups in order to ensure maximum comfort when discussing sensitive issues. However, both males and females in the mixed gender focus group conducted at the school in 2012 appeared to be comfortable speaking about sex in front of each other. Furthermore, some members were able to challenge some gendered stereotypes expressed by members of the opposite

sex. I found a similar dynamic amongst mixed gender focus groups that I conducted with young adults (Jearey Graham, 2014). I therefore chose to conduct a mixed gender group as I felt that the potential benefits of troubling gendered stereotypes outweighed the risk that one gender may be relatively silenced.

In recruiting participants, I attempted to position the learners as experts in the gendered culture of their school and community, and to request their help in piloting the intervention. I thus spoke about the fact that they, as learners, would understand their school and the prevalent norms, cultures, and values in a way that I did not, and that their insights were important to develop better sexuality interventions. I also emphasised that the intervention would not be replicating what they were learning in their LO classes. I informed them that recordings of the group would be made, but that confidentiality would be maintained at all times and that no identifying information would be revealed in the report or passed on to school authorities. I requested that participants ensure that they not divulge personal information that they learn about other group members to people outside the group.

Recordings were transcribed by an independent transcriber who signed a confidentiality agreement committing her not to divulge any information that she gained from the recordings. Hard copies of the transcripts are kept in a locked cupboard, and electronic copies are password protected. All names have been removed in the report.

3.5. Participant details

Ten females and four males signed up for the group. Once the group was constituted, participants signed informed assent forms, and their parent or guardian signed informed consent forms (Appendices E). We discussed the importance of shared confidentiality, and participants signed a commitment to maintain such confidentiality (Appendix F). As an incentive, and to thank them for their time, food was provided during the meetings. This was usually a hot dog (Vienna sausage and roll with tomato sauce), an apple or banana, cool drink, and sometimes biscuits. Of the initial 14 participants, three dropped out (one female and two males), and 11 participants (nine females and two males) completed the course. The female who dropped out was new to the school, and she only attended the first session. One of the males who dropped out (Sibongokuhle) left the school after the fourth session. I speculate that the other male who did not complete the course (Phelani) may have found some of my troubling of gender stereotypes around 'cheating' to be too challenging (I mention this in Chapter 4). Participants' demographic details and the number of sessions they attended, as well as the pseudonym by which I identify them with in the analysis, are shown in the table on the next page.

Table 1: Participant details

Pseudonym and Gender	Age	Home language	'Race'	Number of sessions attended (max: 10)	Completed course
Noluvuyo (f)	16	Xhosa	'Black'	8	Yes
Oyama (f)	16	Xhosa	'Black'	8	Yes
Sinalo (f)	15	Xhosa	'Black'	6	Yes
Lindelwa (f)	15	Xhosa	'Black'	10	Yes
Jaslyn (f)	16	Afrikaans and Xhosa	'Coloured'	8	Yes
Zintle (f)	15	Xhosa	'Black'	9	Yes
Aviwe (f)	15	Xhosa	'Black'	8	Yes
Masenya (f)	15	Xhosa	'Black'	5	Yes
Chanelle (f)	15	Afrikaans	'Coloured'	5	Yes
Thulani (m)	15	Xhosa	'Black'	9	Yes
Luyanda (m)	16	Xhosa	'Black'	8	Yes
Zandisiwe (f)	15	Xhosa	'Black'	1	No
Phelani (m)	16	Xhosa	'Black'	3	No
Sibongokuhle (m)	17	Xhosa	'Black'	2	No

It must be noted that these participants were volunteers who signed up to talk about sex and sexualities, and there were incentives to attend the group. This is in contrast to learners in school sexuality education classes, where participation is compulsory, and there are no concrete incentives. It is likely, therefore, that the participants were more invested in talking about issues of sexuality than the general school population, and their commitment to the group process may have been higher. These factors limit the transferability of findings to school sexuality education classes.

3.6. Design of the intervention, and collaborative planning

The initial design of the intervention was conceived by my supervisor and me. Literature indicates that better outcomes are achieved when interventions are rigorously designed by personnel with expertise in sexuality, behaviour change and pedagogical theory (Harrison et al, 2010; Kirby, 2011; Kirby et al, 2005). In this regard, my supervisor and I have combined extensive backgrounds in psychology, sexualities and education, which we drew on when designing the intervention.

A critical dialogical theoretical lens was used to inform the design and implementation of the group intervention. In order to promote critical consciousness around gendered norms, it was important to instigate a dialogical and conversational approach to discussions of sexuality. Freire argues for the

importance of horizontal, egalitarian relationships and positionings within such approaches. I was mindful of my structural position of power in relation to the participants, due to my subject position as an older, 'White', educated and middle classed person, as opposed to participants who were constituted as young, 'Black/Coloured', and generally lower middle classed. Furthermore, with the intervention taking place in a school, the power vectors that exist between teaching staff and learners came into play as I was sanctioned by the principal of the school to conduct the intervention, and was positioned on the side of the teaching staff. Thus, it was difficult to enter into truly egalitarian relationships. Indeed, I came into the group with my own agenda to trouble gendered norms, and, given my structural position of power, I was able to promote this agenda. In this way the group was not truly Freirian. Nevertheless, it was important to promote 'horizontality' as far as was reasonable. As one way of ameliorating the power differentials between me and the participants, I was careful to position them as 'knowers' (Francis, 2010) and experts with regard to high school sexualities within their contexts, and to seek their knowledge as a way of deepening my own critical consciousness around issues of sexuality and gender. I thus attempted to position all group members, including myself, as "simultaneously teachers *and* students." (Freire, 1993/1970, p. 54).

In using a problem-posing rather than prescriptive approach, and also in an attempt to ensure that the problems that were posed were located within the specific social contexts of the participants, one of activities in the first session involved presenting to the group two of the post-secrets that were generated at the school in 2012 (see chart of session activities in section 3.7, below). This enabled a familiar difficulty, specifically, shame around virginity and pressure to become sexually active, to be examined in a detached and critical manner (Freire & Shor, 1987), and allowed the normative discourses that constituted virginity as a problematic sexual subject position to be brought to visibility. This, in turn, encouraged a troubling of such discourses and positions and allowed alternative, transformative subject positions to surface, or to become less marginal. I view this troubling process as the beginnings of critical consciousness, where reflection on problematic norms is promoted.

Subsequent sessions were planned in a semi-structured manner, based on the discussions of the previous week, and in consultation with the participants, with the aim of providing catalysts to stimulate our mutual education. This is in line with Freire's assertion that libertarian education "cannot present its own program but must search for this program dialogically with the people" (1993/1970, p. 105).

In order to allow for alternative subject positions to be performed and become more habitual, activities such as role plays, debates and artwork were incorporated into some group meetings. One piece of artwork, in the form of a large poster, was displayed during a school assembly, when group members were acknowledged for their participation in the group, and two group members and I gave a brief presentation about the group. This was a form of action (albeit very limited) into the wider community, and was an attempt to extend the praxis of the dialogical approach from the reflection stage, that happened within weekly group meetings, into an action stage.

Regarding collaborating and planning with the participants around the content of sessions (a key Freirian and action research principle), I found that they often struggled to generate suggested topics and activities on their own, and tended to follow my lead, or rely on my suggestions. Given their lack of experience with dialogical groups, this was understandable. Furthermore, Freire developed his interventions with adults (who have more life experience and inherent power due to their age), whereas I was working with adolescents, at a different developmental stage to adults. However, their collaboration and ownership of the group was implicit in that I generally followed their lead during discussions, and introduced subsequent discussion topics based on apparent levels of high interest. One shortcoming of this approach was that the topic of abstinence, which, as I discuss in the next chapter, was a 'silenced' discourse, did not surface, and yet it appeared to be an important topic for some participants. Thus, whilst participant collaboration is crucial, it also seems important for the facilitator to be aware of which discourses are silenced and which need to be more deliberately surfaced.

I also wished to consult with the headmistress and at least one LO teacher at the start of the intervention. However, this was not possible due to the apparent time pressure that the staff were under at the start of the school year. I had ongoing consultations with my supervisor during the course of the intervention in which we reflected on past sessions and discussed future ones. I also consulted twice with a colleague in order to harvest some of her ideas regarding non-dialogical activities for the group

3.7. Group activities and data generation

The intervention took place weekly through the first school term of 2015, with nine sessions of approximately 75 to 90 minutes each. A tenth session, involving a presentation during school assembly, occurred on the first day of the second term. A table outlining the activities that took place in the intervention in each session is shown below.

Table 2: Session activities

Session	Activities			Number of participants
	Warm up/icebreakers	**Discussion topics**	**Physical activity**	
1	Introduce yourself. Use the first letter of your name to generate a descriptive adjective of yourself. Tell a story about something you were proud of doing when a child.	Discussion of two post-secrets: *I am a virgin but I always act as if I'm not a virgin in front of my friends* *I'm so not into boys but I'm 15!*	None	10
2	Sequenced clapping/movement game in pairs.	Debate topic: *It is good for a man to have sex with lots of different women before he gets married*[4] Males to argue against the topic; females to argue for the topic Discussion of picture of clothed TV presenter posing with his girlfriend in lingerie.	None	11
3	Tell of one good thing that's happened to you in past week, and one thing you like about yourself.	Discussion topic: *What is love?* Discussed love between partners, and between non-partners; discussed things you do to show love.	Write down suggestions for future discussion topics (possible examples given)	9
4	Name one thing you'd take if you were to be left on a deserted island for two weeks.	Discussion topic: *faithfulness and cheating.*	Draw what kind of relationship you'd like in 10 years' time	11
5	Name three things that make you happy. Name something that makes you sad.	Discussion topics: *Masturbation* *Pornography*	None	5
6	Pairs producing still image (statue) – one person in position of power, the other powerless.	Discussion topics: *Gender and power* *Sex at a young age*	Examination of female condom. Puzzle competition.	9

[4] I was aware of the heteronormative and gendered assumptions of this topic before presenting it to the group. However, it was a topic that had come up spontaneously in the previous session, and my aim with the debate was to challenge some of the gendered norms embedded within this topic.

7	Say one thing you like about another person in the group.	Discussion topics: *Review & evaluation of previous activities & discussions* *Discussion about future groups* *Gender power*	Circle dance	8
8	None	Discussion topics: *Sex and 'risks'* *Open floor for participants to ask facilitator any questions they want to*	Making a poster	10
9	Pizza party Presenting a personalised 'Thank-you' card to each participant	Discussion topics: *"How has this group been different from sex ed during LO?"* *Discussion of four written vignettes*	Completing written evaluation; Completing the poster	9
10	School assembly: Presenting certificates; brief presentation about group, using poster as a visual aid.			9

The discussion exercise in the first session used two post-secrets as stimuli. Subsequent discussion topics and activities were planned weekly, based on the previous week's discussion, and in consultation with the participants. As shown, the discussion topics all revolved around themes of sexuality and gender. However, I designed ice-breaker activities to enhance participants' self-knowledge, and to promote positive self-positionings and other-positionings. Physical activities were designed to provide an enjoyable non-verbal activity, and/or to enable non-verbal expression of sexual or relational themes.

Audio- and video-recordings of each session were made. Those sections of the audio recordings which contained talk about sexual and gendered matters were transcribed by an independent transcriber who is fluent in both English and Xhosa. Video recordings assisted with transcriptions when there was overlapping speech, or when it was unclear who the speaker was. These transcriptions provided data to answer the research questions regarding the sexual/gendered themes that arose during the intervention, the norms embedded within these themes, and the manner in which such norms were troubled or reinforced.

I kept a diary of my process of planning the intervention, and wrote extensive process and self-reflective notes after each session. I also listened to the audio recording after each session to remind myself of the processes that were occurring, and the themes within the talk that arose. Participants were asked to verbally evaluate aspects of the intervention in sessions 3, 7, and 9, and their verbal responses were transcribed by the independent transcriber. Participants were also asked to

complete a written evaluation questionnaire in session 9 (see Appendix G for the questionnaire and Appendix H for collated answers). The diary and written and verbal participant evaluations provided data on the process of conducting the intervention, the interactive and dialogical processes occurring within the group, and the perceived outcomes as evaluated by the learners and myself. The diary also explicated some of my own values, beliefs and biases which influenced my facilitation of the group, and the write up of the research report.

3.8. Analytical procedures

Braun and Clarke (2006), and Braun, Clarke and Terry (2015) assert that thematic analysis (TA) is a useful method for working with participatory research designs and evaluations of interventions. Its flexibility means that it can be used with a variety of different theoretical approaches, ranging from realist to critical ontological and epistemological frameworks, and to analyse a broad range of qualitative data. As my data took several different forms (post-secrets, transcribed speech, and classroom observations from 2012, and transcribed speech, written evaluations, and my own written reflections from the current intervention) and my ontological approach was constructionist/discursive when analysing gendered themes, but was more realist when analysing evaluations and reflections, a thematic analysis was the analytical method of choice. Braun and colleagues identify six fluid and recursive phases when conducting a thematic analysis, namely: familiarisation with the data, coding the data, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming the themes, then producing the report.

The 2012 data was analysed through a brief descriptive thematic analysis, drawing out themes which spoke to gendered norms, and the content and processes of sexuality education. A far more rigorous analysis was conducted on the data generated by the dialogical sexuality intervention. I familiarised myself with this data by listening to the audio recordings directly after each session, and reading and re-reading the transcriptions. I typed my diary reflections on each session at the end of the session transcriptions. Coding was conducted by importing transcriptions into an NVivo10 qualitative data analysis software programme. The answers to the written evaluations that participants completed in the last session were collated into one word document, and this was likewise imported into the NVivo programme. Codes within the data were identified on the basis of whether a recurring pattern or meaning embedded either sexual/gendered norms and subject positions, or an evaluation of the group. Nodes within the NVivo10 programme were created for each code. Parent nodes (overarching nodes) were generally descriptive, whereas child nodes (sub-nodes) were more interpretative, providing some initial analysis (Braun et al, 2015). Nodes were created, refined, and combined throughout the coding process. All data extracts associated with each code were copied into the relevant nodes.

Themes and sub-themes were identified by thoroughly reviewing all the nodes, clustering similar nodes together, and searching for broad and underlying meaning systems which spoke to my research questions. Themes were reviewed, adjusted and named, and a thematic map was drawn to help me conceptualise the relationships between themes and sub-themes (Braun et al, 2015). As I wrote up my analysis, I chose data extracts that clearly portrayed the analytical point that I was trying to make. I then re-listened to and re-viewed the audio and video recordings of that extract in order to get a better sense of the speakers' intentions from non-verbal cues, and to check the transcriptions for accuracy and add any missing speech.

I conducted two analyses on the 2015 data. The first analysis, presented in the following chapter, was a discursive thematic analysis of the sexual and gendered themes that arose within the group talk, and the way that sexual/gendered discourses embedded societal norms and shaped the talk. I also analysed how dominant sexual/gendered discourses were troubled or reinforced within the group interaction, and I provided a supplementary process evaluation of the dialogical processes occurring in the group. In this analysis, I used data extracts both analytically and illustratively (Braun et al, 2015). Data that were drawn from direct speech were generally used analytically, as I explicated the gendered discourses within the speech, and the productive effects of these discourses. Data that were taken from written texts (participants' answers to the evaluation questionnaire, and my diary) was used in an illustrative manner to explicate the argument that I was making. The second analysis, presented in Chapter 5, was a process evaluation of the intervention through a thematic analysis of the process of conducting the group, participant feedback (both oral and written), and my diary entries. Data extracts were generally used illustratively in this analysis.

3.9. Feedback and ongoing action cycles

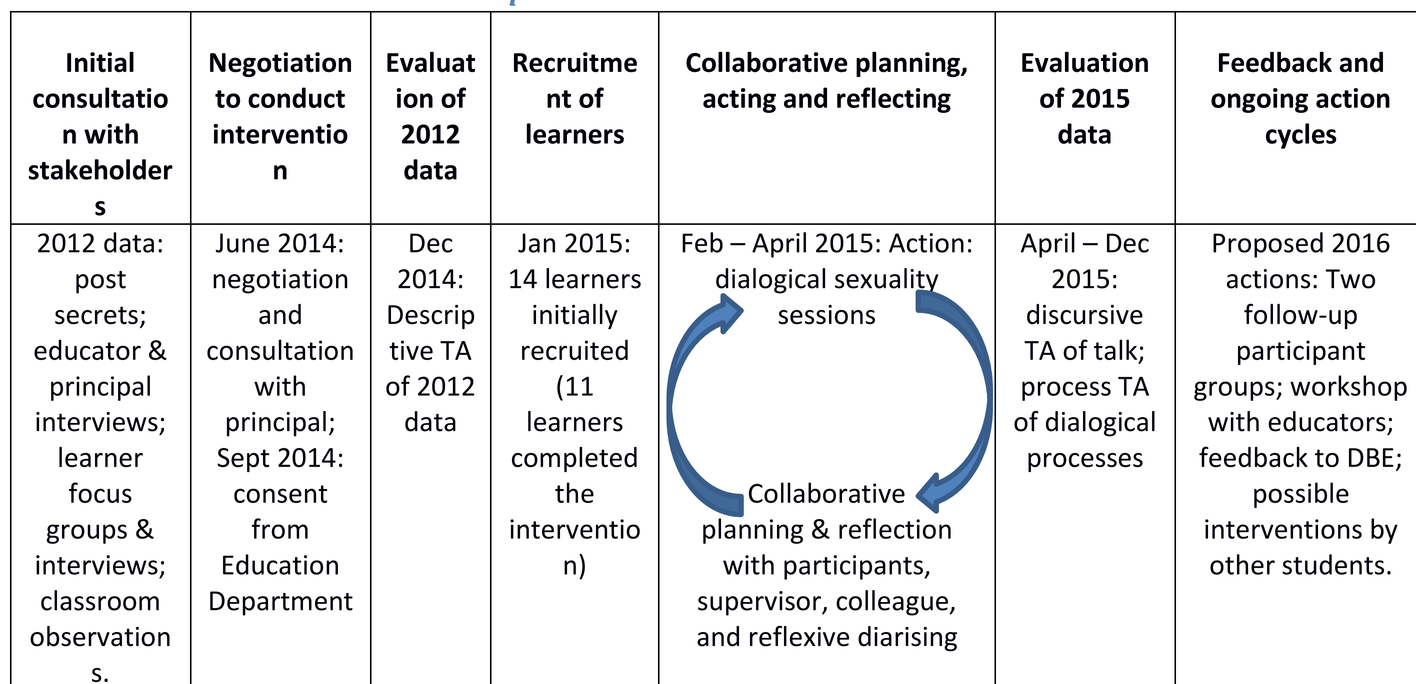
Two follow-up groups with the participants will be conducted in 2016, both to get their further reflections on the dialogical group and as a form of ongoing intervention, as seeking out their thoughts on our past group, asking their suggestions for future groups, and enquiring about their lives since the group will provide them with further recognition. A workshop will be offered to the principal and educators of the school to discuss the findings of the action research, and to discuss the possibility of implementing dialogical processes within the sexuality education lessons. A copy of this report will be sent to the Eastern Cape Department of Basic Education (DBE), to the Chief Director of Strategic Management, Monitoring and Evaluation (as requested by the Department when they granted permission for this research). I will also write a policy brief based on this research for the Department, in order to present the findings and recommendations in a more accessible

format than this current report. There is also the possibility of involving post-graduate Psychology students at Rhodes University in an ongoing intervention process at the target school.

3.10. Summary of the action research process

The table below summarises the process of this action research, and gives the time frame for each activity.

Table 3: The action research process



Initial consultation with stakeholders	Negotiation to conduct intervention	Evaluation of 2012 data	Recruitment of learners	Collaborative planning, acting and reflecting	Evaluation of 2015 data	Feedback and ongoing action cycles
2012 data: post secrets; educator & principal interviews; learner focus groups & interviews; classroom observations.	June 2014: negotiation and consultation with principal; Sept 2014: consent from Education Department	Dec 2014: Descriptive TA of 2012 data	Jan 2015: 14 learners initially recruited (11 learners completed the intervention)	Feb – April 2015: Action: dialogical sexuality sessions Collaborative planning & reflection with participants, supervisor, colleague, and reflexive diarising	April – Dec 2015: discursive TA of talk; process TA of dialogical processes	Proposed 2016 actions: Two follow-up participant groups; workshop with educators; feedback to DBE; possible interventions by other students.

Conclusion

This chapter started with a discussion of post-structuralism and its theorising of an unstable, discursively constituted subject, as this was one of the theoretical bases upon which the intervention was built. When aligned with a feminist orientation, post-structuralism understands gendered identities to arise out of discursive activity (Davies & Gannon, 2005). Discourses were defined in this chapter as broad, commonly used systems of meaning which establish a particular social reality, produce knowledge, and create and maintain societal power (Macleod, 2011; Singer & Hunter, 1999) through establishing normative practices and relationships (Butler, 2004). Discourses are understood as being made up of localised and specific discursive resources.

Norms govern the social intelligibility of behaviour and are usually implicit in their operation (Butler, 2004), with gendered norms constituting the gendered subjectivities of individuals. When discourses outside of the gendered normative field are introduced, this causes discursive trouble and can

disrupt the established norms. My intervention aimed to bring some of the discursive resources which constructed gendered subjectivities to visibility, and to foreground alternative resources for the uptake of participants as a way of troubling gendered norms.

The chapter then moved on to outline a synthetic discursive understanding of subjectivities. Discourses provide subject positions for habitation, and subjectivity may be viewed as the ensemble of subject positions within which a person is habitually located (Wetherell, 1998). These subject positions are both 'conferred from above' in a top-down fashion by available discursive resources, and also agentively taken up or resisted in a bottom-up manner by individual subjects according to the interactive demands of the moment (Bamberg, 2004; Davies & Harré, 1990; Taylor & Littleton, 2006; Wetherell, 1998). Butler (2004) discusses how the self can only recognise itself from a distance, reflected by others. The self is thus crucially social, and dependent on the recognition of others for existence (Lloyd, 2007). The intervention aimed to provide recognition to participants in a number of diverse discursive fields as a way of promoting connections and communication between their varying subject positions, as a way of promoting reflexivity and connections with others.

Whilst feminist post-structuralism provided the underlying theoretical impetus for this intervention, it does not speak to practical issues of implementation. For this reason I supplemented it with Freire's theories of critical consciousness and his teachings on the means of promoting such consciousness through dialogical pedagogy. Friere (1993/1970; 2003/1973) believed that in order to overcome situations of disadvantage, oppressed people need to develop an understanding of how social conditions have fostered this disadvantage, and then they need to develop some kind of collective action to resist or transcend these oppressive conditions (Campbell & MacPhail, 2002). Freire called this development 'critical consciousness'. He also believed that such consciousness does not develop outside of dialogue, and he went on to establish his theories of dialogical pedagogy. Dialogical pedagogy is based on horizontal relations between learners and educators, a problem-posing rather than prescriptive approach to content that is contextually situated within the lives of the learners, and an action orientation which aims to transform the oppressive situation (Freire, 1993/1970).

Although Freire does not theorise a completely discursively constituted subject, he places strong emphasis on dialogue, and there are natural convergences between his liberatory impetus and post-structural agendas which attempt to deconstruct power imbalances. I view the post-structural concept of discursive troubling as being necessary to promote critical consciousness, as troubling enables unjust, underlying power inequities to be brought to visibility. Freire's theories do not take cognisance of the multiplicity of power vectors, instantiated discursively, and an infusion of his

pedagogical theories with post-structuralism adds substantial depth to his underdeveloped concept of power.

Having described the two complementary theoretical bases upon which this intervention was established, the chapter then stated the research questions which innervated the study. The overarching question was: In what ways did this dialogical sexuality intervention highlight gendered norms, foster critical consciousness around such norms through troubling them, and provide recognition to participants?

The chapter moved on to outline the methodological approach of the project, which was based on action research principles. These principles encompass an attempt to bring about change and generate solutions at the same time as promoting understandings of the change process (Kagan et al, 2008; Meyer, 2000). The change that the group intervention attempted to promote was: to increase participants' conscientization/critical awareness around gendered norms; to help soften rigid gendered boundaries by troubling normative gendered practices and bringing alternative subject positions into visibility; and to provide participants with recognition in their varying subject positions. It is also hoped that broader change in the school sexuality education and the Department of Basic Education sexuality education policies will be promoted through the feedback that will be given to each of these institutions. In terms of contributing to social science, it is hoped that this action research will contribute to scholarly knowledge on sexuality interventions.

The project was then described in detail. The first step of the intervention, namely consultation with stakeholders, occurred in 2012 with two separate projects that were conducted at the school where the intervention took place. A brief descriptive thematic analysis was conducted on the data from these projects. Results revealed that strongly gendered norms held sway in the school, and that sexuality education focuses on abstinence and the 'dangers' of sex. Although sexuality education classes attempted, at times, to promote discussion, learners did not experience classes as safe places in which they could ask questions or share opinions. This consultative process indicated that learners did not have a safe and non-judgemental space where they could ask questions and discuss issues relevant to their own sexual and gendered lives. My aim was to provide such a space with the intervention.

The next step of the intervention was to institute the project. Gatekeepers were contacted, participants were recruited, and I used Freirian principles to initiate a critical dialogical sexuality intervention. Fourteen participants signed up, and three dropped out through the course of the intervention. A total of 10 sessions were conducted. Each session was planned in a semi-structured manner, based on the discussions of the previous week, and on participant feedback. Ice-breaker

activities were designed to promote bonding, and positive self- and other-positioning. Discussions focused around various issues pertaining to sexuality and gender, and sometimes a physical activity was incorporated to provide an enjoyable non-verbal activity, and/or to enable non-verbal expression of sexual or relational themes. Participant feedback on the intervention was sought verbally in a number of sessions, and participants filled out a written evaluation at the end of the intervention. I kept a detailed diary throughout the intervention, and recorded my observations and responses during the intervention.

Sessions were video and audio recorded, and those portions of the recordings which contained sexual or gendered themes, or which had feedback on the group, were transcribed. The transcriptions, my diary entries and written evaluations were imported into an NVivo10 software programme, and a thematic analysis was conducted on the data, following the steps outlined by Braun and colleagues (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun et al, 2015). Codes within the data were identified on the basis of whether a recurring pattern or meaning embedded either sexual/gendered norms and subject positions, or an evaluation of the group.

I conducted a discursive thematic analysis of the sexual and gendered themes that arose within the group talk, and the way that sexual/gendered discourses embedded societal norms and provided subject positions for the participants. I also analysed how dominant sexual/gendered discourses were troubled or reinforced within the group interaction. This analysis is presented in the first analysis chapter, which follows directly after this one. I then conducted a process thematic analysis on the dialogical processes occurring in the group, and a descriptive thematic analysis of feedback, and this is presented in the second analysis chapter.

Chapter 4: Baseline data and discursive sexual themes within the group's talk

Introduction

In this chapter I conduct a brief descriptive thematic analysis of the pertinent data that was gathered in 2012, and the initial consultation with the school principal in 2014. This analysis was one of the sources of information upon which the group intervention was based. I move on to analyse data from the group intervention through a discursive thematic analysis on the sexual and gendered themes that were identified in the group talk, and the sexual and gendered norms that were embedded within these themes. Three overarching themes were identified: a theme relating to the physical aspects of sex and sexuality, a relational theme, and a theme relating to same-sex desire and sex. I shall term these 'the physicality of sex', 'the relationality of sex' and 'same-sex desire and sex'. Participants were highly invested in talking about the physical aspects of sex, including female sexual desire, risks and safe sex, and masturbation, and they were also very engaged with the topic of 'cheating' (unfaithfulness). However, apart from cheating, it was harder to generate talk around other relational aspects of sex such as love and emotions. One group member openly shared about her same-sex desires, and thus there was significant talk about female same-sex, but there was a marked silence regarding male same-sex. When this topic did come up, awkwardness and censure prevailed.

Normative gendered assumptions were evident throughout the talk – at times challenged or troubled, and at times reinforced - and these will be highlighted through the discussion. The times when inequitable gendered norms were surfaced and troubled are taken as signs that critical consciousness was being promoted amongst the participants.

Threaded through the discursive thematic analysis is a process thematic analysis as I reflect on processes that were occurring within the group, and the manner in which conscientisation was happening around gendered norms. There were indications that the group process of explicating that which is often left implicit or unarticulated may have contributed to normalising some devalued or illegitimate aspects of sexuality, specifically female sexual desire, masturbation, and female same-sex.

1. Baseline data

Sexual and gendered themes that arose from the 'post-secrets' exercise, conducted with all four English medium Grade 9 classes in the first term of 2012, included: shame (at being a virgin; at being sexually active; at being rejected by a partner; at having a child); fear of the 'dangers' of sex; and

confessions about dating other peoples' partners ('cheating'). These themes speak to a need for learners to be able to talk about sexual issues in a non-judgmental context.

Themes from the Grade 10 learner focus groups and interviews, and LO teacher and principal interviews, revealed the following aspects: Regarding gendered expectations, the 'ideal' female is expected to be quiet, not express anger, look good, not initiate kissing or dating, remain monogamous, and sleep with a boyfriend in order to ensure that he stays with her. The 'ideal' male is expected to be a 'player' (have multiple partners), and also initiate dating, play sport, dress nicely, have a muscular body, and be somewhat rowdy. Female same-sex relationships appear to have a measure of acceptance in the school, while male same-sex relationships are seen as disgusting.

Regarding sexuality education in the school, the LO teacher and principal acknowledged the importance of it, but the LO teacher felt that LO is under-valued as a subject, and that when there is a shortage of teachers, LO is the first subject to be compromised. There was an emphasis on abstinence until marriage and on the negative aspects of sex (unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections), both in LO lessons and in school assemblies. Some learners felt that such lessons were disconnected from the realities of their lives, and they expressed a desire to learn about how to enhance pleasure during sex, and about specifically physical aspects of the sex act, including same-sex acts. Whilst teachers acknowledged the need for learners to ask questions and share opinions in sex education classes, learners stated that this was not possible as the classes were rowdy and learners would be judged negatively if they did so. The classroom observations of sexuality education lessons noted that some lessons were chaotic, with a lack of respect being displayed by some learners for the teachers and other learners. Boys in particular were disruptive during the lessons. There was some attempt at promoting discussions but this led to increased unruliness, and the teachers tended to resort to transmission teaching methods on how to avoid the dangers of sex.

Thus, strongly gendered norms appear to hold sway in the school, although lesbianism seems to be gaining a measure of acceptance. Sexuality education focuses on abstinence and the dangers of sex, and classes are not perceived to be safe places in which to share opinions or ask questions. These themes speak to a need for discussions about sex and gender in a safe and non-judgemental atmosphere, where learners can ask questions and voice opinions about topics that they are interested in. This was therefore one of my aims in developing the current intervention.

In my consultation with the principal in 2014 (who was previously the LO teacher interviewed in 2012), she reiterated her valuing of sexuality education, and talked about three learners (one male and two female) whom she either knew or believed to have same-sex desires. She was concerned

about the homophobic culture of the school and community, and expressed a hope that the one female learner, who was in Grade 9 at the time, would attend my intervention the following year. She mentioned that the school was short of LO teachers, and that some classes were not receiving LO because of this. I had hoped to consult further with her, and possibly the current Grade 10 LO teacher if there was one, at the start of 2015 when I initiated the research at the school. However, she was extremely busy with the start of the school year, and it was difficult even to organise the practicalities of recruiting participants and setting up the group meetings with her. This highlights the realities of working in an under-resourced school.

I now move on to provide a discursive thematic analysis of talk within the group that embedded gendered or sexual themes, and supplement this with a process thematic analysis to elucidate the dialogical processes occurring in the group.

2. *Theme one within the group talk: the physicality of sex*

There was significant talk in the group discussions about a number of physical aspects of sex, including female sexual desire, risks and safe sex, the female condom, masturbation, and how lesbian sex is performed. This indicates a curiosity regarding the act of sex on the part of the participants, and may be a reflection of the developmental stage at which they were at, as participants had either recently started having sex, or may have been contemplating having sex in the near future. I will discuss participants' curiosity about lesbian sex in the third theme, but I will analyse other sub-themes in the sections below.

2.1. An emerging discourse of female sexual desire

Whilst both male and female sexual desire was talked about, male desire was mentioned as a given, whereas female sexual desire was spoken about with qualifiers and laughter, as well as curiosity.

Session 1[5]

Pm[6]: But (.)/R: ja?/ but us boys, we have a problem /R: mm/ we desire having sex /R: mm hmm/ we think about it all the time /R: mm hmm/
Tm: That's true ja
R: Do you think girls think about it?
Tm: I think so ja =
Pm: Yes yes they do /Lm: yes/=
Nf: yes we do *yhu hayi* ((oh no)) =
Pm: Sex =
Zf: Yes we do *hayi* ((no)) we do =
Nf: We think about sex /F: Ja/ yes we do, we get those sometimes (.) I'm gonna be honest (.) sometimes I do get sex::ually [aroused]

[5] See appendix I for transcription conventions
[6] Participants are designated by the initial of their pseudonym, followed by /f/ or /m/ to indicate their gender

Phelani's use of the phrase "us boys" excludes females from the "problem" of desiring sex. I was able to trouble this exclusion, and open up space for the acknowledgement of female desire, but Noluvuyo's qualifier "I'm gonna be honest" before 'confessing' to becoming sexually aroused, and her hesitant articulation of the word "sex::ually" indicates that female desire is, if not shameful, then at least a private and confidential matter.

In the second session, during the debate about whether it is good for a man to have sex with lots of different women before he gets married, the girls drew strongly on a discourse of female desire to argue for the topic.

Session 2

Nf: We as girls decided that it is good because we (.) we as girls we also love /*girls laugh*/ to taste the guys' penis s::o /*boys laugh*/. So if you go around you know (.) giving us sex then it will be good because we also wish to taste the guys (.) even if he is married (.) there wouldn't b::e (.) like that because we know that we're from there /*LAUGHTER*/

This deployment of a discourse of female desire indicates the availability of this discursive resource within the participants' context, but the parodic use of it, as indicated by the laughter, shows that 'normal' sexual desire is male. Nevertheless, Noluvuyo's (Nf) parody of male desire troubles the gendered assumptions within this norm, and she successfully subverts the male focus of the debate topic ("It is good for a *man* to have sex with lots of women") by foregrounding women's desires, and making women the subject of her argument.

There was interest around the nature of female arousal. In the extract below, Luyanda (Lm), eager to demonstrate his knowledge of female sexuality, co-opts female arousal into a male paradigm where arousal is measured by external hardening. However, the females resist this colonisation, and Lindelwa (Lf) wants to understand and talk about her own experiences of sexual arousal.

Session 5

R: Ok, it's nearly half past three, time to pack up

….

Lf: Sorry ma'am how does a girl get horny?

Lm: I can tell you that

Lf: *wathini* ((what do you say))

Lm: E:rr it's easy (.) the boobs g:o harder =

Of: That's not true =

Lf: 'Cause (.) I always know is that (.) ok let me talk about myself (.) when I'm kissing my boyfriend and then you know um our private parts touch, touch each other, so I got that feeling (.) so I think that I'm horny or what? /R: Mm hmm /Nf: yes/

Lf: Oh

R: Ja (.) it's that feeling /Lf: oh/ in the private area /*LAUGHTER*/

Nf: Private area /*laughs*/

Lf: Alright

The session from which this extract was taken had only five participants present. It had started with some very personal sharing of things that made participants happy and unhappy, and then moved on to a discussion of masturbation and pornography. Hence, there was quite an intimate mood throughout. Lindelwa's question, coming after I had started to end the session, suggests that female sexual arousal was something she had been wanting to ask about but had been holding back on. This factor, as well as the laughter, again points to the sense of privacy or awkwardness that surrounds issues of female arousal.

Overall, the group's talk about female sexual desire suggests that, as a discourse in these participants' context, it is no longer 'missing' (Fine, 1988), and is beginning to emerge from the shadows of the dominance of masculine desire, yet is not yet fully within the ambit of 'normality'. Nevertheless, the fact that this group appeared to provide the context to enable this discourse to emerge openly suggests that the group assisted in its normalisation, and facilitated a conscientisation around the realities of female sexual desire.

2.2. Risks and safe sex

Previous studies have demonstrated that risk-aversive sexual discourses, which have been widely promoted in South Africa in an attempt to reduce HIV infection, have achieved wide penetration (for example, James, Reddy, Ruiter, McCauley & van den Borne, 2006; Jearey Graham, 2014). Despite this, such knowledges are often disconnected from the lived realities of young people's sexual lives (Jearey-Graham & Macleod, 2015). Participants in this study likewise demonstrated a clear knowledge of the risks associated with sex, with their recitation of a 'danger and disease' discourse. They also displayed a desire for more accurate information about the physical aspects of contraceptives. There were suggestions that the dialogical format of this intervention may have allowed participants to take up safe sex discourses in a more reflexive manner than their general context allows, which hopefully contributes to a lessening of the disconnect between safe sex messages and participants' own sexual realities.

2.2.1. A discourse of 'danger and disease'

As Macleod (2009, p. 375) has noted, South African sex education manuals are generally premised upon the "guiding metaphors" of "danger and disease". Participants in this study demonstrated that 'danger and disease' discourses were readily available in their discursive economy. For example, in arguing against the debate topic in session 2, Phelani recites the standard risk discourse of 'danger and disease':

Session 2

Pm: It's (.) it's not good for men err sleeping around because e::rr because you catch, infections like STIs and HIV/R: mm/ a::nd maybe (.) some point *mhlambi* ((maybe)) you sleep with a girl then sh::e (.) maybe he gets the girl pregnant /R: mm/ so he will have to quit school and go work you see /R: mm/ so that he can support the baby

Girls sometimes recited tropes of the same discourse to challenge masculine narratives of promiscuity, where the promiscuity was justified on the basis that 'protection' was available. For example:

Session 4

Sf: …let's say he says there's protection and then he gets drunk (.) then he's not in those minds that I must use protection (.) he wants this now and then he gets a disease

This female use of the 'danger and disease' discourse is unsurprising, given women's traditional positioning as sexual 'gatekeepers' who are expected to police and control their sexuality, and to manage 'risk' (Shefer & Ngabaza, 2015). However, it was more surprising when a male took up such a discursive resource. Sibongokuhle (Sm, below) draws off the 'danger and disease' discourse as he joins me in challenging Thulani, who was justifying his promiscuous lifestyle by claiming he needed to 'live life' whilst he was young, and that he would settle down and stick to one woman when he was older:

Session 4

R: Do you think if you (,) if you have a lot of sex now with beautiful girls you can leave it behind?
Tm: I can leave it behind and start a new Thulani again =
R: Ok and focus on one woman =
Tm: One woman (.) if I do it now (.) yho
Sm: I don't think that's a good idea /*Girl laughs*/
Tm: Why not?
Sm: Because you might catch some (.) diseases [Of: Diseases]

The laughter by a female after Sibongokuhle's initial challenge suggests that the use of such a discourse by a male was unusual or surprising.

Whilst the 'danger and disease' discourse was drawn on unreflexively during the debate in session 2, the spontaneous use of it at other times to challenge Thulani may indicate a more reflexive consideration of this discourse.

2.2.2. Condom curiosity

Whilst the male condom was spoken of casually, as a taken-for-granted aspect of young people's sex lives, there was curiosity around the female condom, and some misunderstandings of the female reproductive anatomy.

Session 2

Tm: How does how does a girl wear a condom (.) I hear outside there's a condom for girls, how does a girl wear a condom [Lf: Female condom]/*voices*/ female condom (.) how does she wear it?
R: I'm not very sure but it it goes inside /F: yes/ =
Sf: I have a catalogue (.) where a girl puts a condom inside
R: Ok (.) and does she have to insert it?
Sf: She puts it in (.) I have it at home it's got pictures, I took it at the clinic/Fs: jho *laughter*/ =
Tm: Aah bring it on Monday man I want to see =
F: *Inkulu ingathi yi-panty* ((it's big, almost like a panty)) =
Tm: *Hayi uze nayo* ((no you must bring it)) =
R: Ja I think it's bigger than the male condom =
Sf: It's b::ig it has a (inaudible) like (.) it fits in your womb =
Pm: Does it come with sizes
Nf: /*laughs*/ *uphambene* ((you're mad)) Phelani =
[*giggling throughout this discussion on female condom*]

Thulani's (Tm) insistence that Sinalo (Sf) brings a female condom to the group, and Phelani's (Pm) question as to whether it comes in different sizes, indicates their curiosity about matters pertaining to female sexuality, whilst the giggling again points to the awkwardness surrounding such matters.

Due to the group's curiosity, I obtained a female condom and we examined it in session 6. The participants were very interested and passed it round, commenting on how large it was, wanting to know whether it smelt bad (as the government-issue male condoms reportedly do), and how to use it. Sinalo explained how it should be inserted. Some participants expressed suspicion of it, claiming that it was "dangerous" (Tm), that it was "work" (Of), and that "it can go in" (Nf), suggesting that it may disappear into the womb. I tried to explain, by drawing a diagram on the board, that the vagina and the womb were separate, and that there was no risk of the condom entering the womb.

In session 7, I asked participants to reflect on previous sessions, and think about things they had enjoyed. One participant said she enjoyed learning "about how does a female condom looks like and how does it work" (Af). Later in that session, we discussed making a poster to display to others what the group had been about. Jaslyn (Jf) suggested sticking a female condom on the poster, which we did. In the final written evaluation, two participants indicated appreciation for learning about the female condom, and one participant wrote "I would have loved to know more about condoms. Like can you get HIV/AIDS even when you are using it or is it just preventing you from pregnancy."

This curiosity about condoms indicates participants' desire and appreciation for accurate knowledge about topics that they are interested in, such as sex, contraceptives and STI's. However, this action research shows how such knowledge is best gained through curious questioning, dialogue, demonstration and engagement rather than through facts presented in books or didactic lessons.

2.2.3. Participants' promotion of safe sex messages

When asked about what they had gained from the group that they would like to share with others, participants struggled to articulate something concrete, but when they did, they generally drew off 'safe sex' discourses. This may have been because such discourses are the ones sanctioned in a school setting – they are 'safe' messages to reproduce publicly in school. However, it may also indicate that the intervention had given the participants an opportunity to think about and discuss both 'safe' and 'unsafe' sexual practices, and to take up 'safe sex' discourses in a reflexive manner. For example:

Session 7

Zf: Ok (.) I was thinking that (.) when we are doing the poster then we should write something like to advise people what would you do (*unclear*) the good things you should do
R: Ok (.) so is it the kinds of good things you have =
[*Participants speaking at the same time***]**
R: Oh shush let's just listen to Zintle (.) so you are saying we could write on the poster (.) shush
Zf: To give them advice
R: Ok like what kind of advice?
Zf: The things that we talked about /*noise*/
R: What are the things that we talked about?
Jf: Not to have sex
Zf: And j:a to always use a condom during sex /R: mm/ like if (*inaudible*) /R: ok/ /*noise*/

"Not to have sex" and "to always use a condom" were messages that came from group members during the discussions, rather than from me. I wrote the following reflection in my diary after this session:

> Interesting that people seemed to be taking away a 'safe sex/faithfulness' message when that wasn't what I specifically introduced. But members would raise these discourses in answer to the 'pleasure' discourses that others brought. Maybe the discussions allowed members to take up a 'responsible' sexual position voluntarily, with a sense of choice/agency, rather than a sense of coercion.

Lindelwa, below, said that she wants to share the importance of "learn(ing) from our mistakes", even though, again, this was not a topic that was specifically addressed during the group discussions.

Session 7

R: … Is there anything that we've learned or that, something we've gained from this group that we would like to share with (.) the community, the school, the broader society?
/pause, 2 secs/
Lf: Yes ma'am (.) that we must learn from our mistakes /R: ok/ ja
R: Learn from our mistakes
Lf: Like ma'am (.) maybe if I slept with a guy without using a condom /F: yes/ so I must know that next time I must use it, so, ja.

The fact that 'learning from our mistakes' was a message that Lindelwa gained from the intervention, despite the fact that such a topic was not overtly discussed, indicates how a dialogical learning environment enables participants to individualise and personalise messages.

2.3. Masturbation

There was interest about masturbation, with some participants feeling that such a practice was "disgusting" and would cause harm, whilst others supported my implied position that it was a legitimate sexual activity. The talk was highly gendered, with participants attributing masturbation solely to males.

Session 2

Tm: There's a problem ma'am /R: ja?/ of boys masturbating /*LAUGHTER*/ it's a big problem ma'am …

Nf: Sorry ma'am (.) what is a masturbating =

Sf: *Kumanxa ndizobuza nam* ((I was also just about to ask the same thing))

R: Masturbation is when you use your (.) by yourself you use your hand to stimulate yourself sexually /O:H/JA/ and to bring yourself to orgasm **=**

…

[*Simultaneous conversations in isiXhosa*]

…

R: So Thulani you think it's a problem [Tm: yes it's a problem ma'am] why do you think it's a problem =

Tm: Because ma'am, in isiXhosa I can say it's ***amanyala*** ((something shameful)) (.) what's *amanyala* in English?

Mf: It's disgusting/Nf: disgusting ma'am/ =

Tm: It's disgusting ma'am /R: ok**/** *yho* ma'am masturbating yourself /*laughter*/ *hayi* ((no)) it's bad /*LAUGHTER*/ ma'am (.) God made, God made two people (unclear) /R: mm hm/ (.) a boy and a girl /R: mm?/ how can you masturbate yourself when there's a girl outside /*Laughter*/ you're masturbating yourself =

R: You're not gonna get pregnant or an STD that way /*LAUGHTER*/

Tm: *Haaa* ((no)) ma'am masturbating yourself =

Mf: It's safe sex, safe sex

R: It's very safe sex =

Thulani draws off a traditional heterosexual discourse that uses biblical creation narratives ("God made two people…a boy and a girl") to construct the only 'natural', God-given sex as being that between a male and a female, and any other sexual activity to be unnatural, shameful and disgusting.

Thulani's initial comment sparked much laughter and conversation, so I made masturbation the topic of discussion in session 5. There were only five participants present in that session, and Thulani was absent. When participants were asked what they understood masturbation to be, two girls answered that it was something that males do when aroused and unable to have sex with a girl. I was able to challenge this gendered assumption, as shown below:

R: Is it something that only guys do? /NO/[*giggles*] Girls also do it /P: ja/ often I think more guys do it than girls, but there are certainly some girls that do it, some girls don't

The giggles that arose when participants agreed that masturbation was not something that only males engaged in again suggests that matters pertaining to female sexual arousal are embarrassing.

When asked, in session 5, if masturbation was a good or bad thing, three participants (Luyanda, the only male present, Zintle, and Oyama) argued that "It's not a bad thing", asking how else a person is expected to deal with arousal when they are not able to have sex, whilst Lindelwa felt that it was wrong and could "hurt your private parts". She argued that it would be better for a boy to find a girl to have sex with than to masturbate. This debate around the legitimacy of masturbation indicates the competing discourses in the participants' discursive milieu, with traditional discourses about masturbation being shameful and harmful being pitted against more contemporary ideas of masturbation being normal and natural.

In session 8, whilst working on the poster, participants conversed amongst themselves in isiXhosa about a number of topics, and my transcriber picked up this question from Zintle (f) to Oyama (f):

Session 8
Zf: Oyama *u-mastrubatile* ((do you masturbate))?

This snippet of spontaneous conversation suggests that the previous discussions about masturbation helped to normalise and de-stigmatise the practice (particularly amongst females), opening a space for participants to talk about it amongst themselves.

2.4. The relative absence of 'abstinence'

The only time abstinence from sex came up as a topic was in the extract below. I had raised the topic of gender, and I quoted a participant's comment from an earlier session, in which she said "A guy will break up with a girl if she does not satisfy him."

Session 6
R: How is a girl expected to satisfy her boyfriend?
Am: Thulani? [*pause, giggles*]
Tm: Sex
R: Through sex (.) and what if a girl wants to stay a virgin?
Tm: Yho /Fs: yho,yes/Cf: *Hayi yhu* ((no gosh))/Jf: *Uthini* ((what is she saying)) =
Af: *Nixolele uyekana naye* ((you would rather break up with her)) she wants to stay a virgin
…
Lm: Or you wait whilst you still having sex with another girl =
…
R: Do you have to have sex in a relationship?
Lm: Yes
Af: There's no need =
Jf: mm mm [*shakes head*] =

R: And what if you just want to kiss I mean there was somebody in one of my groups (.) there were there were some people who can go out for two years just kissing and cuddling and they know they want to stay virgins /P: yho/(.) Do you think that's possible?
Af: Yes it is/F: yes/Lm: It depends/Nf: It <u>is</u> possible/Of: Yes it depends/
R: Mm. I suppose it depends on what?
Nf: Possibility =
Lm: Comfortability of the person
Af: Patience/Tm: and patience /Of: yes/
R: I suppose it depends if you both agree (.) if you both agree to it and then maybe you can work it that way

In this extract, I was challenging the notion that it is compulsory to have sex in a relationship. Abstinence did not come up again as a topic. However, in the written feedback (see appendix H), four participants mentioned either appreciating talk about abstinence, or wanting to discuss it more, as shown below:

- Participant B: (*What did you like about the group?*)... I like the abstain from sex the most. (*What could Nicola have done better?*) Explain us why not.
- Participant A: (*what topics/activities did you find useful?*) I liked teenage pregnancy. I found it useful because it taught me to abstain from being absent ((sexually active)).
- Participant H: (*What topics/activities did you find useful?*) Abstaining from sex, I really liked the reasons of the group members on why we should abstain.
- Participant D: (*What other topics/activities would you have liked to have been included, but weren't?*) Well, I would've liked to talk about abstinence and self respect, like exploring more of how to deal and why abstinence is safe and important.

On the poster, made in the final two sessions to display in assembly, participants wrote a heading "Safe Sex", and stapled on male and female condoms. Masenya wrote, under this heading "But! Abstinence is always the BEST OPTION".

The feedback, and Masenya's injunction on the poster, indicate that abstinence is a practice that some participants believe in, and with which they would like assistance. Participant B would have liked me to "explain ... why not (to have sex)", and Participant D would have liked to have talked more about why abstinence "is safe and important". Whilst participants demonstrated a clear understanding of the 'dangers' of sex, so presumably knew why abstinence is "safe and important" from a physical point of view, these participants were possibly asking for a deeper exploration of the reasons for abstinence, perhaps from a relational or moral perspective. More importantly, Participant D wished to "explore... more of how to deal". She may have wanted a discussion on how to negotiate sexual refusal, or of 'how far to go' in terms of physical contact and petting with a romantic partner when she didn't wish to have full sex.

The fact that abstinence was relatively silenced as a topic in the discussions, despite being important to some participants, suggests that there was possibly some discomfort with admitting to a desire to

abstain from sex in front of peers. Whilst abstinence is promoted in many sexuality education lessons, previous research has shown how sexual activity is often perceived as crucial in promoting a young person's social standing amongst peers (for example, Jearey Graham, 2014; Macleod & Jearey-Graham, 2015). Indeed, being a virgin beyond a certain age is seen as shameful in many contexts (Jearey Graham, 2014). This suggests that open discussions about abstinence within a dialogical context may be important to normalise and de-stigmatise the practice, as well as to provide practical advice on how to negotiate abstinence for those who wish to practice it. Indeed, Luker (2006) is of the opinion that abstinence-only sexuality education in the United States does provide social support for those young people who wish to maintain abstinence.

Overall, this theme of the physicality of sex indicates participants' desire to talk about the physical aspects of sex. They were eager to talk about both the dangers and the pleasures of sex, and were curious about sexual aspects that they knew less about, such as female sexual arousal, and the female condom. Their talk revealed heavily gendered norms around issues of sexual arousal and masturbation, with the assumption being that these are male issues, not female ones. The dialogical processes within the group were able bring these norms to visibility and trouble them to an extent, thereby hopefully raising participants' critical consciousness regarding female sexuality. However, abstinence remained a silenced discourse, indicating that this topic needs to be more deliberately explored in dialogical groups.

3. Theme two within the group talk: the relationality of sex

Participants spontaneously raised the topic of 'cheating' (being unfaithful to a partner), and this generated a great deal of conversation over a number of sessions. Other participant-generated relational sexual themes such as love, sexual negotiation and communication, and conflict resolution were minor, and these were issues that I tended to raise. I found that my impetus was to introduce more relational and emotional discourses into the conversation, although I was conflicted at times as to whether this was an appropriate 'socialisation' process, or an inappropriate 'colonisation' of participants' discursive space with my own agenda and beliefs about healthy sexuality. However, there were suggestions that some participants began to follow my lead in later sessions by taking up more relational tropes when discursively constructing sexuality.

3.1. 'Cheating'

In session 1, Thulani told a narrative, with Phelani's permission, about Phelani cheating on his girlfriend. 'Cheating' was a theme within the debate topic of session 2, and in session 3, when we discussed what topics to discuss in future sessions, we agreed that we would discuss "cheating and faithfulness" in the following session, which we did. I wrote a vignette around the topic of

unfaithfulness which we discussed in the final session, and the topic also came up spontaneously in other sessions, indicating participants' high investment in this issue. There were two sub-themes within the topic of 'cheating', namely, a highly gendered one where it was asserted that it is not guys' fault if they cheat, then also a discussion of the pain of being cheated on.

3.1.1. "It's not our fault that we cheat"

In session 4, Phelani discussed how boys will cheat if they are experiencing stress in their relationship with their girlfriend, or if their girlfriend cheats first. However, when he was challenged about how a girlfriend would react if her boyfriend cheats first, a highly gendered norm was brought to visibility.

Session 4
Pm: …if she does it first then you might as well
R: Then you will do it /Pm: ja/ and if he does it first, what does she do?
Pm: *Hayi* ((no)) she has to find a way to forgive him /*LAUGHTER*/
R: What did he say?
Tm: She has to find a way to forgive him
R: Oh she has to find a way to forgive him =
Pm: Because guys *nhe* ((right)) (1) it's not our fault that we cheat (1)
R: Oh?
Pm: Really /R: u-huh/ (1) /*LAUGHTER*/
R: It's not your fault that you cheat /Pm: ja/ what what =
Pm: It's based on the situation of the relationship /R: ok/ of what's going on
R: So if there's stress in the relationship, that causes the guy to cheat =
Pm: But then some of the girls when they see a guy in a relationship they also want that guy so (2) some girls will seduce the guy
R: So another girl might seduce the guy /Pm: ja/. Does she force him to, does she rape him[7]? /Fs: *LAUGHTER/*
Pm: No she doesn't [F: she doesn't] she doesn't rape him (.) but the guy, sometimes he has anger *nhe* ((right)) ((*inaudible talk in Xhosa, laughter*))
……
R: Ok. Thanks Phelani. … so you're saying that it's not really a guy's fault if he cheats /Pm:ja/ because either it's the stress in his relationship or another girl seduces hi:m /Pm: ja/ ok, now what if what if the girl cheats (.) is that not really the girl's fault either?
Pm: It's hard for a guy to forgive a girl
R: It's hard for a guy to?
Pm: To forgive a girl =
Sm: Why =
Tm: When she cheats =
Pm: I don't know =
F: *Kodwa bekulula apha kuthi* ((but it sounds easy for us))
…..
R: Ok, what do the girls think about what Phelani said?
…..
[*Silence from girls; interruption as one girl changed places; I summarise Phelani's argument*

[7] Phelani sadly did not return to the group after this session. He may have found my blunt and somewhat mocking challenge to be overly threatening

and repeat my question; answer from Thulani that he simply forgives a girl by cheating on her with another]

….

Nf: Yho ma'am it's very hard, for us to forgive them, ja

R: You think it's hard for girls to forgive a guy

Tm: How do you know

Of: *Hee hayi* ((oh my gosh)) Themba

Nf: It's very hard ma'am because (.) knowing that h::e has been having an affair with another girl, and now he's back for you, you think, you think twice should I break up with him or should I just (.) so it's very hard for me there /R: mm/ knowing that, knowing that he was cheating with another girl, (.) so you are not satisfying [Of: satisfying him] him /R: mm/ so ja

Phelani argues that, as well as cheating because of relational stress or unfaithfulness in a partner, a guy may also cheat because of being seduced by another girl. He asserts that none of this is the guy's fault, so his girlfriend would need to forgive him for such misdemeanours. Phelani's notion of the 'forgiving girlfriend' draws off what Jewkes and Morrell (2010) maintain is "the dominant ideal of (South African) femininity, (which) embraces compliance and tolerance of violent and hurtful behaviour, including infidelity." (p. 1). However, different standards apply if it is the girlfriend who is being unfaithful, as Phelani claims that "it's hard for a guy to forgive a girl." Two people quietly challenged this discrepancy: Sibongokuhle (m), with his question "Why?", asked for an explanation as to why it's "hard for a guy to forgive a girl", and one girl commented in Xhosa "*Kodwa bekulula apha kuthi* ((but it sounds easy for us))", referring to Phelani's assertion that a girl needs to "find a way to forgive (her boyfriend)". However, it took a lot of work to explicate this challenge, suggesting that it was hard for participants to name this gendered inequity more openly in this session. (This will be discussed further below). When Noluvuyo eventually complied with my requests for elaboration, she discussed the pain that a girl would feel if her boyfriend cheated on her, yet still drew on a traditional heteronormative discourse such that a girl is expected to "satisfy" her boyfriend.

Later in the conversation, Thulani spoke quite vulnerably about his reasons for having multiple partners. His arguments also reinforced the sub-theme that "It's not our fault that we cheat."

Session 4

Tm: ... for example I'm dating Oyama /R: ja/ I'm dating Oyama maybe f::or 10 months /R: mm/... this boy comes along … and tells Oyama that he loves her /R: mm/ Oyama says yes /R: mm/ I love Oyama, I've dated Oyama for 10 months I've told Oyama my secrets, my weaknesses and my strengths, she knows everything about me /R: mm/ what would I do? /F: yho/ ...

....

R: Are you saying that you would cheat just because you don't want to get to a point /Tm: yes/ where you get hurt by a girl /Tm: yes ma'am/ ok (.) so it's almost a way to protect your heart /Tm: ja ma'am/ ok

....

Tm: Ma'am the point is (.) maybe Oyama breaks my heart, what would I do because maybe I'm

dating Oyama alone (.) <u>what</u> should I do =

Thulani indicates that if he was faithful to one girl, she could break his heart if she cheated on him, so he forestalls this possibility by having multiple partners. Whilst this argument draws off a romantic discourse of 'broken hearts' rather than a gendered discourse, it still reinforces the assertion that "It's not our fault that we cheat."

Nevertheless, there was some troubling of this sub-theme. The conversation below occurred just before the extracts cited above.

Session 4

Pm: The reasons why boys get another girlfriend is because /*laughs*/ it's because, there are problems in the relationship [Lf: They're not satisfied] =

Tm: So *uzama ukuthi wena <u>soze</u>, umntu avele acheate nje espacini* ((so you mean that a person would <u>never</u> just cheat out of the blue/for no reason))

Pm: *Mna ndiyakwazi ukucheata espacini andazi uba kutheni* ((I have cheated for no reason before, I really don't know why I did it))

Tm: *Nantso ke* ((exactly))

Pm: N*diyakwazi ukucheata espacini* ((I can cheat for no reason))

In this extract, Thulani challenges Phelani's claim that boys are unfaithful only because of relational problems, and Phelani agrees that there have been times when he has cheated for no (apparent) reason. When speaking to me in the extracts above, Phelani presents rational, logical (although highly gendered) reasons for why boys cheat and why it is not their fault, but when speaking to Thulani, his peer, he confesses his own confusion over why he cheats sometimes. Although Thulani proceeded to translate the gist of this part of the conversation for my benefit, there is a sense that the boys' use of Xhosa here acts to keep my critical, gender-troubling probes out of the conversation, at least temporarily, and allows the boys to speak more vulnerably with one another.

Later in the session, the girls also challenged the boys around their supposed lack of culpability in the face of seduction by other females. Zintle (f) suggested that boys could simply tell the females who are after them that they are dating someone else, although Sibongokuhle (m) still maintained that any seduction was the fault of the seducing woman, who would pursue despite attempts by the man to follow Zintle's suggestion.

Session 4

Zf: Um, it's easy you just tell them to leave you alone 'cause you're dating someone else, you're with someone /Af: *Qha* ((exactly))/Nf: *Qha!* ((exactly!))

Tm: *Hayi hayi* ((no no))

Sm: *Uyabona kengoku kubekho aba bantwana bathi bangafuniyo ukumamela la-way because kukho ababantwana ubaxelela intoba no man ndiyakuthanda noba unganobani ndiyakuthanda qha* ((and then you see, there are those girls who won't listen, they will tell you "it doesn't matter who you're with I love you that's all"))

This theme about the lack of culpability of males if they cheat on their sexual partners reinforces patriarchal norms that place blame on females for males' unfaithfulness – either the male's partner is to blame for (a) "not satisfying" him, or (b) allowing stress to enter the relationship, or, in the worst-case scenario, (c) cheating on him; or another female is to blame for seducing him and luring him away from his girlfriend. Whilst I was able to bring to visibility this patriarchy by asking if females' cheating is also not their fault (see the first extract in this sub-section), the female participants were not able to embrace this anti-patriarchal impetus fully in session 4. However, previously in session 3, Oyama (f) had drawn on feminist/egalitarian tropes to challenge masculine unfaithfulness:

Session 3
Of: Like I'm faithful to him, so why is it hard for him to be faithful to me

I was therefore surprised in session 4 that Oyama and other girls did not take up my invitation to anti-patriarchy. However, an analysis of the demographics of the sessions reveals that there was only one male present in session 3 (Thulani), whereas all four males were present in session 4. Taking up anti-patriarchal/ feminist/egalitarian arguments in the presence of four male peers was possibly too threatening for the assembled girls. As previous research has shown (for example, Jearey Graham, 2014; Jewkes & Morrell, 2010), the subject position of 'compliant girlfriend' is compulsory in many contexts in order to be evaluated as a successful woman, and taking up such feminist arguments may have been perceived as jeopardising the girls' reputations as good 'girlfriend' candidates amongst male peers.

Nevertheless, the girls did trouble the norm of males' lack of culpability in a partial manner by reflecting on the pain that cheating causes a female partner. And this theme of emotional costs was the second sub-theme within the topic of 'cheating'.

3.1.2. The emotional costs of being cheated on

In the first extract in section 3.1.1, from session 4, Noluvuyo spoke about how hard it is if a boyfriend cheats, leaving his girlfriend feeling inadequate as she is not "satisfying" him. Although this argument leaves patriarchy unchallenged, it does call for more reflexivity on the part of males, asking them to consider the emotional costs of their infidelity on their girlfriends. It therefore provides a subtle troubling of this gendered norm, which may, ultimately, be more successful than a direct challenge to patriarchy as it does not cause resistance. In the extracts below, the pain that a partner would feel when cheated on is also acknowledged:

Session 3
Of: Like I'm faithful to him, so why is it hard for him to be faithful to me

R: Ok, so that would actually be hurtful to you /YES/ mm, and if a girl is unfaithful to a boy, how do you think a boy feels? /P: Yhu/

Lf: Disappointed =

Zf: Also hurt

Whilst Oyama (Of), above, applies egalitarian or equal rights discourses to the issue of faithfulness in session 3, challenging the notion that it is harder for males than for females to be faithful, I come in with an 'emotional costs' discourse, and invite participants to apply these costs equally to males and females. In the next session, Sibongokuhle (m) (who wasn't present in session 3) also draws off egalitarian and emotional costs discourses regarding forgiveness:

Session 4

Sm: Aahh ma'am, it's not easy for both of us t::o forgive each other, where ((whether)) a guy and ((or)) a girl

In session 6, I asked the participants to consider an earlier assertion of Phelani's, where he said "If a girl cheats, a guy will also, but if a guy cheats, the girl must forgive him". Building on my claim that cheating causes difficulties in a relationship, female participants acknowledged the break in trust caused by cheating, as shown below:

Session 6

R: Look I think cheating is difficult in a relationship if somebody cheats /Fs: yes/ it's difficult

Af: It will take a long time to regain trust /R: mm/

Nf: You can forgive but you cannot forget /R: mm/ yes trust is broken

Jf: Then you cannot trust him /R: you cannot trust him/ =

Of: Just like my situation [*giggling*]

R: Sex is actually quite a powerful thing /Nf: yho yes/ in a relationship. Sex brings you very close together /F: yes/ ja =

However, this emotional costs discourse, likewise, did not remain untroubled. Thulani claimed that he would not get hurt if his partner cheated on him, as he does the same. Jaslyn troubled the emotional costs discourse in a manner that contributed to reinscribing gendered norms as she talked about "letting" her boyfriend sleep with other girls:

Session 3

Jf: Ok I have one. /R: Mm?/ I have a boyfriend /R: y:es?/ /Jf: *Nervous laughter/Ps: laughter*/... I have one so he gives me everything /R: mm hmm?/ and I (.) maybe he wants to (.) *phofu* ((actually)) actually I told him he can cheat on me, maybe he wants to lie down with other girls I don't care (.)

R: Because he**=**

Jf: But he tells me

R: So he=

Jf: like I've done that with that girl

R: Ok (.) so he, he, also, sleeps with other girls?

Jf: Ja, I let him

R: But you don't mind also because he gives you lots of things?

Jf: (1) mm

R: ok so that makes you feel cared for? When he gives you things?
Jf: Mm/ R: ok/ **=**
Zf: I wouldn't like that =
R: So Zintle says she wouldn't like her boyfriend to be unfaithful to her /Zf: ja/ but it's something that you, don't mind so much? (.) Do you prefer him to be faithful? (Ps: *Inaudible)[Jf gestures to indicate 'maybe']R: nervous laughter*/ R: ok**/** *(inaudible*)*silence/* Jf: */*yho/F: yho

Jaslyn claims that she doesn't care that her boyfriend, who "gives (her) everything", has sex with other girls. My surprise at hearing this revelation is evident in the brokenness in my flow of speech (shown by (.) and the commas in my third utterance). Jaslyn denies any emotional pain from this ("I don't care"), and she asserts that she gives her boyfriend permission to be unfaithful ("I let him"), which helps to portray her as agentic in their relationship. When I suggest that she is content with this arrangement because of its transactional nature ("but you don't mind because he gives you lots of things?"), she hesitates before agreeing. This may have been because she had not understood her relationship in that light before, or because that was not, in fact, the case. She also remains non-committal when I ask if she would prefer her boyfriend to be faithful. My nervous laughter and the silences at the end of the extract indicates some awkwardness in this interaction – Jaslyn may have felt that she had already revealed more than she was comfortable with, and my attempts to clarify her emotional state within her relationship may have been experienced as intrusive.

However, in the last session, the influence of gendered norms regarding the necessity of being a girlfriend came to light. Jaslyn's responses to a vignette that I asked participants to discuss suggest that her acceptance of her partner's unfaithfulness was a pragmatic stance, as she did not seem to feel that all girls could realistically expect to have a boyfriend to themselves. She argues below, in Xhosa, that *"kaloku akasoze sibene boyfriend sonke"* ((the thing is we can't all have a boyfriend)). The implication here is that it is better to have an unfaithful boyfriend rather than no boyfriend.

Session 9
R: There's a girl called Nokuthula, she has a boyfriend and she knows that that boyfriend also sleeps with other girls /P: ok/ but he also buys her a lot of things, so what would you say to that girl?
Sf: And he sleeps with her?
R: Mm he sleeps with her as well
[*Participants speaking at the same time***]**
R: One at a time yes? Ja what were you saying, she should?
Sf: She should break up =
Jf: She should =
R: One at a time, yes Jaslyn, ja what were you saying, she should?
Jf: She should carry on with him /R: she?/ as long as her boyfriend uses protection with other girls /R: ja/ =
Sf: *Aqhubekeke ngoku elala nabo bonke* ((continue even though he sleeps with all of them?)) =
Jf: *Ee* ((ewe)) =
Sf: *Naye uNokuthula alale naye* ((Nokuthula as well must sleep with him?)) =
Jf: *Ewe naye uNokuthuthula asebenzise iprotection* ((yes and Nokuthula herself must also use

protection)) /Sf: never/ *kaloku akasoze sibene boyfriend sonke* ((the thing is we can't all have a boyfriend)) =

Sf: *hayi never, soze uxolo* ((no ways, never I'm sorry))

R: So you're saying she should continue with him as long as he is using protection /Jf: yes/ ok. Yes Sinalo?

Sf: I'm saying that she should just end it because it's more like he's buying her by those things /R: ok/ =

Zf: *Ha a hayi* ((no no))

R: What was that, what were you saying?

Zf: No she should break up with him

R: Ok, because why?

Zf: Why can't he just sleep with Nokuthula only /*mumbling*/ because if she, if he loves Nokuthula he should just sleep with her only /R: mm/ and forget about the other girls

Sinalo and Zintle identify the fictitious Nokuthula's relationship as illegitimate because it is transactional ("it's more like he's buying her by those things") or because it does not fit romantic ideals ("if he loves Nokuthula he should just sleep with her only"), but Jaslyn's responses suggest that the benefits accrued through being a girlfriend (either material benefits, or the status acquired through occupying the subject position of 'girlfriend') are worth the costs of unfaithfulness. Jaslyn therefore challenges the notion that unfaithfulness is always emotionally costly to the partner who is cheated on, but in so doing, she reinscribes gendered norms regarding the necessity of being a girlfriend.

This indicates how a dialogical sexuality group is not always able to challenge inequitable gendered norms, and how there are times when a particular heteronormative or patriarchal norm is reinforced rather than troubled, depending on the discursive resources that members bring to the group.

3.1.3. Conclusion: cheating

The participants' investment in the theme of cheating indicates that it is an important topic in the context of these young people's sexual and relational lives. Given that evaluations of successful masculinities and femininities are frequently premised on a person having a heterosexual partner (Jearey Graham, 2014), then it is understandable that cheating, either as a way of ensuring that you always have at least one partner (leading to greater positive evaluation), or as a threat to your current relationship (leading to reduced positive evaluation) is a topic into which young people need to invest much discursive energy.

Heavily gendered norms were revealed, whereby culpability for male unfaithfulness was laid at the door of females – either the girlfriend who wasn't satisfying her boyfriend or was causing stress in the relationship, or the seductive woman who lures the man away from his girlfriend. Whilst this norm was challenged to some degree in that the supposed difficulty for a male to maintain faithfulness was questioned at times ("Like I'm faithful to him, so why is it hard for him to be faithful

to me?”), the gendered interactional context disallowed such challenges at other times. Specifically, it appears that the presence of a greater number of males in session 4 (even though the males were still outnumbered by females) made it more difficult for the females to explicate the inequity of such gendered norms in this session.

Whilst the pain that unfaithfulness causes a partner was acknowledged by many participants, Jaslyn took a pragmatic approach to unfaithfulness, and she appeared to feel that the benefits gained from being a girlfriend are worth the costs of unfaithfulness. In this manner, she reinscribed gendered norms regarding the necessity of being a girlfriend in order to be positively evaluated.

Other relational themes within the group’s talk were largely initiated by me, as shown below. At times this was done in a rather ‘top-down’ manner as I planned a session around the nature of love, which was not something that had come up in earlier discussions. In later sessions, relational themes came up more spontaneously, which enabled a far more dialogical process to unfold.

3.2. Love and emotions

In the second session, during the debate on whether it is good for a man to have sex with lots of women before marriage, I found myself disappointed that the only sexual discursive resources drawn on were physical ones, relating to the dangers or pleasures of sex. Below is an extract from my diary, written after session 2:

Reflections on session 2

> Debate - I didn't feel it was successful really. The members didn't have a lot of arguments to draw on, although there was lots of laughing, and it led to lots of questions, mainly around the mechanics of sex e.g. how do lesbians do it …; is the female condom larger; does the female condom come in different sizes; wet dreams; and masturbation. So I guess the Q&A it generated was helpful, but I feel the group needs a broader range of discourses to draw on. In the guys' arguments against a man having lots of sex, they only drew on STI/pregnancy risk, and the girls (in arguing for it) only drew on a pleasure discourse (girls also want to "taste the man's penis") and on the necessity for a man to try out lots of different girls before settling on one for marriage. There was nothing about the emotional costs, even though I tried to ask whether sex was just about pleasure. I feel this needs to be a discourse that I introduce.

My reflections highlight the differences in my own investments in the emotional and relational aspects of sex, and participants’ investments in the physical aspects of sex. The reflections also indicate a failure of empathy on my part – because emotional discourses were not utilised in the debate, I considered it unsuccessful, even though it generated a great deal of discussion. I thus was unable, at that point, to empathise with participants’ desires to speak more about the physical aspects of sex as I was caught up with my own agenda about the relationality of sex. An example of this is shown below, where I tried to address this perceived gap in available relational discourses:

Session 2

R: … so we're talking a lot about the <u>physical</u> side of sex here, is there anything else to sex? [*silence and shuffling*] Mm? (2) Is there anything besides the physical feeling, you get horny, you wanna have sex, you get an orgasm you want to be satisfied is there anything else to sex =

Nf: To sex or through sex =

Sm: Passion =

R: To sex, passion, tell me about passion

Pm: *Yho hayke ininzi* ((oh well there's lots of it)) /*LAUGHTER*/

Sm: Feelings

R: Feelings /Sm: yes ma'am/ tell me about feelings

Sm: *Yho* ma'am

R: What kind of feelings are you talking about?

Tm: You feel like a man /Sm: You feel like a man/ =

….

R: Now what about u::m feelings about love, ok you talked about feeling like a man but you know, does it make you love the woman if you are a man, love a man when you have sex, helping your love

Nf: Oh *mna* ((I/me)) I normally do sex like girls

I was hoping to generate a discussion on the emotional aspects of sex in this extract, but Thulani (Tm) moved the conversation into gendered realms, and Noluvuyo (Nf) raised her own concerns about her same sex desires (this will be discussed in the section on same-sex desire and sex).

In session 3, I made the topic of discussion *What is love?* and we discussed different kinds of love. Whilst participants obediently answered my questions and engaged in some discussion, this felt more like a traditional lesson where the topic and the direction of discussion was led by myself. I reflected in my journal after this session that the exercise felt "lacklustre" and wrote the following:

Reflections on Session 3:

> I had struggled to plan the group. After the previous week's debate, in which no relational discourses were drawn on, I felt a need to introduce some relational tropes. So I used an exercise from the Stepping Stones manual to discuss love. But I was a little unsure about this - introducing my own agenda? But how does one conscientise the participants to the lack of relational discourses that are informing their sexuality? Can one conscientise without also, in some way, colonising? But maybe it can be seen more as a socialisation process rather than colonisation.

As I reflect now on the group processes, I realise that I was not following a Freirian pedagogical principle in my planning of Session 3, where *participant* identified problems and difficulties are presented back to participants for reflection and discussion. Instead, I used my power as the facilitator to introduce my own agenda in this session, in a colonising manner, and as a result, participants were not heavily invested in the topic. This indicates the importance of constant reflexivity as the facilitator, as the temptation to revert to one's own agenda is strong.

However, relational aspects of sex began to arise more spontaneously in later sessions, both from myself and from other participants. In session 6, after discussing how cheating leads to a break in

trust in a relationship, I talked about the emotional closeness that sex brings, and Zintle mentioned that sex "is not just for playing".

Session 6

R: Sex is actually quite a powerful thing /Nf: yho yes/ in a relationship. Sex brings you very close together /F: yes/ ja =

Zf: But nowadays yho *hayi* ((no)) boys like (.) /Tm: what/ boys rape [Nf: teenagers] rape people that need them but they forget that sex like, is not just for playing yes =

A little later in the session, we were discussing 'sex at a young age', which was a topic that one of the girls had raised. Luyanda (m) claimed that early sex is "practice" so that "you will know how to satisfy your wife once you get married". On asking other participants for comment on this, Oyama took up my earlier assertions about sex and commented as follows:

Of: Well like, he shouldn't practise sex on me (.) sex is supposed to be, as you said, it's supposed to be something that brings love and closeness /R: mm/ between me and you (.) but just practising *hayi* ((no)) it's not good

A question by Thulani (m) in session 8 suggested that he was beginning to consider relational aspects of sex more intentionally:

Session 8

Tm: Can I ask a question?

R: You can

Tm: Can sex solve a problem in a relationship?

Whilst it was me that introduced the notion of the emotional power of sex in session 6, the spontaneous manner in which I did so, and the way that it was taken up by participants, suggests that an appropriate conscientisation process was happening. This is in contrast to the colonisation that occurred in session 3 where I was imposing my pre-determined agenda on participants.

The participants' relative silence around the emotional aspects of sex, in contrast to their high investment in the physical aspects of sex, suggests that sexuality, in their context, is constructed primarily around the physicality of sex. This may partly be due to their developmental level, as it is likely that many of them were either anticipating or had recently initiated sex, so the physical aspects of sex may carry greater saliency for them at the moment. I, on the other hand, in my long term monogamous relationship of 23 years, am far more invested in the capacity for sex to promote emotional closeness, so my emphasis on the relationality of sex likewise reflects on the developmental level that I am at.

4. Theme three within the group talk: same-sex desire and sex

Noluvuyo spoke a great deal in the first two sessions about her sexual attraction to women rather than men, and expressed great relief at being able to talk about her "problem". She said that she felt that there was something wrong with her, and she claimed that she's not a lesbian, as she wants a

boyfriend and would like to get married one day. The responses of others in the group to her disclosures ranged from pejorative to accepting. Male homosexuality, on the other hand, was not a topic that featured strongly in the group talk, and when it did arise, it was labeled as “disgusting”.

The theme of same-sex desire and sex may be divided into sub-themes of the illegitimacy of female same-sex desires, the acceptance and normalization of such desires, and the silencing and denigration of male same-sex desires.

4.1. “I don’t know what’s wrong with me”: The illegitimacy of female same-sex desires

Noluvuyo repeatedly said “I don’t know what’s wrong with me” when talking about her same-sex desires, and some group members suggested that Noluvuyo was “confused”, or that female-female sex “was not sex” or was “a curse”. These sentiments indicate the devalued and illegitimate status of same-sex desire/sex.

Session 1

Nf: I get horny /*LAUGHTER*/ …but *ke* ((then)) I don’t know what’s wrong with it /*LAUGHTER*/ I really don’t know what’s wrong because when I (.)

R: When you get horny?

Nf: Yes, I I don’t wish to have sex with a male /R: mm hmm/ but I wish to have it with a female /*LAUGHTER*/

Tm: It’s not sex *mos* ((then)) if it’s gonna be with a female /*LAUGHTER*/

Nf: It’s not sex? /*laughs*/

Zf: Then what is it [Nf: What is it /*laughs*/]

Tm: *Hayi hayi hayi* ((no no no)) /*LAUGHTER*/ *hayi hayi hayi* ((no no no)) /*LAUGHTER*/

….

Nf: I really (.) I don’t know what’s wrong with me and (.) you know I’m so happy that we’re having this discussion I’ve always wanted to take this out….

….

Nf: I’m not a lesbian I like boys but I don’t get horny for boys, I only get horny for girls /Pm: you are a lesbian/… I want a boyfriend (R: mm hmm) I really don’t know what’s wrong with me /R: mm hmm/

Pm: You’re bisexual =

….

Nf: It’s a serious problem /*laughs*/

….

R: What do other people think?

Zf: Ok, I think she’s confused (.) ja she doesn’t know herself (.) she’s not sure about what she wants in life

….

Nf: I’m not a lesbian but /R: but some women are lesbians//Zf: yes/ when I see a girl (.) when I see a girl well shaped [*sigh]* I just go crazy /*LAUGHTER*/ I really don’t know, maybe I’ve got man’s genes and woman’s genes, all together, at the same time /*LAUGHTER*/

….

Nf: …please let’s do not take it outside I do not want to hear anybody saying “yhu she’s going to rape us” please because that’s /*LAUGHTER*/ a very big embarrassment=

R: Ja I think that is something we really need to keep confidential /F: ja/ can we all agree to that…

Later, Session 1
Nf: I think maybe I was born to date girls but I don't want to (.) admit it
….
Nf: But how can you be born for another lady (.) like you

Session 2

Nf: … I think there's something wrong about me
R: Do you think lesbians (.) there's something wrong with lesbians?
Nf: No [Tm: yes] I don't think that (.) but I'm not a lesbian /R: ok/ I'm not=
Pm: I think it's a curse=
Nf: *hee ((exclaims in disbelief))*
…
Sf: So *xa ungeyo-lesbian uyintoni* ((so if you're not a lesbian what are you))?
Nf: I really have no idea what I am /*laughs*/

There was a great deal of laughter when Noluvuyo first discussed her same-sex desires, indicating the abnormality of her revelations, and Noluvuyo's repeated assertions that she did not understand what was wrong with her bought into the dominant constructions of same-sex desires as abnormal. Her acknowledgement of this dominant construction had the rhetorical effect of shutting down criticism – because she bowed to the 'abnormality' of her desires, a space was opened up for others to be more accepting of them. This tactic was partially successful, as discussed in the next sub-section.

However, despite Noluvuyo's rhetorical strategies, she still faced censure from some group members. Thulani's claim that female-to-female sex "is not sex", presumably because there is no penile penetration, denies its legitimacy as a sexual practice, and Zintle labelled Noluvuyo as "confused". This suggests that Noluvuyo hasn't yet discovered 'real' or 'true' sex or sexual desires. In session 2, Thulani agreed that "there's something wrong with lesbians", and Phelani was even more pejorative, labelling lesbianism as "a curse", suggesting that it is harmful and evil.

There was an attempt by participants to fit Noluvuyo into a defined sexual category. Phulani, in session 1, labelled her as lesbian or bisexual, and in session 2, Sinalo asked "so if you're not a lesbian, what are you?" Noluvuyo's repeated assertion that she is not a lesbian points to the denigrated status of this sexual category, but also suggests that 'lesbianism' may not fully account for Noluvuyo's experiences of sexuality. It may be argued that her acknowledgement that "I really don't know what I *am*" (emphasis added) indicates recognition of the fact that gender is not an essence. Butler (1990) asserts that gender is a 'doing' rather than a 'being', and is a 'doing' on the surface of the body, rather than the expression of some innate essence of who we 'are'. By that argument, none of us know 'who we *are*' as gendered beings – we can only know 'what we *do*'. Butler also claims that gendered bodies are "so many styles of the flesh" (Butler, 1990, p. 190) with

highly variable boundaries. Thus, our gendered practices are fluid, defying easy categorisation.

Noluvuyo's ongoing questioning of her normality ("I really don't know what's wrong with me"; "How can you be born for another lady?"; "Maybe I've got a man's genes and a woman's genes altogether"; "I really have no idea what I am") points to the confusion faced by those whose sexual desires do not conform to dominant heterosexual, binaried categories. She also raised the topic of her same-sex desires whenever she could in the first two sessions, indicating a great need to talk about the issue. Her statement that "I've always wanted to take this out" suggests that she has not had licence to openly reveal her desires previously, highlighting the prevalent silencing of homosexuality. However, several times she requested that the group members keep her revelations confidential, knowing the censure she would face if her desires became public knowledge. This indicates the double-bind that people with same-sex desires in conservative cultures face – a need to talk about their desires as a way of self-performance, yet fearing the ostracization that would be a likely consequence of this.

In contrast to the denigration of same-sex desires, some group members expressed support and acceptance of Noluvuyo's feelings, and I attempted to normalise her experiences, as shown in the following section.

4.2. Normalisation of female same-sex desires

A discursive space which normalised lesbian desires and sex was opened up through several avenues. As well as my own attempts to legitimize Noluvuyo's experiences, which were supported by some participants, her open expression of her desires was a normalising practice in itself, enabling other participants to compassionately consider the subjectivity of someone who experiences such desires.

Session 1
Tm: It's not sex *mos* ((then)) if it's gonna be with a female /*LAUGHTER*/
Nf: <u>It's not sex?</u> /*laughs*/
Zf: Then what is it [Nf: What is it /*laughs*/]
….
Nf: … so when maybe I'm watching (.) Blue Movies /R: mm/ …I get horny for the lady /*LAUGHTER*/ not for the man, I really don't know what's wrong /*LAUGHTER*/
R: But do you think do you think, maybe uh, um (.) do you think other people feel that way? Or do you think you're the only one
Zf: Most of them /Nf: I think I'm the only one/ feel that way =
R: I don't think you're the only one
Lf: She's not
R: You're not the only one /Zf: You're not the only one/ =
Lf: Exactly ja =

Of: There are a lot of people out there, but you also want boys /*LAUGHTER*/ but she likes boys /R: mm hmm/

In the extract above, Zintle challenged Thulani's claim that lesbian sex "is not sex" with her question "Then what is it?", which implies that female-female sex is indeed legitimate sex. Zintle and Lindelwa also took up the opening that I offered when I asked Noluvuyo whether other people might also feel as she does, by affirming with me that she's "not the only one".

Noluvuyo herself resisted attempts by others to deny the reality of her desires or to claim that female-female sex was not true sex:

Session 2

Mf: Can I add to that /R: ja?/ sometime when girls are like that it's because they are afraid to have like, those intimate /Tm: ja/ like relationships /R: mm/ … so I think, from that point, she's too young to be actually, like that mentality, to know that (.) actually I don't have those kinds of feelings for boys =

Nf: I really don't though, really don't, <u>really really,</u> to be honest (.) I <u>really</u> get attracted by older and young women I don't know what's my problem really /*noise*/ =

….

Tm: … when she gets horny (.) she wants to have sex with a girl /R: mm/ it's not, it's no longer sex ma'am

….

Nf: But I've done it for two hours
/*LAUGHTER AND CLAPPING*/

….

Lm: I've got a question /*noise/* how do girls have sex =

R: Why don't you ask Noluvuyo

Lm: How do they do it /*LAUGHTER*/

….

Nf: … this is a girl and this is another girl [*holds up two fingers on each hand]* she opens her legs and then (*interlaces fingers*) you see /Fs: SIES/ /*LAUGHTER*/ you're making me feel bad now because you're saying "sies" [*participants speaking at the same time*]

Tm: *Hayi hayi akusiyo-sex mos le* ((no no that's not sex though)) /Sm: *Akusiyo sex* ((that's not sex))/

Masenya attempted to explain Noluvuyo's desires as being the result of a fear of intimate relationships, or because she is too young to know that she does not have sexual feelings for boys, but Noluvuyo was able to resist this very strongly. She also counteracted Thulani's repeated assertion that female-female sex "is not sex" by claiming that she has "done it for two hours", and demonstrating how it is done in response to Luyanda's question. Although this brought heavy censure from the other girls with their expressions of disgust ("sies"), she was able to explicate the effects of their comments on her ("you're making me feel bad now"), thereby rebuking their insensitivity. Her graphic explanation of female-female sex, and her explication of the effect of other people's negative comments on her, brought female same-sex experiences into the realm of the named and known, enabling a normalisation of such practices.

Whilst Noluvuyo raised the topic of her same-sex desires frequently in the first two sessions, and was very dominant vocally, she was much quieter in subsequent sessions. Whether this was because she had genuinely discharged a need to openly talk about her desires and no longer felt a pressure to talk, or because she felt she had revealed too much and feared the consequences, is unclear. The next time female same-sex desire came up as a topic, it was Zintle who raised it.

Session 5

R: Ok, it's nearly half past three, time to pack up

Zf: Is there anything wrong when a girl has sex with another girl (.) 'cause I'm planning to do that /laughs/

....

[*Question by Lindelwa asking how a girl gets aroused – see section 2.1*]

R: And you asked if there's anything wrong with girls sleeping with other girls /Zf: ja/, mm (.) what do people think?

Lm: I don't see it as a bad thing /R: you don't see it as a bad thing/ ja

R: Ok (.) we can call that lesbian sex (.) same sex

....

[*discussion about male same-sex – see section 4.3*]

R: Just going back to your question (.) I think, I think having sex with <u>any</u>body is a big decision, it's something one has to, I think it's (.) something you know one needs to think through (2) whether it's with a girl or a guy

Nf: But what you have to think through the most is when you are going to have sex with a guy (.) it's simple to have sex with a girl, it's not that much because you just, if you're going to have sex with a guy yho (.) maybe it's a lot of work

R: A lot of work?

Nf: Yes

R: In what way? Consequences? **/***LAUGHTER***/** [*inaudible*]

Nf: <u>Yes</u> (.) you won't get pregnant if you're sleeping with another woman /R: mm hmm/(.) you won't have HIV if you're sleeping with another woman /R: mm/ you won't get STIs

As with Lindelwa's question about how females get aroused (see section 2.1), Zintle's question came directly after I had announced the end of the session, suggesting that it was something she had been wanting to talk about, but had been reluctant to, or had not had the opportunity to do so earlier. The question "Is there anything wrong when a girl has sex with another girl" indicates the conflicting constructions of female-female sex as both 'wrong' and 'not wrong'. However, the fact that Zintle is entertaining the possibility of it being 'not wrong', and of engaging in the practice, suggests that it has become normalized, to an extent, within this group. Noluvuyo goes further to construct female-female sex as superior to female-male sex as there are none of the physical risks associated with heterosexual sex.

With Noluvuyo's open discussion of her same-sex desires and practices, she was able to subvert the dominance of female heterosexuality to an extent, leading to a partial normalization of lesbian sex. Unfortunately, the same could not be achieved with male-male sexual desires and practices, as shown below.

4.3. Male same-sex desire and sex

Male same-sex was a minor theme within the group conversations, so it could not be explicated in the same manner as female same-sex. Although it was mentioned in passing a few times, the only time it was addressed in depth was in the extract shown below:

Session 5

Lm: I don't see it ((female-female sex)) as a bad thing /R**:** you don't see it as a bad thing/ ja

…

Lm: Not if it's a male and a male/ F: girl/ it's fine if it's a girl and a girl but if it's a male and male =

Nf: People will judge you

R: So you don't think it's fine for men to have sex with men /Lm: yes/ why do you think that Luyanda?

Lm: It's disgusting /R: it's disgusting/ yes (*3 sec pause*)

R: What if they don't have a desire for women (.) they only have desire for other men

Lm: Then it's cool as longer as you never be my friend and never touch me /*LAUGHTER*/

R: Ok so you don't want to have sex with a man /Lm: no/ ok so you're clear on that, and you don't want anybody to try and rape you /*LAUGHER*/ you're clear on that too *(2 sec pause)* and if they respect you for that, they're not gonna try and touch you?

Lm**:** yes (*4 sec pause*)

R: how do you think (.) how do you think male homosexuals feel about being attracted to other men?

Lm: I think they like it

R: You think they do like it /Lm: ja/ do you think they feel embarrassed, that they know that other people will think they're disgusting =

Of: Some don't [Lm: Some don't] =

R: Some don't what?

Of: Some don't feel embarrassed

R: Mm hmm ok some don't feel embarrassed /Of: yes/ *(1 sec pause*) do you think some people hide it because they are embarrassed /Of:yes/ ja *[Lm yawns loudly](2 sec pause).* 'Cause they fear they're going to be judged /Fs: YES/

Luyanda makes a distinction between female and male same-sex, proclaiming that the former is not "a bad thing". This sympathy towards lesbian desires may have been a result of the contact he had had with Noluvuyo in the group, where he had a chance to listen to her revelations and struggles in a setting which had been constructed as non-judgemental of other participants' views. It may also have been because he concurred with Thulani and Sibongokuhle who insisted, in session 2, that lesbian sex "is not sex", probably because of its lack of penile penetration. If it is not sex, then it is not disrupting compulsory heterosexuality, whereby the only legitimate sex is when vaginal-penile penetration occurs. Male same-sex, on the other hand, with its penetrative possibilities, cannot be deemed to be "not sex", so is seen as "disgusting" in its disruption of the heterosexual order.

Luyanda's vehement homophobia ("as long as you never be my friend") indicates a fear of contamination from that which is "disgusting", and also points to the inherent fragility and artificiality of gendered identities (Butler, 1990) which can be so easily disturbed by non-ideal gendered representations. Previous research has demonstrated how successful male identities in

many contexts are premised on hyper-heterosexual performances and displays (for example, Jearey Graham, 2014; Jewkes & Morrell, 2010), which requires an emphatic rejection of homosexuality.

The many pauses in the extract above indicate the discomfort that Luyanda felt in discussing the topic of male homosexuality. I no doubt added to that discomfort with my blunt and somewhat mocking explication of the fact that he does not wish to have sex with a man, or be raped, and he responded by withdrawing from the conversation. He also resisted my attempts to promote compassion for male homosexuals by suggesting that they like being attracted to other men, and that "some don't" feel embarrassed that others find them disgusting. He was joined in this stance by Oyama, and he made his resistance clear with a loud yawn.

This much greater difficulty in normalizing or de-stigmatising male same-sex desires and practices than female same-sex ones in this group is likely to be the result of at least three factors. Firstly, at the micro-level of the group, Noluvuyo's open explication of her same-sex desires and practices brought lesbian sex to the forefront of the discussions on several occasions, and enabled other participants to compassionately consider her subjectivity in a non-threatening environment. None of the male participants revealed same-sex desires, so an equivalent process did not happen with male same-sex desires. Secondly, at the meso-level of the school context, the data gathered at the school in 2012 indicated that female same-sex relationships may be becoming less stigmatized than previously, whereas male same-sex relationships are still heavily censured.

Thirdly, broader macro-level processes are also likely to have been a factor. As well as lesbian sex not being perceived as 'real sex', as discussed above, and therefore being less of a threat to the dominant heterosexual order, Jewkes and Morrell (2012) discuss how the different femininities identified in their study tended to be "arranged laterally to one another" (p. 1735), as opposed to the hierarchical arrangement of masculinities. This lateral arrangement resulted in little specific challenge by one type of femininity to the legitimacy or power of other femininities. Whilst the femininities that Jewkes and Morrell studied were specifically heterosexual, their analysis may hold true for femininities across the board. Thus, the same-sex femininity that Noluvuyo was performing in the group may not have been perceived as a challenge to the legitimacy of the other heterosexual femininities that other girls were trying to perform. However, if, as many authors argue (for example, Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Jewkes & Morrell, 2010), masculinities tend to be arranged hierarchically around a culturally specific hegemonic ideal, then progression up the masculine hierarchy requires denigration of non-ideal masculinities. With homosexuality being the antithesis of idealized hyper-heterosexuality, it invites expungement from those males attempting to conform to the hegemonic ideal.

Overall, this theme of same-sex desire and sex indicates differential evaluations of female and male same-sex by group members, with conflicting views around the (non)acceptability of female same-sex, but outright rejection of the validity of male same-sex. The struggles and confusion of someone who experiences same-sex desires was shown, and her resistance to easy categorization points to the inherent artificiality of binaried sexual designations.

Conclusion: Female desire, safe sex, and gendered norms: sexual themes within the group's talk

This chapter started with a brief description of the themes that arose from the initial consultative process. Data from the 'post-secrets' project indicated a need for learners to be able to speak about sexual issues in a safe and non-judgemental context, while interview data revealed that strongly gendered norms were prevalent in the school. Sexuality education classes were not places where it was emotionally safe to share opinions or ask questions, and the emphasis in such classes was on abstinence and the negative aspects of sex. LO as a subject was not highly valued, and the school frequently lacked available teachers to teach LO.

The chapter then presented a discursive thematic analysis on the sexual and gendered themes that arose within the talk of the dialogical group. Three primary themes were identified: the physicality of sex, the relationality of sex, and same-sex desire and sex. Participants were heavily invested in talking about the physical aspects of sexuality, such as its dangers and pleasures, and were curious about issues that they knew less about, particularly factors pertaining to female sexuality such as arousal, masturbation and female condoms. The fact that they had less knowledge about these issues highlights the silencing of female sexuality within the broader culture. Nevertheless, there were indications that female sexual desire is beginning to emerge as a normative discourse, and its explication within the group hopefully promoted this.

Whilst a sexual 'danger and disease' discourse was recited, somewhat unreflexively, by participants, there were suggestions that the dialogical nature of the group allowed participants to also consider safe sex messages in a more reflexive manner. This was seen when some participants individualized and personalized such messages. However, abstinence, as a topic, was relatively silenced in the group, although the participants' written evaluations indicated that this is an important issue for some. This suggests that it needs to be more deliberately addressed in peer dialogical interventions.

The only relational/emotional sexual theme that participants spontaneously generated was around the topic of 'cheating', and this was a topic in which they were highly invested. As 'cheating' is a mechanism through which sexual partners are lost and gained, the participants' interest in the topic indicates the saliency of 'partner management' in their lives. As discussed above, successful

personhood tends to be judged on a young person's relationship status, so the losing and gaining of partners carries high costs and benefits. Strongly gendered norms were evident in this theme, as culpability for male unfaithfulness was laid at the door of females. Furthermore, the presence of greater numbers of males in session 4 appeared to make it harder for the females to challenge the gendered inequities that I brought to visibility, compared to when there was only one male in session 3. This suggests that taking up anti-patriarchal arguments is risky for young women in the presence of males, at least in this context.

Other relational/emotional topics tended to be raised by me. This was sometimes done in a rather colonizing manner as I attempted to populate the participants' discursive environment with resources that spoke to the emotional and relational aspects of sex, but at other times I introduced the topic in a more spontaneous way.

One participant, Noluvuyo, was very open about her same-sex desires and practices, which allowed for a partial normalization of female same-sex within the group, but the same could not be achieved for male same-sex, for which marked homophobia was displayed. The differential evaluation of female and male same-sex was likely to be due both to Noluvuyo's explicit discussion of her desires, struggles, and sexual practices, for which there was no parallel male process, but also due to gendered norms: specifically, the denigration of homosexuality is one of the ways that males affirm their own heterosexual identity. My attempts to challenge homophobia and promote empathy for males who experience same-sex desires were firmly resisted.

This chapter has traced the sexual themes within the talk of the group, and the gendered norms that were evident. Through bringing some gendered norms to visibility, the dialogical nature of the group process was able to mount a challenge to these, and at times alternative discourses could be foregrounded, such as the normality of female desire and female same-sex. If conscientisation is understood to be a process which "expand(s) the range of discourses within which people might actively … participate" (Roberts, 1996, p. 193), then a conscientisation process regarding some gendered norms was promoted amongst participants. However, in some instances the gendered context appeared to prevent participants from taking up more equitable discourses, specifically around unfaithfulness and male same-sex. There were also suggestions that abstinence is a 'silenced' discourse in peer contexts.

The next chapter will analyse the interactional processes within the group in more depth and look at participant feedback. From this, I will theorise as to what participants found to be the most beneficial aspect of the group.

Chapter 5: Processes of recognition

Introduction

This chapter will analyse the structural and dialogical aspects of the group which, I will argue, provided recognition to participants. Using participants' feedback as evidence, I suggest that this was what the participants found to be the most valuable aspect of the group. The group enabled participants to be recognised, both as sexual subjects and also as subjects in a number of different discursive fields. The structural aspects included all the concrete aspects of being part of the group and the acknowledgements provided to the members, such as the weekly gatherings, the provision of food, and the public issuing of certificates. The interactive and dialogical processes revolved around the creation of a context that encouraged group members to share opinions and speak about themselves. As members gave opinions and told narratives about their lives (even if only to themselves), they positioned themselves within varying discourses, and were recognised as legitimate subjects within these discourses. This opportunity for self-positioning, and the ensuing recognition, allowed for an expansion of the constituting discourses that constructed the subjectivity of the members, thereby enhancing each member's ensemble of subject positions. Furthermore, given the synthetic discursive lens of this thesis which views subjects as "complex composites of, on the one hand, who they create themselves as and present to the world, as a way of 'acting upon' it, and on the other, who that world makes them and constrains them to be" (Taylor & Littleton, 2006, p. 23), then the self-positioning afforded by the group context allowed the members a chance to "create themselves" in an agentic manner, in contrast to being made and constrained by others.

The chapter moves on to analyse the necessary pre-conditions for fruitful dialogue and recognition to occur, and I show how trust is the key ingredient, according to participants' feedback. However, there are limits to the fruitfulness of dialogue, which are explicated. Thereafter, I discuss my attempts to introduce an action component into the intervention, and then provide a reflexive analysis of my experience of conducting the group. I end with reflections on the voluntary nature and demographic constitution of the group and how this may have impacted the group processes, as well as considerations about the transferability of findings.

1. Recognition through structural aspects of the group

There were a number of physical or structural aspects that constituted this group as an entity. I suggest that, merely being recognised as a member of a valued group, provided participants with a positive subject position within their school context. The structural aspects involved the following:

- Weekly meetings, held at the same time and venue for the first school term. This provided regularity and consistency.

- The provision of food. As well as providing an incentive for attendance, this constituted the group as a social and nurturing entity, and encouraged informal conversations to happen at the start of each session.

- The small size and closed nature of the group. After the second session, we accepted no new members, which allowed greater intimacy and trust to develop. This also made the group exclusive, which may have increased the status afforded to it.

- The naming of the group – "Sexuality Research Group". The word 'Research' linked the group to academia and the university at which this research is based, and 'sexuality' is generally an area of high interest for teenagers.

- Weekly text messages to remind participants of the meetings and to advertise the activities planned for the next meeting. This constituted participants as valuable members of the group. The messages also probably ensured better attendance, which contributed to a more cohesive group.

- Provision of a personalised 'Thank-You' card to each member in the last group meeting. For each member, I wrote a sentence expressing what I had appreciated about them, which affirmed an individual attribute in each of them.

- Awarding of certificates to each participant (see Appendix J), and praise from the headmistress, in the school assembly at the start of the second school term. This provided public recognition of the participants, and concrete evidence of their membership of the group.

Three of these structural aspects were specifically identified by participants as being valuable, namely the food, the small number of people, and the closed nature of the group. Noluvuyo stated that one of the things she appreciated about the group was the food, and this sentiment was echoed in the anonymous written feedback by one participant. One other participant wrote that the group was "a great place to socialise", and this aspect of the group may have been enhanced by the food. Masenya made the following remark in session 7:

M: ((The group)) is very enjoyable because I like to talk about certain things that we don't usually say to people /R: mm/ um so ja we're limited ((fewer)) so it's a bit (.) nice.

Here, she links being able to talk about "things that we don't usually say" with the fact that the

group was small. In written feedback, one participant wrote "What I liked about the group is that we were less, so it was very easy to talk about anything that involves sex or other things." Luyanda commented, at the end of session 5 where there were only five participants present, that it was good to have fewer people as one could then talk more. Regarding the closed nature of the group, Noluvuyo indicated that this enabled them to trust one another and speak more freely, as shown below:

Session 7

Nf: I think everything was fine (.) but we shouldn't just (.) we shouldn't involve other people we should stay as the amount we are

R: Ok (.) so not having it open to everybody /Nf: yes/ ok (.) why do you say that?

Nf: .... you may think that you trust the person but no (.) because there are some people that said they were going to come but they are not trustworthy

Participants were therefore explicit about their appreciation of the food, the limited numbers, and the closed nature of the group.

Regarding the certificates, the idea of for these came from the group members. At the end of session 6, when I told the group that we only had three sessions left, some girls asked for certificates. Chanelle then helped me carry my equipment to the car, and asked that the certificates be presented to them during a school assembly. When I put forward this proposal in session 7, the other participants were all extremely eager for this too, and several of them instructed me that I should call out their names in assembly, one by one, and that they would come to the front. They clearly valued the prospect of being publicly recognised and affirmed in front of the whole school body.

The suggestion for the name of the group came from me, but members expressed satisfaction with it and used it, referring to themselves as members of the "SRG" (sexuality research group). The word 'research' linked group members to academia and the university, which is generally held in high esteem by residents of the town, as it is seen as a gateway to employment and upward social mobility. Additionally, the name positioned the participants as co-researchers (and thereby, intelligent and learned) in the area of sexualities. Positioning participants as co-researchers is a core principle of action research.

Therefore, structural aspects of the group (food, limited numbers, group name, certificates) appeared to provide avenues for identity enhancement and public recognition for the participants. However, more importantly, the structure of the group enabled dialogical processes to occur.

2. Recognition through the dialogical processes in the group

I attempted to run the group along Freire's principles of dialogical pedagogy, which emphasise egalitarian relationships, dialogue between participants, and content that is contextually situated within the lives of the learners (Freire, 1993/1970; Freire & Shor, 1987). In written evaluations from participants at the end of the intervention, it is notable that the first positive aspect that all eleven people mentioned was the dialogical processes within the group (see the collated answers to the questionnaire in Appendix H). Likewise, in oral feedback solicited in sessions 3 and 7, participants expressed appreciation for the chance to freely express themselves about pertinent issues in their lives. Whilst some members specifically mentioned valuing discussions on sexual aspects (as explicated in the previous chapter), which hopefully led to an increased conscientisation around sexual and gendered inequities, others referred to other topics that were introduced during ice-breaker activities. These topics were often designed to promote self-positioning and positive other-positioning (see chart of activities in the methodology chapter). This led to opportunities for participants to be recognized by other group members as legitimate subjects within valued discursive fields. Another spontaneous spin-off of the ice-breaker activities was that, at times, they allowed some members to share their pain, which was clearly meaningful for them, as shown below. Thus, the primary value of the intervention for the participants appeared to lie in the processes of dialogue. Whilst dialogue which positioned members positively was obviously esteemed, so was dialogue about painful personal issues, which allowed a sense of commonality and community in one's pain. This section will analyse the participant feedback in more detail and examine the necessary ingredients for the promotion of dialogue.

2.1. "It's good to talk" – the value of dialogue

In the anonymous written evaluation that participants filled out in the last session, the first question was "What did you like about the group?" The responses are listed below:

Table 1: Participant answers to the question "What did you like about the group?"

Participant	Answer	Themes within the answers
A	What I liked about the group is that everything that we discussed and talked about does not go out it stays personally and inside the group	Confidentiality
B	I like that we were not shy towards us, we had talk I like the abstain from sex the most.	Free expression; talk about sexual abstinence
C	I liked everything about the group e.g. you feel free to share anything with the people who are in the group they don't judge you about the things you are telling them.	Free expression; Non judgementalism

D	Well, I enjoyed talking more and expressing myself more, and getting to test myself in whether I'm confidential or if I can speak to a group of people.	Free expression
E	What I liked about the group is that we were less, so it was very easy to talk about anything that involves sex or other things. I never got the chance to learn about some things that include sex, but now I know and I like that.	Free expression; limited numbers; talking and learning about sex and other things
F	What I like about the group is that I was open and I felt free by facing my fare's [fears]	Free expression
G	We can talk about everything. I like when we talk about love.	Free expression; talking about love
H	We were able to talk/chat to each other and I liked the fact that nobody judged when we were sharing a thought or our feelings.	Free expression; non judgementalism
I	I liked it because we share things in our lives that were happening.	Free expression
J	Everything because we talk a lot of things in this group that help ourselves and things you don't know about yourself.	Free expression; learning about selves
K	I like everything about the group it was a great place to socialise and learn more about sexuality life and to hear other people's thoughts about sex.	Socialising; learning and hearing about sexuality

The responses of participants B to J all indicate that the most valuable aspect of the group for them was the chance to freely express themselves about pertinent issues in their lives. Whilst participants A and K don't specifically mention free expression, participant A highlights one of the necessary pre-conditions for free expression and dialogue, namely confidentiality, while participant K indicates that s/he enjoyed "socializing" and hearing the dialogue of other members. The dialogical aspects were also mentioned in answer to other questions in the written feedback. For example, in response to the question *What did Nicola do that was helpful?,* participant D wrote "Nicola let everybody speak, she gave each of us a chance and made sure that you were comfortable talking, and she helped us here and there."

Two broad aspects to the participants' valuing of the dialogical nature of the group was firstly, a sense that the group provided a unique place for dialogue, and secondly, that the group assisted in the learning process.

2.1.1. The group as a unique place for dialogue

In oral feedback in session 7, Masenya said that "I like to talk about certain things that we don't usually say to people", indicating that the group provided a unique context for dialogue. Others echoed this sentiment, as shown below:

Session 7

R: …what's kept you coming each week?

Nf: What kept me coming each week is that u::m when I'm here I feel free 'cause (.) um I say everything that I want to say (.) a::nd you know (.) the environment that in here I think it makes me feel very humble and very calm (.) so that's why I keep on coming back

R: You feel free to just to talk /Nf: to talk/ about yourself /N: yes/ ok (.) ok so that's what kept you coming /*silence*/ anything else?

Zf: U::m what kept me coming is that (.) to talk about all things that are happening to myself (.) um some not all of them (.) some /*laughs*/ so ja I think (.) it's a humbling experience for me to be here you know

Noluvuyo and Zintle express appreciation for the freedom to "say everything I want to say" and to talk about "things that are happening to myself", and in sessions 3, below, several participants identified "talking" as an aspect of the group that they enjoyed:

Session 3

R: How are these groups going for you so far? What kinds of things are you enjoying and what kinds of things are you not enjoying?

Jf: I'm enjoying e::verything /R: you're enjoying everything/ ja =

Tm: Most {of us

Mf: {and it's good, it's good to talk

Af: Talk

R: It's good to talk about what?

Mf: About things /R: sex//*LAUGHTER*/Jf: ja/ not only sex =

Nf: It's good to talk=

R: Not only sex no =

Lf: Because at home you cannot talk about things it's hard =

Af: It's like (inaudible) you've been hiding something in your heart for a long time then you get to the group and take it out then (,) you feel free

Lf: Yes

R: It is freeing /YES/ to talk about those things ja

Af: Because if you've been hiding for a long time /R: mm/ it's like (.)

There was general agreement that it was good to talk, not only about sex but also about other things that "you've been hiding … in your heart". According to Lindelwa (Lf), home is not a place conducive for such talking. At the start of session one, when invited to talk about something they were proud of doing when they were a child, Noluvuyo and Oyama shared how Aviwe (Af) had been bullied in primary school. Although Aviwe didn't speak much, she agreed with what Noluvuyo and Oyama said and shed some tears. She therefore may have been referring to this when she mentioned how freeing it is to talk about something "you've been hiding for a long time."

Similar to Aviwe's appreciation of sharing personal or painful memories, Lindelwa, in session 7, referred back to the opening ice-breaker of session 5:

Session 7

Lf: I liked that (.) that you talked about um is when you were talking about things that makes you feel sad and happy /R: mm/ so I liked that (.) it's nice to say things that makes you sad so that you cannot (.) keep them inside your heart (.) so it's better to let them go out (.) other people can (.) might help you /R: ok/ mm

At the start of session 5, I had asked participants to share, firstly, three things that made them happy, and then something that made them sad. Lindelwa said that losing family members or a boyfriend made her sad. Oyama then talked about conflict with her younger sister and the death of her father five years previously, and she broke down emotionally when I reflected how painful this loss must have been for her. Other group members were supportive and respectful of her tears, and she allowed me to ask specifically what she missed about her father. I was able to affirm the fact that sharing one's pain is a way of honouring and trusting other group members. Lindelwa's comment in session 7, above, suggests that the groups' ability to recognize and honour Oyama's pain possibly enabled a vicarious recognition of Lindelwa's own pain from her losses, and it may have encouraged her to open up more in other discursive spaces.

The chance to talk about difficult aspects of their lives was also mentioned by participants in the written feedback. For example, in answer to the question *What topics/activities did you find helpful?* Participant C wrote "…when someone is talking about his/her problem you just give them some advise" and participant E wrote "What I found useful is that it is important to talk or cry about something rather than keeping it inside, because it damages our inner parts." In answer to the question *What did Nicola do that was helpful?,* participant J wrote "I remember the other day when she asked us to say something that you were proud of and I told my story and I was crying but she helped me."

However, it wasn't just talking about difficulties that participants enjoyed. Participant D wrote that she really enjoyed hearing something positive about herself from another member, which was the ice-breaker activity at the start of session 7: "And there was an activity where one member had to describe and tell what he/she likes about you, so I felt it was good, and made me feel blissful." She also wrote that "I'm more open and more acknowledged than before." Being positioned positively by a peer is highly affirming. When asked whether they had changed through being part of the group, participant C wrote "I feel free to open up to everyone who is close to me…" and participant J wrote "I used to have lots of anger inside me but I joined this group I don't think I have that anger any more." These responses suggest that participants' emotional competence and self-esteem were enhanced through being part of the group.

2.1.2. The group as a place to learn

Related to participants' valuing of the chance to talk was a sense that such talking assisted their learning process.

Session 7

R: … what are we gonna go away with from this group?

…

Mf: A bit of uhm knowledge I can say /**mhh**/ err (.) I mean (.) some of us didn't know certain things /R: mm/ didn't know certain things about ourselves (.) so uhm maybe if we (.) if it ends (.) at least we actually know more some of the things (.) ok no I talked about this (.) somehow /R: mm/ you know um (.) or maybe you're in the situation and then you will just think back to the discussion /R: mm/ and just

R: What kinds of things (.) you said knowledge about things (.) what kinds of things?

Mf : The things we talked about =

R: Around sex **=**

Mf: Yes ma'am and other things about ourselves =

R: And other things about oneself /Mf**:** ja**/**

Masenya highlights the knowledge that she feels she has gained from the group, particularly about herself. Whilst we can only guess at what the specifics of her self-knowledge are, this appreciation of learning about herself suggests that connections between her differing subject positions have been enhanced. Her example that "maybe you're in the situation and then you will just think back to the discussion" suggests that she feels she has gained a greater reflexive ability to analyse her actions. Written feedback also suggests that participants felt that their self-knowledge and reflexivity had grown, both of which are linked to emotional competence:

- Participant J: … we talk a lot of things in this group that help ourselves and things you don't know about yourself
- Participant I: (Nicola) thought [taught] me of being carefull and responsible to my life and showed me the way of living to learn from my mistakes.
- Participant D: …I know things I didn't really know about myself. I know how I will deal with issues if anyday something happened.

Regarding the differences between the group and the sexuality education provided in Life Orientation, Sinalo (Sf) talked about how the dialogical aspect of the group enhanced their learning. She states that this was valuable because, in contrast to her experiences of sexuality education, "we got to express ourselves about what we think about things":

Session 9

R: … how has this group been different from the sexuality education you get in Life Orientation?

Sf: I think here we got to express ourselves about what we think about things

R: Ok (.) you got to express yourselves /Sf: yes/ about what you think, u-huh (.) And how was that?

Sf: It was better because there you get taught and you don't get to talk back in terms of things like that

R: So there you get taught (.) you don't get to talk back **/**YES**/ =**

Sf: You just get asked questions and you have to answer them (.) so you don't get to ask about personal things [*Participants speaking at the same time*] =
R: So you don't get to ask about things you're interested in, or (.)
Sf: You don't get to (.) it's not easy to ask about them cause (.) ja

Sinalo describes sexuality education as a place where "you get taught and you don't get to talk back". This mode of education is an example of what Friere (1993/1970) refers to as the 'banking' concept, where students are asked to merely 'store' the educational deposits made by their teachers. In contrast, "talking back" about what you have been taught is a crucial aspect of conscientization, as you "reflect on (your) reality as (you) make and remake it" (Freire & Shor, 1987, p. 13). Whilst Life Orientation and sexuality education textbooks and manuals often request that teachers invite opinions from learners and generate discussions, the structural aspects of many school sexuality education classes (for example, large class sizes, poor learner discipline, teachers who are not steeped in dialogical modes of learning (Rooth, 2005)), and the judgemental culture, mitigate against meaningful dialogue. Sinalo goes on to say that, in sexuality education, "you don't get to ask about things". A crucial aspect of Frierian pedagogy is that the content of the education is contextually situated in the lives of learners, addressing problems that are meaningful and relevant in their lives. If learners are unable to ask about specific aspects that are meaningful to them, true learning will not take place.

Written feedback, below, also showed that participants had learnt about sexual issues, indicating how a dialogical group facilitates sexual learning.

- Participant A: I liked teenage pregnancy. I found it useful because it taught me to abstain from being absent
- Particiapnt E: What I found useful was knowing about the female condom, because I wanted to know and see it.
- Participant B: (Nicola) talk(ed) to us about sex
- Participant F: (Nicola taught) us not us not to be afred to say No because this is mine body and I to the disitions [decisions].
- Participant K: She answered most of the questions which we had no answers to and thought [taught] us a little more about sex.
- Participant E: I now have a lot of knowledge about sex and I know the disadvantages and advantages of it. I can never be wrong now when it comes to sex because of this group

It is thus clear that participants found dialogue about important aspects of their lives (including sexual, relational and emotional aspects) to be very valuable. Dialogue is necessary to develop social bonding and emotional competence, and these factors have been shown in the literature to be protective of sexual and reproductive health. An analysis of the factors that participants identified as promoting such dialogue indicates that trust was a key ingredient, as explicated below.

2.2. Trust – a necessary pre-condition for dialogue

Several participants either stated or implied that their talking was enabled by the fact that they trusted the other participants. Specific and inter-related aspects that built up trust in the group, as highlighted by participants, were non-judgementalism, confidentiality, the small number and closed nature of the group, and egalitarian relationships.

In the written feedback, participant H wrote "(Nicola) was able to make us feel comfortable with each other and able to trust one another", and Noluvuyo, in session 7, highlighted trust as an important aspect of the group (see extract in section 2 of this chapter). Thulani, below, states that his trust of other group members enabled him to "face one of (his) fears", and this was what kept him coming to the group each week:

Session 7

R: Thulani (.) what kept you coming through?

Tm: What kept me coming to all the sessions is that (.) I have faced one of my fears /R: ok/ talking about =

R: You've faced one of your fears?

Tm: Yes ma'am (.) people tell me (I'm a loud speaker) (.) so that (.) that's what kept me coming to all the sessions (,) because everyone in here I trust ma'am (.) I trust everyone here

R: So you trust everyone and it's actually (.) you're facing your fears by being able to talk vulnerably about /Tm: yes ma'am/ share what's in your heart /Tm: yes ma'am/ ok (,) awesome (.) thank you Thulani /Tm: yes ma'am/

Thulani was not explicit about what the fear was that he faced, but, as shown in the previous chapter, he had spoken in the fourth session about how he has multiple partners in order to protect himself from falling in love with one girl, which would then place him at risk of "a broken heart" if she rejected him. This may have been the fear that he faced.

Non-judgementalism was something I had highlighted at the start of the group when discussing group parameters and rules, and it was something that I modeled in my responses to participants. Non-judgementalism came through as a crucial ingredient of trust that many participants explicitly appreciated about the group. In answer to question 1 in the written feedback, participant C wrote "(group members) don't judge you about the things you are telling them" and participant H wrote "I liked the fact that nobody judged when we were sharing a thought or our feelings." In oral feedback in session 9, when asked how the small size and closed nature of the group compared to school sexuality education classes, non-judgementalism was highlighted as an important difference:

Session 9

Lf: I think ma'am it's fine having discussions like this ma'am (.) maybe because in class some of us are shy (.) when you answer a question to that particular teacher (.) she will be like (.) how do you know about sex (.) some teachers will judge you so /R: ok/ things like that

Jf: ...Maybe ma'am somebody is asking something from our teacher (.) the children like to laugh (.) so we don't ask

With the possibility of negative judgement from the teacher, and mocking laughter from other learners, answering or asking questions about sex in class appears to be fraught with danger, unlike in this group.

However, group members were not always non-judgemental, and two participants mentioned this in their written feedback when asked what they did not like about the group. Participant E stated "What I didn't like about the group is when I answer a question about sex and people judge me or say that I am old and have a dirty mind and I am sexually active, but I am not", and participant G wrote "...why people ask me when last have I had sex ☹." The latter participant was probably Jaslyn, who was mocked in the 8th session when someone asked when she last had sex. The fact that these participants highlighted times when they felt judged as a negative aspect of the group indicates the premium they place on non-judgementalism when in a dialogical space.

Confidentiality was another aspect of trust that was important to some participants, particularly Noluvuyo, as she shared about her same-sex desires and practices. At the start of the group, I explained the necessity of maintaining confidentiality about what was shared, and participants signed a confidentiality agreement (Appendix F). Noluvuyo repeatedly asked for confidentiality when discussing her sexual desires, for example in session 1 she said "please let's do not take it outside I do not want to hear anybody saying 'yhu she's going to rape us' please because that's a very big embarrassment" and in session 2, after stating that she has sex with girls, she pleaded that this information "not go out". In written feedback, participant A wrote "What I liked about the group is that everything that we discussed and talked about does not go out it stays personally and inside the group", indicating that s/he felt that confidentiality was maintained, and this was no doubt promoted by the closed nature of the group and limited group numbers. However, participant F feared that group members who had dropped out may not be trusted with confidential information that s/he shared: "I did not like that, the first I came there were many people and we even tolded them ower secrets and now they are not coming maybe are not trustworthy."

A final aspect of trust within a group that is worth highlighting is the promotion and maintenance of egalitarian relationships, as far as possible, between the facilitator and the participants. This is particularly important when there are large class, race and age differentials, as was the case between the participants and me. Egalitarianism is also a fundamental Freirian principle. Written evaluations from participants that suggested egalitarian and horizontal, as opposed to vertical, relationships were promoted are as follows:

- Participant B: I like that we were not shy towards us
- Participant K: the group … was a great place to socialize
- Participant D: Nicola … made sure that you were comfortable talking
- Participant G: I made like she (Nicola) my friend
- Participant H: Nicola was able to make us feel comfortable with each other
- Participant E: everything she (Nicola) did was helpful and she did it in a very good manner

This section has shown how trust is a necessary condition for dialogue to flourish. Dialogue about pertinent and personal life issues was clearly highly valued by the group members, and I suggest that this is because it allowed members to be recognised and validated as subjects in a variety of both positive and painful discursive fields. However, there was nevertheless a limit to what dialogue could achieve, as shown below.

2.3. The limits of dialogue

Whilst participants engaged eagerly in dialogical exercises in the early sessions, this eagerness waned somewhat in later sessions, and I felt that more non-dialogical, yet still social, activities needed to be introduced. I wrote in my reflections after session 6 that "I really have a sense that we've had enough discussion", and after session 8, after reflecting that the group was very quiet, I wrote "'Discussion' is exhausted, I think!" Whilst I tried to introduce some non-verbal activities into the sessions, (see 'physical activities' and 'ice-breakers' outlined in the 'session activities' chart in the methodology chapter), planning and organising physical/fun activities is not an area of strength for me, and I sometimes found doing so to be quite stressful. In session 7, when I asked participants if there was anything else they wanted to talk about or do, Noluvuyo said "I thought that … maybe you were going to take us to (name of local university) and do some activities there." In written feedback, participant A wrote "I would like if drama or acting was involve. To show pictures of what we are trying to say", and in answer to the question *What could Nicola have done better?* Participant F wrote "By taking us out to do activity's and to bond."

These participants were thus expressing a desire for non-dialogical activities to complement the dialogical focus of the group, and my own sense as facilitator coincided with their sentiments. Gavin et al (2010) outlined how positive sexual and reproductive health outcomes could arise from programmes that spent at least 50% or more of the programme time on promoting general competency (social, cognitive, emotional or vocational competency) amongst youth, as opposed to a focus on direct sexual health. Activities that promoted these general competency goals appeared to be both dialogical and non-dialogical. The wisdom of some of this group's members was that there was a limit to the amount of recognition that could arise from discussions, and that other avenues of affirmation, competency-building, and enjoyment were needed as well.

Regarding the non-verbal activities that I did introduce, there was not much concrete feedback regarding them. In the written feedback, in answer to the question "What topics/activities did you find useful?" participant B mentioned the puzzle challenge (where I divided the group into two teams and saw which team was the fastest at completing a 48 piece puzzle). However, in answer to the question "What topics/activities did you find not useful/not helpful", participant F mentioned the puzzle, and participant B wrote "I did not find the poster useless" (presumably s/he meant 'useful'). I, on the other hand, wrote in my diary after session 8 "There was a nice relaxed vibe when doing the poster. Some went outside and chatted whilst others worked, but this was fine." My own sense was that, whilst a specific activity will always be enjoyed more by some than by others, a non-verbal activity was a welcome adjunct to the discussions.

The above sections have analysed the participants' feedback in depth. I shall now move on reflect on the process of attempting to introduce an action component into the intervention, as the second arm of the reflection-action praxis, before presenting a candid reflection of some of my own experiences of running the group that I have not expressed earlier.

3. *Attempts to introduce an action component into the intervention*

Freire (1993/1970) asserts that a dialogical investigation cannot remain at an abstract level, but that true reflection leads to transformative action, which then promotes further reflection in an iterative cycle. I was therefore hoping that some form of social action, beyond the confines of the group, could be stimulated by the intervention. After group members asked for certificates to be given out in the school assembly, I thought that this may be a good place to institute some form of action by the participants. Below is an extract from my diary, written after session 7:

> Discussed the way forward. I asked if they wanted to share anything from the group with others. Seemed lukewarm (at best) to this idea. Concept seemed a bit strange. Also, I suspect that what they got most from the group (apart from the food) was the personal-ness of it all - how does one share this in assembly?

We did eventually agree on making a poster to display in assembly, and, although the group wanted me to do the talking, two members did then volunteer to speak about the intervention, which they did so briefly in addition to me. Although the thought of speaking in assembly to over one thousand learners is understandably daunting to most people, the group members did not seem to be very eager for any form of action in the school, even outside of assembly.

As I reflect now on members' hesitation at sharing things with others, three issues come to mind. Firstly, the desire to reach out to others can only arise from a basis of safety and confidence, and it appears that members often feared being 'judged' by other learners or teachers. They may not have

felt emotionally/socially safe enough within the school to share what had arisen in the group. Secondly, regarding gendered norms (which was initially what I had hoped the group could influence in the school), members' conscientization around gendered inequities was only just beginning to emerge, and may not yet have solidified sufficiently to be shared with others. Indeed, the messages on the poster were only about safe sex and cheating, with no mention of any gendered issues. This suggests that ongoing interventions in the school are needed before any gender transformative action by participants can arise. And thirdly, as I mentioned in my diary entry, if the personal dialogical processes and ensuing recognition was what members found to be the most beneficial aspect of the group, then this is not something concrete that can be put on a poster or presented in assembly.

This lack of a robust social action component arising from the intervention is a weakness of this research, limiting the extent to which it can truly be seen as 'action research'. However, if the action research project is analysed as a whole, then the intervention may itself be seen as a form of action, with this report being a form of reflection, and future engagements with the participants, school, and Department of Basic Education being a further form of action in the action-reflection cycle of praxis.

4. Fatigue and fondness: personal reflections on the intervention

My over-riding feeling whilst running this intervention was exhaustion. Whilst my exhaustion was primarily due to factors unrelated to the intervention (stresses around my husband's employment; moving house and starting an internship at a busy counselling centre at the same time as starting the intervention), my felt sense was testimony to the amount of effort it took from me to run the group. Below is an extract from my diary, written after session 9 (the last group session before the presentation in assembly):

> When planning, found myself so relieved that this was the last session – I've found the planning, organising, getting all the stuff and transporting it (food, drinks, video recorder, tripod, voice recorder, research file, cloth, knife, and anything else for an activity) quite onerous. I realise (again) that my strength with groups is the facilitation of discussions and deep reflections. But a relative weakness is the ability to initiate fun and creative activities. I've felt the group (and I) have needed this at times, but I've found it quite stressful trying to plan and organise such activities. Also, the running of this group has come at the most stressful time of my life that I've experienced in many a year – the last time I felt quite so spent was when I had a new baby.

Several factors can be identified as contributing to the effort it took from me to run this group. Firstly, any first time venture requires more mental resources than subsequent ones, due to its newness. Secondly, because this is action research, I was both conducting an intervention and doing research on it at the same time, which meant that I had two foci to consider. Thirdly, my dialogical pedagogical approach meant that I was not instituting a pre-prepared curriculum, but was planning

each session in response to the last one, and I felt the need to come up with new and interesting topics and activities each week. (In this regard, it was valuable for me to consult twice with a friend and colleague who is particularly gifted at running groups, and harvest some of her excellent ideas. Perusing the manual of the Stepping Stones programme, a gender and sexuality intervention which is freely available online, was also helpful.) Fourthly, and possibly most pertinently, Freire developed his dialogical pedagogical approaches when working with adults, whereas I was working with adolescents aged 15 to 16. A group of adults may have taken more ownership of the group, and taken some responsibility for some of the organisational demands that I found onerous. Whilst I did try and encourage group input in terms of the kinds of topics participants wanted to discuss, they tended to follow my lead in this regard. I also thought of asking participants to bring some relaxing activities to do – below is a reflection from my diary, written after session 3:

> Later, I thought of suggesting that members could bring music or a game to play after the formal discussion ends. I doubt anyone will take the initiative to run this part, and I don't think I should. Or maybe I should? – teach them some healthy leisure time activities? I don't think I have the energy though!

I did suggest that members bring some music to share after one session, but only one member did, and the others did not seem to be too interested in his music. So I did not suggest this activity again.

However, along with the effort of running the group, I also developed an increasing fondness for the participants. Below is a continuation of my diary entry after session 9:

> However, I also feel a sense of fondness for group members. The fact that 11 of the original 14 who signed up have stuck with the group is quite a good record. They were obviously getting something out of the group (hopefully more than just food!)…
> Before the group started, some members had written on the board in coloured chalk "Good bye Nicola. We will miss you very much though ☹" This was set in a large heart shape. Some expressed verbally that they'd miss me. I was quite touched by this.

It does not seem possible to see another person, and recognize them as worthy subjects within varying discursive fields, without connecting emotionally with them, on some level. Butler (2004) says that "the self is always finding itself as the Other, becoming Other to itself … transported outside of itself in an irreversible relation of alterity. In a sense, the self 'is' this relation to alterity" (p. 149 – 150). Thus, my own self is tied up in my relationships with others, including my relationships with the participants.

5. *Reflections on the constitution of the group, and limits to the transferability of findings*

As noted in Chapter 3, the group was voluntary, and, when recruiting participants, I described the group as a place where we would talk about sex and sexuality. Hence, it is likely that the learners

who volunteered had an openness to dialogue, and possibly a desire to talk about sexual issues. Thus, whilst this chapter has demonstrated how much the participants valued the chance to talk about pertinent issues in their lives, the general learner population may not be as invested in dialogue.

More females than males joined the group, and this appears to be a common pattern amongst volunteers for groups that focus on personal issues. This is likely to be a reflection of gendered norms, where talk about personal matters is perceived to be more of a female than male activity. I have already discussed, in Chapter 4, how the gendered constitution of the group appeared to affect how much troubling of patriarchal norms the females engaged in (with more troubling emerging when fewer males were present). Thus, in a group with more equal numbers of females and males, the females may be relatively silenced. This may be an argument for single sex dialogical groups (as advocated by authors such as Jewkes et al, 2010), although mixed groups allow more easily for the challenging of gender stereotypes (as shown by Jearey Graham, 2014). Engagement in both single and mixed gender groups may be the ideal combination for participants.

The racial constitution of the group (primarily ‘Black’ with two ‘Coloured’ members) roughly reflects the demographics of the English streamed classes from which I recruited participants. Whilst all participants were being schooled in English, their mother tongues were Xhosa (all the ‘Black’ participants), Xhosa/Afrikaans (one ‘Coloured’ participant) and Afrikaans (the other ‘Coloured’ participant). As I am not fluent in Xhosa, conversations with me were in English, although participants sometimes spoke amongst themselves in isiXhosa. I did not specifically ask participants about how my race and language may have affected dynamics in the group. However, young adult participants in my previous research indicated that my being ‘White’ and English speaking made it easier to talk with me about sexual matters than if I had been ‘Black’, as cultural mores and inhibitions around cross-generational sexual communication did not apply. Furthermore, they claimed that it was easier to talk about sex in English than in isiXhosa, due to taboos about using sexual words in Xhosa (Jearey Graham, 2014). Sexuality education teachers in a study by Helleve, Flisher, Onya, Mukoma and Klepp (2009) reported similar issues regarding the relative ease of talking about sex in English as opposed to a vernacular language. Thus, it is possible that my racial and linguistic differences from the participants made sexual communication easier rather than more difficult.

These specific factors relating to the nature and constitution of this group need to be considered when using findings of this study to inform future sexuality interventions. In particular, the general learner population may be less invested in dialogue than these participants, and an African facilitator may need to negotiate cultural sanctions regarding cross-generational sexual talk in a way that I, as a

‘White’ English speaker, did not have to. Furthermore, attention needs to be paid to the gendered constitution of any group, as this will impact the kinds of talk that is generated.

Conclusion

Based on participant feedback and my own reflections on the group, I have proposed in this chapter that the most valuable aspect of the intervention for the participants was the recognition that they received. They were recognised as sexual subjects, and also as emotional subjects, as communicative subjects, as knowledgeable subjects, and as valuable members of the group. This recognition arose largely through the dialogical processes of the group, but structural aspects of the group also provided recognition, and enabled dialogue to occur. Trust was foregrounded as a necessary pre-condition for dialogue, and the specific elements of the group that participants mentioned as promoting trust were non-judgementalism, confidentiality, the small number and closed nature of the group, and egalitarian relationships. However, there was a limit to what dialogue could achieve, and I discuss the need for other avenues of recognition as well as dialogue.

I go on to reflect on my attempts to introduce an action component into the intervention, and the difficulties with this, as well as on my own experiences of running the intervention and the inherent demands of engaging in action research. I end the chapter with reflections on the demographic constitution of the group, and limits to the transferability of findings.

Chapter 6: An integrative evaluation, and conclusions

Introduction

In this final chapter I commence with a review of the rationale for this study, and the theoretical and methodological approach. Thereafter I provide an integrative evaluation of the action research by drawing out findings and implications from the previous two analytical chapters. I move on to provide suggestions for future sexuality interventions, and then I highlight strengths and limitations of this action research. I end with suggestions for continuing the action research cycle.

1. Rationale for study, and theoretical/methodological approach

Given the high burden of HIV, gender based violence, and coercive sex that South Africa carries, gender transformative sexuality education programmes are deemed to be a crucial public health intervention (Kirby, 2011; Jewkes, 2010). The most widely implemented sexuality intervention in South Africa is the sexuality education modules of the compulsory school learning area, Life Orientation. However, research has shown significant shortcomings in these modules, including inadequate curricula (Francis & DePalma, 2014; UNESCO & UNFPA, 2012), poor pedagogical approaches (Harrison et al, 2010; Jearey-Graham & Macleod, 2015; Rooth, 2005), and a skewed emphasis on the risky and negative aspects of sex (Francis, 2011; Francis & DePalma, 2014; Jearey-Graham & Macleod, 2015; Macleod, 2009). Whilst sexuality education programmes can have positive effects on sexual and reproductive health, the proviso is that they be rigorously designed and implemented (Fonner et al, 2014; Kirby et al, 2005; Kirby, 2011). Following suggestions from the literature regarding the necessary ingredients of successful interventions, and based on an initial consultative process, I implemented an action research project involving a pilot sexuality intervention with a group of Grade 10 learners at a local high school.

As outlined in the third chapter, I drew off two complementary theoretical lenses to inform the action research, namely, feminist post-structuralism and Freire's theories of critical consciousness and dialogical pedagogy. Feminist post-structuralism focuses attention on constructions of gender and the taken-for-granted norms which constitute gendered identities and guide gendered behaviours. It understands subjectivities as arising from the multiple discursive formulations within which subjects are positioned/position themselves. An aspect of this theoretical lens that was important for this project is the notion that a subject needs to be recognized and reflected by another in order to develop reflexivity and connections between its varying subject positions. Whilst feminist post-structuralism provides rich theoretical material for understanding gendered subjectivities and inequities, it does not speak to practical ways of re-constructing more equitable and just gendered realities. Therefore, combining it with Freire's eminently applicable theories of

critical consciousness and the necessary pedagogical approaches to promote critical consciousness proved to be a fruitful marriage.

Freire's thesis is that, in order to transcend unjust social structures, people need to develop a critical consciousness about the socially constructed and ultimately mutable nature of injustice and disadvantage. He posited that such a consciousness cannot develop outside of dialogue, and he advanced a highly influential theory of dialogical pedagogy as a necessary means of promoting critical consciousness. Dialogical pedagogy is based on ideals of horizontal and egalitarian relationships between all participants, with both teachers and students being seen as teacher-students. Content of any learning needs to be contextually situated in the lives of the learners and focus on issues that they deem to be relevant. By presenting content through a problem-posing approach, the knowledge and perspectives of all participants are foregrounded.

The orientation to this study was action research, which attempts to contribute both to social science as well as to social change by instituting action at the same time as researching that action. It is a fundamentally democratic and consultative process, being based on collaboration with all stakeholders. This action research commenced with projects conducted in 2012 at the target school with learners and educators. Data from these projects were used as part of the initial consultation process with stakeholders in the school's sexuality and sex education landscape. The consultation continued with a follow up discussion with the school principal in June 2014. This consultative process provided information on the specific gendered norms prevalent in the school, and the nature of the school sexuality education. An intervention was then implemented in the first school term of 2015 with a group of Grade 10 learners, informed by the initial consultative process and a thorough review of the literature. The intervention was based on dialogical pedagogical principles and focused on promoting discussions around sexual and gendered issues prevalent in the school. It also attempted to promote participants' positive self- and other-positionings through activities that enabled them to share important aspects of their lives. The intervention did not consist of running a pre-prepared programme: each session was planned based on issues that arose in previous sessions, and on ongoing consultations with the participants about what they would like to discuss. My supervisor and a colleague were also consulted to assist with the planning. This was in line with principles of consultation and iterative planning and action that characterise action research, although participants themselves could not be consulted prior to the implementation of the programme.

A thematic analysis was conducted on several sources of data from the research in order to evaluate this research. As well as conducting a brief descriptive thematic analysis of data from the initial consultative process, I also conducted an in-depth discursive thematic analysis of the sexual and

gendered themes within the talk during the intervention, and the manners in which gendered norms were troubled or reinforced. Additionally, I conducted a process thematic analysis of the dialogical processes that occurred in the group, a descriptive thematic analysis of the participants' oral and written feedback, and a reflexive analysis of my diary entries and reflections on the intervention. Drawing together these analyses, I present below an integrative evaluation of the action research.

2. *Integrative evaluation*

The dialogical pedagogical approach of the intervention was clearly very valuable to the participants, as they appreciated the chance to talk about pertinent issues in their lives, both sexual and otherwise, in a trusting, non-judgemental and confidential space. In my analysis, I showed how trust undergirded the success of the dialogical processes, and I theorised that the value of the dialogue lay in the way in which it provided recognition to participants in their varying subject positions. This recognition enhanced their subjectivities and promoted self-knowledge and reflexivity through enabling connections and communication to occur between their diverse subject positions, both between and within individuals. It also enabled them to be positively positioned within valued discursive fields. Self-knowledge, reflexivity and positive positioning enhance emotional competence, which has been shown in the literature to be protective of sexual and reproductive health (Gavin et al, 2007). However, there were limits to how much dialogue could achieve, and there was a sense, from about the sixth session onwards, that dialogue had achieved saturation within the group, and that a different focus was needed.

The participants enjoyed talking about sex and sexuality. Curiosity was generated and expressed through the dialogical emphasis, and this appeared to lead to far greater learning about sexual matters than the kinds of teaching to which participants were exposed in LO sexuality education. There was evidence that some participants were taking up safe-sex messages in a reflexive and considered manner, and that the dialogical learning environment enabled some participants to individualise and personalise such messages. Participants also valued the inclusion of activities that integrated sexuality talk with other personal and identity issues. Indeed, it was the chance to talk about personal and, sometimes, painful issues that some participants found to be the most significant aspect of the group. Given that our sexualities are embedded within our personal and social lives, interventions that integrate a focus on sexualities with other significant life issues may be more meaningful.

Regarding the sexual and gendered norms that the dialogical processes within the group were able to surface and bring to visibility, issues pertaining to masturbation and female sexuality were brought out of relative 'hiding' and normalised, to an extent. These included female sexual desire,

female and male masturbation, and female same-sex, as well as the female condom. Regarding female same-sex, one participant challenged the heterosexual norm by admitting to and talking about her same-sex desires and practices. Her open talk not only shut down criticism, but it also brought female same-sex experiences into the realm of the named and known, enabling a normalisation of such practices. Male same-sex, on the other hand, was not only silenced but was thoroughly denigrated when it did surface. This indicates the limits of dialogical processes in challenging certain entrenched inequities.

The issue of 'cheating' was extensively discussed, and a highly gendered norm of lack of culpability for male infidelity was surfaced. This was troubled as members highlighted the emotional costs of cheating on the partner. This was a subtle rather than direct challenge, and whilst, at the time, I was hoping for a more direct challenge to patriarchy, it appeared that the gendered interactional context prevented the females from being more explicit in their troubling. Furthermore, a more oblique undermining of such a norm is likely to have led to less resistance amongst members. My blunt challenge to one member may have been the cause of his not returning to the group.

There was a relative silencing of sexual abstinence, although written feedback from the participants indicated that this is an important topic for some of them. Some participants appeared to desire more talk around 'how to do abstinence' in the current peer environment which foregrounds sex as not only desirable but necessary to prove one's adequacy as a woman/man.

Freirian principles emphasise the need for transformative action to arise out of the reflection of any intervention, Whilst no concrete gender-transformative action came forth from this group of participants, it is hoped that shifts occurred within members' own ability to critique some gendered norms, particularly around female desire, double sexual standards for males and females, and female same-sex. The action that did occur was presenting safe sex messages on a poster and in assembly. Whilst this may not have had much effect on the school community as a whole, just the act of setting out safe sex messages may have enabled participants to consider such messages in a more reflexive manner than previously.

My own experience whilst running the group was frequently of exhaustion, although much of this was due to factors unrelated to the intervention. Nevertheless, this sense of fatigue points to the fact that such an intervention with adolescents does require a large investment of energy on the part of the facilitator. Along with the fatigue, there was also a sense of real relatedness to the participants as I developed an increasing fondness for them.

There were naturally specific aspects of the constitution of the group that limit transferability of findings to other sexuality intervention groups. Voluntary participation in a dialogical group meant that those participants who completed the intervention may have been more invested in dialogue, or found it more beneficial, than the general learner population; the fact that I was 'White' and English speaking may have meant that it was easier for participants to talk with me about sexual matters than to a 'Black' facilitator, as cultural mores inhibiting inter-generational sex talk did not apply; and there is the possibility that a group with more equal numbers of males and females may result in females being relatively more 'silenced' than in this group.

To conclude this integrative evaluation, I argue that effective sexuality interventions cannot be divorced from processes that provide recognition to young people. Young people need to be seen, heard, and affirmed, not only as sexual subjects, but as people in their multiplicity of subject positions. Such recognition needs to come through dialogical processes of talking and being listened to, but it is important that other channels of recognition are also provided to young people, through engagement in any number of other group activities.

3. *Recommendations for future sexuality interventions*

A dialogical pedagogical approach which promotes the recognition of participants in positive and meaningful personal and sexual subject positions has been shown by this project to be highly valued by participants. Structural aspects that ensure consistency and enable a non-judgemental and safe atmosphere to be created are essential for meaningful dialogue to occur. Whilst following the participants' lead in discussing what sexual aspects they most wish to talk about is essential, a facilitator also needs to be mindful of which issues may be silenced, such as abstinence, and which may need to be more deliberately drawn out and discussed by the facilitator. Regarding abstinence, it would be important to move any talk about abstinence from moral impositions into something that speaks to relational and personal aspects, as well as practical discussions of 'how to do abstinence' in a milieu that favours hetero-sex.

This intervention has shown how gendered norms can be challenged through a dialogical approach, leading to conscientisation around some gendered inequities. However, it has also shown the limits of the challenges that can be mounted against highly entrenched norms, such as the denigration of male same-sex. In this regard, it may be helpful to add to the dialogical approach by presenting outside resources, such as speakers or videos, to the group, or even to a school class or grade. If, for example, a gay man could share some personal narratives with the learners, this would then provide interesting dialogical fodder for group discussions afterwards, and would provide additional discursive resources to bolster those brought by the facilitator.

In the third session of this intervention, I tried to populate the members' discursive space with relational discursive resources in a rather colonising manner. This points to one of the temptations that facilitators of dialogical interventions need to guard against – the pull to revert to 'teacher-centred' lessons which 'educate' rather than conscientise. Thus, high reflexivity is required by the facilitator. Reflective diarising, supervision and the opportunity to reflect with another on the process of the intervention all assist in the reflexive process.

In chapter 4, section 3.1.1. ("It's not our fault that we cheat"), I showed how highly gendered arguments were presented to me as to why boys cheat and why it is not their fault. However, two boys then spoke in isiXhosa, musing over how they can cheat for no reason. Likewise, in section 2.3 of chapter 4, on masturbation, we saw how one girl asked another, in isiXhosa, whether she masturbated. This suggests that participants also benefit from some dialogical space without the facilitator's input, once trust has been established. This may be encouraged by having more activities where unstructured and spontaneous dialogue can arise after the formal discussions are over, such as time for artwork, board games, card games or listening to music.

Whilst dialogue has been shown to be crucial, given the apparent 'dialogue saturation' that appeared to occur in the later sessions of this intervention, what may work better is to have a series of only six dialogically focused sessions, then have another series of follow up sessions at a later stage, after a break of six to twelve months. Furthermore, other non-dialogical means of recognition also appear to be necessary for young people to have a sense of their own agency, including sexual agency, in this world. Work on Positive Youth Development has shown the efficacy on sexual health of developing general competencies, such as vocational, emotional, or cognitive skills in young people, whilst embedding the young people in networks of supportive adults (Gavin et al, 2010). Thus, if a dialogically focused intervention is twinned with an intervention that promotes other competencies in young people, the best outcomes may be achieved. Leading the intervention was an intense process for me as the facilitator, so pairing with another facilitator would also lessen the demands on individual facilitators.

The literature shows that a community based component to sexuality interventions, such as strengthening the family or school through training parenting or teaching skills, enhances sexual and reproductive outcomes (Fonner et al, 2014; Jemmot et al, 2010). This has not yet been accomplished with this current action research due to time constraints, but I will be offering a dialogical workshop to the teachers at the target school at the start of next year. The aim of this will be to discuss, in a dialogical manner, the importance of dialogical techniques, non-judgementalism, and the need to

focus on positive and relational aspects of sex as well as on the risks of sex in school sexuality education.

There are structural constraints to the implementation of small dialogical groups by teachers, due to the large classes that they are expected to manage. Therefore, as Harrison et al (2010) suggest, using outside facilitators to lead such groups may be the recommended approach to instituting such groups in schools. Finally, any dialogical sexuality intervention needs to consider the gendered, racial and linguistic composition of the participants and facilitator, as these factors will affect the ease with which certain topics can be addressed.

4. Strengths and limitations of this research

One of the strengths of this research, as I see it, was its foundation on previous research projects at the target school. This enabled me, as the facilitator, to have a thorough knowledge of the particular sexual and gendered context of the school and the nature of the sexuality education that it offers. However, a limitation was the fact that I was not able to consult in an ongoing manner with the principal or any LO educators during the implementation of the intervention, due to their time constraints, and that I have not yet been able to offer follow up workshops with the educators, although this is planned for the start of next year. Furthermore, I was not able to consult with current participants prior to recruitment for the intervention. Whilst I did consult, collaborate and reflect as much as possible with the group participants regarding the planning of sessions during the intervention, I found that they tended to follow my lead. Given their youthfulness and the fact that they had probably not been exposed to other similar experiences, it is understandable that their suggestions for sessions were limited. Nevertheless, their collaboration in the group was implicit in that I tried to follow their lead in terms of which topics to discuss, and which discursive areas were of high interest.

The complementary theoretical lenses applied to the action research enabled the rich theoretical resources of feminist post-structuralism to be applied in a practical manner through Freirian principles of dialogical pedagogy. This enabled a conscientisation about/troubling of gendered norms and practices to occur in the intervention. However, the benefits of the action research for the participants appeared to go beyond a conscientisation about gender and sexual practices, and encompass broader issues of identity and self-hood. This was clearly a strength of this research. There was evidence that the dialogical intervention group provided valuable recognition to participants, not only in sexual subject positions, but also in other valued and personal subject positions. I theorised that this recognition would have increased the connections and communication between their diverse subject positions, both between and within participants,

thereby increasing their ability to be reflexive about their behaviours, and promoting relationships. However, the intervention could have been expanded through incorporating more non-dialogical, yet still social activities for the participants.

Whilst my engagement with the participants produced only a very minor 'action' component, in the form of a presentation in a school assembly, the intervention itself can be seen as an action arising from the previous research at the school. Likewise, if I succeed in conducting a workshop at the school with the staff, or if other research builds on this, then these will be actions arising out of this research.

Regarding my facilitation of the group, my strengths as a facilitator are my abilities to recognise and affirm participants in their varying subject positions, to manage group processes by ensuring that all members have a chance to speak, and to respond appropriately to manifest affect. My training as a counselling psychologist is beneficial in this regard. Additionally, my studies in gender and sexualities make me alert to implicit and taken-for-granted gender inequities and norms. However, there are two weaknesses of which I am aware. The first were my levels of busyness and emotional stress at the time of conducting the intervention, which reduced my creativity and energy levels during the intervention. The second is my tendency to challenge gendered norms rather too bluntly at times, which can lead to resistance or hurt. One male dropped out after the session in which I challenged him on his assertion that it is not males' fault that they are unfaithful to their partners (whether he stopped coming because of this or because of other factors is unknown), while another male withdrew from the conversation when I challenged his homophobic sentiments. Whilst I feel that it was important that I troubled these gendered norms, some of my comments may have been perceived as mocking, and a more oblique challenge may ultimately have been more helpful.

5. Suggestions for continuing this action research cycle

Conducting follow-up focus groups with the participants in this project in 2016 would accomplish at least two further goals. Firstly, working from the premise that an interview or focus group is, in itself, an intervention, this would allow me to provide further recognition to the participants as I ask their thoughts on our intervention, seek their suggestions for future ones, and enquire about their lives since the intervention. The group interviews would also provide further data on participants' evaluations of the dialogical intervention in which we engaged.

This project has highlighted the great benefit of a dialogical intervention, but has also shown the limits of dialogue. As recommended above, complementing a dialogical intervention with some other, less dialogically focused intervention is likely to produce better results. Therefore, an action research project which institutes and evaluates the effects of such a twinned dialogical/non-

dialogical intervention would be of great value. This would likely require more than one facilitator/researcher with complementary skills in facilitating dialogical and non-dialogical interventions. It is recommended that this dialogical/non-dialogical action research be instituted on a larger scale, and across a diversity of school settings in order to evaluate the transportability of this model of intervention.

As already mentioned, I hope to conduct a workshop with the staff of the school, and this would be a form of action/intervention into their pedagogical approaches, as well as hopefully providing them with some support in their very demanding roles as educators in an under-resourced school. I also wish to be able to engage with the school management about whether it would be possible to implement dialogical groups in the school in an ongoing manner. There may be a possibility of post-graduate psychology students from Rhodes University continuing with the process. However, the long-term aim is for the intervention to be sustainable within the system itself, and in this regard, it would be valuable if group facilitators within the educational system could be trained to run such groups, and also to engage in the action research cycle as they reflect on their own interventions and actions.

In order to facilitate this, engagement with the Eastern Cape Department of Basic Education (DBE) is necessary. I will be sending a copy of this thesis to the Chief Director of Strategic Monitoring and Evaluation in the Eastern Cape Department of Basic Education (DBE). However, I also plan to write a policy brief based on this research to provide more accessible feedback to the DBE regarding sexuality education.

Finally, given my assertion that sexuality interventions need to provide recognition to participants in a diversity of subject positions, ongoing research is recommended to explore this from a post-structural theoretical standpoint.

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Appendices

Appendix A – RPERC ethical clearance

RHODES UNIVERSITY
Grahamstown • 6140 • South Africa

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY
Tel: +27 (0)46 603 8500 • Fax: +27 (0)46 622 4032 • Website: http://www.rhodes.ac.za/academic/department/psychology

RESEARCH PROJECTS AND ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

14 May 2014

Nicola Graham
Department of Psychology
RHODES UNIVERSITY
6140

Dear Nicola

ETHICAL CLEARANCE OF PROJECT PSY2014/07

This letter confirms your research proposal with tracking number PSY2014/07 and title, 'A participatory dialogical sexuality intervention with high school learners: an action research project', served at the Research Projects and Ethics Review Committee (RPERC) of the Psychology Department of Rhodes University on 14 May 2014. The project has been given ethics clearance.

Please ensure that the RPERC is notified should any substantive change(s) be made, for whatever reason, during the research process. This includes changes in investigators.

Yours sincerely

CHAIRPERSON OF THE RPERC

Appendix B – permission from school Principal

Rhodes University Psychology Department

The Principal

(Name) High School

(Town)

11th June 2014

Dear Ms. (Name),

I would like to ask for permission to conduct a research project in the form of a sexuality intervention at your school. This will not be a repetition of the kinds of input that your learners get in their LO sexuality education, but will consist of a small semi-structured discussion group around sexual and gendered issues of pertinence to the learners. I will be drawing on insights gained from research conducted at this school in 2012 by (Name of previous researcher). I hope that the group will enable participants to critically evaluate sexual and gendered norms and behaviours.

The intervention will last for approximately 12 sessions of about an hour each. Participation will be entirely voluntary, and will take place outside of class time. I would like to recruit Grade 10 learners to take part in the group, but if you feel that it would be better for me to conduct the group with learners from a different grade, I would be happy to consider that. I will tape record the group sessions, and ask the learners to evaluate the group at the end of the process.

The principle of shared confidentiality amongst group members will be emphasised strongly. Group members will **not** be required to disclose personal information, although they may choose to do so. Should any group members experience distress, or feel the need to talk privately through issues that have arisen, I will be available after the sessions. Members may also be referred to the Rhodes Psychology Clinic if they require ongoing counselling.

The research report that I write on the intervention will contain no information that could be used to identify the school, the educators, yourself, or the learners. Information will be treated with the utmost confidentiality.

At the end of my research I would be happy to conduct a feedback session with you and your educators in which we could dialogue about our different experiences of engaging in sexuality education, if this would be of value to your educators. I can also provide you with a summary report of my findings and recommendations if this would be helpful.

If you are in agreement with my conducting the intervention and researching it, please would you sign the consent on the next page.

With thanks and kind regards,

____

Nicola Graham, student psychologist and researcher

____

Prof. Catriona Macleod, research supervisor

I, ____(full name), the Principal of (Name) High School, do hereby give permission to Nicola Graham to conduct a dialogical sexuality discussion group at (Name) High School, and to research the process of conducting this group.

Appendix C – Permission from Eastern Cape Department of Education

STRATEGIC PLANNING POLICY RESEARCH AND SECRETARIAT SERVICES
Steve Vukile Tshwete Complex • Zone 6 • Zwelitsha • Eastern Cape • Private Bag X0032 • Bhisho• 5605 • REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA
Website: www.ecdoe.gov.za • Email:babalwa.pamla@edu.ecprov.gov.za

Enquiries: B Pamla

Tel : +27 (0)40 608 4773/4035/4537
Fax: +27 (0)40 608 4574

04 September 2014

Ms. Nicola Jearey Graham
CSSR House, Psychology Department
P.O. Box 94
Grahamstown
5099

Dear Ms. Graham

PERMISSION TO UNDERTAKE A MASTERS THESIS:A PARTICIPATORY DIALOGICAL SEXUALITY INTERVENTION WITH HIGH SCHOOL LEARNERS – AN ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT

1. Thank you for your application to conduct research.

2. Your application to conduct the above mentioned research at Mary Waters High School under the jurisdiction of Grahamstown District of the Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDoE) is hereby approved on condition that:

   a. there will be no financial implications for the Department;

   b. institutions and respondents must not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation;

   c. you present a copy of the written approval letter of the Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDoE) to the Cluster and District Directors before any research is undertaken at any institutions within that particular district;

   d. you will make all the arrangements concerning your research;

   e. the research may not be conducted during official contact time, as educators' programmes should not be interrupted;

   f. should you wish to extend the period of research after approval has been granted, an application to do this must be directed to Chief Director: Strategic Management Monitoring and Evaluation;

   g. the research may not be conducted during the fourth school term, except in cases where a special well motivated request is received;

building blocks for growth

Ikamva eliqaqambileyo!

Page 1 of 2

h. your research will be limited to those schools or institutions for which approval has been granted, should changes be effected written permission must be obtained from the Chief Director: Strategic Management Monitoring and Evaluation;

i. you present the Department with a copy of your final paper/report/dissertation/thesis free of charge in hard copy and electronic format. This must be accompanied by a separate synopsis (maximum 2 – 3 typed pages) of the most important findings and recommendations if it does not already contain a synopsis.

j. you present the findings to the Research Committee and/or Senior Management of the Department when and/or where necessary.

k. you are requested to provide the above to the Chief Director: Strategic Management Monitoring and Evaluation upon completion of your research.

l. you comply with all the requirements as completed in the Terms and Conditions to conduct Research in the ECDoE document duly completed by you.

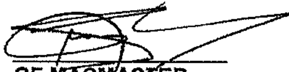
m. you comply with your ethical undertaking (commitment form).

n. You submit on a six monthly basis, from the date of permission of the research, concise reports to the Chief Director: Strategic Management Monitoring and Evaluation.

3. The Department reserves a right to withdraw the permission should there not be compliance to the approval letter and contract signed in the Terms and Conditions to conduct Research in the ECDoE.

4. The Department will publish the completed Research on its website.

5. The Department wishes you well in your undertaking. You can contact the Chief Director, Mr. GF Mac Master on the numbers indicated in the letterhead or email greg.macmaster@edu.ecprov.gov.za should you need any assistance.



GF MACMASTER
CHIEF DIRECTOR: STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT MONITORING AND EVALUATION

FOR SUPERINTENDENT-GENERAL: EDUCATION

Appendix D – flier for recruiting participants

SEXUALITY DISCUSSION RESEARCH GROUP

Do you:

- Wonder about sex?
- Have questions about passion, desire and love?
- Think about being a man/woman?

!!FREE SNACKS EVERY SESSION!!!

Are you:

- A virgin?
- Sexually active?
- A guy?
- A girl?
- Straight/lesbian/gay/bisexual/don't know?

Then this group is for you! Come and discuss sex and sexuality in a semi-structured, confidential group setting, and engage in some fun activities too.

MONDAYS AT 3PM, DURING THE FIRST TERM

SAFE, NON-JUDGEMENTAL ENVIRONMENT

Group facilitated by Nicola Graham, intern psychologist & researcher at Rhodes University. For more information, contact Nicola on 076-259-2303

Appendix E – Informed assent and consent forms

Rhodes University Psychology Department

Learner information and consent form

Dear learner,

Thank you for agreeing to take part in our sexuality discussion group. I really value your participation. I will be conducting research on this group in order to understand how to improve on such groups in the future. This will involve making recordings of the group sessions, asking you some questions about the group at the end, and writing a report. The report will NOT mention your name or the name of your school or any other identifying information. The recordings will only be shared with my supervisors and a transcriber, who are bound by rules of confidentiality.

Please will you and your parent or guardian (if you are under 18) read and sign the attached agreement forms.

Yours sincerely,

Nicola Graham

Intern psychologist and researcher

Agreement between researcher and participant

I (participant's name) ____agree to participate in the action research project of **Nicola Graham** on **a participatory dialogical sexuality intervention.**

I understand that:

1. Nicola Graham is a training psychologist conducting the research as part of the requirements for a Master's degree at Rhodes University. She may be contacted on **076-259-2303** or **n.graham@ru.ac.za**. The research project has been approved by the relevant ethics committee(s), and is under the supervision of Prof Catriona Macleod in the Psychology Department at Rhodes University, who may be contacted on 046-603-2377 (office) or c.macleod@ru.ac.za (email).

2. The researcher is interested in the process of conducting a sexuality intervention with high school learners. The intervention will consist of weekly group meetings for the first school term. In this group we will have discussions and do activities related to sexuality and gender.

3. I give permission to Nicola to use things that I say in the groups for research purposes.

4. As a member of the group, I commit myself to maintaining group confidentiality.

5. I will not be asked questions of a personal nature, although I may choose to disclose personal information.

6. I am invited to ask Nicola about any concerns I have about my participation in the study, or consequences I may experience as a result of my participation. I have the right to have these addressed to my satisfaction. The Rhodes Psychology Clinic may be contacted for further support after the discussion groups on (046) 603-8502 if I feel the need. I may also seek support (which will not be recorded or used for research purposes) from Nicola after the discussion group if I need to talk through issues that arose.

7. I am free to withdraw from the study at any time – however I commit myself to full participation unless some unusual circumstances occur, or I have concerns about my participation which I did not originally anticipate.

8. The report on the project may contain information about my personal experiences, attitudes and behaviours, but the report will be designed in such a way that it will not be possible for me to be identified by the reader. My name and all identifying information about me will be changed.

Participant:____

Age: __________________________ Female/Male:____________________________

Signed on (Date):____

Researcher:____

Agreement between researcher and parent/guardian of participant under 18

I (name) ____ the parent/guardian of (child's name) ____agree that my child may participate in the action research project of **Nicola Graham** on **a participatory dialogical formative evaluation of a sexuality intervention**.

I understand that:

1. Nicola Graham is a training psychologist conducting the research as part of the requirements for a Master's degree at Rhodes University. She may be contacted on **076-259-2303** or **n.graham@ru.ac.za**. The research project has been approved by the relevant ethics committee(s), and is under the supervision of Prof Catriona Macleod in the Psychology Department at Rhodes University, who may be contacted on 046-603-2377 (office) or c.macleod@ru.ac.za (email).

2. The researcher is interested in the process of conducting a sexuality intervention with high school learners. The intervention will consist of weekly group meetings for the first school term. In this group we will have discussions and do activities related to sexuality and gender.

3. I give permission to Nicola to use things that my child says in the groups for research purposes.

4. All members of the group will commit themselves to maintaining group confidentiality.

5. My child will not be asked questions of a personal nature, although s/he may choose to disclose personal information.

6. I am invited to ask Nicola about any concerns I have about my child's participation in the study, or consequences s/he may experience as a result of her/his participation. I have the right to have these addressed to my satisfaction. The Rhodes Psychology Clinic may be contacted for further support for my child after the discussion groups on (046) 603-8502 if s/he feels the need. S/he may also seek support (which will not be recorded or used for research purposes) from Nicola after the discussion group if s/he needs to talk through any issues that arose.

7. My child is free to withdraw from the study at any time – however I understand that s/he needs to commit her/himself to full participation unless some unusual circumstances occur, or s/he has concerns about her/his participation which s/he did not originally anticipate.

8. The report on the project may contain information about my child's personal experiences, attitudes and behaviours, but the report will be designed in such a way that it will not be possible for my child to be identified by the reader. My child's name and all identifying information will be changed.

Parent/Guardian: ____

Child's name:______________________________Age of child:____________

Female/Male:_____________Signed on (Date):_________________________

Researcher:____

Appendix F – Confidentiality agreement

Shared confidentiality

What is shared confidentiality?

Shared confidentiality means that what group members say in this group remains here, and is not told to other people. This includes members' opinions and details of their lives.

Why do we need to keep group members' opinions and information confidential?

In order for us all to benefit from this group, it is important that we can talk freely without the fear that what we say will be told to others. If group members trust us enough to tell us important things about themselves, we owe it to them to keep it confidential.

Tear off here:

Confidentiality agreement

As a member of the sexuality discussion group run by Nicola, I undertake to keep all information that I learn about other people in this group confidential.

Name :____

Date :____

Appendix G – Final evaluation questionnaire

Sexuality Research Group

Final evaluation

1. What did you like about the group?

____

____

____

____

2. What didn't you like about the group?

____

____

____

3. What topics/activities did you find useful?

____

____

____

____

4. What topics/activities did you find not useful/not helpful?

____

____

____

5. What other topics/activities would you have liked to have been included, but weren't?

____

____

____

6. What did Nicola do that was helpful?

____

____

____

7. What could Nicola have done better?

____

____

____

8. Have you changed through being part of this group?

____

9. If so, how have you changed?

____

____

____

____

10. Is there anything you would have liked to speak about but were too shy to say?

____

____

____

____

Thank you so much for being part of this group!

Nicola.

Appendix H – collated answers to final evaluation questionnaire

Sexuality Research Group

Final evaluation – collated answers

1. **What did you like about the group?**
    a. What I liked about the group is that everything that we discussed and talked about does not go out it stays personally and inside the group.
    b. I like that we were not shy towards us, we had talk I like the abstain from sex the most.
    c. I liked everything about the group e.g. you feel free to share anything with the people who are in the group they don't judge you about the things you are telling them.
    d. Well, I enjoyed talking more and expressing myself more, and getting to test myself in whether I'm confidential or if I can speak to a group of people.
    e. What I liked about the group is that we were less, so it was very easy to talk about anything that involves sex or other things. I never got the chance to learn about some things that include sex, but now I know and I like that.
    f. What I like about the group is that I was open and I felt free by facing my fare's (fears).
    g. We can talk about everything. I like when we talk about love.
    h. We were able to talk/chat to each other and I liked the fact that nobody judged when we were sharing a thought or our feelings.
    i. I liked it because we share things in our lives that were happening.
    j. Everything because we talk a lot of things in this group that help ourselves and things you don't know about yourself.
    k. I like everything about the group it was a great place to socialise and learn more about sexuality life and to hear other people's thoughts about sex.
2. **What didn't you like about the group?**
    a. What I didn't like about the group is when groupmates are cheecky and moody against each other.
    b. Some children did not talk the true that is what I didn't like.
    c. -
    d. Well, nothing much because the group was always interesting

e. What I didn’t like about the group is when I answer a question about sex and people judge me or say that I am old and have a dirty mind and I am sexually active, but I am not.
f. I did not like that, the first I came there were many people and we even tolded them ower secrets and now they are not coming maybe are not trustworthy.
g. None but why people ask me when last have I had sex (sad face icon).
h. Nothing, everything was going fine.
i. I didn’t like some of the discussions I was a bit shy and scared but I ended up talking and feeling free.
j. I like everything about this group.
k. Nothing everything was great in the group.

3. **What topics/activities did you find useful?**
    a. I liked teenage pregnancy. I found it useful because it taught me to abstain from being absent.
    b. The puzzle.
    c. The debate, and when someone is talking about his/her problem you just give them some advise
    d. I think when we talked about cheating and behaviour. And there was an activity where one member had to describe and tell what he/she likes about you, so I felt it was good, and made me feel blissful.
    e. What I found useful was knowing about the female condom, because I wanted to know and see it. Also what I found useful is that it is important to talk or cry about something rather than keeping it inside, because it damages our inner parts.
    f. Gender, female condome, male condomes, and mostly that sex.
    g. none everything is just fin [fine]
    h. Abstaining from sex, I really liked the reasons of the group members on why we should abstain.
    i. Every topic was useful to me because sometimes you find it difficult for you to talk its better if its an activity
    j. Faithful, cheating.
    k. All the topic because they all were things that most young teen’s want to know so everything was useful on my side.
4. **What topics/activities did you find not useful/not helpful?**
    a. None of the topics that we did
    b. I did not find the poster useless

c. -
d. None
e. Nothing, everthing was useful/helpful
f. The parsil (puzzle)
g. None
h. None, they were all helpful and useful
i. There wasn't an activity to me that wasn't useful so they all are useful
j. None
k. Nothing everything was useful

5. **What other topics/activities would you have liked to have been included, but weren't?**
    a. I would like if drama or acting was involve. To show pictures of what we are trying to say.
    b. Non
    c. To talk about forgiveness
    d. Well, I would've liked to talk about abstinence and self respect, like exploring more of how to deal and why abstinence is safe and important.
    e. I would have loved to know more about condoms. Like can you get HIV/AIDS even when you are using it or is it just preventing you from pregnancy.
    f. Everything was perfect from my side.
    g. None
    h. None as far as Im concerned.
    i. Talking about violence, rape and others not in the relationships though outside the relationship.
    j. Abuse, Environment, Is it useful to date someone in internet
    k. nothing everything was cool

6. **What did Nicola do that was helpful?**
    a. She gave us food and helped us to
    b. Talk to us about sex
    c. She thought [taught] us about we should open and we shouldn't be scared to talk to others even if people are making fun of your thing let them be
    d. Nicola let everybody speak, she gave each of us a chance and made sure that you were comfortable talking, and she helped us here and there.
    e. When we talked about the things that do not make us happy, it was really useful to me.

f. By teaching us not to be afred to say No because this is mine body and I to the disitions [decisions].
g. a lot Because can talk with everything. I made like she my friend.
h. She was able to make us feel comfortable with each other and able to trust one another.
i. She thought [taught] me of being carefull and responsible to my life and showed me the way of living to learn from my mistakes.
j. I remember the other day when she asked us to say something that you were proud of and I told my story and I was crying but she helped me
k. She answered most of the questions which we had no answers to and thought [taught] us a little more about sex

7. **What could Nicola have done better?**
   a. No, everything was fine by me
   b. Explain us why not.
   c. Nothing she is just fine
   d. I don't think there are things she did not do. I feel like she did absolutely fantastic
   e. Nothing, everything she did was helpful and she did it in a very good manna [manner].
   f. By taking us out to do activity's and to bond
   g. none everything was just right for me
   h. Nothing, was wrong. At all
   i. Nothing, she did Everything better to me as I've seen the past few weeks.
   j. Everything she has done is perfect.
   k. nothing everything was good
8. **Have you changed through being part of this group?**
   a. Not ever
   b. No
   c. Yes
   d. Yes
   e. Yes
   f. No, because I love the group
   g. Yes
   h. Yes
   i. Yes
   j. Yes

k. Nope Im still same old me

9. **If so, how have you changed?**
   a. -
   b. -
   c. I feel free to open up to everyone who is close to me and if there is a fight between me and my loved ones we seat down and solve the problem without shouting at each other
   d. Im more open and more acknowledged than before. I know things I didn't really know about myself. I know how I will deal with issues if anyday something happened.
   e. I now have a lot of knowledge about sex and I know the disadvantages and advantages of it. I can never be wrong now when it comes to sex because of this group.
   f. I wonte let anyone to tell me what to do about my body.
   g. a lot of thinks
   h. Nomore thinking about things that are too old for my age. And focus on living a positive teenage life.
   i. By knowing on where I was wrong and try to learn from my mistakes and do better than the others.
   j. I used to have lots of anger inside me but I joined this group I think don't have that anger anymore
   k. -

10. **Is there anything you would have liked to speak about but were too shy to say?**
    a. Nope
    b. No
    c. Yes, that I was once infected by STI and the pills I got from the clinic didn't help me.
    d. Yes, there is. For example: Talking about my feelings and I don't really know why I do some things, so I would've liked some clarity from others in the group
    e. No
    f. Yes, someone close to me was abused and that someone the group membrae's minte know thas someone.
    g. none
    h. No, there was nothing because Nicola made us feel very comfortable @ our SR Group, so we were able to share things freely.

i. Nothing so far I’m all fine about the group discussions, nothing to ask or say . (Smiley face)
j. No there is nothing
k. nope nothing I am alright everything was said

Appendix I - Transcription conventions

P:	- unidentified participant
F:	- unidentified female participant
M:	- unidentified male participant
R:	- Researcher
/laugh/	- laughter by the person speaking
/P*: laugh/*	- laughter by a designated participant
/laughter/	- group laughter
/LAUGHTER/	- loud group laughter
/P: mm/	- backchannel response by a designated participant uttered during the flow of the primary speaker's speech
[P: comment]	- short comment by a designated participant uttered during the flow of the primary speaker's speech
Word	- vocal stress or emphasis
Wo::rd	- extension/stretching out of the word
YES	- more than one participant answering loudly
,	- short pause
(.)	- slightly longer pause
(1)	- one second pause
=	- no break between the end of one participant's speech and the start of the next
{word	- overlapping speech
{word	
(….)	- unclear speech
(word)	- probable transcription of unclear speech
((explanation))	- explanation or translation of Xhosa speech
….	- deleted words
[*description]*	- description of non-verbal context or events

Appendix J: Participant certificate

CERTIFICATE OF PARTICIPATION

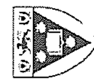
Name Surname

is thanked for her phenomenal participation in the

SEXUALITY RESEARCH GROUP

PRESENTED BY: *Nicola Graham, researcher & psychologist*

ON THIS DAY: *13th April 2015*



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